SPURGEON'S SERMONS VOLUME 04: 1858

by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon's powerful sermons on church and Christian discipleship.

61 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 04: 1858

Chapter 1

The Destroyer Destroyed

A Sermon

(No. 166)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 6, 1857, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil"--Hebrews 2:14.

IN GOD'S ORIGINAL empire everything was happiness, and joy, and peace. If there be any evil, any suffering and pain, that is not God's work. God may permit it, overrule it, and out of it educe much good; but the evil cometh not of God. He himself standeth pure and perfect, the clean fountain out of which gusheth forth ever more sweet and pure waters. The devil's reign, on the contrary, containeth nought of good, "the devil sinneth from the beginning," and his dominion has been one uniform course of temptation to evil and infliction of misery. Death is a part of Satan's dominion, he brought sin into the world when he tempted our mother Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, and with sin he brought also death into the world, with all its train of woes. There had been likely no death, if there had been no devil. If Satan had not tempted, mayhap man had not revolted, and if he had not revolted he would have lived for ever, without having to undergo the painful change which is caused by death. I think death is the devil's masterpiece. With the solitary exception of hell, death is certainly the most Satanic mischief that sin hath accomplished. Nothing ever delighted the heart of the devil so much as when he found that the threatening would be fulfilled, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely

die," and never was his malicious heart so full of hellish joy as when he saw Abel stretched upon the earth, slain by the club of his brother. "Aha!" said Satan, "this is the first of all intelligent creatures that has died. Oh how I rejoice! This is the crowning hour of my dominion. It is true that I have marred the glory of this earth by my guileful temptation; it is true the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain by reason of the evil that I have brought into it; but this, this is my masterpiece; I have killed man; I have brought death into him, and here lieth the first--the first dead man." Since that time Satan hath ever gloated over the death of the human race, and he hath had some cause of glory, for that death has been universal. All have died. Though they had been wise as Solomon, their wisdom could not spare their head; though they had been virtuous as Moses, yet their virtue could not avert the axe, All have died; and therefore the devil hath boasted in his triumph. But twice hath he been defeated; but two have entered heaven without dying, but the mass of mankind have had to feel the scythe of death; and he has rejoiced because this, his mightiest work, has had foundations broad as earth, and a summit that reached as high as the virtues of mankind could climb.

There is something fearful in death. It is frightful even to him that hath the most of faith. It is only the gildings of death, the afterwards, the heaven, the harp, the glory, that maketh death bearable even to the Christian. Death in itself must ever be an unutterably fearful thing to the sons of men. And oh! what ruin doth it work! It darkens the windows of the eyes; it pulls down the polished pillars of the divine architecture of the body; it turns the inhabitant the soul, out of its door, and bids it fly to worlds unknown; and it leaves in place of a living man a corpse whose appearance is so wretched that none can look upon it without emotions of horror. Now, this is Satan's

delight. He conceives death to be his masterpiece, because of its terror, and because of the ruin which it works. The greater the evil, the better doth he delight in it. No doubt he gloats over our sicknesses; he rejoices himself in our sin; but death is to him a theme of as much delight as he can be capable of in his eternal misery. He, as far as he can, shouteth for joy when he witnesseth how, by one fell deed of his, one piece of treachery, he hath swept the world with the besom of destruction, and hurried all men to the tomb.

And death is very lovely to the devil for another reason--not only because it is his chief work on earth, but because it gives him the finest opportunity in the world for the display of his malice and his craft. The devil is a coward, the greatest of cowards, as most wicked beings are. A Christian in health he will seldom attack; a Christian who has been living near his Master, and is strong in grace, the devil will leave alone, because he knows he will meet his match then; but if he can find a Christian either weak in faith, or weak in body, then he thinks it a fair opportunity for attack.

Now when death comes with all its terrors, it is usual for Satan to make a fierce inroad into the soul. Usually with many of the saints, if not in the last article of death, yet some little time before it, there is a ferocious onslaught made by the great enemy of souls. And then he loves death, because death weakens the mind. The approach of death destroys some of the mental power, and takes away from us for a season some of those spirits by which we have been cheered in better days. It makes us lie there, languid, and faint, and weary. "Now is my opportunity," says the evil one; and he steals in upon us. Hence I believe for this reason he is said to have the power of death, for I cannot conceive that the devil hath the power of death in any other sense but this, that it was originated by him, and that he at such time

generally displays the most of his malice and of his power. For it is certain my brethren the devil has not the power over death so as to cause death. All the devils in hell could not take away the life of the smallest infant in the world, and though we lie gasping and sick, so that the physician despairs of us, it is nothing but the fiat of the Almighty that can cause us to die, even in the extremity of our weakness As far as the cause is concerned, the devil is not the cause of death. We rejoice to believe with Dr. Young, that an angel's arm cannot hurl us to the grave, even though it be the arm of that fallen archangel Lucifer; and we rejoice to know that afterwards a myriad angels cannot confine us there. So that neither for the unlocking of the door, nor for the securing of it afterwards, hath the devil any power whatever over the Christian in death.

Why, there are many persons here present who have such notion of religion that they conceive it to be a thing of happiness and pleasure, and delight, and living near the fountain of all bliss, that is their God, their path is filled with sunshine, and their eye sparkles with perpetual happiness. They bear the trials of this life manfully as Christians should; they take afflictions from the hand of God with all resignation and patience. Now the devil says, "It is of no use my meddling with that man with doubting thoughts; he is too mighty for me; he is powerful on his knees, and he is powerful with his God." "Hands off!" says the Christian to the devil then. But when we begin to be weak, when our mind through the influence of the body begins to be sad, when we have either been starving ourselves by some wicked religious asceticism, or when the rod of God hath bruised us, then in our evil plight the foe will beset us. And for this reason the devil loves death, and hath the power over it, because it is the time of nature's extremity, and therefore is the time of the devil's opportunity.

The subject of our discourse this morning is this. Jesus Christ through his death, hath destroyed what power the devil hath over death. Ay, and to add a second truth which shall be our second head, he hath not only by his death destroyed the power which the devil had over death, but he hath destroyed the devil's power entirely in every respect by the death which he died.

I. Let us begin, then, at the beginning. BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST THE DEVIL'S POWER OVER DEATH IS TO THE CHRISTIAN UTTERLY DESTROYED. The devil's power over death lies in three places, and we must look at it in three aspects. sometimes the devil hath power in death over the Christian, by tempting him to doubt his resurrection, and leading him to look into the black future with the dread of annihilation. We will look at that first, and we will endeavor to show you that by the death of Christ that peculiar form of the devil's power in death is entirely removed. When the poor spirit lieth on the verge of eternity, if faith be weak, and if the eye-sight of hope be dim, the Christian will most likely look forward into what? Into a world unknown, and the language of even the infidel sometimes rush into the lips of the most faithful child of God.

"My soul looks down on what?
A dread eternity; a dreary gulf."

You may tell him of the promises; you may try to cheer him by reminding him of the certain revelations of the future; but apart from the death of Christ, I say, even the Christian himself would look forward to death as being a dreary goal, a dark cloudy end to a life of weariness and woe. Whither am I speeding? An arrow shot from the bow of God's creation! Whither am I speeding? And the answer cometh back from blank nothingness thou camest, and thou art speeding to the same; there is nought to thee; when thou diest thou art lost. Or if reason has been

well tutored it may perhaps reply to him, "Yes, there is another world, but reason can only tell him that it thinks so. It dreams of it. but what that other world shall be, what its tremendous mysteries, what its gorgeous splendors, or what its horrible terrors, reason cannot tell." And the sting of death would be to such a man, who had no view of immortality in Christ, the thought that he was to be annihilated--not to exist--or if to exist that he knew not how, or where. But, beloved, by the death of Christ all this is taken away. If I lie a-dying, and Satan comes to me and says, "Thou art to be annihilated, thou art now sinking beneath the waves of time, and thou shalt lie in the caverns of nothingness for ever; thy living, leaping spirit, is to cease for ever and be not." I reply to him, "No, not so: I have no fear of that; O Satan, thy power to tempt me here faileth utterly and entirely. See there my Saviour! He died--he died really and actually, for his heart was pierced, he was buried, he lay in his grave three days; but, O Devil, he was not annihilated, for he rose again from the tomb on the third day, and in the glories of the resurrection he appeared unto many witnesses, and gave infallible proofs that he was risen from the dead. And now, O Satan, I tell thee, thou canst not put an end to my existence, for thou couldst not put an end to the existence of my Lord. As the Lord the Saviour rose, so all his followers must. I know that my Redeemer liveth,' and therefore I know that though the worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' Thou tellest me, O Satan, that I am to be swallowed up, and be a thing of nought, and sink into the bottomless pit of nonenity. I reply to thee, thou liest. My Saviour was not swallowed up, and yet he died, he died, but could not long be held a prisoner in the tomb. Come, death, and bind me, but thou canst not destroy me. Come on, O grave; open thy ghastly mouth, and swallow me up; but I shall burst thy bonds another day. When that all-glorious

morning shall dawn, I having a dew like the dew of herbs upon me, shall be raised up and shall live in his sight. Because he lives I shall live also." So, you see, Christ, by being a witness to the feet of the resurrection, has broken the power of the devil in death. In this respect he has prevented him from tempting us to fear annihilation, because, as Christians, we believe that because Christ rose again from the dead, even so they that sleep in Jesus will the Lord bring with him.

But now for a more common temptation--another phase of the devil's power in death. Full often the devil comes to us in our life-time, and he tempts us by telling us that our guilt will certainly prevail against us, that the sins of our youth and our former transgressions are still in our bones, and that when we sleep in the grave our sins shall rise up against us "They have many of them," saith he, "gone before you unto judgment, and others shall follow after." When the Christian getteth weak, and his heart and his flesh do fail him, were it not, I say for the great doctrine of the death of Christ the devil would be able to tempt him thus "Thou art about to die. I dare not tell thee that there is no future state, for if I do thou replies to me, 'There is, for Christ rose from the dead and therefore I shall,' but I will tempt thee another way. Thou hast made a fine profession, but I charge upon thee that thou hast been a hypocrite. Thou pretendest that thou art one of the Lord's beloved: now look back upon thy sins: remember on such-a-day how thy rebellious lusts arose, and thou wast led if not quite to indulge in a transgression, yet to long after it. Recollect how often thou hast provoked him in the wilderness, how frequently thou hast made his anger wax hot against thee." The devil takes up our diary, and he turns over the page, and with black finger points to our sins; and he reads scornfully, with a leer upon his

countenance. "See here saint" he says. "Saint! Aha! a fine saint you were. There! Sabbath breaking. There! evil thoughts of unbelief. There! departure from the living God." And he turns over page after page, and he stops over some very black page, and says, "See here!" And he twits the Christian with the thing. "Ah!" saith he, "David, remember Bathsheba. Lot, remember Sodom and the cave, Noah, remember the vineyard and the drunkenness." Ah! and it makes even the saint quiver, when sin stares him in the face--when the ghosts of his old sins rise up and stare upon him. He is a man that has got faith indeed that can look sin in the face, and still say, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth me from sin." But were it not for that blood, were it not for the death of Christ, you can easily conceive what power the devil would have over us in the hour of death, because he would fling all our sins in our teeth just when we came to die, But now see how through death Christ has taken away the devil's power to do that. We reply to the temptation to sin, "In truth O Satan thou art right; I have rebelled, I will not belie my conscience and my memory; I own I have transgressed. O Satan, turn to the blackest page of my history, I confess all,

'Should he send my soul to hell
His righteous law approves it well.'

But O fiend, let me tell thee my sins were numbered on the scape-goat's head of old. Go thou, O Satan, to Calvary's cross, and see my substitute bleeding there, Behold, my sins are not mine; they are laid on his eternal shoulders, and he has cast them from his own shoulders into the depths of the sea. Avaunt, hell-hound! Wouldst thou worry me? Go thou and satisfy thyself with a sight of that Man, who entered the gloomy dungeons of death, and slept awhile there, and then rent the bars away, and led captivity captive as a proof that he was justified of God the Father. and that I also am justified in him." Oh! yes, this

is the way that Christ's death destroys the power of the devil. We can tell the devil that we care not for him, for all our sins are passed away, covered in the thick cloud, and shall not be brought against us any more for ever, "Ah!" said an aged saint once who had been much teased by Satan, "at last I got rid of my temptations, sir, and I enjoyed much peace," "How did you do it?" said a Christian friend who visited him, "I showed him blood, sir; I showed him the blood of Christ." That is a thing the devil cannot endure. You may tell the devil, "Oh! but I prayed so many times." He will sniff at your prayers. You may tell him, "Ah! but I was a preacher" He will laugh in your face, and tell you you preached your own damnation You may tell him you had some good works, and he will lift them up and say, "these are your good works--filthy rags: no one would have them at a gift." You may tell him, "Ah! but I have repented." He will sneer at your repentance. You may tell him what you like, he will sneer at you, till at last you say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling;"

And it is all over with the devil then; there is nothing now that he can do, for the death of Christ has destroyed the power that the devil hath over us to tempt us on account of our guilt. "The sting of death is sin:" our Jesus took the sting away, and now death is harmless to us, because it is not succeeded by damnation.

Once more, you may suppose a Christian who has firm confidence in a future state. The evil one has another temptation for him.."It. may be very true," saith he, "that you are to live for ever and that your sins have been pardoned; but you have hitherto found it very hard work to persevere, and now you are about to die you will be sure to fail. When you have had troubles you know you have been half inclined to go back

again to Egypt. Why, the little hornets that you have met have worried you, and now this death is the prince of dragons; it will be all over with you now. You know that when you used to go through a cart-rut you were crying for fear of being drowned: what will you do now that you have got into the swellings of Jordan? "Ah!" says the devil, "you were afraid of the lions when they were chained: what will you do with this unchained lion? How will you come off now? When you were a strong man and had marrow in your bones, and your sinews were full of strength, even then you trembled at me: now I shall have at you, when I get you in your dying-time and your strength fails, and if I once get the grip of you

'That desperate tug your soul shall feel,
Through bars of brass and triple-steel.'

Ah! you will then be overcome." And sometimes the poor feint-hearted Christian thinks that is true; I shall surely fall one day by the hand of the enemy. Up gets the Arminian divine, and says, "that is a very proper sort of feeling, my friend; God often does desert his children and cast them away." To which we reply "Thou liest, Arminian; shut thy mouth, God never did desert his children, neither can he, nor will he." And having answered the Arminian we turn to answer the devil, and we say to him, "O fiend, thou temptest us to think that thou wilt conquer us; remember Satan, that the strength that has preserved us against thee has not been our own; the arm that has delivered us has not been this arm of flesh and blood, else we had long since been overcome. Look thou there, fiend, at him that is Omnipotent: his Almightiness is the power that preserves us to the end; and, therefore, be we never so weak, when we are weak then we are strong, and in our last hour of peril we shall yet overcome thee."

But please to notice, that this answer springs and arises from Christ's

death. Let us just picture a scene. When the Lord Jesus came down to earth, Satan knew his errand. He knew that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God, and when he saw him an infant in the manger, he thought if he could kill him and get Him in the bonds of death what a fine thing it would be! So he stirred up the spirit of Herod to slay him; but Herod missed his mark. And many a time did Satan strive to put the personal existence of Christ in danger, so that he might get Christ to die. Poor fool as he was, he did not know that when Christ died he would bruise the devil's head. Once, you remember, when Christ was in the synagogue, the devil stirred up the people, and made them angry; and he thought, "Oh! what a glorious thing it would be if I could kill this man; then there would be an end of him, And I should reign supreme for ever." So he got the people to take him to the brow of the hill, and he gloated over the thought that now surely he would be cast down headlong. But Christ escaped. He tried to starve him, he tried to drown him; he was in the desert without food, and he was on the sea in a storm; but there was no starving or drowning him, and Satan no doubt panted for his blood and longed that he should die. At last the day arrived; it was telegraphed to the court of hell that at last Christ would die. They rung their bells with hellish mirth and joy. "He will die now," said he, "Judas has taken the thirty pieces of silver. Let those Scribes and Pharisees get him, they will no more let him go than the spider will a poor unfortunate fly. He is safe enough now." And the devil laughed for very glee, when he saw the Saviour stand before Pilate's bar. And when it was said, "Let him be crucified," then his joy scarce knew bounds, except that bound which his own misery must ever set to it. As far as he could he revelled in what was to him a delightful thought, that the Lord of glory was about to die. In death, as Christ was seen of angels, he was seen of devils too; and that dreary march from Pilate's palace

to the cross was one which devils saw with extraordinary interest. And when they saw him on the cross, there stood the exulting fiend, smiling to himself. "Ah! I have the King of Glory now in my dominions, I have the power of death, and I have the power over the Lord Jesus." He exerted that power, till the Lord Jesus had to cry out in bitter anguish, "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" But ah! how short-lived was hellish victory! How brief was the Satanic triumph! He died, and "It is finished!" shook the gates of hell. Down from the cross the conqueror leaped, pursued the fiend with thunder-bolts of wrath; swift to the shades of hell the fiend did fly, and swift descending went the conqueror after him; and we may conceive him exclaiming--

"Traitor! this bolt shall find and pierce thee through,
Though under hell's profoundest wave thou div'st,
To find a sheltering grave."

And seize him he did--chained him to his chariot wheel; dragged him up the steps of glory; angels shouting all the while, "He hath led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." Now, devil, thou saidst thou wouldst overcome me, when I came to die. Satan I defy thee, and laugh thee to scorn! My Master overcame thee, and I shall overcome thee yet. You say you will overcome the saint, do you? You could not overcome the saint's Master, and you will not overcome him. You once thought you had conquered Jesus: you were bitterly deceived. Ah! Satan, thou mayest think thou shalt overcome the little faith and the faint heart; but thou art wondrously mistaken--for we shall assuredly tread Satan under our feet shortly; and even in our last extremity, with fearful odds against us, we shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

You see that thus, my brethren, Christ's death has taken away from

Satan the advantage which he has over the saint in the hour of death; so that we may joyfully descend the shelving banks of Jordan, or may even, if God calls us to a sudden death, glide from its abrupt cliffs, for Christ is with us, and to die is gain.

II. But now, I want just a moment or two, whilst I try to show you that not only has Christ by his death taken away the devil's power in death; but HE HAS TAKEN AWAY THE DEVIL'S POWER EVERYWHERE ELSE OVER A CHRISTIAN. "He hath destroyed," or overcome, "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Death was the devil's chief intrenchment: Christ bearded the lion in his den, and fought him in his own territory; and when he took death from him and dismantled that once impregnable fortress, he took away from him not only that, but every other advantage that he had over the saint. And now Satan is a conquered foe, not only in the hour of death, but in every other hour and in every other place. He is an enemy, both cruel and mighty, but he is a foe who quakes and quails when a Christian gets into the lists with him; for he knows that though the fight may waver for a little while in the scale, the balance of victory must fall on the side of the saint, because Christ by his death destroyed the devil's power.

Satan, my brethren, may to-morrow get much power over you, by tempting you to indulge in the lusts of the flesh, or in the pride of life; he may come to you and say, "Do such-and-such a thing that would be dishonest, and I will make you rich; indulge in such-and-such a pleasure, and I will make you happy. come," saith Satan, "yield to my blandishments; I will give you wine to quaff that shall be richer than ever came from the wine-vats of Holy Scripture; I will give you bread to eat that you know not of. Eat thou the tempting fruit; it is sweet; it will make thee like a god.". "Ah!" saith the Christian, "but Satan,

my Master died when he had to do with thee, and therefore I will have nothing to do with thee. If thou didst kill my Lord, thou wilt kill me too if thou canst, and therefore away with thee! but inasmuch as thou layest down silver for me, and tellest me I can have it if I do wrong, lo, Satan, I can cover thy silver with gold, and have ten times as much to spare afterwards. Thou sayest I shall get gain if I sin. Nay, but the treasures of Christ are greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Why, Satan, if thou wert to bring me a crown, and say, There! thou shalt have that if thou wilt sin.' I should say, Poor crown! Why, Satan, I have got a better one than that laid up in heaven, I could not sin for that, that is a bribe too paltry," In he brings his bags of gold. and he says, "Now, Christian, sin for them." The Christian says, "Why fiend, that stuff is not worth my looking at. I have an inheritance in a city where the streets are paved with solid gold; and, therefore, what are these poor chinking bits to me? Take them back!" He brings in loveliness, and he tempts us by it. but we say to him, "Why, devil, what art thou at? What is that loveliness to me? Mine eyes have seen the King in his beauty and the land that is very far oft; and by faith I know that I shall go where beauty's self, even in her perfection, is excelled--where I shall see my Saviour, who is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.' That is no temptation to me! Christ has died, and I count all these things but dross, that I may win Christ and be found in him." So that you see, even in temptation, the death of Christ has destroyed the devil's power "You will not yield, will you?" says the devil "You cannot be tempted! Ah! well," says he, "if you cannot be drawn aside, I'll pull you aside. What are you, that you should stand against me? A poor puny man! Why, I have made angels fall, and I am not afraid of you. Come on!" And he puts his foot to our foot, and with his dragon yell he frights the

echoes till they dare not reply. He lifts his blazing sword, and thinks to smite us to the ground. You know, my brethren, what the shield is that must catch the blow. It is the shield of faith in Christ that died for us. He hurls his darts, but his darts hurt not, for lo, we catch them also on this all-powerful shield, Christ and his cross. So that, let his insinuations be never so direful, the death of Christ has destroyed the devil's power either to tempt or to destroy. He may be allowed to attempt either the one or the other, but he can be successful in neither. The death of Christ has "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Some people say they don't believe in a devil. Well, I have only to tell them I don't believe in them because if they knew themselves much they would very soon find a devil. But it is quite possible that they have very little evidence of there being any devil; for you know the devil never wastes his time. He comes up a street, and he sees a man engaged in business, hoarding, covetous, grasping. He has got a widow's house in his throat, he has just swallowed the last acre of a poor orphan's lands. "Oh," says the devil, "drive by, I shall not stop there; he does not need me; he will go to hell easily enough." He goes to the next house: there is a man there, a drunkard. spending his time in riotousness: he marches by, and says, "There's no need for me here; why should I trouble my own dear friends? Why should I meddle with those whom I am sure to have at last? There's no need to tease them." He finds a poor saint upon his knees, exercising but very little power in prayer. "Oh!" says the devil, "I shant have this creature at last; I'll howl at him now." There is a poor sinner just returning from his evil ways and crying, "I have sinned and done evil in thy sight; Lord, have mercy upon me " "Losing a subject," says Satan; "I'll have him; I'm not going to lose my subjects like this." So he worries him. The

reason why you don't believe there is a devil, very likely is, that the devil very seldom comes to you because you are so safe that he does not take any trouble to look after you, and you have not seen him, because you are too bad for him to care about, and he says, "Oh no, there's no need for me to waste time to tempt that man, it would be carrying coals to Newcastle to tempt him, for he is as bad as he can be, and therefore let him alone." But when a man lives near to God, or when a man's conscience begins to be aroused, then Satan cries, "To arms! to arms! to arms!" For two good reasons: first, because he wants to worry him, and secondly, because he wants to destroy him. Well, we bless God that though the devil may direct his utmost scorn and craft and malice against the Christian, the Christian is safe behind the rock Christ Jesus, and may rest secure.

And now, in conclusion, suffer a word or two of comfort to the people of God, and a warning to those that know him not.

O children of God! death hath lost its sting, because the devil's power over it is destroyed. Then cease to fear dying. Thou knowest what death is: look him in the face, and tell him thou art not afraid of him. Ask grace from God, that by an intimate knowledge and a firm belief of thy Master's death, thou mayest be strengthened for that dread hour. And mark me, if thou so livest, thou mayest be able to think of death with pleasure, and to welcome it when it comes with intense delight. It is sweet to die: to lie upon the breast of Christ, and have one's soul kissed out of one's body by the lips of divine affection. And you that have lost friends, or that may be bereaved, sorrow not as those that are without hope; for remember the power of the devil is taken away. What a sweet thought the death of Christ brings us concerning those who are departed! They are gone, my brethren; but do you know how far they have gone? The distance between the glorified spirits in heaven and the

militant saints on earth seems great; but it is not so. We are not far from home.

"One gentle sigh the spirit breaks,
We scarce can say tis gone,
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its station near the throne."

We measure distance by time. We are apt to say that a certain place is so many hours from us. If it is a hundred miles off and there is no railroad we think it a long way; if there is a railway, we think we can be there in no time, But how near must we say heaven is? For it is just one sigh and we get there. Why, my brethren, our departed friends are only in the upper room, as it were, of the same house; they have not gone far off; they are up stairs, and we are down below.Yea, more as the poet says,

"Ten thousands to their endless home,
This solemn moment fly,
And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die."

And then he describes them.

"Part of the host have crossed the flood."

There they are, on the other side the banks. Here is another part, deep in the stream. Here are we on the margin, just about to step down. They are all one army; there is not one gap, right down from Abel to the one that is now departing; and they never shall be but one, till the pearly gates are shut for ever, and they are all secure.

"E'en now by faith we clasp our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon the eternal shore."

And now I close by saying this word to the sinner O thou that knowest not God, thou that believest not in Christ, death is to thee a horrible thing. I need not tell thee that; for thine own conscience tells it to thee. Why, man, thou mayest laugh sometimes at religion; but in thine own solitary moments it is no laughing thing. The greatest brags in the world are always the greatest cowards. If I hear a man saying, "Oh, I am not afraid of dying, I don't care about your religion," he does not deceive me; I know all about that. He says that to cover up his fears, when he is alone of a night. You should see how white his cheek is if a leaf falls against the window When there is lightning in the air you should look at him. "Oh that flash" he says. Or if he is a strong man perhaps he does not say a word, but he feels in such horror all the time the storm is on. Not like the Christian man: not like the man who has courage. Why, I love the lightnings; God's thunder is my delight. I never feel so well as when there is a tremendous thunder and lightning storm. Then I feel as if I could mount up, and my whole heart sings. I love then to sing--

"This awful God is mine
My Father and my love,
He shall send down his heavenly powers
To carry me above.

Yes, you are afraid of dying I know; and what I shall say to you is this _ You have good need to be afraid of dying, and you have good need to be afraid of dying now. Because you have escaped many times you think you shall never die. Suppose we should take a man and tie him to that pillar, and a good marksman should take bow and arrows and shoot at him. Well, one arrow might glance and strike some one that sits at the right, and another might glance and strike some one that is to the left; one might go above his head, and another beneath his feet, but

you cannot suppose that man would laugh and mock, when the arrows were flying about his ears, and if he was quite certain that it only wanted the marksman to take an aim at him, and he would be shot, then, my friends, you cannot conceive how he would tell you what terror he would experience. But certainly there would be no laughter. He would not say, "Oh! I shall not die, see, the man has been shooting all these others." No, the risk of dying would be enough to steady him and the thought that that marksman had an eye so true and a hand so steady that he had but to pull the string, and the arrow would certainly reach his heart, would be enough at least to sober him, and keep him always watchful; for in a moment, when he thought not that arrow might fly. Now, that is you to-day, God puts the arrow to the string: your neighbor is dead on the right, and another on the left; the arrow will come to you soon, it might have come before, if God willed it. Oh, mock not at death, and despise not eternity, but begin to think whether you are prepared for death, lest death should come and find you wanting. And remember, death will make no delays for you. You have postponed the time of thought: death will not be postponed to suit you, but when you die, there will be no hour allowed for you in which then to turn to God. Death comes with its first blow; damnation comes afterwards, without the hope of reprieve. "He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Thus do we preach the Gospel of God unto you as God would have us. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Go ye and teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Behold, I tell you, faith in Jesus is the soul's only escape; profession of that in immersion is God's own way of professing faith before men. The Lord help you to obey him in the two great gospel commandments, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 2

The Holy Spirit and the One Church

A Sermon

(No. 167)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 13, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit."--Jude 1:19.

WHEN a farmer comes to thrash out his wheat, and get it ready for the market there are two things that he desires--that there may be plenty of it, of the right sort, and that when he takes it to market, he may be able to carry a clean sample there. He does not look upon the quantity alone; for what is the chaff to the wheat? He would rather have a little clean than he would have a great heap containing a vast quantity of chaff, but less of the precious corn. On the other hand, he would not so winnow his wheat as to drive away any of the good grain, and so make the quantity less than it need to be. He wants to have as much as possible--to have as little loss as possible in the winnowing, and yet to have it as well winnowed as may be. Now, that is what I desire for Christ's Church, and what every Christian will desire. We wish Christ's church to be as large as possible. God forbid that by any of our winnowing, we should ever cast away one of the precious sons of Zion. When we rebuke sharply, we would be anxious lest the rebuke should fall where it is not needed, and should bruise and hurt the feelings of any who God hath chosen. But on the other hand, we have no wish to see the church multiplied at the expense of its purity. We do not wish to have a charity so large that it takes in chaff as well as

wheat: we wish to be just charitable enough to use the fan thoroughly to purge God's floor, but yet charitable enough to pick up the most shrivelled ear of wheat, to preserve it for the Master's sake, who is the husbandman. I trust, in preaching this morning, God may help me so to discern between the precious and the vile that I may say nothing uncharitable, which would cut off any of God's people from being part of his true and living and visible church; and yet at the same time I pray that I may not speak so loosely, and so without God's direction, as to embrace any in the arms of Christian affection whom the Lord hath not received in the eternal covenant of his love.

Our text suggests to us three things: first, an inquiry--Have we the Spirit? secondly, a caution--if we have not the spirit we are sensual; thirdly, a suspicion--there are many persons that separate themselves. Our suspicion concerning them is, that notwithstanding their extra-superfine profession, they are sensual, not having the Spirit; for our text says, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit."

I. First, then, our text suggests AN INQUIRY--Have we the Spirit? This is an inquiry so important, that the philosopher may well suspend all his investigations to find an answer to this question on his own personal account. All the great debates of politics, all the most engrossing subjects of human discussion, may well stop to-day, and give us pause to ask ourselves the solemn question--"Have I the Spirit?" For this question does not deal with any externals of religion, but it deals with religion in its most vital point. He that hath the Spirit, although he be wrong in fifty things, being right in this, is saved; he that hath not the Spirit, be he never so orthodox, be his creed as correct as Scripture-ay and in his morals outwardly as pure as the law, is still unsaved; he is destitute of the essential part of

salvation--the Spirit of God dwelling in him.

To help us to answer this question, I shall try to set forth the effects of the Spirit in our hearts under sundry Scriptural metaphors. Have I the Spirit? I reply, And what is the operation of the, Spirit? How am I to discern it? Now the Spirit operates in divers ways, all of them mysterious, and supernatural, all of them bearing the real marks of his own power, and having certain signs following whereby they may be discovered and recognised.

1. The first work of the Spirit in the heart is a work during which the Spirit is compared to the wind. You remember that when our Saviour spoke to Nicodemus he represented the first work of the Spirit in the heart as being like the wind, "which bloweth where it listeth;" "even so;" saith he, "is every one that is born of the Spirit." Now you know that the wind is a most mysterious thing; and although there be certain definitions of it which pretend to be explanations of the phenomenon, yet they certainly leave the great question of how the wind blows, and what is the cause of its blowing in a certain direction, where it was before. Breath within us, wind without us, all motions of air, are to us mysterious. And the renewing work of the Spirit in the heart is exceedingly mysterious. It is possible that at this moment the Spirit of God may be breathing into some of the thousand hearts before me; yet it would be blasphemous if any one should ask, "Which way went the Spirit from God to such a heart? How entered it there?" And it would be foolish for a person who is under the operation of the Spirit to ask how it operates: thou knowest not where is the storehouse of the thunder; thou knowest not where the clouds are balanced; neither canst thou know how the Spirit goeth forth from the Most High and enters into the heart of man. It may be, that during a sermon two men are listening to the same truth; one of them hears as attentively as the other and

remembers as much of it; the other is melted to tears or moved with solemn thoughts; but the one though equally attentive, sees nothing in the sermon, except, maybe, certain important truths well set forth; as for the other, his heart is broken within him and his soul is melted.

Ask me how it is that the same truth has an effect upon the one, and not upon his fellow: I reply, because the mysterious Spirit of the living God goes with the truth to one heart and not to the other. The one only feels the force of truth, and that may be strong enough to make him tremble, like Felix; but the other feels the Spirit going with the truth, and that renews the man, regenerates him, and causes him to pass into that gracious condition which is called the state of salvation. This change takes place instantaneously. It is as miraculous a change as any miracle of which we read in Scripture. It is supremely supernatural. It may be mimicked, but no imitation of it can be true and real. Men may pretend to be regenerated without the Spirit, but regenerated they cannot be. It is a change so marvellous that the highest attempts of man can never reach it. We may reason as long as we please, but we cannot reason ourselves into regeneration; we may meditate till our hairs are grey with study; but we cannot meditate ourselves into the new birth. That is worked in us by the sovereign will of God alone.

"The Spirit, like some heavenly wind,
Blows on the sons of flesh,
Inspires us with a heavenly mind,
And forms the man afresh."

But ask the man how: he cannot tell you. Ask him when: he may recognize the time, but as to the manner thereof he knoweth no more of it than you do. It is to him a mystery.

You remember the story of the valley of vision. Ezekiel saw dry bones

lying scattered here and there in the valley. The command came to Ezekiel, "Say to:these dry bones, live." He said, "Live," and the bones came together, "bone to his bone, and flesh came upon them;" but as yet they did not live. "Prophesy, son of man; say to the wind, breathe upon these slain, that they may live." They looked just like life: there was flesh and blood there; there were the eyes and hands and feet; but when Ezekiel had spoken there was a mysterious something given which men call life, and it was given in a mysterious way, like the blowing of the wind. It is even so to-day. Unconverted and ungodly persons may be very, moral and excellent; they are like the dry bones, when they are put together and clothed with flesh and blood. But to make them live spiritually it needs the divine afflatus from the breath of the Almighty, the divine pneuma, the divine Spirit, the divine wind should blow on them, and then they would live. Say, my hearer, hast thou ever had any supernatural influence on thine Heart? For if not I may seem to be harsh with thee, but I am faithful: if thou hast never had more than nature in thy heart, thou art "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Nay, sir, sneer not at that utterance; it is as true as this Bible, for tis from this Bible it was taken, and for proof thereof hear thou me. "except a man be born again (from above) of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What sayest thou to that? It is in vain for thee to talk of making thyself to be born again; thou canst not be born again except by the Spirit, and thou must perish, unless thou art. You see, then, the first effect of the Spirit, and by that you may answer the question.

2. In the next place, the Spirit in the word of God is often compared to fire. After the Spirit, like the wind, has made the dead sinner live, then comes the Spirit like fire. Now, fire has a searching and tormenting power. It is purifying, but it purifies by a terrible

process. Now, after the Holy Spirit has given us the life of Christianity, there immediately begins a burning in our heart: the Lord searches and tries our reins, and lights a candle within our spirits which discovers the wickedness of our nature, and the loathsomeness of our iniquities. Say, my hearer, dost thou know anything about that fire in thine heart? For if not, thou hast not yet received the Spirit. To explain what I mean, let me just tell a piece of my own experience, by way of illustrating the fiery effects of the Spirit. I lived careless and thoughtless; I could indulge in sin as well as others, and did do so. Sometimes my conscience pricked me, but not enough to make me cease from vice. I could indulge in transgression, and I could love it: not so much as others loved it--mine early training would not let me do that--but still enough to prove that my heart was debased and corrupt. Once on a time something more than conscience pricked me: I knew not then what it was. I was like Samuel, when the Lord called him; I heard the voice, but I knew not whence it came. A stirring began in my heart, and I began to feel that in the sight of God I was a lost, ruined, and condemned sinner. That conviction I could not shake off. Do what I might it followed me. If I sought to amuse my mind and take it off from serious thoughts it was of no use; I was obliged still to carry about with me a heavy burden on my back. I went to my bed, and there I dreamed about hell, and about "the wrath to come." I woke up, and this dreary nightmare, this incubus, still brooded on me. What could I do? I renounced first one vicious habit, then another: it mattered not; all this was like pulling one firebrand from a flame, that fed itself with blazing forests. Do what I might, my conscience found no rest. Up to the house of God I went to hear the gospel: there was no gospel for me; the fire burned but the more fiercely, and the very breath of the gospel seemed to fan the flame. Away I went to my chamber and my closet

to pray: the heavens were like brass, and the windows of the sky were barred against me. No answer could I get; the fire burned more vehemently. Then I thought, "I would not live always; would God I had never been born!" But I dared not die, for there was hell when I was dead; and I dared not live, for life had become intolerable. Still the fire blazed right vehemently; till at last I came to this resolve: "If there be salvation in Christ, I will have it. I have nothing of my own to trust to; I do this hour, O God, renounce my sin, and renounce my own righteousness too." And the fire blazed again, and burned up all my good works, ay, and my sins with them. And then I saw that all this burning was to bring me to Christ. And oh! the joy and gladness of my heart, when Jesus came and sprinkled water on the flame, and said, "I have bought thee with my blood; put thy trust in me; I will do for thee what thou canst not do for thyself; I will take thy sins away; I will clothe thee with a spotless robe of righteousness; I will guide thee all thy journey through, and land thee at last in heaven." Say, my dear hearer, Dost know anything about the Spirit of burning? For if not, again I say, I am not harsh, I am but true; if thou hast never felt this, thou knowest not the Spirit.

3. To proceed a little further. When the Spirit has thus quickened the soul and convinced it of sin, then he comes under another metaphor. He comes under the metaphor of oil. The Holy Spirit is very frequently in Scripture compared to oil. "Thou anointest mine head with oil; my cup runneth over." Ah! brethren, though the beginning of the Spirit is by fire, it does not end there. We may be first of all convinced and brought to Christ by misery; but when we get to Christ there is no misery in him, and our sorrow results from not getting close enough to him. The Holy Spirit comes, like the good Samaritan, and pours in the oil and the wine. And oh! what oil it is with which he anoints our

head, and with which he heals our wounds! How soft the liniments which he binds round our bruises! How blessed the eye-salve with which he anoints our eyes! How heavenly the ointment with which he binds up our sores, and wounds, and bruises, and makes us whole, and sets our feet upon a rock, and establishes our goings! The Spirit, after he has convinced, begins to comfort; and ye that have felt the comforting power of the Holy Spirit, will bear me witness there is no comforter like him that is the Paraclete. Oh! bring hither the music, the voice of song, and the sound of harps; they are both as vinegar upon nitre to him that hath a heavy heart. Bring me here the enchantments of the magic world, and all the enjoyments of its pleasures; they do but torment the soul and prick it with many thorns. But oh! Spirit of the living God, when thou dost blow upon the heart, there is not a wave of that tempestuous sea which does not sleep for ever when thou biddest it be still; there is not one single breath of the proud hurricane and tempest which doth not cease to howl and which doth not lie still, when thou sayest to it, "Peace be unto thee; thy sins are forgiven thee."

Say, do you know the Spirit under the figure of oil? Have you felt him at work in your spirits, comforting you, anointing your head, making you glad, and causing you to rejoice?

There are many people that never felt this. They hope they are religious; but their religion never makes them happy. There are scores of professors who have just enough religion to make them miserable. Let them be afraid that they have any religion at all; for religion makes people happy; when it has its full sway with man it makes him glad. It may begin in agony, but it does not end there. Say, hast thou ever had thine heart leaping for joy? Hath thy lip ever warbled songs of ecstatic praise? Doth thine eye ever flash the fire of joy? If these things be not so, I fear lest thou art still without God, and without

Christ; for where the Spirit comes, his fruits are, joy in the Spirit, and peace, and love, and confidence, and assurance for ever.

4. Bear with me once more. I have to show you one more figure of the Spirit, and by that also you will be able to ascertain whether you are under his operation. When the Spirit has acted as wind, as fire, and as oil, he then acts like water. We are told that we are "born again of water and of the Spirit." Now I do not think you foolish enough to need that I should say that no water, either of immersion or of sprinkling, can in the least degree operate in the salvation of a soul. There may be some few poor creatures, whose heads were put on their shoulders the wrong way, who still believe that a few drops of water from a priest's hands can regenerate souls. There may be such a few, but I hope the race will soon die out. We trust that the day will come when all those gentry will have no "other Gospel" to preach in our churches, but will have clean gone over to Rome, and when that terrible plague-spot upon the Protestant Church, called Puseyism, will have been cut out like a cancer, and torn out by its very roots. The sooner we get rid of that the better; and whenever we hear of any of them going over to Rome, let them go--I wish we could as easily get rid of the devil, they may go together--we do not want either of them in the Protestant Church, anyhow. But the Holy Spirit when he comes in the heart comes like water. That is to say, he comes to purify the soul. He that is to-day as foul a liver as he was before his pretended conversion is a hypocrite and a liar; he that this day loveth sin and liveth in it just as he was wont to do, let him know that the truth is not in him, but he hath received the strong delusion to believe a lie: God's people are a holy people; God's Spirit works by love, and purifies the soul. Once let it get into our hearts, and it will have no rest till it has turned every sin out. God's Holy Spirit and man's sin cannot live together

peaceably; they may both be in the same heart, but they cannot both reign there, nor can they both be quiet there; for "the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit;" they cannot rest, but there will be a perpetual warring in the soul, so that the Christian will have to cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But in due time the Spirit will drive out all sin, and will present us blameless before the throne of his Majesty with exceeding great joy.

Now, my hearer, answer thou this question for thyself, and not for another man. Hast thou received this Spirit? Answer me, anyhow; if it be with a scoff, answer me; if thou sneerest and sayest, "I know nothing of your enthusiastic rant," be it so, sir; say, nay, then. It may be thou carest not to reply at all. I beseech thee do not put away my entreaty. Yes or no. Hast thou received the Spirit? "Sir no man can find fault with my character; I believe I shall enter heaven through my own virtues." It is not the question, sir. Hast thou received the Spirit? All that thou sayest thou mayest have done; but if thou hast left the other undone, and hast not received the Spirit, it will go ill with thee at last. Hast thou had a supernatural operation upon thine own heart? Hast thou been made a new man in Christ Jesus! For if not, depend on it, as God's Word is true, thou art out of Christ, and dying as thou art thou wilt be shut out of heaven, be thou who thou mayest and what thou mayest.

II. Thus, I have tried to help you to answer the first question--the inquiry, Have we received the Spirit? And this brings me to the CAUTION. He that has not received the Spirit is said to be sensual. Oh, what a gulf there is between the least Christian and the greatest moralist! What a wide distinction there is between the greatest professor destitute of grace, and the least of God's believers who has

grace in his heart. As great a difference as there is between light and darkness between death and life, between heaven and hell, is there between a saint and a sinner; for mark, my text says, in no very polite phrase, that if we have not the Spirit we are sensual. " Sensual!" says one; "well, I am not converted man--I don t pretend to be; but I am not sensual." Well, friend, and it is very likely that you are not--not in the common acceptation of the term sensual; but understand that this word, in the Greek, really means what an English word like this would mean, if we had such a one--soulish. We have not such a word--we want such a one. There is a great distinction between mere animals and men, because man hath a soul, and the mere animal hath none. There is another distinction between mere men and a converted man. The converted man hath the Spirit--the unconverted man hath none; he is a soulish man--not a spiritual man; he has got no further than mere nature and has no inheritance in the spiritual kingdom of grace. Strange it is that soulish and sensual should after all mean the same! Friend, thou hast not the Spirit. Then thou art nothing better--be thou what thou art, or whatsoever thou mayest be--than the fall of Adam left thee. That is to say, thou art a fallen creature, having only capacities to live here in sin, and to live for ever in torment; but thou hast not the capacity to live in heaven at all, for thou hast no Spirit; and therefore thou art unable to know or enjoy spiritual things. And mark you, a man may be in this state, and be a sensual man, and yet he may have all the virtues that could grace a Christian; but with all these, if he has not the Spirit, he has got not an inch further than where Adam's fall left him--that is, condemned and under the curse. Ay, and he may attend to religion with all his might--he may take the sacrament, and be baptized, and may be the most devout professor; but if he hath not the Spirit he hath not started a solitary inch from

where he was, for he is still in "the bonds of iniquity," a lost soul. Nay, further, he may pick up religious phrases till he may talk very fast about religion; he may read biographies till he seems to be a deep taught child of God; he may be able to write an article upon the deep experience of a believer; but if this experience be not his own, if he hath not received it by the Spirit of the living God, he is still nothing more than a carnal man, and heaven is to him a place to which there is no entrance. Nay, further, he might go so far as to become a minister of the gospel, and a successful minister too, and God may bless the word that he preaches to the salvation of sinners, but unless he has received the Spirit, be he as eloquent as Apollos, and as earnest as Paul, he is nothing more than a mere soulish man, without capacity for spiritual things.

Nay, to crown all, he might even have the power of working miracles, as Judas had--he might even be received into the church as a believer, as was Simon Magus, and after all that, though he had cast out devils, though he had healed the sick, though he had worked miracles, he might have the gates of heaven shut in his teeth, if he had not received the Spirit. For this is the essential thing, without which all others are in vain--the reception of the Spirit of the living God. It is a searching truth, is it not, my friends? Do not run away from it. If I am preaching to you falsehood, reject it; but if this be a truth which I can substantiate by Scripture, I beseech you, rest not till you have answered this question: Hast thou the Spirit, living, dwelling, working in thy heart?

III. This brings me, in the third place, to THE SUSPICION. How singular that "separation" should be the opposite of having the Spirit. Hark! I hear a gentle man saying, "Oh! I like to hear you preach smartly and sharply; I am persuaded, sir, there are a great many people in the

church that ought not to be there; and so I, because there is such a corrupt mixture in the church, have determined not to join anywhere at all. I do not think that the Church of Christ now a days is at all clean and pure enough to allow of my joining with it. At least, sir, I did join a church once, but I made such a deal of noise in it they were very glad when I went away. And now I am just like David's men; I am one that is in debt and discontented, and I go round to hear all new preachers that arise. I have heard you now these three months; I mean to go and hear some one else in a very little time if you do not say something to flatter me. But I am quite sure I am one of God's special elect. I don't join any church because a church is not good enough for me; I don't become a member of any denomination, because they are all wrong, every one of them." Hark ye brother, I have something to tell you, that will not please you. "These be they that separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." I hope you enjoy the text: it certainly belongs to you, above every man in the world. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." When I read this over I thought to myself, there be some who say, "Well, you are a dissenter, how do you make this agreeable with the text, These be they who separate themselves;' " you are separated from the Church of England. Ah, my friends, that a man may be, and be all the better for it; but the separation here intended is separation from the one universal Church of Christ. The Church of England was not known in Jude's day: so the apostle did not allude to that. "These be they who separate themselves,"--that is from the Church of Christ; from the great universal body of the elect. Moreover, let us just say one thing. We did not separate ourselves--we were turned out. Dissenters did not separate themselves from the Church of England, from the Episcopal church; but when the Act of Uniformity was passed, they were turned out

of their pulpits. Our forefathers were as sound Churchmen as any in the world, but they could not take in all the errors of the Prayer Book, and they were therefore hounded to their graves by the intolerance of the conforming professors. So they did not separate themselves. Moreover, we do not separate ourselves. There is not a Christian beneath the scope of God's heaven from whom I am separated. At the Lord's table I always invite all Churches to come and sit down and commune with us. If any man were to tell me that I am separate from the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, or the Methodist, I would tell him he did not know me, for I love them with a pure heart fervently, and I am not separate from them. I may hold different views from them, and in that point truly I may be said to be separate; but I am not separate in heart, I will work with them--I will work with them heartily; nay, though my Church of England brother sends me in, as he has done, a summons to pay a churchrate that I cannot in conscience pay, I will love him still; and if he takes chairs and tables it matters not--I will love him for all that; and if there be a ragged-school or anything else for which I can work with him to promote the glory of God, therein will I unite with him with all my heart. I think this bears rather hard on our friends--the Strict Communion Baptists. I should not like to say anything hard against them, for they are about the best people in the world, but they really do separate themselves from the great body of Christ's people. The Spirit of the living God will not let them do this really, but they do it professedly. They separate themselves from the great Universal Church. They say they will not commune with it; and if any one comes to their table who has not been baptized, they turn him away. They "separate," certainly. I do not believe it is willful schism that makes them thus act; but at the same time I think the old man within has some hand in it.

Oh, how my heart loves the doctrine of the one church. The nearer I get to my Master in prayer and communion, the closer am I knit to all his disciples. The more I see of my own errors and failings, the more ready am I to deal gently with them that I believe to be erring. The pulse of Christ's body is communion; and woe to the church that seeks to cure the ills of Christ's body by stopping its pulse. I think it sin to refuse to commune with anyone who is a member of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. I desire this morning to preach the unity of Christ's church. I have sought to use the fan to blow away the chaff. I have said no man belongs to Christ's church unless he has the Spirit; but, if he hath the Spirit, woe be to the man that separates himself from him. Oh! I should think myself grossly in fault if at the foot of these stairs I should meet a truly converted child of God, who called himself a Primitive Methodist, or a Wesleyan. or a Churchman, or an Independent, and I should say, "No, sir, you do not agree with me on certain points; I believe you are a child of God, but I will have nothing to do with you." I should then think that this text would bear very hard on me. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." But would we do so, beloved? No, we would give them both our hands, and say, God speed to you in your journey to heaven; so long as you have got the Spirit we are one family, and we will not be separate from one another. God grant the day may come when every wall of separation shall be beaten down! See how to this day we are separate. There! you will find a Baptist who could not say a good word to a Poedo-Baptist if you were to give him a world. You find to this day Episcopalians who hate that ugly word, "Dissent;" and it is enough for them that a Dissenter has done a thing; they will not do it then, be it never so good.

Ah! and furthermore, there are some to be found in the Church of

England that will not only hate dissent, but hate one another into the bargain. Men are to be found that cannot let brother ministers of their own church preach in their parish. What an anachronism such men are! They would seem to have been sent into the world in our time purely by mistake. Their proper era would have been the time of the dark ages. If they had lived then, what fine Bonners they would have made! What splendid fellows they would have been to have helped to poke the fire in Smithfield! But they are quite out of date in these times, and I look upon such a curious clergyman in the same way that I do upon a Dodo--as an extraordinary animal whose race is almost, if not quite extinct. Well, you may look, and look and wonder. The animal will be extinct soon. It will not be long, I trust, before not only the Church of England shall love itself, but when all who love the Lord Jesus shall be ready to preach in each other's pulpits, preaching the same truth, holding the same faith, and mightily contending for it. Then shall the world "see how these Christians love one another; " and then shall it be known in heaven that Christ s kingdom has come, and that his will is about to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

My hearer, dost thou belong to the church? For out of the church there is no salvation. But mark what the church is. It is not the Episcopalian, Baptist, or Presbyterian: the church is a company of men who have received the Spirit. If thou canst not say thou hast the Spirit, go thy way and tremble; go thy way and think of thy lost condition; and may Jesus by his Spirit so bless thee, that thou mayest be led to renounce thy works and ways with grief, and fly to him who died upon the cross, and find a shelter there from the wrath of God.

I may have said some rough things this morning, but I am not given much to cutting and trimming, and I do not suppose I shall begin to learn that art now. If the thing is untrue, it is with you to reject it; if

it be true, at your own peril reject what God stamps with divine authority. May the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest upon the one church of Israel's one Jehovah. Amen and Amen.

Chapter 3

The First Christmas Carol

A Sermon

(No. 168)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 20, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."--Luke 2:14.

IT IS SUPERSTITIOUS to worship angels; it is but proper to love them. Although it would be a high sin, and an act of misdemeanor against the Sovereign Court of Heaven to pay the slightest adoration to the mightiest angel, yet it would be unkind and unseemly, if we did not give to holy angels a place in our heart's warmest love. In fact, he that contemplates the character of angels, and marks their many deeds of sympathy with men, and kindness towards them, cannot resist the impulse of his nature--the impulse of love towards them. The one incident in angelic history, to which our text refers, is enough to weld our hearts to them for ever. How free from envy the angels were! Christ did not come from heaven to save their compeers when they fell. When Satan, the mighty angel, dragged with him a third part of the stars of heaven, Christ did not stoop from his throne to die for them; but he left them to be reserved in chains and darkness until the last great day. Yet angels did not envy men. Though they remembered that he took not up angels, yet they did not murmur when he took up the seed of Abraham; and though the blessed Master had never condescended to take the angel's form, they did not think it beneath them to express their joy when they found him arrayed in the body of an infant. How free,

too, they were from pride! They were not ashamed to come and tell the news to humble shepherds. Methinks they had as much joy in pouring out their songs that night before the shepherds, who were watching with their flocks, as they would have had if they had been commanded by their Master to sing their hymn in the halls of Caesar. Mere men--men possessed with pride, think it a fine thing to preach before kings and princes; and think it great condescension now and then to have to minister to the humble crowd. Not so the angels. They stretched their willing wings, and gladly sped from their bright seats above, to tell the shepherds on the plain by night, the marvelous story of an Incarnate God. And mark how well they told the story, and surely you will love them! Not with the stammering tongue of him that tells a tale in which he hath no interest; nor even with the feigned interest of a man that would move the passions of others, when he feeleth no emotion himself; but with joy and gladness, such as angels only can know. They sang the story out, for they could not stay to tell it in heavy prose. They sang, "Glory to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Methinks they sang it with gladness in their eyes; with their hearts burning with love, and with breasts as full of joy as if the good news to man had been good news to themselves. And, verily, it was good news to them, for the heart of sympathy makes good news to others, good news to itself. Do you not love the angels? Ye will not bow before them, and there ye are right; but will ye not love them? Doth it not make one part of your anticipation of heaven, that in heaven you shall dwell with the holy angels, as well as with the spirits of the just made perfect? Oh, how sweet to think that these holy and lovely beings are our guardians every hour! They keep watch and ward about us, both in the burning noon-tide, and in the darkness of the night. They keep us in all our ways; they bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we

dash our feet against stones. They unceasingly minister unto us who are the heirs of salvation; both by day and night they are our watchers and our guardians, for know ye not, that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him."

Let us turn aside, having just thought of angels for a moment, to think rather of this song, than of the angels themselves. Their song was brief, but as Kitto excellently remarks, it was "well worthy of angels expressing the greatest and most blessed truths, in words so few, that they become to an acute apprehension, almost oppressive by the pregnant fulness of their meaning"--"Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." We shall, hoping to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, look at these words of the angels in a fourfold manner. I shall just suggest some instructive thoughts arising from these words; then some emotional thoughts; then a few prophetical thoughts; and afterwards, one or two preceptive thoughts.

I. First then, in the words of our text. There are many INSTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS.

The angels sang something which men could understand--something which men ought to understand--something which will make men much better if they will understand it. The angels were singing about Jesus who was born in the manger. We must look upon their song as being built upon this foundation. They sang of Christ, and the salvation which he came into this world to work out. And what they said of this salvation was this: they said, first, that it gave glory to God; secondly, that it gave peace to man; and, thirdly, that it was a token of God's good will towards the human race.

1. First, they said that this salvation gave glory to God. They had been present on many august occasions, and they had joined in many a solemn chorus to the praise of their Almighty Creator. They were

present at the creation: "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." They had seen many a planet fashioned between the palms of Jehovah, and wheeled by his eternal hands through the infinitude of space. They had sung solemn songs over many a world which the Great One had created. We doubt not, they had often chanted "Blessing and honour, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might, be unto him that sitteth on the throne," manifesting himself in the work of creation. I doubt not, too, that their songs had gathered force through ages. As when first created, their first breath was song, so when they saw God create new worlds then their song received another note; they rose a little higher in the gamut of adoration. But this time, when they saw God stoop from his throne, and become a babe, hanging upon a woman's breast, they lifted their notes higher still; and reaching to the uttermost stretch of angelic music, they gained the highest notes of the divine scale of praise, and they sung, "Glory to God in the highest," for higher in goodness they felt God could not go. Thus their highest praise they gave to him in the highest act of his godhead. If it be true that there is a hierarchy of angels, rising tier upon tier in magnificence and dignity--if the apostle teaches us that there be "angels, and principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions," amongst these blest inhabitants of the upper world--I can suppose that when the intelligence was first communicated to those angels that are to be found upon the outskirts of the heavenly world, when they looked down from heaven and saw the newborn babe, they sent the news backward to the place whence the miracle first proceeded, singing

"Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your downward flight to earth,
Ye who sing creation's story,

Now proclaim Messiah's birth;

Come and worship,

Worship Christ, the newborn King."

And as the message ran from rank to rank, at last the presence angels, those four cherubim that perpetually watch around the throne of God--those wheels with eyes--took up the strain, and, gathering up the song of all the inferior grades of angels, surmounted the divine pinnacle of harmony with their own solemn chant of adoration, upon which the entire host shouted, "The highest angels praise thee."--"Glory to God in the highest." Ay, there is no mortal that can ever dream how magnificent was that song. Then, note, if angels shouted before and when the world was made, their hallelujahs were more full, more strong, more magnificent, if not more hearty, when they saw Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary to be man's redeemer--"Glory to God in the highest."

What is the instructive lesson to be learned from this first syllable of the angels' song? Why this, that salvation is God's highest glory. He is glorified in every dew drop that twinkles to the morning sun. He is magnified in every wood flower that blossoms in the copse, although it live to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness in the forest air. God is glorified in every bird that warbles on the spray; in every lamb that skips the mead. Do not the fishes in the sea praise him? From the tiny minnow to the huge Leviathan, do not all creatures that swim the water bless and praise his name? Do not all created things extol him? Is there aught beneath the sky, save man, that doth not glorify God? Do not the stars exalt him, when they write his name upon the azure of heaven in their golden letters? Do not the lightnings adore him when they flash his brightness in arrows of light piercing the midnight darkness? Do not thunders extol him when they roll like drums in the

march of the God of armies? Do not all things exalt him, from the least even to the greatest? But sing, sing, oh universe, till thou hast exhausted thyself, thou canst not afford a song so sweet as the song of Incarnation. Though creation may be a majestic organ of praise, it cannot reach the compass of the golden canticle--Incarnation! There is more in that than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger, than there is in worlds on worlds rolling their grandeur round the throne of the Most High. Pause Christian, and consider this a minute. See how every attribute is here magnified. Lo! what wisdom is here. God becomes man that God may be just, and the justifier of the ungodly. Lo! what power, for where is power so great as when it concealeth power? What power, that Godhead should unrobe itself and become man! Behold, what love is thus revealed to us when Jesus becomes a man. Behold ye, what faithfulness! How many promises are this day kept? How many solemn obligations are this hour discharged? Tell me one attribute of God that is not manifest in Jesus; and your ignorance shall be the reason why you have not seen it so. The whole of God is glorified in Christ; and though some part of the name of God is written in the universe, it is here best read--in Him who was the Son of Man, and, yet, the Son of God.

But, let me say one word here before I go away from this point. We must learn from this, that if salvation glorifies God, glorifies him in the highest degree, and makes the highest creatures praise him, this one reflection may be added--then, that doctrine, which glorifies man in salvation cannot be the gospel. For salvation glorifies God. The angels were no Arminians, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest." They believe in no doctrine which uncrowns Christ, and puts the crown upon the head of mortals. They believe in no system of faith which makes salvation dependent upon the creature, and, which really gives the

creature the praise, for what is it less than for a man to save himself, if the whole dependence of salvation rests upon his own free will? No, my brethren; they may be some preachers, that delight to preach a doctrine that magnifies man; but in their gospel angels have no delight. The only glad tidings that made the angels sing, are those that put God first, God last, God midst, and God without end, in the salvation of his creatures, and put the crown wholly and alone upon the head of him that saves without a helper. "Glory to God in the highest," is the angels' song.

2. When they had sung this, they sang what they had never sung before. "Glory to God in the highest," was an old, old song; they had sung that from before the foundations of the world. But, now, they sang as it were a new song before the throne of God: for they added this stanza--"on earth, peace." They did not sing that in the garden. There was peace there, but it seemed a thing of course, and scarce worth singing of. There was more than peace there; for there was glory to God there. But, now, man had fallen, and since the day when cherubim with fiery swords drove out the man, there had been no peace on earth, save in the breast of some believers, who had obtained peace from the living fountain of this incarnation of Christ. Wars had raged from the ends of the world; men had slaughtered one another, heaps on heaps. There had been wars within as well as wars without. Conscience had fought with man; Satan had tormented man with thoughts of sin. There had been no peace on earth since Adam fell. But, now, when the newborn King made his appearance, the swaddling band with which he was wrapped up was the white flag of peace. That manger was the place where the treaty was signed, whereby warfare should be stopped between man's conscience and himself, man's conscience and his God. It was then, that day, the trumpet blew--"Sheathe the sword, oh man, sheathe the sword, oh

conscience, for God is now at peace with man, and man at peace with God." Do you not feel my brethren, that the gospel of God is peace to man? Where else can peace be found, but in the message of Jesus? Go legalist, work for peace with toil and pain, and thou shalt never find it. Go, thou, that trustest in the law: go thou, to Sinai; look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair; for peace is nowhere to be found, but in him, of whom it is said, "This man shall be peace." And what a peace it is, beloved! It is peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea. It is the peace of God that passeth all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. This sacred peace between the pardoned soul and God the pardoner; this marvelous at-one-ment between the sinner and his judge, this was it that the angels sung when they said, "peace on earth."

3. And, then, they wisely ended their song with a third note. They said, "Good will to man." Philosophers have said that God has a good will toward man; but I never knew any man who derived much comfort from their philosophical assertion. Wise men have thought from what we have seen in creation that God had much good will toward man, or else his works would never have been so constructed for their comfort; but I never heard of any man who could risk his soul's peace upon such a faint hope as that. But I have not only heard of thousands, but I know them, who are quite sure that God has a good will towards men; and if you ask their reason, they will give a full and perfect answer. They say, he has good will toward man for he gave his Son. No greater proof of kindness between the Creator and his subjects can possibly be afforded than when the Creator gives his only begotten and well beloved Son to die. Though the first note is God-like, and though the second note is peaceful, this third note melts my heart the most. Some think

of God as if he were a morose being who hated all mankind. Some picture him as if he were some abstract subsistence taking no interest in our affairs. Hark ye, God has "good will toward men." You know what good will means. Well, Swearer, you have cursed God; he has not fulfilled his curse on you; he has good will towards you, though you have no good will towards him. Infidel, you have sinned high and hard against the Most High; he has said no hard things against you, for he has good will towards men. Poor sinner, thou hast broken his laws; thou art half afraid to come to the throne of his mercy lest he should spurn thee; hear thou this, and be comforted-- God has good will towards men, so good a will that he has said, and said it with an oath too, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live;" so good a will moreover that he has even condescended to say, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." And if you say, "Lord, how shall I know that thou hast this good will towards me," he points to yonder manger, and says, "Sinner, if I had not a good will towards thee, would I have parted with my Son? if I had not good will towards the human race, would I have given up my Son to become one of that race that he might by so doing redeem them from death?" Ye that doubt the Master's love, look ye to that circle of angels; see their blaze of glory; hear their son, and let your doubts die away in that sweet music and be buried in a shroud of harmony. He has good will to men; he is willing to pardon; he passes by iniquity, transgression, and sin. And mark thee, if Satan shall then add, "But though God hath good will, yet he cannot violate his justice, therefore his mercy may be ineffective, and you may die;" then listen to that first note of the song, "Glory to God in the highest," and reply to

Satan and all his temptations, that when God shows good will to a penitent sinner, there is not only peace in the sinner's heart, but it brings glory to every attribute of God, and so he can be just, and yet justify the sinner, and glorify himself.

I do not pretend to say that I have opened all the instructions contained in these three sentences, but I may perhaps direct you into a train of thought that may serve you for the week. I hope that all through the week you will have a truly merry Christmas by feeling the power of these words, and knowing the unction of them. "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

II. Next, I have to present to you some EMOTIONAL THOUGHTS. Friends, doth not this verse, this song of angels, stir your heart with happiness? When I read that, and found the angels singing it, I thought to myself, "Then if the angels ushered in the gospel's great head with singing, ought I not to preach with singing? And ought not my hearers to live with singing? Ought not their hearts to be glad and their spirits to rejoice?" Well, thought I, there be some somber religionists who were born in a dark night in December that think a smile upon the face is wicked, and believe that for a Christian to be glad and rejoice is to be inconsistent. Ah! I wish these gentlemen had seen the angels when they sang about Christ; for angels sang about his birth, though it was no concern of theirs, certainly men ought to sing about it as long as they live, sing about it when they die, and sing about it when they live in heaven for ever. I do long to see in the midst of the church more of a singing Christianity. The last few years have been breeding in our midst a groaning and unbelieving Christianity. Now, I doubt not its sincerity, but I do doubt its healthy character. I say it may be true and real enough; God forbid I should say a word against the sincerity of those who practice it; but it is a sickly religion. Watts

hit the mark when he said,

"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less."

It is designed to do away with some of our pleasures, but it gives us many more, to make up for what it takes away; so it does not make them less. O ye that see in Christ nothing but a subject to stimulate your doubts and make the tears run down your cheeks; O ye that always say,

"Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supplies,"

Come ye hither and see the angels. Do they tell their story with groans, and sobs, and sighs? Ah, no; they shout aloud, "Glory to God in the highest." Now, imitate them, my dear brethren. If you are professors of religion, try always to have a cheerful carriage. Let others mourn; but

"Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?"

Anoint your head and wash your face; appear not unto men to fast. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say unto you rejoice. Specially this week be not ashamed to be glad. You need not think it a wicked thing to be happy. Penance and whipping, and misery are no such very virtuous things, after all. The damned are miserable; let the saved be happy. Why should you hold fellowship with the lost by feelings of perpetual mourning? Why not rather anticipate the joys of heaven, and begin to sing on earth that song which you will never need to end? The first emotion then that we ought to cherish in our hearts is the emotion of joy and gladness.

Well, what next? Another emotion is that of confidence. I am not sure that I am right in calling that an emotion, but still in me it is so much akin to it, that I will venture to be wrong if I be so. Now, if

when Christ came on this earth God had sent some black creature down from heaven, (if there be such creatures there) to tell us, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," and if with a frowning brow and a stammering tongue he delivered his message, if I had been there and heard it, I should have scrupled to believe him, for I should have said, "You don't look like the messenger that God would send--stammering fellow as you are--with such glad news as this." But when the angels came there was no doubting the truth of what they said, because it was quite certain that the angels believed it; they told it as if they did, for they told it with singing, with joy and gladness. If some friend, having heard that a legacy was left you, and should come to you with a solemn countenance, and a tongue like a funeral bell, saying, "Do you know so-and-so has left you £10,000!" Why you would say, "Ah! I dare say," and laugh in his face. But if your brother should suddenly burst into your room, and exclaim, "I say, what do you think? You are a rich man; So-and-so has left you £10,000!" Why you would say, "I think it is very likely to be true, for he looks so happy over it." Well, when these angels came from heaven they told the news just as if they believed it; and though I have often wickedly doubted my Lord's good will, I think I never could have doubted it while I heard those angels singing. No, I should say, "The messengers themselves are proof of the truth, for it seems they have heard it from God's lips; they have no doubt about it, for see how joyously they tell the news." Now, poor soul, thou that art afraid lest God should destroy thee, and thou thinkest that God will never have mercy upon thee, look at the singing angels and doubt if thou darest. Do not go to the synagogue of long-faced hypocrites to hear the minister who preaches with a nasal twang, with misery in his face, whilst he tells you that God has good will towards men; I know you won't believe what he says,

for he does not preach with joy in his countenance; he is telling you good news with a grunt, and you are not likely to receive it. But go straightway to the plain where Bethlehem shepherds sat by night, and when you hear the angels singing out the gospel, by the grace of God upon you, you cannot help believing that they manifestly feel the preciousness of telling. Blessed Christmas, that brings such creatures as angels to confirm our faith in God's good will to men!

III. I must now bring before you the third point. There are some PROPHETIC UTTERANCES contained in these words. The angels sang "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." But I look around, and what see I in the wide, wide world? I do not see God honored. I see the heathen bowing down before their idols; I mark the Romanist casting himself before the rotten rags of his relics, and the ugly figures of his images. I look about me, and I see tyranny lording it over the bodies and souls of men; I see God forgotten; I see a worldly race pursuing mammon; I see a bloody race pursuing Moloch; I see ambition riding like Nimrod over the land, God forgotten, his name dishonored. And was this all the angels sang about? Is this all that made them sing "Glory to God in the highest?" Ah! no. There are brighter days approaching. They sang, "Peace on earth." But I hear still the clarion of war; and the cannon's horrid roar: not yet have they turned the sword into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook! War still reigns. Is this all that the angels sang about? And whilst I see wars to the ends of the earth, am I to believe that this was all the angels expected? Ah! no, brethren; the angels' song is big with prophecy; it travaileth in birth with glories. A few more years, and he that lives them out shall see why angels sang; a few more years, and he that will come shall come, and will not tarry. Christ the Lord will come again, and when he cometh he shall cast the idols from

their thrones; he shall dash down every fashion of heresy and every shape of idolatry; he shall reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway; he shall reign, when like a scroll, yon blue heavens have passed away. No strife shall vex Messiah's reign, no blood shall then be shed; they'll hang the useless helmet high, and study war no more. The hour is approaching when the temple of Janus shall be shut for ever, and when cruel Mars shall be hooted from the earth. The day is coming when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, when the leopard shall lie down with the kid; when the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice den and play with the asp. The hour approacheth; the first streaks of the sunlight have made glad the age in which we live. Lo, he comes, with trumpets and with clouds of glory; he shall come for whom we look with joyous expectation, whose coming shall be glory to his redeemed, and confusion to his enemies. Ah! brethren, when the angels sang this there was an echo through the long aisles of a glorious future. That echo was--

"Hallelujah! Christ the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign."

Ay, and doubtless the angels heard by faith the fulness of the song,

"Hark! the song of jubilee
Loud as mighty thunders' roar,
Or the fulness of the sea,
When it breaks upon the shore."

"Christ the Lord Omnipotent reigneth."

IV. Now, I have one more lesson for you, and I have done. That lesson is PRECEPTIVE. I wish everybody that keeps Christmas this year, would keep it as the angels kept it. There are many persons who, when they talk about keeping Christmas, mean by that the cutting of the bands of their religion for one day in the year, as if Christ were the Lord of

misrule, as if the birth of Christ should be celebrated like the orgies of Bacchus. There are some very religious people, that on Christmas would never forget to go to church in the morning; they believe Christmas to be nearly as holy as Sunday, for they reverence the tradition of the elders. Yet their way of spending the rest of the day is very remarkable; for if they see their way straight up stairs to their bed at night, it must be by accident. They would not consider they had kept Christmas in a proper manner, if they did not verge on gluttony and drunkenness. They are many who think Christmas cannot possibly be kept, except there be a great shout of merriment and mirth in the house, and added to that the boisterousness of sin. Now, my brethren, although we, as successors of the Puritans, will not keep the day in any religious sense whatever, attaching nothing more to it than to any other day: believing that every day may be a Christmas for ought we know, and wishing to make every day Christmas, if we can, yet we must try to set an example to others how to behave on that day; and especially since the angels gave glory to God: let us do the same.

Once more the angels said, "Peace to men:" let us labor if we can to make peace next Christmas day. Now, old gentleman, you won't take your son in: he has offended you. Fetch him at Christmas. "Peace on earth;" you know: that is a Christmas Carol. Make peace in your family.

Now, brother, you have made a vow that you will never speak to your brother again. Go after him and say, "Oh, my dear fellow, let not this day's sun go down upon our wrath." Fetch him in, and give him your hand. Now, Mr. Tradesman, you have an opponent in trade, and you have said some very hard words about him lately. If you do not make the matter up today, or tomorrow, or as soon as you can, yet do it on that day. That is the way to keep Christmas, peace on earth and glory to God. And oh, if thou hast anything on thy conscience, anything that

prevents thy having peace of mind, keep thy Christmas in thy chamber, praying to God to give thee peace; for it is peace on earth, mind, peace in thyself, peace with thyself, peace with thy fellow men, peace with thy God. And do not think thou hast well celebrated that day till thou canst say, "O God,

'With the world, myself, and thee
I ere I sleep at peace will be. "

And when the Lord Jesus has become your peace, remember, there is another thing, good will towards men. Do not try to keep Christmas without keeping good will towards men. You are a gentleman, and have servants. Well, try and set their chimneys on fire with a large piece of good, substantial beef for them. If you are men of wealth, you have poor in your neighborhood. Find something wherewith to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, and make glad the mourner. Remember, it is good will towards men. Try, if you can, to show them good will at this special season; and if you will do that, the poor will say with me, that indeed they wish there were six Christmases in the year.

Let each one of us go from this place determined, that if we are angry all the year round, this next week shall be an exception; that if we have snarled at everybody last year, this Christmas time we will strive to be kindly affectionate to others; and if we have lived all this year at enmity with God, I pray that by his Spirit he may this week give us peace with him; and then, indeed, my brother, it will be the merriest Christmas we ever had in all our lives. You are going home to your father and mother, young men; many of you are going from your shops to your homes. You remember what I preached on last Christmas time. Go home to thy friends, and tell them what the Lord hath done for thy soul, and that will make a blessed round of stories at the Christmas fire. If you will each of you tell your parents how the Lord met with

you in the house of prayer; how, when you left home, you were a gay, wild blade, but have now come back to love your mother's God, and read your father's Bible. Oh, what a happy Christmas that will make! What more shall I say? May God give you peace with yourselves; may he give you good will towards all your friends, your enemies, and your neighbors; and may he give you grace to give glory to God in the highest. I will say no more, except at the close of this sermon to wish every one of you, when the day shall come, the happiest Christmas you ever had in your lives.

"Now with angels round the throne,
Cherubim and seraphim,
And the church, which still is one,
Let us swell the solemn hymn;
Glory to the great I AM!
Glory to the Victim Lamb.
Blessing, honour, glory, might,
And dominion infinite,
To the Father of our Lord,
To the Spirit and the Word;
As it was all worlds before,
Is, and shall be evermore."

Chapter 4

What Have I Done?

A Sermon

(No. 169)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 27, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"What have I done?"--Jeremiah 8:6.

PERHAPS NO FIGURE represents God in a more gracious light than those figures of speech, which represent him as stooping from his throne, and as coming down from heaven to attend to the wants and to behold the woes of mankind. We must have love for that God, who, when Sodom and Gomorrah were reeking with iniquity, would not destroy those cities, although he knew their guilt and their wickedness, until he had made an actual visitation to them and had sojourned for awhile in their streets. Methinks we can not help pouring out our heart in affection to that God, of whom we are told that he inclines his ear from the highest glory, and puts it to the lip of the faintest that breathes out the true desire. How can we resist feeling that he is a God whom we must love, when we know that he regards everything that concerns us, numbers the very hairs of our heads, bids his angels protect our footsteps lest we dash our feet against stones, marks our path end ordereth our ways. But especially is this great truth brought near to man's heart, when we recollect how attentive God is, not merely to the temporal interests of his creatures, but to their spiritual concerns. God is represented in Scripture as waiting to be gracious, or, in the language of the parable, when his prodigals are yet a great way off he sees them; he runs and falls upon their neck and kisses them. He is so attentive to

everything that is good, even in the poor sinner's heart, that to him there is music in a sigh, and beauty in a tear; and in this verse that I have just read, he represents himself as looking upon man's heart and listening--listening, if possibly he may hear something that is good. "I hearkened and heard; I listened; I stood still, and I attended to them." And how amiable does God appear, when he is represented as turning aside, and as it were with grief in his heart, exclaiming, "I did listen, I did hearken, but they spake not aright; no man repented of his wickedness, saying, "What shall I do?" Ah! my hearer, thou never hast a desire toward God which does not excite God's hope; thou dost never breathe a prayer toward heaven which he does not notice; and though thou hast very often uttered prayers which have been as the morning cloud and as the early dew that soon passeth away, yet all these things have moved Jehovah's bowels; for he has been hearkening to thy cry and noticing the breathing of thy soul, and though it all hath passed away, yet it did not pass away unnoticed, for he remembers it even now. And oh! thou that art this day seeking a Saviour, remember, that Saviour's eyes are on thy seeking soul to-day. Thou art not looking after one who can not see thee; thou art coming to thy Father, but thy Father sees thee even in the distance. It was but one tear that trickled down thy cheek, but thy Father noticed that as a hopeful sign; it was but one throb that went through thy heart just now during the singing of the hymn, but God, the Loving, noticed even that, and thought upon it as at least some omen that thou wast not yet quite hardened by sin, nor yet given up by love and mercy.

The text is "What have I done?" I shall just introduce that by a few words of affectionate persuasion, urging all now present to ask that question: secondly, I shall give them a few words of assistance in trying to answer it; and when I have so done, I shall finish by a few

sentences of solemn admonition to those who have had to answer the question against themselves.

I. First, then, a few words of EARNEST PERSUASION, requesting every one now present, and more especially every unconverted person, to ask this question of himself, and answer it solemnly: "What have I done?"

Few men like to take the trouble to review their own lives, most men are so near bankruptcy that they are ashamed to look at their own books. The great mass of mankind are like the silly ostrich, which, when hard pressed by the hunters, buries its head in the sand and shuts its eyes, and then thinks, because it does not see its pursuers, that therefore it is safe. The great mass of mankind, I repeat, are ashamed to review their own biographies; and if conscience and memory together could turn joint authors of a history of their lives throughout, they would buy a huge iron clasp and a padlock to it, and lock the volume up, for they dare not read it. They know it to be a book full of lamentation and woe, which they dare not read, and still go on in their iniquities. I have therefore a hard task in endeavoring to persuade you one and all to take down that book, and be its pages few or many, be they white or be they black, I have some difficulty in getting you to read them through. But may the Holy Spirit persuade you now, so that you may answer this question, "What have I done?" For remember, my dear friend, that searching yourself can do you no hurt. No tradesman ever gets the poorer by looking to his books; he may find himself to be poorer than he thought he was, but it is not the looking to the books that hath hurt him; he hath hurt himself by some ill trading before. Better, my friend, for you to know the past whilst there is yet time for repairing it, than that you should go blindfolded, hoping to enter the gates of Paradise and find out your mistake when alas! it is too late, because the door is shut. There is nothing to be lost by taking

stock; you can not be any the worse for a little self examination. This of itself shall be one strong argument to induce you to do it; but remember you may be a great deal the better; for suppose your affairs are all right with God, why then you may make good cheer and comfort yourself for he that is right with his God has no cause to be sad. But ah! remember there are many probabilities that you are wrong. There are so many in this world that are deceived, that there are many chances that you are deceived too. You may have a name to live and yet be dead; you may be like John Bunyan's tree, of which he said "twas fair to look upon and green outside, but the inside of it was rotten enough to be tinder for the devils tinder box." You may this day thus stand before yourself your fellow creatures well whitewashed, and exceeding fair, but you may be like that Pharisee of whom Christ said, "Thou art a whited sepulcher, for inwardly thou art full of rottenness and dead men's bones." Now, man, however thou mayest wish to be self-deceived, for my own part I feel that I would a thousand times rather know my own state really than have the most pleasing conceptions about it and find myself deceived. Many a time have I solemnly prayed that prayer, "Lord, help me to know the worst of my own case; if I be still an apostate from thee, without God and without Christ, at least let me be honest to myself and know what I am." Remember, my friend, that the time you have for self-examination is, after all, very short. Soon thou wilt know the great secret. I perhaps may not say words rough enough to rend off the mask which thou now hast upon thee, but there is one called Death who will stand no compliment. You may masquerade it out to-day in the dress of the saint, but death will soon strip you, and you must stand before the judgment seat after death has discovered you in all your nakedness, be that naked innocence or naked guilt. Remember, too, though you may deceive yourself, you will not deceive your God. You may have light

weights, and the beam of the scale in which you weigh yourself may not be honest, and may not therefore tell the truth; but when God shall try you he will make no allowances; when the everlasting Jehovah grasps the balances of justice and puts his law into one scale, ah, sinner, how wilt thou tremble when he shall put thee into the other; for unless Christ be thy Christ thou wilt be found light weight--thou wilt be weighed in the balances and found wanting, and be cast away for ever. Oh! what words shall I adopt to induce every one of you now to search yourselves! I know the various excuses that some of you will make. Some of you will plead that you are members of churches, and that, therefore, all is right with you. Perhaps you look across from the gallery, and you say to me, "Mr. Spurgeon, your hands baptized me but this year into the Lord Jesus, and you have often passed to me the sacramental bread and wine. Ah, my hearer, I know that, and I have baptized, I fear, many of you that the Lord hath never baptized; and some of you have been received into the church fellowship on earth who were never received by God. If Jesus Christ had one hypocrite in his twelve, how many hypocrites must I have here in nearly twelve hundred? Ah! my hearers, in this age it is a very easy thing to make a profession of religion: many churches receive candidates into their fellowship without examination at all; I have had such come to me, and I have told them, "I must treat you just the same as if you came from the world," because they said, "I never saw the minister; I wrote a note to the Church, and they took me in." Verily, in this age of profession, a man may make the highest profession in the world, and yet be at last found with damned apostates. Do not put off the question for that; and do not say, "I am too busy to attend to my spiritual concerns; there is time enough yet." Many have said that, and before their "time enough" has come, they have found themselves where time

shall be no more. O! thou that sayest thou hast time enough, how little dost thou know how near death is to thee. There are some present that will not see New Year's Day; there is every probability that a very large number will never see another year. O, may the Lord our God prepare us each for death and for judgment, and bless this mornings exhortation to our preparation, by leading us to ask the question--"What have I done?"

II. Now, then, I am to help you to answer the question--"What have I done?"

Christian, true Christian, I have little to say to thee this morning. I will not multiply words, but leave the inquiry with thine own conscience. What hast thou done? I hear thee reply, "I have done nothing to save myself; for that was done for me in the eternal covenant, from before the foundation of the world. I have done nothing to make a righteousness for myself, for Christ said, It is finished;' I have done nothing to procure heaven by my merits, for all that Jesus did for me before I was born." But, say, brother, what hast thou done for him who died to save thy wretched soul? What hast thou done for his church? What hast thou done for the salvation of the world? What hast thou done to promote thine own spiritual growth in grace? Ah! I might hit some of you that are true Christians very hard here; but I will leave you with your God. God will chastise his own children. I will, however, put a pointed question. Are there not many Christians now present who can not recollect that they have been the means of the salvation of one soul during this year? Come, now; turn back. Have you any reason to believe that directly or indirectly you have been made the means this year of the salvation of a soul? I will go further.

There are some of you who are old Christians, and I will ask you this question: Have you any reason to believe that ever since you were

converted you have ever been the means of the salvation of a soul? It was reckoned in the East, in the time of the patriarchs, to be a disgrace to a woman that she had no children--to have none born unto God through his instrumentality! And yet, there are some of you here that have been spiritually barren, and have never brought one convert to Christ; you have not one star in your crown of glory, and must wear a starless crown in heaven. Oh! I think I see the joy and gladness with which a good child of God looked upon me last week, when we had heard some one who had been converted to God by her instrumentality. I took her by the hand and said, "Well, now, you have reason to thank God." "Yes, sir," she said, "I feel a happy and an honored woman now. I have never, that I know of, before been the means of bringing a soul to Christ." And the good woman looked so happy; the tears were in her eyes for gladness. How many have you brought during this year? Come, Christian, what have you done? Alas! alas! you have not been barren fig-trees, but still your fruit is such that it can not be seen. You may be alive unto God, but how many of you have been very unprofitable and exceedingly unfruitful? And do not think that while I thus deal hardly with you I would escape myself. No, I ask myself the question, "What have I done?" And when I think of the zeal of Whitfield, and of the earnestness of many of those great evangelists of former times, I stand here astounded at myself, and I ask myself the question, "What have I done?" And I can only answer it with some confusion of face. How often have I preached to you, my hearers, the Word of God, and yet how seldom have I wept over you as a pastor should? How often ought I to have warned you of the wrath to come, when I have forgotten to be so earnest as I might have been. I fear lest the blood of souls should lie at my door, when I come to be judged of my God at last. I beseech you, pray for your minister in this thing, that he may be forgiven, if there

has ever been a lack of earnestness, and energy, and prayerfulness, and pray that during the next year I may always preach as though I ne'er might preach again.

"A dying man to dying men."

I heard the moralist whilst I was questioning the Christian, say, "What have I done? Sir, I have done all I ought to have done. You may, as a Gospeller, stand there and talk to me about sins; but I tell you, Sir, I have done all that was my duty; I have always attended my church or chapel regularly every Sunday as ever a man or woman could; I have always read prayers in the family, and I always say prayers before I go to bed and when I get up in the morning. I don't know that I owe anybody anything, or that I have been unkind to anybody; I give a fair share to the poor, and I think if good works have any merit I certainly have done a great deal." Quite right, my friend, very right, indeed, if good works have any merit; but then it is very unfortunate that they have not any; for our good works, if we do them to save ourselves by them, are no better than our sins. You might as well hope to go to heaven by cursing and swearing, as by the merits of your own good works; for although good works are infinitely preferable to cursing and swearing in a moral point of view, yet there is no more merit in one than there is in the other, though there is less sin in one than in the other. Will you please to remember, then, that all you have been doing all these years is good for nothing? "Well, but, sir, I have trusted in Christ." Now, stop! Let me ask you a question. Do you mean to say, that you have trusted partly in Christ, and partly in your own good works? "Yes, sir." Well, then, let me tell you, the Lord Jesus Christ will never be a make weight; you must take Christ wholly, or else no Christ at all, for Christ will never go shares with you in the work of salvation. So, I repeat, all you have ever done is good for nothing.

You have been building a card-house, and the tempest will blow it down; you have been building a house upon the sand, and when the rains descend and the floods come, the last vestige of it will be swept away forever. Hear ye the word of the Lord! "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" and in as much as you have not continued in all things that are written in the law you are transgressors of the law, and you are under the curse, and all that the law has to say to you is, "Cursed, cursed, cursed! Your morality is of no help to you whatever, as to eternal things."

I turn to another character. He says, "Well, I don't trust in my morality nor in anything else; I say,

'Begone dull care, I pray thee begone from me.'

I have nothing to do with talking about eternity, as you would have me. But, sir, I am not a bad fellow after all. It is a very little that I ever do amiss; now and then a peccadillo, just a little folly, but neither my country, nor my friends, nor my own conscience, can say anything against me. True, I am none of your saints; I don't profess to be too strict; I may go a little too far sometimes, but it is only a little; and I dare say we shall be able to set all matters straight before the end comes." Well, friend, but I wish you had asked yourself the question, "What have I done?"--it strikes me that if each of you would just take off that film, that films your heart and your life over, you might see a grievous leprosy lurking behind what you have done. "Well, for the matter of that," says one, "perhaps I may have taken a glass or two too much sometimes." Stop a bit! What is the name of that? Stutter as much as you like! Out with it! What is the name of it? "Why, it is just a little mirth, sir." Stop, let us have the right name of it. What do you call it in any one else? "Drunkenness, I

suppose." Says another, "I have been a little loose in my talk sometimes." What is that? "It has been just a merry spree." Yes, but please to call it what it ought to be called--lascivious conversation. Write that down. "Oh! no, sir; things are looking serious." Yes, they are indeed; but they do not look any more serious than they really are. Sometimes you have been out on the Sabbath day haven't you? "Oh! yes; but that has been only now and then--just sometimes." Yes, but let us put it down what it is, and we will see what the list comes to. Sabbath-breaking! "Stop," you say, "I have gone no further, sir; certainly I have gone no further." I suppose in your conversation, sometimes during your life, you have quoted texts of Scripture to make jokes of them, haven't you? And sometimes you have cried out, when you have been a little surprised, "Lord, have mercy upon me, and such things. I don't venture to say you swear; though there is a Christian way of swearing that some people get into, and they think it is not quite swearing, but what it is besides nobody knows, and so we will put it down as swearing--cursing and swearing. "Oh! sir, it was only when somebody trod on my toes, or I was angry." Never mind, put it down by its right name: we shall get a pretty good list against you by and by. I suppose that in trade you never adulterate your articles. "Well that is a matter of business in which you ought not to interfere." Well, it so happens I am going to interfere--and if you please we will call it by its right name--stealing. We will put that down. I suppose you have never been hard with a debtor, have you? You have never at any time wished that you were richer, and sometimes half wished that your opposite neighbor would lose part of his custom, so that you might have it? Well, we will call it by its right name: that is "covetousness, which is idolatry." Now, the list seems to be getting black indeed. Besides that, how have you spent all this year; and though you have

pretended sometimes to say prayers, have you ever really prayed? No, you have not. Well, then there is prayerlessness to put down. You have sometimes read the Bible, you have sometimes listened to the ministry but have you not, after all, let all these things pass away? Then I want to know whether that is not despising God, and whether we must not put that down under that name. Truly we need go but very little further; for the list already when summed up is most fearful, and few of us can escape from sins so great as these, if our conscience be but a little awake.

But there is one man here who has grown very careless and indifferent to every point of morality, and he says, "Ah! young man, I could tell you what I have done during the year." Stop, sir, I don't particularly wish to know just now; you may as well tell it to yourself when you get home. There are young people here: it would not do them much good to know what you have done perhaps. You are no better than you should be, some people say; which means, you are so bad they would not like to say what you are. Do you suppose in all this congregation we have no debauched men--none that indulge in the vilest sin and lust? Why, God's angel seems even now to be flying through our midst, and touching the conscience of some, to let them know in what iniquities they have indulged during the year. I pray God that my just simply alluding to them may be the means of startling your conscience. Ah! ye may hide your sins; the coverlet of darkness may be your shelter; you may think they shall never be discovered; but remember, every sin that you have done shall be read before the sun, and men, and angels shall hear it in the day of final account. Ah! my hearer, be thou moral or be thou dissolute, I beseech thee, answer this question solemnly to-day: "What have I done?" It would be as well if you took a piece of paper when you went home, and just wrote down what you have done from last January to

December; and if some of you do not get frightened at it I must say you have got pretty strong nerves, and are not likely to be frightened at much yet.

Now I specially address myself to the unconverted man and I would help him to answer this question in another point of view. "What have I done?" Ah! man, thou that livest in sin, thou that art a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, what hast thou done? Dost thou not know that one sin is enough to damn a soul for ever? Hast thou never read in Holy Scripture that cursed is he that sins but once? How damned then, art thou by the myriad sins of this one year! Recall, I beseech thee, the sins of thy youth and thy former transgressions up till now; and if one sin would ruin thee for ever, how ruined art thou now! Why, man, one wave of sin may swamp thee. What will these oceans of thy guilt do? One witness against thee will be enough to condemn thee: behold the crowds of follies and of crimes now gathered round the judgment-seat that have gone before thee into judgment. How wilt thou escape from their testimonies, when God shall call thee to his bar.

What hast thou done? Come, man, answer this question. There are many consequences involved in thy sin, and in order to answer this question rightly thou must reply to every consequence, what hast thou done to thine own soul? Why, thou hast destroyed it; thou hast done thy best to ruin it for ever. For thine own poor soul thou hast been digging dungeons; thou hast been piling faggots; thou hast been forging chains of iron--faggots with which to burn it, and fetters with which to bind it for ever.

Remember, thy sins are like sowing for a harvest. What a harvest is that which thou hast sown for thy poor soul! Thou hast sown the wind, thou shalt reap the whirlwind; thou hast sown iniquity, thou shalt reap damnation. But what hast thou done against the gospel? Remember, how

many times this year thou hast heard it preached? Why, since thy birth there have been wagon-loads of sermons wasted on thee. Thy parents prayed for thee in thy youth; thy friends instructed thee till thou didst come to manhood. Since then how many a tear has been wept by the minister for thee! How many an earnest appeal has been shot into thine heart! But thou hast rent out the arrow. Ministers have been concerned to save thee, and thou cast never been concerned about thyself. What hast thou done against Christ? Remember, Christ has been a good Christ to sinners here; but as there is nothing that burns so well as that soft substance, oil, so there is nothing that will be so furious as that gentle-hearted Saviour, when he comes to be your Judge. Fiercer than a lion on his prey is rejected love. Despise Christ on the cross, and it will be a terrible thing to be judged by Christ on his throne.

But again: what have you done for your children this year? Oh! there be some here present that have been doing all they could to ruin their children's souls. Tis solemn what responsibility rests upon a father; and what shall be said of a drunken father?--the father that sets his children an example of drunkenness. Swearer, what have you done for your family? Haven't you, too, been twisting the rope for their eternal destruction? Will they not be sure to do as you do? Mother, you have several children, but this year you have never prayed for one of them, never put your arms round their necks as they kneeled at their little chair at night, and said, "Our Father;" you have never told them of Jesus that loved children, and once became a child like them. Ah, then, you too have neglected your children. I remember a mother who was converted to God in her old age, and she said to me--and I shall never forget the womanly grief--"God has forgiven me, but I shall never forgive myself. For sir," she said, "I have nourished and brought up children but I have done it without any respect to religion." And then

she burst into tears, and said, "I have been a cruel mother, sir; I have been a wretch!" "Why," said I, "my good woman, you have brought your children up." "Yes," said she, "my husband died when they were young, and left me with six of them, and these hands have earned their bread and found them clothes; no one," she said, "can accuse me of being unkind to them in anything but this; but this is the worst of all; I have been a cruel mother to them, for while I fed their bodies I neglected their souls. But some have gone further than this. Ah, young man, you have not only done your best this year to damn yourself, but you have done your best to damn others! Remember, last January, you took that young man into the tavern for the first time, and laughed at all his boyish scruples, as you called them, and told him to drink away, as you did. Remember, when in the darkness of night you first led astray one young man whose principles were virtuous, and who had not known lust unless you had revealed it to him; you said at the time, "Come with me; I'll show you London life, I'll let you see pleasure!" That young man, when he first came to your shop, used to go to the house of God on Sunday, and seemed to bid fair for heaven--"Ah," you say, "I have laughed religion out of Jackson, he doesn't go any where on a Sunday now except for a spree, and he is just as merry as any of us." Ah! sir, and you will have two hells when you are damned; you will have your own hell and his too, for he will look through the lurid flames upon you, and say, "Mayhap, I had never been here if you had not brought me here!" And ah! seducer, what eyes will be those that will glare at you through hell's horror?--The eyes of one whom you led into iniquity! what double hells they will be to you as they glare on you like two stars, whose light is fury, and wither your blood for ever! Pause, ye that have led others astray, and tremble now. I paused myself, and prayed to God when I first knew a Saviour, that he would

help me to lead those to Christ that I had ever in any way led astray. And I remember George Whitfield says when he began to pray, his first prayer was that God would convert those with whom he used to play at cards and waste his Sundays. "And blessed be God," he says, "I got every one of them."

O my God, can I not detect in some face here astonishment and terror. Doth no man's knees knock together? Doth no man's heart quail within him because of his iniquity? Surely it cannot be so, else were your hearts turned to steel, and your bowels become as iron in the midst of you. Surely, if it be so, the words of God are most certainly true, wherein he saith, in the seventh verse of this chapter--"The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord;" and certainly that prophet was true who said, "The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass his masters crib; but my people doth not know, Israel doth not consider." Oh, are ye so brutish as to let the reflections of that guilt pass over you without causing astonishment and terror? Then, surely we who feel our guilt have need to bend our knees for you, and pray that God might yet bring you to know yourselves; for, living and dying as you are, hardened and without hope, your lot must be horrible in the extreme.

How happy should I be if I might hope that the great mass of you could accompany me in this humble confession of our faith; may I speak as if I were speaking for each one of you? It shall be at your option, either to accept what I say, or to reject it; but, I trust, the great multitude of you will follow me. "Oh, Lord! I this morning confess that my sins are greater than I can bear; I have deserved thy hottest wrath, and thine infinite displeasure; and I hardly dare to hope that thou canst have mercy upon me; but inasmuch as thou didst give thy Son to

die upon the cross for sinners, thou hast also said, Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth,' Lord, I look to thee this morning, though I never looked before, yet I look now; though I have been a slave of sin to this moment, yet Lord, accept me, sinner though I be, through the blood and righteousness of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Oh Father, frown not on me; thou mayest well do so, but I plead that promise which says, Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Lord, I come--

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.
My faith doth lay its hand,
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.

"Lord accept me, Lord pardon me, and take me as I am, from this time forth and for ever, to be thy servant whilst I live, to be thy redeemed when I die." Can you say that? Did not many a heart say it? Did I not hear many a lip in silence utter it? Be of good cheer, my brother, my sister, that if that came from your heart, you are as safe as the angels of heaven, for you are a child of God, and you shall never perish.

III. Now I have to address a few words of AFFECTIONATE ADMONITION, and then I have done. It is a very solemn thing to think how years roll away. I never spent a shorter year in my life than this one, and the older I grow, the shorter the years get; and you, old men, I dare say, look back on your sixty and seventy years, and you say, "Ah, young man, they will seem shorter, soon!" No doubt, they will. "So teach us to

number our days, O God, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." But, is it not a solemn thing, that there is another year nearly gone; and yet many of you are unsaved? You are just where you were last year. No, you are not, you are nearer death, and you are nearer hell, except you repent; and, perhaps, even what I have said this morning will have no effect upon you. You are not altogether hardened, for you have had many serious impressions. Scores of times you have wept under discourses, and yet all has been in vain, for you are what you were. I beseech you, answer this question, "What have I done?" for, remember, there will be a time when you will ask this question, but it will be too late. When Is that--say you--on the death bed? No, it is not too late there.

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

But it will be too late to ask, "What have I done?" when the breath has gone out of your body. Just suppose the monument as it used to be, before they caged it round. Suppose a man going up the winding staircase to the top, with a full determination to destroy himself. He has got on the outside of the railings. Can you imagine him for a moment saying, "What have I done?" just after he has taken his leap. Why, methinks some spirit in the air might whisper, "Done? you have done what you can never undo. You are lost--lost--lost!" Now, remember that you that have not Christ, are to-day going up that spiral stair-case; perhaps, to-morrow you will be standing in the article of death upon the palisading, and when death has gotten you, and you are just leaping from that monument of life down to the gulf of despair, that question will be full of horror to you. "What have you done?" But the answer for it will not be profitable, but full of terror. Methinks, I see a spirit launched upon the sea of eternity. I hear it say, "What have I done?" It is plunged in flaming waves, and cries, "What have I

done?" It sees before it a long eternity; but it asks the question again, "What have I done?" The dread answer comes; thou hast earned all this for thyself. Thou knewest thy duty, but thou didst it not; Thou wast warned, but thou didst despise the warning. Ah! hear the doleful soliloquy of such a spirit. The last great day is come; the flaming throne is set, and the great book is opened. I hear the leaves as with terrible rustle they are turned over. I see men motioned to the right or to the left, according to the result of that great book. And what have I done? I know that to me sin will be destruction, for I have never sought a Saviour. What is that? The Judge has fixed his eye on me. Now, it is on me turned. Will he say, "Depart ye cursed," unto me? Oh! let me be crushed for ever, rather than bear that sight. There is no noise, but the finger is lifted, and I am dragged out of the crowd, and singly I stand before the Judge. He turns to my page, and before he reads it, my heart quakes within me. "Be it so," says he, "it has never been blotted with my blood. You despised my calls; you laughed at my people; you would have none of my mercy; you said that you would take the wages of unrighteousness. You shall have them, the wages of sin is death." Ah! me, and is he about to say, "Depart, ye cursed?" Yes, with a voice louder than a thousand thunders, he says, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Ah! it is all true now. I laughed at the minister, because he preached about hell; and here am I in hell, myself. Ah! I used to wonder why he wanted to frighten us so. Ah! I would to God he had frightened me more, if he might but have frightened me out of this place. But now, here am I lost, and there is no escape. I am in darkness so dark, there is not a ray of light can ever reach me. I am shut up so close, that not one of the bolts and bars can ever be removed. I am damned for ever. Ah! that is a dreary soliloquy. I cannot tell it to you. Oh! if you were there,

yourselves, if you could only know what they feel, and see what they endure, then would you wonder that I am not more earnest in preaching the Gospels and you would marvel, not that I wish to make you weep, but that I did not weep far more myself, and preach more solemnly. Ah! my hearers, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, I shall one day stand acknowledged by our conscience as having been a true witness unto you this morning; for there is not one of you here today, but will be without excuse, if you perish. You have been warned, I have warned you as earnestly as I can. I have no more powers to spend, no more arts to try, no more persuasion that I can use. I can only conclude by saying, I beseech you, fly to Jesus. I entreat you, as immortal spirits that are bound for endless weal or woe, fly ye to Christ; seek for mercy at his hands; trust in him, and be saved; and, at your peril, reject my solemn warning. Remember, ye may reject it, but ye reject not me, but him that sent me. Ye may despise it, but ye despise not me, but a greater than Moses, even Jesus Christ the Lord; and when ye come before his bar, piercing will be his language, and terrible his words, when he condemns you for ever, for ever, for ever, without hope, for ever, for ever, for ever. May God deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 5

The Immutability of Christ

A Sermon

(No. 170)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 3, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."--Hebrews 13:8.

IT IS WELL that there is one person who is the same. It is well that there is one stable rock amidst the changing billows of this sea of life; for how many and how grievous have been the changes of this year? How many of you who commenced in affluence, have by the panic, which has shaken nations, been reduced almost to poverty? How many of you, who in strong health marched into this place on the first Sabbath of last year, have had to come tottering here, feeling that the breath of man is in his nostrils, and wherein is he to be accounted of? Many of you came to this hall with a numerous family, leaning upon the arm of a choice and much loved friend. Alas! for love, if thou wert all and naught beside, O earth! For ye have buried those ye loved the best. Some of you have come here childless, or widows, or fatherless, still weeping your recent affliction. Changes have taken place in your estate that have made your heart full of misery. Your cups of sweetness have been dashed with draughts of gall; your golden harvests have had tares cast into the midst of them, and you have had to reap the noxious weed along with the precious grain. Your much fine gold has become dim, and your glory has departed; the sweet frames at the commencement of last year became bitter ones at the end. Your raptures and your ecstacies

were turned into depression and forebodings. Alas! for our changes, and hallelujah to him that hath no change.

But greater things have changed than we; for kingdoms have trembled in the balances. We have seen a peninsula deluged with blood, and mutiny raising its bloody war whoop. Nay, the whole world hath changed; earth hath doffed its green, and put on its somber garment of Autumn, and soon expects to wear its ermine robe of snow. All things have changed. We believe that not only in appearance but in reality, the world is growing old. The sun itself must soon grow dim with age; the folding up of the worn-out vesture has commenced; the changing of the heavens and the earth has certainly begun. They shall perish; they all shall wax old as doth a garment; but for ever blessed be him who is the same, and of whose years there is no end. The satisfaction that the mariner feels, when, after having been tossed about for many a day, he puts his foot upon the solid shore, is just the satisfaction of a Christian when, amidst all the changes of this troublous life, he plants the foot of his faith upon such a text as this--"the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The same stability that the anchor gives the ship, when it hath at last got the grip of some immovable rock, that same stability doth our hope give to our spirits, when, like an anchor, it fixes itself in a truth so glorious as this--"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

I shall first try this morning to open the text by a little explanation; then I shall try to answer a few objections, which our wicked unbelief will be quite sure to raise against it; and afterward I shall try to draw a few useful, consoling, and practical lessons from the great truth of the immutability of Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, we open the text by a little EXPLANATION--"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He is the same in his

person. We change perpetually; the bloom of youth gives place to the strength of manhood, and the maturity of manhood fades away into the weakness of old age. But "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Christ Jesus, whom we adore, thou art as young as ever! We came into this world with the ignorance of infancy; we grow up searching, studying, and learning with the diligence of youth; we attain to some little knowledge in our riper years; and then in our old age we totter back to the imbecility of our childhood. But O, our Master! thou didst perfectly foreknow all mortal or eternal things from before the foundations of the world, and thou knowest all things now, and for ever thou shalt be the same in thine omniscience. We are one day strong, and the next day weak--one day resolved, and the next day wavering--one hour constant, and the next hour unstable as water. We are one moment holy, kept by the power of God; we are the next moment sinning, led astray by our own lusts; but our Master is for ever the same; pure and never spotted; firm, and never changing--everlastingly Omnipotent, unchangeably Omniscient. From him no attribute doth pass away; to him no parallax, no tropic, ever comes; without variableness or shadow of a turning, he abideth fast and firm. Did Solomon sing concerning his best beloved, "His head is as the most fine gold: his locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedar ?" Surely we can even now conclude the description from our own experience of him; and while we endorse every word which went before, we can end the description by saying, "His

mouth is most sweet, yea he is altogether lovely. His matchless beauty is unimpaired; he is still the chief among ten thousand'--fairest of the sons of men." Did the divine John talk of him when he said--"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." He is the same; upon his brow there is ne'er a furrow; his locks are gray with reverence, but not with age; his feet stand as firm as when they trod the everlasting mountains in the years before the world was made--his eyes as piercing when, for the first time he looked upon a new-born world. Christ's person never changes. Should he come on earth to visit us again, as sure he will, we should find him the same Jesus; as loving, as approachable, as generous, as kind, and though arrayed in nobler garments than he wore when first he visited earth, though no more the Man of Sorrows and griefs acquaintance, yet he would be the same person, unchanged by all his glories, his triumphs, and his joys. We bless Christ that amid his heavenly splendors his person is just the same, and his nature unaffected.. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Again: Jesus Christ is the same with regard to his Father as ever. He was his Father's well-beloved Son before all worlds; he was his well-beloved in the stream of baptism; he was his well-beloved on the cross; he was his well-beloved when he led captivity captive, and he is not less the object of his Father's infinite affection now than he was then. Yesterday he lay in Jehovah's bosom, God, having all power with his Father--to-day he stands on earth, man, with us, but still the same, for ever--he ascends on high, and still he is his Father's

son--still by inheritance, having a more excellent name than angels--still sitting far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named. O Christian, give him thy cause to plead; the Father will answer him as well now as he did aforetime. Doubt not the Father's grace. Go to thine Advocate. He is as near to Jehovah's heart as ever--as prevalent in his intercession. Trust him, then, and in trusting him thou mayest be sure of the Father's love to thee.

But now there is a yet sweeter thought. Jesus Christ is the same to his people as ever. We have delighted, in our happier moments, in days that have rolled away, to think of him that loved us when we had no being; we have often sung with rapture of him that loved us when we loved not him.

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He to save my soul from danger
Interposed his precious blood."

We have looked back, too, upon the years of our troubles and our trials; and we can bear our solemn though humble witness that he has been true to us in all our exigencies, and has never failed us once. Come, then, let us comfort ourselves with this thought--that though to-day he may distress us with a sense of sin, yet his heart is just the same to us as ever. Christ may wear masks that look black to his people, but his face is always the same; Christ may sometimes take a rod in his hand instead of a golden scepter, but the name of his saint is as much engraved upon the hand that grasps the rod as upon the palm that clasps the scepter. And oh, sweet thought that now bursts upon our mind! Beloved, can you concede how much Christ will love you when you are in heaven? Have you ever tried to fathom that bottomless sea of affection in which you shall swim, when you shall bathe yourself in

seas of heavenly rest? Did you ever think of the love which Christ will manifest to you, when he shall present you without spot, or blemish, or any such thing before his Father's throne? Well, pause and remember that he loves you at this hour a. much as he will love you then; for he will be the same for ever as he is to-day, and he is the same to-day as he will be for ever. This one thing I know: if Jesus' heart is set on me he will not love me one atom better when this head wears a crown, and when this hand shall, with joyous fingers, touch the strings of golden harps, than he does now, amid all my sin and care and woe. I believe that saying which is written--"As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you;" and a higher degree of love we can not imagine. The Father loves his Son infinitely, and even so to-day, believer, doth the Son of God love thee. All his heart flows out to thee. All his life is thine; all his person is thine. He can not love thee more; he will not love thee less. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

But let us here recollect that Jesus Christ is the same to sinners to-day as he was yesterday. It is now eight years ago since I first went to Jesus Christ. Come the sixth of this month, I shall then be eight years old in the gospel of the grace of Jesus; a child, a little child therein as yet. I recall that hour when I heard that exhortation--"Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is none else." And I remember, how with much trembling and with a little faith I ventured to approach the Saviour's feet. I thought he would spurn me from him. "Sure," said my heart, "if thou shouldst presume to put thy trust in him as thy Saviour, it would be a presumption more damnable than all thy sins put together. Go not to him; he will spurn thee." However, I put the rope about my neck, feeling that if God destroyed me for ever, he would be

just. I cast the ashes on my head, and with many a sigh I did confess my sin; and then, when I ventured to draw nigh to him, when I expected that he would frown, he stretched out his hand and said, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." I came like the prodigal, because I was forced to come. I was starved out of that foreign country where, in riotous living I had spent my substance, and I saw my Father's house a great way off; little did I know that my Father's heart was beating high with love to me. O rapturous hour, when Jesus whispered I was his, and when my soul could say, "Jesus Christ is my salvation." And now I would refresh my own memory by reminding myself that what my Master was to me yesterday that he is to-day; and if I know that as a sinner I went to him then and he received me, if I have never so many doubts about my saintship I can not doubt but what I am a sinner; so to thy cross, O Jesus, I go again, and if thou didst receive me then, thou wilt receive me now; and believing that to be true, I turn round to my fellow-immortals, and I say, "He that received me, he that received Manasseh, he that received the thief upon the cross, is the same to-day as he was then. Oh! come and try him! Come and try him! Oh! ye that know your need of him, come ye to him; ye that have sold for nought your heritage above may have it back unbought, the gift of Jesus' love. Ye that are empty, Christ is as full today as ever. Come! fill yourselves here. Ye that are thirsty, the stream is flowing; ye that are black, the fountain still can purify; ye that are naked, the wardrobe is not empty.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away,
To Christ, and heal your wounds;
Still tis the gospel's gracious day,
And now free grace abounds"

I can not pretend to enter into the fullness of my text as I could desire, but one more thought. Jesus Christ is the same to-day as he was yesterday in the teachings of his Word. They tell us in these times that the improvements of the age require improvements in theology. Why, I have heard it said that the way Luther preached would not suit this age. We are too polite! The style of preaching, they say, that did in John Bunyan's day, is not the style now. True, they honor these men; they are like the Pharisees; they build the sepulchers of the prophets that their fathers slew, and so they do confess that they are their father's own sons, and like their parents. And men that stand up to preach as those men did, with honest tongues, and know not how to use polished courtly phrases, are as much condemned now as those men were in their time; because, say they, the world is marching on, and the gospel must march on too. No, sirs, the old gospel is the same; not one of her stakes must be removed, not one of her cords must be loosened. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Theology hath nothing new in it except that which is false. The preaching of Paul must be the preaching of the minister to-day. There is no advancement here. We may advance in our knowledge of it; but it stands the same, for this good reason, that it is perfect, and perfection can not be any better. The old truth that Calvin preached, that Chrysostom preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach to-day, or else be a liar to my conscience and my God. I can not shape the truth. I know of no such thing as the paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again. The great mass of our ministers are sound enough in the faith, but not sound enough in the way they preach it. Election is not mentioned once in the year in many a pulpit; final perseverance

is kept back; the great things of God's law are forgotten, and a kind of mongrel mixture of Arminianism and Calvinism is the delight of the present age. And hence the Lord hath forsaken many of his tabernacles and left the house of his covenant; and he will leave it till again the trumpet gives a certain sound. For wherever there is not the old gospel we shall find "Ichabod" written upon the church walls ere long. The old truth of the Covenanters, the old truth of the Puritans, the old truth of the Apostles, is the only truth that will stand the test of time, and never need to be altered to suit a wicked and ungodly generation. Christ Jesus preaches to-day the same as when he preached upon the mount; he hath not changed his doctrines; men may ridicule and laugh, but still they stand the same--semper idem written upon every one of them. They shall not be removed or altered.

Let the Christian remember that this is equally true of the promises. Let the sinner remember this is just as true of the threatenings. Let us each recollect that not one word can be added to this Sacred Book, nor one letter taken away from it; for as Christ Jesus is yet the same, so is his Gospel, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.

I have thus briefly opened the text, not in its fullest meanings, but still enough to enable the Christian at his own leisure to see into that depth without a bottom--the immutability of Christ Jesus the Lord.

II. And now comes in one of crooked gait, with hideous aspect--one that hath as many lives as a cat, and that can not be killed any how, though many a great gun hath been shot against him. His name is old Mr. Incredulity--unbelief; and he begins his miserable oration by declaring, "How can that be true? Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' Why, yesterday Christ was all sunshine to me--to-day I am in distress!" Stop, Mr. Unbelief, I beg you to remember that Christ is not changed. You have changed yourself; for you have

said in your very accusation that yesterday you rejoiced, but to-day you are in distress. All that may happen, and yet there may be no change in Christ. The sun may be the same always, though one hour may be cloudy and the next bright with golden light; yet there is no proof that the sun has changed. Tis even so with Christ.

"If today he deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He to-morrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within.
All to make us,
Sick of self and fond of him."

There is no change in him.

"Immutable his will,
Though dark may be my frame,
His loving heart is still
Unchangeably the same.
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows"

Your frames are no proof that Christ changes: they are only proof that you change.

But saith old Unbelief again--"Surely God has changed if you look at the old saints of ancient times. What happy men they were! How highly favored of their God! How well God provided for them! But now, sir, when I am hungry, no ravens come and bring me bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening. When I am thirsty, no water leaps out of the rock to supply my thirst. It is said of the children of Israel that their clothes waxed not old; but I have a hole in my coat today, and where I shall get another garment I know not. When they marched through the desert he suffered no man to hurt them; but, sir, I

am continually beset by enemies. It is true of me as it says in the Scriptures, And the Ammonites distressed Israel at the coming in of the year;' for they are distressing me. Why, sir, I see my friends die in clouds; there are no fiery chariots to carry God's Elijahs to heaven now. I lost my son; no prophet lay upon him and gave him life again; no Jesus met me at the city gates, to give me back my son from the gloomy grave. No sir, these are evil times; the light of Jesus Christ has become dim; if he walks among the golden candlesticks, yet, still it is not as he used to do. And worse than that, sir, I have heard my father talk of the great men that were in the age gone by: I have heard the names of Romaine, and Toplady, and Scott; I have heard of Whitfields and of Bunyans; and even but a few years ago I heard talk of such men as Joseph Irons--solemn and earnest preachers of a full gospel. But where are those men now? Sir, we have fallen upon an age of drivellings; men have died out, and we have only a few dwarfs left us; there are none that walk with the giant tramp and the colossal tread of the mighty fathers, like Owen, and Howe, and Baxter, and Charnock. We are all little men. Jesus Christ is not dealing with us as he did with our fathers. Stop, Unbelief, a minute: let me remind thee that the ancient people of God had their trials too. Know ye not what the apostle Paul says? "For thy sake we are killed all the day long." Now, if there be any change it is a change for the better; for you have not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

But remember that does not affect Christ; for neither nakedness, nor famine, nor sword, has separated us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is true that you have no fiery chariot; but then the angels carry you to Jesus' bosom, and that is as well. It is true no ravens bring you food; it is quite as true you get your food somehow or other. It is quite certain that no rock gushes out with

water; but still your water has been sure. It is true your child has not been raised from the dead; but you remember that David had a child that was not raised any more than yours. You have the same consolation that he had: "I shall go to him; he shall not return to me." You say that you have more heart-rendings than the saints had of old. It is your ignorance that makes you say so. Holy men of old said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me?" Even prophets had to say--"Thou hast made me drunken with wormwood, and broken my teeth with gravel stones." O, you are mistaken: your days are not more full of trouble than the days of Job; you are not more vexed by the wicked than was Lot of old, you have not more temptations to make you angry than had Moses; and certainly your way is not half so rough as the way of your blessed Lord. The very fact that you have troubles is a proof of his faith fulness; for you have got one half of his legacy, and you will have the other half. You know that Christ's last will and testament has two portions in it. "In the world ye shall have tribulation:" you have got that. The next clause is--"In me ye shall have peace." You have that too. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." That is yours also.

And then you say that you have fallen upon a bad age with regard to ministers. It may be so; but remember, the promise is true still. "Though I take away from thee bread and water, yet will I never take away thy pastors." You have still such as you have--still some that are faithful to God and to his covenant, and who do not forsake the truth, and though the day may be dark, yet it is not so dark as days have been; and besides remember, what you say to-day is just what your forefathers said. Men in the days of Toplady looked back to the days of Whitfield; men in the days of Whitfield looked back to the days of Bunyan; men in the days of Bunyan wept because of the days of Wycliffe,

and Calvin, and Luther; and men then wept for the days of Augustine and Chrysostom. Men in those days wept for the days of the Apostles; and doubtless men in the days of the Apostles wept for the days of Jesus Christ; and no doubt some in the days of Jesus Christ were so blind as to wish to return to the days of prophesy, and thought more of the days of Elijah than they did of the most glorious day of Christ. Some men look more to the past than the present. Rest assured, that Jesus Christ is the same to-day as he was yesterday, and he will be the same for ever.

Mourner, be glad! I have heard of a little girl who, when her father died, saw her mother weeping immoderately. Day after day, and week after week, her mother refused to be comforted; and the little girl stepped up to her mother, and putting her little hand inside her mothers hand, looked up in her face, and said. "Mamma is God dead? Is God dead, mamma?" And her mother thought, "Surely, no." The child seemed to say, "Thy maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name. So you may dry your tears, I have a father in heaven, and you have a husband still." O! ye saints that have lost your gold and your silver; ye have got treasure in heaven, where no moth nor rust doth corrupt, where no thieves break through and steal! Ye that are sick to-day, ye that have lost health, remember the day is coming when all that shall be made up to you, and when ye shall find that the flame has not hurt you, it has but consumed your dross and refined your gold. Remember, Jesus Christ is "the same today, yesterday, and for ever."

III. And now I must be brief in drawing one or two sweet conclusions from that part of the text.

First, then, if he be the same to-day as yesterday, my soul, set not thine affections upon these changing things, but set thine heart upon him. O my heart, build not thine house upon the sandy pillars of a

world that soon must pass away, but build thy hopes upon this rock, which, when the rain descends, and floods shall come, shall stand immovably secure. O my soul, I charge thee, lay up thy treasure in this secure granary. O my heart, I bid thee now put thy treasure where thou canst never lose it. Put it in Christ; put all thine affections in his person, all thy hope in his glory, all thy trust in his efficacious blood, all thy joy in his presence, and then thou wilt have put thyself and put thine all where thou canst never lose anything, because it is secure. Remember, O my heart, that the time is coming when all things must fade, and when thou must part with all. Death's gloomy night must soon put out thy sunshine; the dark flood must soon roll between thee and all thou hast. Then put thine heart with him who will never leave thee; trust thyself with him who will go with thee through the black and surging current of death's stream, and who will walk with thee up the steep hills of heaven and make thee sit together with him in heavenly places for ever. Go, tell thy secrets to that friend that sticketh closer than a brother. My heart, I charge thee, trust all thy concerns with him who never can be taken from thee, who will never leave thee, and who will never let thee leave him, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." That is one lesson. Well, then, the next. If Jesus Christ be always the same, then, my soul, endeavor to imitate him. Be thou the same, too. Remember that if thou hadst more faith, thou wouldst be as happy in the furnace, as on the mountain of enjoyment. Thou wouldst be as glad in famine, as in plenty; thou wouldst rejoice in the Lord when the olive yielded no oil, as well as when the vat was bursting and overflowing its brim. If thou hadst more confidence in thy God, thou wouldst have far less of tossings up and down; and if thou hadst greater nearness to Christ thou wouldst have less vacillation. Yesterday thou couldst pray with all the

power of prayer; perhaps if thou didst always live near thy Master, thou mightest always have the same power on thy knees. One time thou canst bid defiance to the rage of Satan, and thou canst face a frowning world; to-morrow thou wilt run away like a craven. But if thou didst always remember him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, thou mightest always be firm and stedfast in thy mind. Beware of being like a weathercock. Seek of God, that his law may be written on your hearts as if it were written on stone, and not as if it were written in sand. Seek, that his grace may come to you like a river, and not like a brook that fails. Seek, that you may keep your conversation always holy; that your course may be like the shining light that tarries not, but that burneth brighter and brighter, until the fullness of the day. Be ye like Christ--ever the same.

Again: if Christ be always the same, Christian, rejoice! Come what may, thou art secure.

"Let mountains from their seats be hurled
Down to the deeps, and buried there;
Convulsions shake the solid world;
Our faith shall never need to fear."

If kingdoms should go to rack, the Christian need not tremble! Just for a minute imagine a scene like this. Suppose for the next three days the sun should not rise; suppose the moon should be turned into a clot of blood, and shine no more upon the world; imagine that a darkness that might be felt, brooded over all men; imagine, next, that all the world did tremble in an earthquake, till every tower, and house, and hut fell down: imagine, next, that the sea forgot its place, and leaped upon the earth; and that the mountains ceased to stand, and began to tremble from their pedestals; conceive after that, that a blazing comet streamed across the sky--that the thunder bellowed incessantly--that

the lightnings, without a moment's pause, followed one the other; conceive, then, that thou didst behold divers terrible sights, fiendish ghosts, and grim spirits; imagine, next, that a trumpet, waxing exceeding loud, did blow; that there were heard the shrieks of men dying and perishing; imagine, that in the midst of all this confusion, there wee to be a found a saint. My friend, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for every, would keep him as secure amidst all these horrors, as we are to-day. Oh! rejoice! I have pictured the worst that can come. Then you would be secure. Come what may then, you are safe, while Jesus Christ is the same.

And now, last of all, if Jesus Christ be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," what sad work this is for the ungodly! Ah! sinner, when he was on earth, he said, "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." When he stood upon the mount, he said, "It were better to enter life halt or maimed, than having two hands, and two eyes to be cast into hell-fire." As a man on earth, he said that the goats should be on the left, and that he would say to them, "Depart, ye cursed." Sinner, he will be as good as his word. He has said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." He will damn you if you believe not, depend upon it. He has never broken a promise yet; he will never break a threatening. That same truth which makes us confident to-day that the righteous shall go away into everlasting life, should make you quite as confident that unbelievers shall go into eternal misery. If he had broken his promise, he might break his threatening; but as he has kept one, he will keep the other. Do not hope that he will change, for change he will not. Think not that the fire which he said was unquenchable, will, after all, be extinguished. No, within a few more years, my hearer, if thou dost not repent, thou wilt find that every jot and every letter of the threatenings of Jesus will be fulfilled;

and, mark thee, fulfilled in thee. Liar, he said, "All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." He will not deceive you. Drunkard, he has said, "Ye know that no drunkard hath eternal life." He will not belie his word. You shall not have eternal life. He has said, "The nations that forget God shall be cast into hell." All ye that forget religion, moral people you may be, he will keep his word to you; he will cast you into hell. O "kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are an they that put their trust in him. Come, sinner, bow thy knee; confess thy sin and leave it; and then come to him; ask him to have mercy upon thee. He will not forget his promise--"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Come and try him. With all your sins about you, come to him now. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved;" for this is my Master's gospel, and I now declare it--"He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned. God grant you grace to believe, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Chapter 6

Paul's Sermon Before Felix

A Sermon

(No. 171)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 10, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."--Acts 24:25.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL appears in marvelous grandeur when we see its hold upon hearts devoted to it, when subjected to trouble, persecution, and sorrow. How mighty must that gospel be, which, when it gained an entrance into the heart of Paul, could never be driven out of it! For it he suffered the loss of all things, and as for them, he counted them but dung, that he might win Christ. To spread the truth, he encountered hardships, shipwrecks, perils on the land, and perils by sea; but none of these things moved him, neither did he count his life dear unto him, that he might win Christ and be found in him. Persecution followed persecution; of the Jews was he beaten with rods; he was dragged from one tribunal to another; scarce in any city did he find anything but bonds and imprisonment awaiting him. Attacked in his own country--he is accused at Jerusalem, and arraigned at Cesarea; he is taken from one tribunal to another to be tried for his life. But mark how he always maintains the prominent passion of his soul. Put him where you may, he seems to be like John Bunyan, who says, "If you let me out of prison to-day, I will preach the gospel again to-morrow, by the grace of God." Nay, more than that, he preached it in prison, before his judges he

proclaimed it. Standing up before the Sanhedrim, he cries, "As touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question." When brought to stand before Agrippa, he tells out his conversion, and so sweetly speaks of the grace of God, that the king himself cries, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" and here in our text when he stands before the Roman Procurator, to be tried for life or death, instead of entering into a defence of himself, he reasons "of righteousness, continence, and judgment to come," until his judge trembles, and he that sits upon the throne takes the prisoner's place, while the prisoner judges him, in anticipation of that time when the saints shall judge the angels, as assessors with Christ Jesus. Why, once let a man believe the gospel, and determine to spread it, and it makes him a grand man. If he be a man destitute of power, intellect, and talent, it makes him grandly earnest in his arduous desire to serve Christ, in the little measure in which he can do it; but if he be a gifted man, it sets his whole soul on fire, brings out all his powers, develops everything that lies hidden, digs up every talent that had been buried in its napkin, and spreads out all the gold and silver of man's intellectual wealth, displaying it all to the honor of that Christ who has bought it all with his blood.

We might stay a little while and dilate on this thought, and show you how, in all ages, this has been the truth, that the power of the gospel has been eminently proved in its influence over men's hearts, proving the truth of that utterance of Paul, when he said, that neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, shall separate them from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ their Lord. But instead of so doing, I invite you to contemplate the text more closely. We have before us a picture containing three characters: Felix and Drusilla, sitting side by side

upon the judgment-seat; Paul, the prisoner, brought in bound in chains, to explain to Drusilla and Felix the doctrines of the Christian religion, in order that he might either be acquitted or condemned to die. You have a judge extremely willing to put the prisoner to death, because he desired to please the Jews; you have, on the other hand, a prisoner, unabashed, who comes before the judge, and without any debate, begins to unfold the gospel, selecting a certain part of it, described in our text as reasoning concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." The Judge trembles, dismisses the prisoner in haste; and promises to attend to him at a convenient season.

Note, first then, the appropriate sermon; secondly, the affected audience--for the audience was certainly moved--"Felix trembled!" Note, then, thirdly, the lamentable disappointment. Instead of attending to the message, "Go thy way" was all that Paul had.

I. First, then, we have an APPROPRIATE SERMON. Just hear for a moment or two the history of Felix. Felix was originally a slave; he was freed by Claudius, and became one of the infamous favorites of the emperor. Of course in that capacity he pandered to his master's vices, and was at all times prepared to indulge the Emperor in every lustful wish of his abominable heart. Through this he became promoted, and ran through the stages of Roman preferment, until he obtained the Governorship of Judea. Whilst he was Governor there, he committed every act of extortion which it was possible for him to commit, and went so far at last, that the Emperor Nero was obliged to recall him, and he would have been severely punished for his crimes, had it not been for the influence of his brother Pallas, another freedman, with the Emperor, through whom he obtained a release, after a sharp rebuke. The Roman historian, Tacitus, says, "He exercised, in Judea, the imperial

functions with a mercenary soul." You may easily see, then, how appropriate was the discourse, when the apostle Paul reasoned concerning righteousness. Felix had been an unjust extortioner, and the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse. By the side of Felix sat Drusilla; in the verse preceding our text she is called his wife. It is said she was a Jewess. This Drusilla was a daughter of Herod Agrippa, the great--a woman noted in that age for her superlative charms, and for her unbridled voluptuousness. She had been once affianced to Antioch who, upon the death of Herod, refused to marry her. She was afterward married to Azizus, the king of the Amesenes, who, although a heathen, was so fond of her, that he submitted to the most rigorous rites of the Jewish religion in order to obtain her in marriage. His love was but ill-requited, for in a little time she deserted him at the instigation of Felix, and was, at the time of Paul's address, living as the wife of the lascivious Felix. We may easily understand then, why the apostle Paul, fixing his stern eye on Drusilla, reasoned concerning continence, and publicly rebuked both Felix and Drusilla for the shameless lust in which they were publicly living. And then you may imagine since there was now a court sitting, and Felix himself was the judge, and Paul the prisoner, how strikingly appropriate was the last theme--"judgment to come."

I think, my brethren, it would not be very hard for us to imagine how well the apostle handled this subject. I can conceive that Felix expected to have a grand disquisition upon some recondite themes of the gospel. Possibly he expected that the apostle Paul would reason concerning the resurrection of the dead. He thought perhaps that predestination, election, and free will would be the topics or the apostles discourse. "Surely," thought he, "he will tell me those deep

and hidden matters in which the gospel of Jesus differs from Judaism." Not so. In another place, on Mar's Hill, the apostle would speak of resurrection; in another place he could speak of election, and declare that God was the potter, and man was but the clay. This was not the place for that; and this was not the time for such subjects; this was the time for preaching the plain precepts of the gospel, and for dealing sternly with a wicked man who sat in eminent power. Conceive then, the pointed manner of his opening discourse--How he would address Felix concerning righteousness. I can imagine how he would bring before the mind of Felix, the widow who had been defrauded of inheritance, the fatherless children, who, cast from affluence, were led to beg their bread. I can suppose how he brought before the mind of that base man the many bribes that he had taken, when he sat upon his judgment-seat. He would recall to him the false decisions that he had given; he would remind him how the Jews, as a nation had been oppressed--how by taxation, they had been ground to the earth; he would bring before him one scene after another, where avarice had overridden equity, boldly and sternly depicting the exact character of the man; and then, at the end, declaring that such men could have no inheritance in the kingdom of God--bidding him repent of this his wickedness, that his sins might be forgiven him. Then gently and delicately turning to the other subject, I can imagine how he would fix his eyes upon Drusilla, and remind her that she had lost everything for which a woman ought to live, and solemnly bring the most powerful motives to bear upon her lascivious heart; and then turning to Felix, would remind him that adulterers, fornicators, and unclean persons, have no inheritance in the kingdom of God--reminding him how the vices of a ruler would tend to pollute a nation, and how the iniquities of the nation of the Jews must, in a great measure, be laid to his charge. I can conceive how,

for a moment, Felix would bite his lips. Paul gave him no time for anger and passion; for in a moment, in a fury of impassioned eloquence, he introduced the "judgment to come." He made Felix think he saw the great white throne, the books opened, and himself arraigned before his judge: he made him hear the voices of the trumpet--the "Come ye blessed"--the "Depart ye cursed." He petrified him, nailed him to his seat, opened his ears, and made them listen, while with stern and impassioned earnestness, though his hands were bound with chains, he used the liberty of the gospel in upbraiding him. Well do I conceive that then Felix began to tremble. He that had been base, and mean, and perfidious, trembled like a coward slave, as he really was; and though sitting on throne, he pictured himself already damned. What he next would have done we can not tell, if the devil had not then suggested to him that it was time to rise; for in hot haste he and Drusilla left the throne. "Go thy way for this time; when I have convenient season, I will call for thee."

Hear me, then, brethren! What the apostle Paul did, every minister ought to do. He selected a topic appropriate to his audience. It is ours ever to do the same. But are there not to be found many ministers who, if they addressed kings and princes, would pour out before them the vilest adulation and flattery that ever came from mortal lips? Are there not many who, when they are aware the great and mighty ones are listening to them, trim their doctrine, cut the edges of their speech, and endeavor in some way or other to make themselves pleasing to their audience? Can there not be found many ministers who, if addressing an Antinomian audience, would confine themselves strictly to predestination and reprobation? and ministers who, if they addressed an audience of philosophers, would just talk about morality but never mention such words as the covenant of grace and salvation by blood? Are

there not some to be found, who think the highest object of the minister is to attract the multitude and then to please them? O my God! how solemnly ought each of us to bewail our sin, if we feel that we have been guilty in this matter. What is it to have pleased men? Is there aught in it that can make our head lie easy on the pillow of our death? Is there aught in it that can give us boldness in the day of judgment, or cause us happiness when we face thy tribunal, O Judge of quick and dead? No, my brethren, we must always take our texts so that we may bear upon our hearers with all our might. I hope I may never preach before a congregation--I desire always to preach to you; nor do I wish to exhibit powers of eloquence, nor would I even pretend to exhibit any depth of learning. I would simply say, "Hear me, my fellow men, for God doth send me unto you. There are some things that concern you; I will tell you of them. You are dying; many of you when you die must perish for ever; it is not for me to be amusing you with some deep things that may instruct your intellect but do not enter your hearts; it is for me to fit the arrow to the string and send it home--to unsheathe the sword--be the scabbard never so glittering, to cast it aside, and let the majesty of naked truth smite at your hearts; for in the day of judgment aught beside personal home-speaking will be consumed as wood, and hay, and stubble; but these shall abide, like the gold and silver and precious stones that can not be consumed.

But some men will say, "Sir, ministers ought not to be personal." Ministers ought to be personal, and they will never be true to their Master till they are. I admire John Knox for going, Bible in hand, to Queen Mary, and sternly upbraiding her. I admit I do not exactly love the way in which he did it; but the thing itself I love. The woman had been a sinner, and he told her so flat to her face. But now we poor graven sons of nobodies have to stand and talk about generalities; we

are afraid to point you out and tell you of your sins personally. But, blessed be God, from that fear I have been delivered long ago. There walketh not a man on the surface of this earth whom I dare not reprove. There are none of you, however connected with me by ties of profession or in any other respect, that I would blush to speak personally to, as to the things of the kingdom of God; and it is only by being bold, courageous, and sending home the truth, that we shall at last be free from the blood of our hearers. May God grant us the power of Paul, that we may reason on appropriate subjects, and not select generalities, when we ought to be pushing home truths to the consciences of our hearers. After all, the apostle Paul needs no eulogy. The best eulogy that could be passed on the apostle was the fact that "Felix trembled." And that brings us to the second part of our subject.

II. "FELIX TREMBLED." Yes, the poor prisoner, having nought wherewith to assist him in the delivery of the truth but having everything to his disadvantage--the chain, the prison dress, the character of one that had stirred up sedition in a nation--this poor prisoner, with believing hand, laid hold on the sword of truth, and with this he did divide in sunder the joints and marrow. He did beard the lion in his den. Even now I see him look the governor sternly in the face, attack him in his heart, drive him from his excuses, push the word home at the point of the bayonet of truth, drive him from every refuge of lies, and make him tremble! O marvellous power of a preached gospel! O mighty truth that God is with the ministry, when the kings of the earth that take counsel together are yet dismayed by it. Who is he that doth not see here something more than human eloquence, when prisoner becomes the judge and the prince upon the throne becomes the criminal? "Felix trembled." Have I not some here who have experienced the same feelings as Felix? Some plain-spoken minister has told you something that was rather too

plain for you. At first you were angry; on second thoughts, and as the man moved on in his discourse, you became chagrined that you gave him the opportunity of thus exposing you, as you imagined. A better thought struck you and you saw at once that the man could have no intention personally to insult you; and then your feelings changed. Thunderbolt after thunderbolt fell from his lips; he seemed a very Jupiter Tonans sitting upon his throne, casting lightnings from his lips. Ye began to tremble. "Verily here is a man that has told me all things that ever I did; is not this man sent from Christ?" Ah! and thus you have borne your witness to the truth of the gospel. Though you have not felt its power to your salvation, yet you have been an unwilling witness that the gospel has been true; for you have felt its power when it made your knees knock together, and your eyes run down with tears.

But what is it that makes men tremble under the sound of the Gospel? Some say it is their conscience. Yes, and doubtless it is in some sense. The poet said, "Conscience makes cowards of us all;" and certainly, when the minister's exposition is faithful and pertinent to our own case, conscience, if it be not thoroughly seared and dead, will make the blush mantle on our cheeks. But I take it that conscience of itself is so thoroughly corrupt, together with all the other powers of manhood, that it would never even make a man go so far as trembling, if there were not something at work upon the conscience, besides being left to its own natural force. My brethren, I believe that what some people call natural conviction is, after all, the work of the Spirit.

Some very profound divines are so fond of the doctrine that the Holy Spirit always works efficaciously, that they think that the Spirit never can work a transitory emotion in a man's soul; they impute such things to conscience. And if they see a man like Felix trembling, they say tis all natural conscience! Now, do they not see that they are in

this touching on another doctrine equally dear to them--the doctrine of total depravity?--for if men be totally depraved by nature, then as trembling is a good thing, they are not capable even of that without some influence of the Holy Spirit. The fact is, my hearers, the Holy Spirit works in two ways. In some men's hearts he works with restraining Grace only, and the restraining Grace, though it will not save them, is enough to keep them from breaking out into the open and corrupt vices in which some men indulge who are totally left by the restraints of the Spirit. Now, there was in Felix some little portion of this restraining Grace; and when the Apostle laid the Gospel open to him, this restraining Grace quickened the conscience, and compelled Felix to tremble. Mark you, this Grace man may resist and does resist; for albeit that the Holy Spirit is Omnipotent and never can be resisted when he works Omnipotently, yet as a strong man may sometimes not put out all his strength, but work with his finger, for instance, so that he may permit even a gnat or an ant to overcome him, even so the Holy Spirit sometimes works but temporarily and but for good and excellent purposes, which he always accomplishes; but he allows men to quench and resist his influences, so that salvation is not so much as approached thereby. God the Holy Spirit may work in men some good desires and feelings, and yet have no design of saving them. But mark, none of these feelings are things that accompany sure salvation, for if so, they would be continued. But he does not work Omnipotently to save, except in the persons of his own elect, whom he assuredly bringeth to himself. I believe, then, that the trembling of Felix is to be accounted for by the restraining grace of the Spirit quickening his conscience and making him tremble.

But what shall be said of some of you who never tremble? Thou hast come hither this morning with thy brazen face, and with thine impudent and

arrogant heart. Thou hast been mouthing high heaven with thy blasphemies; and now thou standest all unmoved and unabashed in the house of God. Though a Baxter should rise from the dead, and with moving sighs and tears should preach the Gospel, you would laugh and scoff; though Boanerges with a tongue of thunder should come and preach to you, you would turn up your lip and find some fault with his oratory, and his words would never reach your heart. O ungodly generation! how hath God given you up, and how hath hell bewitched you? O race of evil doers! children that are corrupters! how are ye seared. My soul reads with prophetic glance the handwriting on the wall! You are condemned already; you are past hope, "trees plucked up by the roots, twice dead." For in the fact that ye tremble not, there is proof not only of your death but of your positive corruption. Ye shall die as ye are, without hope, without trust or refuge; for he that hath lost feeling hath lost hope; he that is past conscience, God the Holy Spirit hath given up, and he will no more strive with him for ever.

III. And now, passing rapidly over this point of the trembling audience, we come in the next place to the LAMENTABLE DISAPPPOINTMENT which Paul experienced, when he saw Felix rise in haste, and dismiss him from his presence. "It is wonderful," said a good man once to a minister, "it is wonderful to see a whole congregation moved to tears by the preaching of the Word." "Yes," said that minister, "it is wonderful; but I know a wonder ten times greater than that: the wonder is, that those people should so soon wipe away their tears and forget what they have heard. Tis wonderful that Felix trembled before Paul; tis more wonderful that Felix should say, "Go thy way." "Tis strange, tis passing strange," that when the word touches the conscience, even then sin hath such power over men, that the truth can be repulsed and driven out of the heart. Felix, unhappy Felix! why is it that thou dost

rise from thy judgment-seat? Is it that thou hast much business to do? Stop, Felix; let Paul speak to thee a minute longer. Thou hast business: but hast thou no business for thy soul? Stop, unhappy man! Art thou about again to be extortionate, again to make thy personal riches greater! Oh! stop: canst thou not spare another minute for thy poor soul? It is to live for ever: hast thou naught laid up for it--no hope in heaven, no blood of Christ, no pardon of sin, no sanctifying Spirit, no imputed righteousness? Ah! man there will be a time when the business that seems so important to thee will prove to have been but a day-dream, a poor substitute for the solid realities thou hast forgotten. Dost thou reply, "Nay, the king has sent me an urgent commission; I must attend to Caesar." Ah! Felix, but thou hast a greater monarch than Caesar: there is one who is Emperor of heaven and Lord of earth; canst thou spare no time to attend to his commands? Before his presence Caesar is but a worm. Man! wilt thou obey the one, and wilt thou despise the other? Ah! no; I know what thou durst not say. Felix, thou art turning aside again to indulge in thy lascivious pleasures. Go, and Drusilla with thee! But stop! Darest thou do that, with that last word ringing in thy ears, "Judgment to come." What! wilt thou repeat that wanton dalliance that hath damned thee already, and wilt thou go again to imbrue thy hands in lust, and doubly damn thy spirit, after warnings heard and felt? O man! I could weep o'er thee, to think that as the bullock goeth to the slaughter, and as the lamb licks the knife, so dost thou go back to the sin that destroys thee, and to the lust that ruins thee. You, too, many of you, have often been impressed under the ministry. I know what you have said on the Monday morning, after deep searchings of heart on the Sabbath: you have said, "I must attend to business, I must see after the things of this world." Ah! you will say that one day, when hell shall laugh you in the face

for your folly. Think of men that are dying every day saying, "We must live," and forgetting that they must die. O poor soul! to be caring about that house, thy body, and neglecting the tenant within! Another replies, "I must have a little more pleasure." Pleasure dost thou call it? What! can there be pleasure in turning suicide to thine own soul--pleasure in defying thy Maker, trampling on his laws, despising his grace? If this be pleasure, tis a pleasure over which angels might weep. What, man, wilt thou count this pleasure when thou comest to die? Above all, wilt thou count this pleasure when thou dost stand before thy Maker's bar at last? It is a strange delusion that causes thee to believe a lie. There is no pleasure in that which brings wrath upon thy soul, even to the uttermost.

But the usual reply is, "There is time enough yet." The young man says, "Let me alone till I grow old." And you old men, what do you say? I can suppose that the youth looks forward to life, and expects to find a future time more convenient. But there are some of you o'er whose heads seventy winters have blown. When do you hope to find a convenient season? You are within a few days' march of the tomb: if you do but open your poor dull eyes, you may see death but a slight distance in advance. The young may die; the old must! To sleep in youth is to sleep in a siege; to sleep in old age is to slumber during the attack. What! man, wilt thou that art so near thy Maker's bar still put him off with a "Go thy way?" What! procrastinate now, when the knife is at thy throat--when the worm is at the heart of the tree, and the branches have begun to wither--when the grinders fail even now, because they are few, and they that look out of the windows are darkened? The sere and yellow leaf has come upon thee, and thou art still unready for thy doom! O man! of all fools, a fool with a gray head is the worst fool anywhere. With one foot in the grave, and another foot on a sandy

foundation, how shall I depict you, but by saying to you, as God said to the rich man, "Thou fool! a few more nights and thy soul shall be required of thee;" and then where art thou?

But still the common cry is, "There is time enough." Even the worldly moralist said, "Time enough is always little enough." Time enough, man! What for? Surely you have spent time enough in sin: the time past may "suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." What! time enough to serve a God that laid down his life for you? No! eternity will not be too long to utter his praise, and therefore it can not be too long to love him here, and serve him the few remaining days that you are to live on earth. But stop! I will reason with you. Come, Felix! thou shalt not go away this morning till my whole soul hath poured itself out over thee, not until I have cast mine arms round thee, and tried to stop thee this time from turning from the face of him that bids thee live. Thou sayest, "Another time." How knowest thou that thou wilt ever feel again as thou feelest now? This morning, perhaps, a voice is saying in thine heart, "Prepare to meet thy God." To-morrow that voice will be hushed. The gayeties of the ball-room and the theater will put out that voice that warns thee now, and perhaps thou wilt never hear it again. Men all have their warnings, and all men who perish have had a last warning. Perhaps this is your last warning. You are told to-day, that except ye repent, ye must perish, except ye put your trust in Christ, ye must be cast away forever. Perhaps no honest lip will again warn you; perhaps no tearful eye will ever look on you affectionately again; God to-day is pulling the reins tight to check you from your lust; perhaps, if to-day you spurn the bit, and rush madly on, he will throw the reins upon your back, saying, "Let him alone;" and then it is a dark steeplechase between earth and hell, and you will run it in mad confusion, never thinking of a hell till you

find yourself past warning, past repentance, past faith, past hope.

But again: how knowest thou, if thou shouldst ever have these feelings again, God will accept thee then? "To-day," he says, "to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." This hour his love weepeth over you, and his bowels yearn for you. To-day he says, "Come, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Do you to-day turn a deaf ear to trim? Do you to-day forego his invitation and despise his warning? Take heed! You may one day need what now you despise, and you may then cry to him, but he will not hear you; you may then pray to him, but he will shut out your prayer, and his only answer will be, "I called!" "I called, and you refused. You stood against that pillar under the gallery; I called and you refused! I stretched out my hands, as if I would bring you to my bosom, and no man regarded me. You were there in the gallery; you listened, but it was as though you heard not; therefore"--and oh! the dreadful conclusion!--"I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Stay! those are not my words, they are God's words. Turn ye to the book of Proverbs, and find them there. It were a harsh thing for me to say of God; but God says it of himself, and God is true, though every man be a liar; and if he be true, how know ye that he may not despise your prayer one day, shut out your cry, and banish you forever?

But again: how do you know that you shall live to be warned again? Said a minister once, when I gently hinted to him that he had not preached the gospel that morning, "No, I did not mean to preach to sinners in the morning; but I will preach to them in the evening." "Ah!" said I, "but what if some of your congregation of the morning should be in hell before the evening." So may I say to you. You have promised to go to a

friend's house to-day, you think you can not break that promise; you wish you could. You wish you could go home and fall on your knees and pray; but no, you can not, because your promise binds you. You will have a convenient season one of these days! And so God Almighty is to wait man's convenience! How do you know you will live till that convenience comes? A little too much heat or too much cold within the brain--a little too fast flowing of the blood, or a little too slow circulation thereof--some little turning of the fluids of the body in a wrong direction, and you are dead!

"Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
To bear you to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home."

Oh! why will you then dare to procrastinate, and say, "time enough yet?" Will your soul ever be saved by your saying "Time enough yet?" Archbishop Tillotson well says, "A man might say I resolve to eat, but the resolve to eat would never feed his body. A man might say, I am resolved to drink, but the resolve to drink would never slake his thirst." And you may say, "I am resolved by-and-by to seek God;" but your resolve will not save you. It is not the forgetful hearer but the doer of the word that shall be blessed therein. Oh that ye might now say--To-day, my God, to-day I confess my sin; to-day I ask thee to manifest thy grace; to-day receive my guilty soul, and show me a Saviours blood; to-day I renounce my follies, my vices, and my sins, constrained by Sovereign Grace; to-day I cast away my good works as my ground of trust; to-day I cry,

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling!"

Oh! happy minister who shall have such an audience!--happier than Paul,

if he should know that his congregation had said this! Come, O Holy Spirit, and draw unwilling hearts, and make them bow before the scepter of sovereign grace.

Preaching, you see, takes away my voice. Ah! it is not that. It is not the preaching, but the sighing over your souls that is the hard work. I could preach forever: I could stand here day and night to tell my Master's love, and warn poor souls; but tis the after-thought that will follow me when I descend these pulpit steps, that many of you, my hearers, will neglect this warning. You will go; you will walk into the street; you will joke; you will laugh. My Master says, "Son of man, hast thou heard what the children of Israel say concerning thee? Behold, thou art as one that playeth a tune upon an instrument; they make merry with thee, and they go their ways." Yes, but that were little. To be laughed at is no great hardship to me. I can delight in scoffs and jeers; caricatures, lampoons, and slanders, are my glory; of these things I boast, yea, in these I will rejoice. But that you should turn from your own mercy, this is my sorrow. Spit on me, but oh! repent! Laugh at me: but oh I believe in my Master! Make my body as the dirt of the streets, if you will: but damn not your own souls! Oh! do not despise your own mercies. Put not away from you the gospel of Christ. There are many other ways of playing fool beside that. Carry coals in your bosom: knock your head against a wall: but do not damn your souls for the mere sake of being a fool, for fools laugh at. Oh! be in earned upon an earnest subject. If there be no hereafter, live as you like; if there be no heaven, if there be no hell, laugh at me! But if these things be true, and you believe them, I charge you, as I shall face you at the judgment bar of the Lord Jesus in the day of judgment--I charge you, by your own immortal welfare, lay these things to heart. Prepare to meet your God, O sons of Israel! And the Lord help

you in this thing; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 7

Search the Scriptures

A Sermon

(No. 172)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 17, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."--Isaiah 8:20.

WHEN men will not learn of God, how huge their folly grows! If they despise the wisdom that is from above, how grievously does God allow them to prove their own ignorance! When a man will not bow down before God the Most High, immediately he buildeth for himself an idol; he maketh an image of wood or stone, and he degradeth himself by bowing before the work of his own hands. When men will not receive the Scripture testimony concerning God's creation, straightway they begin to form theories that are a thousand times more ridiculous than they have ever endeavoured to make the Bible account of it, for God leaveth them, if they will not accept his solution of the problem, to grope for another, and their own solution is so absurd, that all the world except themselves hath sense enough to laugh at it. And when men leave the Sacred Book of Revelation, ah! my friends, where do they go? We find that in Isaiah's time they went to strange places; for he says in the 19th verse, that they sought unto familiar spirits, unto wizards that did peep and mutter; yea, they sought for things concerning the living, amongst the dead, and became the dupes of necromancers. It is marvellous that the men who most of all rail at faith are remarkable for credulity. One of the greatest unbelievers in the world, who has

called himself a free-thinker from his birth, is to be found now tottering into his tomb, believing the veriest absurdity that a child might confute. Not caring to have God in their hearts, forsaking the living foundation, they have hewn out to themselves cisterns which are broken, and hold no water. Oh! that we may each of us be more wise, that we may not forsake the good old path, nor leave the way that God hath prepared for us. What wonder we should travel amongst thorns and briars, and rend our own flesh, or worse than that, fall among dark mountains, and be lost amongst the chasms thereof, if we despise the guidance of an unerring Father. Seek ye in the word of God, and read, Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Jesus Christ.

I feel at this particular crisis of religious affairs, it is imperative upon the Christian minister to urge his people to hold fast the doctrines of the truth--the words of God. This seems likely to become the age of preaching, rather than the age of praying. We now see everywhere large congregations assembling in halls and abbeys to listen to the Word preached; and it is an ominous sign of the times, that these preachings are not only espoused by the orthodox, but even by those whom we have considered to be at least somewhat heretical from the old faith of the Protestant Church. It becomes, therefore, a serious thing; for it is most probable--and may not every wise man see it?--that whosoever may now arise who hath some powers of oratory and some graces of eloquence, will be likely to attract the multitude, preach he what he may, though the word that he should utter be as false as God's Word is true, and as contrary to the gospel as hell is opposed to heaven. Doth it not seem probable that in this age he would attract a multitude of followers? and is it not also very likely that through that spurious charity which is now growing upon us, which would gag the

mouths of honest reprovers, we shall find it hard to rebuke the impostor when he arises, and difficult to expose the falsehood, even though it may be apparent unto us. We are now happily so well commingled together, the Dissenter and the Churchman have now become so friendly with each other, that we have less to dread the effects of bigotry, than the effects of latitudinarinism. We have some reason now to be upon the watchtower, lest haply some should arise in our midst, the spurious offspring of these happy times of evangelical alliance, who will claim our charity, whilst they are preaching that which we in our hearts do totally condemn. And what better advice can the minister give in such times as these? To what book shall he commend his hearers? How shall he keep them fast? Where is the anchor which he shall give them to cast into the rocks? or where the rocks into which they should cast their anchor? Our text is a solution to that question. We are here furnished with a great answer to the inquiry--"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

First, I shall endeavour this morning to urge you to bring certain things, to which we are afraid a superstitious importance may be attached, "to the law and to the testimony." Secondly, I shall try to show the good effects that will follow, if each of you rigidly bring everything you hear and believe, "to the law and to the testimony." And, thirdly, I shall give you some powerful reasons why you should subject everything to this sacred touchstone; and close by offering you some little advice how you may do this truly and profitably.

I. Permit me to urge upon you the bringing CERTAIN THINGS "to the law and to the testimony."

1. First, I would have you bring the ideas engendered in you by your early training, to the test of the Book of God. It is very much the

custom of people to say, "Was I not born in the Church of England? Ought I not therefore to continue in it?" Or, on the other hand, "Was not my grandmother an Immersionist? Ought not I, therefore, to continue in the Baptist denomination?" God forbid that I should say aught against your venerable and pious relatives; or that you should pay any disrespect to their teaching! We always respect their advice, even when we cannot receive it, for the sake of the person who offers it to us; knowing that their training, even should it have been mistaken, was nevertheless well meant. But we claim for ourselves, as men, that we should not be fed with doctrines as we were fed in our helpless infancy, with food chosen for us: we claim that we should have the right of judging whether the things which we have received and heard, are according to this Sacred Book; and if we find that in aught our training has been erroneous, we do not consider that we are violating any principle of affection, if we dare to come forth from our families, and join a denomination holding tenets far different from those which our parents had espoused. Let us each recollect that as God has given every man a head on his shoulders, every man is bound to use his own head, and not his father's. God gave your father judgment. Well and good: he judged for himself. He has given you a judgment: judge for yourself too. Say, concerning all that you have received in your early childhood, "Well, I will not lightly part with this, for it may be sterling gold; but at the same time, I will not blindly hoard it, for it may be counterfeit coin. I will sit down to the study of the Sacred Book, and I will endeavour, as far as I can, to unprejudice myself. I will read the Bible, just as if I had never heard any preacher, or had never been taught by a parent; and I will there endeavour to find out what God saith, and what God saith, be it what it may, I will believe and espouse, hoping that by his grace I may also feel the power of it

in my own soul.

2. Remember, also, to bring the preachers of the gospel to this standard. A great many of you know but very little about what gospel is. The general notion of the mass is, that we are everyone of us right; that though to-day I may contradict some one else, and some one else may contradict me, yet we are all right; and though it is treason to common sense to believe such a thing, yet this is a common idea. Some men always believe like the last speaker. Should they hear the most hyper of hyper-Calvinists, they believe with him the fulness of the doctrine of reprobation; should they hear on the morrow the lowest of Arminians, they believe with him the most universal of redemptions and the most powerful of free-wills. Should they then hear the genuine Calvinist, who preaches that man hath destroyed himself, but in God is his help found, perhaps then they think the man contradicts himself, and for once they rebel against their teachers. But it is probable that should they hear such a person again, they will be easily reconciled to seeming contradictions; for to them it is just the man's appearance, just the man's way of saying the thing, that they like, and not the thing that he says. Just as I have heard of holy Mr. Durham, the writer of that sweet book on Solomon's Song. If I had lived in his time, I should never, I think, have wanted to hear any other preacher; I would have sat, both by night and day, to receive the sweet droppings of his honied lips. But in his time there was a young preacher, whose name is totally forgotten, whose church was crowded to the door, and Mr. Durham's meeting-house hard by forsaken. The reason of that is, because the mass of people do not lay hold upon what is said, but upon how it is said: and if it is said smartly, said prettily, and said forcibly, that is enough for them, though it be a lie; but if the truth be spoken, that they will not receive, unless it be attended by some

graces of oratory and eloquence. Now, the Christian that has got above his babyhood, does not care about how the man says it; it is the thing that is said that he cares about. All he asks is, "Did he speak the truth?" He just gets hold of the corn. To him the straw is nothing, and the chaff less. He cares not for the trimming of the feast, nor for the exquisite workmanship of the dish; he only cares for that which is solid food for himself.

Now, my dear friends, I claim for myself, when I enter this pulpit, the right of being heard; but I do not claim the right of being believed, unless the words that I speak shall be in accordance with this Sacred Book. I desire you to serve me as I would have you serve everybody else--bring us each "to the law and to the testimony." I thank God, of my Bible I have no need to be ashamed. I sometimes am ashamed of this translation of it, when I see how, in some important points, it is not true to God's Word; but of God's own Word I can say, it is the man of my right hand, my meditation both day and night; and if there be aught I preach that is contrary to this Word, trample it in the mire, spit upon it, and despise it. The truth lieth here. It is not what I say, but what my God saith, that you are demanded to receive. Put myself and put all my brethren into the sieve; cast us each into the fire; put us into the crucible of truth; and what is not according to God's Word must be consumed like dross.

3. There is another class of men quite contrary to those I have referred to. These men are their own preachers; they believe no one but themselves, and without knowing it, there is every reason for them to hate the Pope, because "two of a trade never agree," they being Popes themselves. These persons, if they hear a truth preached, judge of it not by the Bible, but by what they think the truth ought to be. I have heard a person, for instance, say, when he has heard the doctrine of

Election, or of particular Redemption, "Well, now the doctrine does not please me, I do not like it." And then he begins to urge some objection which he has forged upon his own anvil, yet never trying to quote a Scripture text to refute it, if he can; never turning to some old saying of the Prophets, and endeavouring to find out that the doctrine was an error, but only judging of it by his own opinion, by his wishes as to what the truth ought to be. What would you think of a man who should say to an astronomer, "Now, it is of no use your telling me that the constellation of Scorpio of such-and-such a shape; I tell you, I do not like the look of it. My dear fellow, I don't think that the constellation of Scorpio ought to have been made that shape; and I think this star ought to have been put just here, instead of there: and then all would be well." The astronomer would simply smile at him, and say, "Your opinion does not signify, because it does not alter facts. If you think I am wrong, your right way to disprove me is not to say where you think the stars ought to be, but just come and take a look through my telescope and see where the stars are." now, it is just the same with the truth. People say, "I do not like such a truth." That is no refutation of it. The question is,--Is it in the Bible? Because if it is there, like it or not like it, it is a fact, and all the minister has to do is to report the facts that he finds there. Why, the astronomer cannot put the stars in a row, like a row of gas lights, to please you; and the minister cannot put the doctrines into a shape in which you would wish to have them cast. All the astronomer does is to map them out, and say, "That is how they are in the sky:" you must then look at the sky, and see whether it is so. All I have to do is to tell you what I find in the Bible; if you do not like it, remember, that is no refutation of it, nor do I care for your liking it or not liking it; the only thing is, Is it in the Bible? If it is there I shall not stop

to prove it. I do not come here to prove a doctrine at all. If it is in the Bible, it is true: there it is; I tell it out; reject it, and you do so to your own condemnation; for you yourself believe the Bible to be true, and I prove it to be there, and therefore it must be true. Should it be according to thy mind? Wouldst thou like to have a Bible made for the devices of thine own heart? If it were, it would be a worthless thing. Wouldst thou desire to have a Gospel according to thy wishes? Then with some of you it would be a Gospel that allowed lasciviousness. Wouldst thou wish to have a revelation made that should pamper thee in thy lusts, and indulge thee in thy pride? If so, this know, God will never stoop to feed thy haughtiness or wantonness. The Bible is a God-like book; he demands thy faith in it; and though thou kickest against it, this stone can never be broken; but, mark thee, thou mayest be broken upon it, yea, it may fall upon thee and bruise thee to powder. Bring, then, I beseech thee, your own thoughts and your own sentiments to the touchstone of the truth; for "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

4. And just do the same with all books that you read. This is the age of book-making and book-writing. Now-a-days, what with periodical literature and the books upon our shelves, our Bibles do not get much read. I will tell you a truthful story as it was told to me yesterday. There was a young man, who is now a student for the ministry, so extraordinarily ignorant was he of his own Bible, that upon hearing a young minister mention the story of Nebuchadnezzar's being driven out from men, until his nails did grow like birds' claws, and his hair like eagles' feathers, he said to the minister at the close of the sermon, "Well, that was a queer story you told the people, certainly: where did you fish that up?" "Why," said the minister, "have you never read your Bible? Can you not find it in the Book of Daniel?" The young man had

read a great many other things, but never read his Bible through, and yet was going to be a teacher of it! Now, I fear that the same ignorance is very current in many persons. They do not know what is in the Bible: they could tell you what is in the Churchman's Penny, or the Christian's Penny, or the Churchman's Magazine, or the Wesleyan Magazine, or the Baptist Magazine, or the Evangelical Magazine, and all that; but there is one old magazine, a magazine of arms, a magazine of wealth, that they forget to read--that old-fashioned book called the Bible. "Ah!" said one, when he came to die, who had been a great classic, "I would to God I had spent as much time in reading my Bible as I have spent in reading Livy! Would to God I had been exact in my criticisms of Holy Scripture as I was in criticisms upon Horace!" Oh! that we were wise, to give the Bible the largest share of our time, and ever to continue reading it, both by day and night, that we might be as trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season! Let us remember, as ministers of the Gospel, what M'Cheyne beautifully said; "Depend upon it," said he, "it is God's Word, not man's comment upon God's Word, that saves souls;" and I have marked, that if ever we have a conversion at any time, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the conversion is rather traceable to the text, or to some Scripture quoted in the sermon, than to any trite or original by the preacher. It is God's Word that breaks the fetters and sets the prisoner free; it is God's Word instrumentally that saves souls; and therefore let us bring everything to the touchstone. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

II. Now I pass to my second point. Brethren, let me show you some of the GOOD EFFECTS that you will derive from a minute and careful study of the law and testimony of God.

1. First, remember, that unless you study the Word of God, you will not be competent to detect error. A man may in your hearing preach downright falsehood, but you will not be qualified to judge concerning that falsehood unless you have studied the Word of God. You and I would not be fit to sit on the judgment bench of some of the superior courts of our land, because we are not acquainted with the intricacies of the law. We could not quote precedents, for we have not been learned therein. And so no man is able to judge concerning the thing that he hears, unless he is able to quote Scripture--unless he understands the Word of God, and is able to perceive and to know what it means.

But I hear some one say, that the Bible is so difficult a book that he is sure he never could understand it. Mark thee, man, the Bible is so plain a book that he that is willing to understand it may do so; it is so plain that he that runs may read, and read while he runs; yea, it is so plain, that the simpler a man is, the more easily he can understand it. All the learning that man ever received is rather a hindrance than a benefit when he comes for the first time to read the Word. Learning may untie many a knot afterwards; it may unravel many a mystery in after times; but we have heard deep-minded critics say, that at first they would have given all the world, if they could have thrown their learning aside, just to read the Bible as the humble cottager reads it, and believe it as God's Word, without any quibbles of criticism. You know how Mrs. Beecher Stowe represents Uncle Tom reading it. He could not read it fast; so he just spelt it over letter by letter, and word by word; and the Bible is one of the books, she says, that always gains by that way of reading. You recollect how he read it. "Let--not--your--hearts--be----;" and then he stopped at the long word; and he fumbled it out at last, and it was, "troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Why, it gets sweeter from your being a long

time reading it; and so far from your want of learning disqualifying you from understanding the Bible, the mass of it is all the more understandable from the simplicity of your heart. Come ye, and search the Scriptures; they are no such mysterious fables or learned volumes of hard words as some men say. This is no closed book, as the priest would tell us; it is a volume which the Sunday School child may understand, if the Spirit of God rests upon his heart. It is a book which the horny-handed workman may comprehend as well as the learned divine, and many such have become exceedingly wise therein. I say again, read your Bibles, that you may be qualified to detect error.

2. But again: I do not like a man who is always looking out for error. That man has got some error in his own heart, depend on it. They say, "Set a thief to catch a thief;" and it is very likely that there is some love of error in your heart, or else you would not be so ready to suspect it in other people. But let me give you another reason. Search your Bibles; for then, when you are in a matter of dispute you will be able to speak very confidently. There is nothing gives a man so much power amongst his fellows as confidence. If in conversation I am contradicted as to any sentiment that I propound, if I have got Scripture at my fingers' ends, why I laugh at my opponent, and though he be never so wise and has read ten times more books than I have ever seen, I just smile at him, if I can quote Scripture; for then I am confident--I am sure--I am certain about the matter--for "thus saith the Lord," is an argument that no man can answer. It makes a man seem very foolish when he has to speak in a diffident manner. I always think that certain elegant ministers, who are afraid of being called dogmatical, and who therefore propound the gospel as if they did not hardly like to say they were sure it was true--as if they thought so, they nearly thought so--still they did not think so quite enough to say

they knew, but leave it to their hearers. I always think they show the littleness of their minds in so doing. It may be a great thing to doubt, but it is a great thing to hold your tongue while you are doubting, and not to open your mouth till you believe, and then, when you do open your mouth, to say the thing you know is true, and stick to it, not as an opinion, but as an incontrovertible fact. No man will ever do much amongst his fellows till he can speak confidently what he knows to be revealed.

Now, Bible readers, you can attain this confidence, but you can get it nowhere else but at the foot of Scripture. Hear ministers alone, and ye shall be led to doubt, for one of them shall confound what his brought sought to prove; but read your Bibles, and when ye get the Word legible by its own light, impressed upon your own hearts by the Holy Spirit, then

"Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault your faith with treacherous art,
You'll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to your heart."

3. Furthermore, search the Scriptures, and bring everything you hear to this great test, because in so doing you will get a rich harvest of blessing to your own soul. I suppose there is scarce a text in Holy that has not been the instrument of the salvation of a soul. Now, "he that walketh among wise men will be wise;" and he that walks amongst the wise men that wrote Holy Scripture stands at least the highest probability of being made wise unto salvation. If I desired to put myself into the most likely place for the Lord to meet with me, I should prefer the house of prayer, for it is in preaching, that the Word is most blessed; but still I think I should equally desire the reading of the Scriptures; for I might pause over every verse, and say,

"Such a verse was blessed to so many souls; then, why not to me? I am at least in the pool of Bethesda; I am walking amongst its porches, and who can tell but that the angel will stir the pool of the Word, whilst I lie helplessly by the side of it, waiting for the blessing?" Yea, the truth is so great, that God has blessed every word of Scripture, that I remember a striking anecdote of the conversion of a man by a passage of Scripture that did not seem adapted for any such purpose. You know that chapter in Genesis, that very dull chapter, where we read, "and Methusaleh lived 969 years, and he died," and such a one lived so many years and he died? We have heard of its being read once in public; and a man who stood there, when he heard the words often repeated, "and he died," thought, "Ah! and I shall die!" And it was the first note of warning that had ever struck his seared conscience, and was the means under God of bringing him to Jesus. Now, read the Scriptures for this reason. If you desire salvation, and if you are panting after mercy, if you feel your sin and want salvation, come ye to this sea of love, to this treasury of light, to this wardrobe of rich clothing, to this fountain of bliss; come ye, and have your wants supplied out of the fulness of the riches of Jesus, who is "evidently set forth" in this Word, "crucified among you."

III. And now let me endeavour as briefly as I can, to urge upon you yet again the constant and perpetual reading of the Word of God, not only for the reasons that I have now propounded, but for others more important. Many false prophets have gone forth into the world: I beseech you, then, if ye would not be led astray, be diligent in the study of the Word of God. In certain parts of Dr. Livingstone's travels, he tells us, that his guides were either so ignorant or so determined to deceive him, that he could have done far better without them than with them; and he had constantly to refer to his compass,

lest he should be led astray. Now, I would not say a hard thing if I did not believe it true; but I do solemnly think that there are some professed teachers of the Word, who are either so ignorant of spiritual things in their own hearts, or else so determined to preach anything but Christ, that you might do better without them than with them; and hence you have an absolute necessity to turn perpetually to this great compass by which alone you can steer your way. I scorn a charity that after all is not charity. I must tell you what I believe. Some would have me now stand here and say, "All that are eminent preachers are most certainly truthful preachers." now, I cannot say it. If at any time I hear a man preach the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, through the merits of Christ, I give him my hand, and call him my brother, because he is right in the main thing; but when I do that I am long way from endorsing many other of his sentiments. It may be that he denies the effectual power of the Spirit in conversion; it may be he does not hold the doctrine of the entire depravity of the human race--does not insist upon free sovereign grace--does not hold forth and teach the doctrine of substitution and satisfaction through Christ. Now, I will not so befool myself as to tell you that wherein that man differs from the Word of God he is true. No doubt that man may be blessed for your salvation; but there may he a curse upon his ministry notwithstanding; so that while you may be saved by it, you may be all your lifetime subject to bondage through it, and you may go groaning, where you ought to have gone singing--crying, where you might have had a sacred burst of joy. You sit under such-and-such a man who has been made the means of your conversion; but he tells you that your salvation depends upon yourself, and not upon the power of Christ. He insists upon it that you may, after all, fall from grace and be a cast-away; he tells you that although you are saved, God did no more love you than he

loved Judas; that there is no such thing as special love, no such thing, in fact, as Election. He tells you that others might have come to Christ, as well as yourself--that there was no extraordinary power put out in your case, more than in any others. Well, if he does not lead you to glory in man, to magnify the flesh, and sometimes to trust in yourself, or else lead you to distress yourself where there is no need for distress, I should marvel indeed, inasmuch as his doctrine is false, and must mislead you. It may be the means of your salvation, and yet it may fail in may points to minister to your edification and comfort. Therefore, if ye would not be thus misled, search ye the Scriptures.

But ah! there is a solemn danger of being absolutely misled. Ye may hear all that the minister says, but he may forget to tell you the vital part of the truth; he may be one who delights in ceremonies, but does not insist upon the grace therein; he may hold forth to you the rubric and sacrament, and tell you there is efficacy in obedience to the one, and attention to the other, and he may forget to tell you that "Except a man be born again of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now, under such a ministry you may not only be misled, but alas! you may be destroyed altogether. He may be one who insists much upon morality of life; he may tell you to be honest, just, and sober; but mayhap he may forget to tell you that there is a deeper work required than mere morality; he may film the surface over, and never send the lancet into the deep ulcer of your heart's corruption. He may give you some palliating dose, some medicine that may still your conscience; he may never say to you, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" he may be one of those that prophesy smooth things, that does not like to disturb you. And oh! remember that your minister may be the instrument in the hands of Satan of blindfolding your eyes and leading

you to hell, while all the while you thought you were going to heaven. Ah! and hear me yet: I do not exclude myself from my own censure. It may be possible--I pray God it may not be so--that I myself may have mistaken the reading of the Holy Scripture, that I may have preached to you "another gospel which is not another;" and therefore I demand of you that my own teaching, and the teaching of every other man, whether by pen or lip, should be always brought "to the law and to the testimony," lest we should deceive you and lead you astray. Ah! my hearers, it would be an awful thing, if I should be the means of leading any of you into the gulf. Although in some measure your blood must be upon my head, if I deceive you, yet I beseech you, remember that I am not further responsible for your souls than my power can carry me. If you are misled by me, after this solemn declaration of mine, you shall be as verily guilty as if I had not misguided you; for I charge you, as ye love your own souls, as ye would make sure work for eternity, put no more trust in me than you would in any other man, only so far as I can prove, by infallible testimony of God's Word, that what I have said is true. Stand ye always to this. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." I heard a story once that I remember to have told before, of some young person going out of the place, and saying, "Well, I don't like Mr. Spurgeon at all; he is so high in doctrine; he said so-and-so." And then the young body quoted a text out of the Bible as a very wicked thing that I had said--something about the potter having power over the clay. So the friend who was with her said, "It was Paul said that, not Mr. Spurgeon." "Ah!" said she, "and I think the Apostle Paul was a great deal too high too." Well, we are very glad to incur censure of that sort, and will not at all object to go with Paul wherever he may go; but we do beseech you never at any

time to take our bare saying for a thing, but always to turn to your Bible and see whether it is so. That is a good habit some Christian fathers have; when the boys and girls come home, they say, "Well, now, what was the text?" And then the father wants them to tell over what the minister has said; and even the small boy knows something, and tells something or other that the minister said from the pulpit. Then the fathers turns to his Bible to see whether these things are so. Then he endeavours to explain the hard things; so that they become like those noble Bereans, who were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they searched the Scriptures, whether those things were so. And now I may just hint at one or two peculiarities in that which I have ever preached to you, which peculiarities I desire you most anxiously to inquire into. Now, take nothing at second hand from me, but try all of it by the written Word. I believe, and I teach that all men by nature are lost by Adam's fall. See whether that be true or not. I hold that men have so gone astray that no man either will or can come to Christ except the Father draw him. If I be wrong, find me out. I believe that God, before all worlds, chose to himself a people, whom no man can number, for whom the Saviour died, to whom the Holy Spirit is given, and who will infallibly be saved. You may dislike that doctrine; I do not care: see if it is not in the Bible. See if it does not there declare that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," and so on. I believe that every elect child of God must assuredly be brought by converting grace from the ruins of the fall, and must assuredly be "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation," beyond the hazard of ever totally falling away. If I be wrong there, get your Bibles out, and refute me in your own houses. I hold it to be a fact that every man who is converted will lead a holy life, and yet at the same time will put no dependence on his holy life,

but trust only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. And I hold, that every man that believes, is in duty bound to be immersed. I hold the baptism of infants to be a lie and a heresy; but I claim for that great ordinance of God, Believer's Baptism, that it should have the examination of Scripture. I hold, that to none but believers may immersion be given, and that all believers are in duty bound to be immersed. If I am wrong, well and good; do not believe me; but if I am right, obey the Word with reverence. I will have no error, even upon a point which some men think to be unimportant; for a grain of truth is a diamond, and a grain of error may be of serious consequence to us, to our injury and hurt. I hold then, that none but believers have any right to the Lord's Supper; that it is wrong to give the Lord's Supper indiscriminately to all, and that none but Christians have a right either to the doctrines, the benefits, or the ordinances of God's house. If these things be not so, condemn me as you please; but if the Bible is with me, your condemnation is of no avail.

And now I charge you that are now present to read your Bibles, for one thing. Read your Bibles to know what the Bible says about you; and some of you when you turn the leaves over, will find the Bible says, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." If that startles you, turn over another page, and read this verse--"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and when you have read that, turn to another and read, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." I pray you, put not away your Bibles till their dust condemns you; but take them out, bend your knees, seek for the Spirit of divine teaching, and turn ye these pages with diligent search, and see if ye can find there the salvation of your souls, through our Lord Jesus Christ. May the blessing of God rest upon you in so doing, through

Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter 8

The Death of Christ

A Sermon

(No. 173)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 24, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."--Isaiah 53:10.

WHAT myriads of eyes are casting their glances at the sun! What multitudes of men lift up their eyes, and behold the starry orbs of heaven! They are continually watched by thousands--but there is one great transaction in the world's history, which every day commands far more spectators than that sun which goeth forth like a bridegroom, strong to run his race. There is one great event, which every day attracts more admiration than do the sun, and moon, and stars, when they march in their courses. That event is, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. To it, the eyes of all the saints who lived before the Christian era were always directed; and backwards, through the thousand years of history, the eyes of all modern saints are looking. Upon Christ, the angels in heaven perpetually gaze. "Which things the angels desire to look into," said the apostle. Upon Christ, the myriad eyes of the redeemed are perpetually fixed; and thousands of pilgrims, through this world of tears, have no higher object for their faith, and no better desire for their vision, than to see Christ as he is in heaven, and in communion to behold his person. Beloved, we shall have many with

us, whilst this morning we turn our face to the Mount of Calvary. We shall not be solitary spectators of the fearful tragedy of our Saviour's death: we shall but dart our eyes to that place which is the focus of heaven's joy and delight, the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Taking our text, then, as a guide, we propose to visit Calvary, hoping to have the help of the Holy Spirit whilst we look upon him who died upon the cross. I would have you notice this morning, first of all, the cause of Christ's death--"It pleased the Lord to bruise him." "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him," saith the original; "he hath put him to grief." Secondly, the reason of Christ's death--"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Christ died because he was an offering for sin. And then, thirdly, the effects and consequences of Christ's death. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Come, Sacred Spirit, now, whilst we attempt to speak on these matchless themes.

I. First, we have THE ORIGIN OF CHRIST'S DEATH. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to griefs." He who reads Christ's life, as a mere history, traces the death of Christ to the enmity of the Jews, and to the fickle character of the Roman governor. In this he acteth justly, for the crime and sin of the Saviour's death must lay at the door of manhood. This race of ours became a deicide and slew the Lord, and nailed its Saviour to a tree. But he who reads the Bible with the eye of faith, desiring to discover its hidden secrets, sees something more in the Saviour's death than Roman cruelty, or Jewish malice: he sees the solemn decree of God fulfilled by men, who were the ignorant, but guilty instruments of its accomplishment. He looks beyond the Roman spear and nail, beyond the Jewish taunt and jeer, up to the Sacred Fount, whence all things flow, and traces the crucifixion of Christ to

the breast of Deity. He believes with Peter--"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." We dare not impute to God the sin, but at the same time the fact, with all its marvelous effects in the world's redemption, we must ever trace to the Sacred Fountain of divine love. So cloth our prophet. He says, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him. He overlooks both Pilate and Herod, and traces it to the heavenly Father, the first Person in the Divine Trinity. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief."

Now, beloved, there be many who think that God the Father is at best but an indifferent spectator of salvation. Others do belie him still more. They look upon Him as an unloving, severe Being, who had no love to the human race, and could only be made loving by the death and agonies of our Saviour. Now, this is a foul libel upon the fair and glorious grace of God the Father, to whom for ever be honor: for Jesus Christ did not die to make God loving, but he died because God was loving.

"Twas not to make Jehovah's love
Toward his people flame,
That Jesus from the throne above,
A suffering man became.
"Twas not the death which he endured,
Nor all the pangs he bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was love before."

Christ was sent into the world by his Father, as the consequence of the Father's affection for his people. Yea, he "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The fact is, that the Father as much

decreed salvation, as much effected it, and as much delighted in it, as did either God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. And when we speak of the Saviour of the world, we must always include in that word, if we speak in a large sense, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, for all these three, as one God, do save us from our sins. The text puts away every hard thought concerning the Father, by telling us that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Jesus Christ. The death of Christ is traceable to God the Father. Let us try if we can see it is so.

1. First it is traceable in decree. God, the one God of heaven and earth, hath the book of destiny entirely in his power. In that book there is nothing written by a stranger's hand. The penmanship of the solemn book of predestination is from beginning to end entirely divine.

"Chained to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel's form and size
Drawn by th' eternal pen."

No inferior hand hath sketched even so much as the least minute parts of providence. It was all, from its Alpha to its Omega, from its divine preface to its solemn finis, marked out, designed, sketched, and planned by the mind of the all-wise, all-knowing God. Hence, not even Christ's death was exempt from it. He that wings an angel and guides a sparrow, he that protects the hairs of our head from falling prematurely to the ground, was not likely, when he took notice of such little things, to omit in his solemn decrees the greatest wonder of earth's miracles, the death of Christ. No; the blood-stained page of that book, the page which makes both past and future glorious with golden words,--that blood-stained page, I say, was as much written of Jehovah, as any other. He determined that Christ should be born of the Virgin Mary, that he should suffer under Pontius Pilate, that he should

descend into Hades, that thence he should rise again, leading captivity captive, and then should reign for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Nay, I know not but that I shall have Scripture for my warrant when I say, that this is the very core of predestination, and that the death of Christ is the very center and main-spring by which God did fashion all his other decrees, making this the bottom and foundation-stone upon which the sacred architecture should be builded. Christ was put to death by the absolute foreknowledge and solemn decree of God the Father, and in this sense "it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief."

2. But a little further, Christ's coming into the world to die was the effect of the Father's will and pleasure. Christ came not into this world unsent. He had laid in Jehovah's bosom from before all worlds, eternally delighting himself in his Father, and being himself his Father's eternal joy. "In the fullness of time" God did rend his Son from his bosom, his only-begotten Son, and freely delivered him up for us all. Herein was matchless, peerless love, that the offended judge should permit his co-equal Son to suffer the pains of death for the redemption of a rebellious people. I want your imaginations for one minute to picture a scene of olden times. There is a bearded patriarch, who rises early in the morning and awakes his son, a young man full of strength, and bids him arise and follow him. They hurry from the house silently and noiselessly, before the mother is awake. They go three days, journey with their men; until they come to the Mount, of which the Lord hath spoken. You know the patriarch. The name of Abraham is always fresh in our memories. On the way, that patriarch speaks not one solitary word to his son. His heart is too full for utterance. He is overwhelmed with grief. God has commanded him to take his son, his only son, and slay him upon the mountain as a sacrifice. They go together;

and who shall paint the unutterable anguish of the father's soul, whilst he walks side by side with that beloved son, of whom he is to be the executioner? The third day has arrived; the servants are bidden to stay at the foot of the hill, whilst they go to worship God yonder. Now, can any mind imagine how the father's grief must overflow all the banks of his soul, when, as he walked up that hill-side, his son said to him, "Father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Can you conceive how he stifled his emotions, and, with sobs, exclaimed, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." See! the father has communicated to his son the fact that God has demanded his life. Isaac, who might have struggled and escaped from his father, declares that he is willing to die, if God hath decreed it. The father takes his son, binds his hands behind his back, piles up the stones, makes an altar, lays the wood, and has his fire ready. And now where is the artist that can depict the anguish of the fathers countenance, when the knife is unsheathed, and he holds it up, ready to slay his son? But here the curtain falls. Now the black scene vanishes at the sound of a voice from heaven. The ram caught in the thicket supplies the substitute, and faith's obedience need go no further. Ah! my brethren, I want to take you from this scene to a far greater one. What faith and obedience made man do, that love constrained God himself to do. He had but one son, that son his own heart's delight: he covenanted to yield him up for our redemption, nor did he violate his promise; for, when the fullness of time was come, he sent his Son to be born of the Virgin Mary, that he might suffer for the sins of man. O! can ye tell the greatness of that love, which made the everlasting God not only put his Son upon the altar, but actually do the deed, and thrust the sacrificial knife into his Son's heart? Can you think how overwhelming must have been the love of God toward the human race, when

he completed in act what Abraham only did in intention? Look ye there, and see the place where his only Son hung dead upon the cross, the bleeding victim of awakened justice! Here is love indeed; and here we see how it was, that it pleased the Father to bruise him.

3. This allows me to push my text just one point further. Beloved, it is not only true that God did design and did permit with willingness the death of Christ; it is moreover, true that the unutterable agonies that clothed the death of the Saviour with superhuman terror, were the effect of the Father's bruising of Christ in very act and deed. There is a martyr in prison: the chains are on his wrists, and yet he sings. It has been announced to him that to-morrow is his burning day. He claps his hands right merrily, and smiles while he says, "It will be sharp work to-morrow, I shall breakfast below on fiery tribulations, but afterward I will sup with Christ. Tomorrow is my wedding-day, the day for which I have long panted, when I shall sign the testimony of my life by a glorious deaths." The time is come; the men with the halberts precede him through the streets. Mark the serenity of the martyrs countenance. He turns to some who look upon him, and exclaims, "I value these iron chains far more than if they had been of gold; it is a sweet thing to die for Christ. There are a few of the boldest of the saints gathered round the stake, and as he unrobes himself, ere he stands upon the fagots to receive his doom, he tells them that it is a joyous thing to be a soldier of Christ, to be allowed to give his body to be burned; and he shakes hands with them, and bids them "Good by" with merry cheer. One would think he were going to a bridal, rather than to be burned. He steps upon the fagots; the chain is put about his middle; and after a brief word of prayer, as soon as the fire begins to ascend, he speaks to the people with manful boldness. But hark! he sings whilst the fagots are crackling and the smoke is blowing upward. He sings, and

when his nether parts are burned, he still goes on chanting sweetly some psalm of old. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Picture another scene. There is the Saviour going to his cross, all weak and wan with suffering; his soul is sick and sad within him. There is no divine composure there. So sad is his heart, that he faints in the streets. The Son of God faints beneath a cross that many a criminal might have carried. They nail him to the tree. There is no song of praise. He is lifted up in the air, and there he hangs preparatory to his death. You hear no shout of exultation. There is a stern compression of his face, as if unutterable agony were tearing his heart--as if over again Gethsemane were being acted on the cross--as if his soul were still saying, "If it be possible let this cross pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Hark! he speaks. Will he not sing sweeter songs than ever came from martyr's lips? Ah! no; it is an awful wail of woe that can never be imitated. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The martyrs said not that: God was with them. Confessors of old cried not so, when they came to die. They shouted in their fires, and praised God on their racks. Why this? Why doth the Saviour suffer so? Why, beloved, it was because the Father bruised him. That sunshine of God's countenance that has cheered many a dying saint, was withdrawn from Christ; the consciousness of acceptance with God, which has made many a holy man espouse the cross with joy, was not afforded to our Redeemer, and therefore he suffered in thick darkness of mental agony. Read the 22nd Psalm, and learn how Jesus suffered. Pause over the solemn words in the 1st, 2nd, 6th, and following verses. Underneath the church are the ever lasting arms; but underneath Christ there were no arms at all, but his Father's hand

pressed heavily against him; the upper and the nether mill-stones of divine wrath pressed and bruised him; and not one drop of joy or consolation was afforded to him. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." This, my brethren, was the climax of the Saviour's woe, that his Father turned away from him, and put him to grief.

Thus have I expounded the first part of the subject--the origin of our Saviour's worst sufferings, the Father's pleasure.

II. Our second head must explain the first, or otherwise it is an insolvable mystery how God should bruise his Son, who was perfect innocence, while poor fallible confessors and martyrs have had no such bruising from him in the time of their trial. WHAT WAS THE REASON OF THE SAVIOUR'S SUFFERING? We are told here, "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Christ was thus troubled, because his soul was an offering for sin. Now, I am going to be as plain as I can, while I preach over again the precious doctrine of the atonement of Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ was an offering for sin, in the sense of a substitute. God longed to save; but, if such a word may be allowed, Justice tied his hands. "I must be just," said God; "that is a necessity of my nature. Stern as fate, and fast as immutability, is the truth that I must be just. But then my heart desires to forgive--to pass by man's transgressions and pardon them. How can it be done? Wisdom stepped in, and said, "It shall be done thus;" and Love agreed with Wisdom. "Christ Jesus, the Son of God, shall stand in man's place, and he shall be offered upon Mount Calvary instead of man. Now, mark: when you see Christ going up the Mount of Doom, you see man going there: when you see Christ hurled upon his back, upon the wooden cross, you see the whole company of his elect there; and when you see the nails driven through his blessed hands and feet, it is the whole body

of his Church who there, in their substitute, are nailed to the tree. And now the soldiers lift the cross, and dash it into the socket prepared for it. His bones are every one of them dislocated, and his body is thus torn with agonies which can not be described. Tis manhood suffering there; tis the Church suffering there, in the substitute. And when Christ dies, you are to look upon the death of Christ, not as his own dying merely, but as the dying of all those for whom he stood as the scape-goat and the substitute. It is true, Christ died really himself; it is equally true that he did not die for himself, but died as the substitute, in the room, place, and stead of all believers. When you die you will die for yourselves; when Christ died, he died for you, if you be a believer in him. When you pass through the gates of the grave, you go there solitary and alone; you are not the representative of a body of men, but you pass through the gates of death as an individual; but, remember, when Christ went through the sufferings of death, he was the representative Head of all his people.

Understand, then, the sense in which Christ was made a sacrifice for sin. But here lies the glory of this matter. It was as a substitute for sin that he did actually and literally suffer punishment for the sin of all his elect. When I say this, I am not to be understood as using any figure whatever, but as saying actually what I mean. Man for his sin was condemned to eternal fire; when God took Christ to be the substitute, it is true, he did not send Christ into eternal fire, but he poured upon him grief so desperate, that it was a valid payment for even an eternity of fire. Man was condemned to live forever in hell. God did not send Christ forever into hell; but he put on Christ, punishment that was equivalent for that. Although he did not give Christ to drink the actual hells of believers, yet he gave him a quid pro quo--something that was equivalent thereunto. He took the cup of

Christ's agony, and he put in there, suffering, misery, and anguish such as only God can imagine or dream of, that was the exact equivalent for all the suffering, all the woe, and all the eternal tortures of every one that shall at last stand in heaven, bought with the blood of Christ. And you say, "Did Christ drink it all to its dregs?" Did he suffer it all? Yes, my brethren, he took the cup, and

"At one triumphant draught of love,
He drank damnation dry."

He suffered all the horror of hell: in one pelting shower of iron wrath it fell upon him, with hail-stones bigger than a talent; and he stood until the black cloud had emptied itself completely. There was our debt; huge and immense; he paid the utmost farthing of whatever his people owed; and now there is not so much as a doit or a farthing due to the justice of God in the way of punishment from any believer; and though we owe God gratitude, though we owe much to his love, we owe nothing to his justice; for Christ in that hour took all our sins, past, present, and to come, and was punished for them all there and then, that we might never be punished, because he suffered in our stead. Do you see, then, how it was that God the Father bruised him? Unless he had so done the agonies of Christ could not have been an equivalent for our sufferings; for hell consists in the hiding of God's face from sinners, and if God had not hidden his face from Christ, Christ could not--I see not how he could--have endured any suffering that could have been accepted as an equivalent for the woes and agonies of his people.

Methinks I heard some one say, "Do you mean us to understand this atonement that you have now preached as being a literal fact?" I say, most solemnly, I do. There are in the world many theories of atonement; but I can not see any atonement in any one, except in this doctrine of

substitution. Many divines say that Christ did something when he died that enabled God to be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. What that something is they do not tell us. They believe in an atonement made for every body; but then, their atonement is just this. They believe that Judas was atoned for just as much as Peter; they believe that the damned in hell were as much an object of Jesus Christ's satisfaction as the saved in heaven; and though they do not say it in proper words, yet they must mean it, for it is a fair inference, that in the case of multitudes, Christ died in vain, for he died for them all, they say; and yet so ineffectual was his dying for them, that though he died for them they are damned afterward. Now, such an atonement I despise--I reject it. I may be called Antinomian or Calvinist for preaching a limited atonement; but I had rather believe a limited atonement that is efficacious for all men for whom it was intended, than an universal atonement that is not efficacious for anybody, except the will of man be joined with it. Why, my brethren, if we were only so far atoned for by the death of Christ that any one of us might afterward save himself, Christ's atonement were not worth a farthing, for there is no man of us can save himself--no, not under the gospel; for if I am to be saved by faith, if that faith is to be my own act, unassisted by the Holy Spirit, I am as unable to save myself by faith as to save myself by good works. And after all, though men call this a limited atonement, it is as effectual as their own fallacious and rotten redemptions can pretend to be. But do you know the limit of it? Christ hath bought a "multitude that no man can number." The limit of it is just this: He hath died for sinners; whoever in this congregation inwardly and sorrowfully knows himself to be a sinner, Christ died for him; whoever seeks Christ, shall know Christ died for him; for our sense of need of Christ, and our seeking after Christ, are

infallible proofs that Christ died for us. And, mark, here is something substantial. The Arminian says Christ died for him; and then, poor man, he has but small consolation therefrom, for he says, "Ah! Christ died for me; that does not prove much. It only proves I may be saved if I mind what I am after. I may perhaps forget myself; I may run into sin and I may perish. Christ has done a good deal for me, but not quite enough, unless I do something." But the man who receives the Bible as it is, he says, "Christ died for me, then my eternal life is sure. I know," says he, "that Christ can not be punished in a man's stead, and the man be punished afterwards. No," says he, "I believe in a just God, and if God be just, he will not punish Christ first, and then punish men afterwards. No; my Saviour died, and now I am free from every demand of God's vengeance, and I can walk through this world secure; no thunderbolt can smite me, and I can die absolutely certain that for me there is no flame of hell, and no pit digged; for Christ, my ransom, suffered in my stead, and, therefore, am I clean delivered. Oh! glorious doctrine! I would wish to die preaching it! What better testimony can we bear to the love and faithfulness of God than the testimony of a substitution eminently satisfactory for all them that believe on Christ? I will here quote the testimony of that pre-eminently profound divine, Dr. John Owen:--"Redemption is the freeing of a man from misery by the intervention of a ransom. Now, when a ransom is paid for the liberty of a prisoner, does not justice demand that he should have and enjoy the liberty so purchased for him by a valuable consideration? If I should pay a thousand pounds for a man's deliverance from bondage to him that retains him, who hath power to set him free, and is contented with the price I give, were it not injurious to me and the poor prisoner that his deliverance be not accomplished? Can it possibly be conceived that there should be a redemption of men,

and those men not redeemed? That a price should be paid and the ransom not consummated? Yet all this must be made true, and innumerable other absurdities, if universal redemption be asserted. A price is paid for all, yet few delivered; the redemption of all consummated, yet, few of them redeemed; the judge satisfied, the jailer conquered, and yet the prisoners inthralled! Doubtless 'universal,' and 'redemption,' where the greatest part of men perish, are as irreconcilable as 'Roman, and 'Catholic.' If there be a universal redemption of all, then all men are redeemed. If they are redeemed, then are they delivered from all misery, virtually or actually, whereunto they were inthralled, and that by the intervention of a ransom. Why, then, are not all saved? In a word, the redemption wrought by Christ being the full deliverance of the persons redeemed from all misery, wherein they were inwrapped, by the price of his blood, it can not possibly be conceived to be universal unless all be saved: so that the opinion of the Universalists is unsuitable to redemption."

I pause once more; for I hear some timid soul say--"But, sir, I am afraid I am not elect, and if so, Christ did not die for me." Stop sir! Are you a sinner? Do you feel it? Has God, the Holy Spirit, made you feel that you are a lost sinner? Do you want salvation? If you do not want it it is no hardship that it is not provided for you; but if you really feel that you want it, you are God's elect. If you have a desire to be saved, a desire given you by the Holy Spirit, that desire is a token for good. If you have begun believingly to pray for salvation, you have therein a sure evidence that you are saved. Christ was punished for you. And if now you can say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling."

you may be as sure you are God's elect as you are sure of your own

existence; for this is the infallible proof of election--a sense of need and a thirst after Christ.

III. And now I have just to conclude by noticing the BLESSED EFFECTS of the Saviour's death. On this I shall be very brief.

The first effect of the Saviour's death is, "He shall see his seed." Men shall be saved by Christ. Men have offspring by life; Christ had an offspring by death. Men die and leave their children, and they see not their seed; Christ lives, and every day sees his seed brought into the unity of the faith. One effect of Christ's death is the salvation of multitudes. Mark, not a chance salvation. When Christ died the angel did not say, as some have represented him, "Now by his death many may be saved;" the word of prophecy had quenched all "buts" and "peradventures;" "By his righteousness he shall justify many. There was not so much as an atom of chance work in the Saviour's death. Christ knew what he bought when he died; and what he bought he will have--that, and no more, and no less. There is no effect of Christ's death that is left to peradventure. "Shalls" and "wills" made the covenant fast: Christ's bloody death shall effect its solemn purpose.

Every heir of grace shall meet around the throne,
"Shall bless the wonders of his grace,
And make his glories known."

The second effect of Christ's death is, "He shall prolong his days." Yes, bless his name, when he died he did not end his life. He could not long be held a prisoner in the tomb. The third morning came, and the conqueror, rising from his sleep burst the iron bonds of death, and came forth from his prison house, no more to die. He waited his forty days, and then, with shouts of sacred song, he "led captivity captive, and ascended up on high." "In that he died he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth he liveth unto God," no more to die.

"Now by his Father's side he Sits,
And there triumphant reigns,"
the conqueror over death and hell.
And, last of all, by Christ's death the Father's good pleasure was effected and prospered. God's good pleasure is, that that this world shall one day be totally redeemed from sin; God's good pleasure is, that this poor planet, so long swathed in darkness, shall soon shine out in brightness, like a new-born sun. Christ's death hath done it. The stream that flowed from his side on Calvary shall cleanse the world from all its blackness. That hour of mid-day darkness was the rising of a new sun of righteousness, which shall never cease to shine upon the earth. Yes, the hour is coming when swords and spears shall be forgotten things--when the harness of war and the pageantry of pomp shall all be laid aside for the food of the worm or the contemplation of the curious. The hour approacheth when old Rome shall shake upon her seven hills, when Mohammed's crescent shall wane to wax no more, when all the gods of the heathens shall lose their thrones and be cast out to the moles and the bats; and then, when from the equator to the poles Christ shall be honored, the Lord paramount of earth, when from land to land, from the river even to the ends of the earth, one King shall reign, one shout shall be raised, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Then, my brethren, shall it be seen what Christ's death has accomplished, for "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

Chapter 9

A Call to the Unconverted

A Sermon

(No. 174)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, November 8, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."--Galatians 3:10.

MY HEARER, ART THOU a believer, or no? for, according to thine answer to that question, must be the style in which I shall address thee to-night. I would ask thee as a great favor to thine own soul, this evening to divest thyself of the thought that thou art sitting in a chapel, and hearing a minister who is preaching to a large congregation. Think thou art sitting in thine own house, in thine own chair, and think that I am standing by thee, with thy hand in mine, and am speaking personally to thee, and to thee alone; for that is how I desire to preach this night to each of my hearers--one by one. I want thee, then, in the sight of God, to answer me this all important and solemn question before I begin--Art thou in Christ, or art thou not? Hast thou fled for refuge to him who is the only hope for sinners? or art thou yet a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, ignorant of God, and of his holy Gospel? Come--be honest with thine own heart, and let thy conscience say yes, or no, for one of these two things thou art to-night--thou art either under the wrath of God, or thou art delivered from it. Thou art to-night either an heir of wrath, or an inheritor of the kingdom of grace. Which of these two? Make no "ifs" or "ahs" in

your answer. Answer straight forward to thine own soul; and if there be any doubt whatever about it, I beseech thee rest not till that doubt be resolved. Do not take advantage of that doubt to thyself, but rather take a disadvantage from it. Depend upon it, thou art more likely to be wrong than thou art to be right; and now put thyself in the scale, and if thou dost not kick the beam entirely, but if thou hangest between the two, and thou sayest, "I know not which," better that thou shouldst decide for the worst, though it should grieve thyself, than that thou shouldst decide for the better, and be deceived, and so go on presumptuously until the pit of hell shall wake thee from thy self-deception. Canst thou, then, with one hand upon God's holy word, and the other upon thine own heart, lifts thine eye to heaven, and say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see; I know that I have passed from death unto life, I am not now what I once was; I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me.' And if I be not awfully deceived, I am this night "A sinner saved by blood, a monument of grace?"' My brother, God speed you; the blessing of the Most High be with you. My text has no thunders in it for you. Instead of this verse, turn to the 13th, and there read your inheritance--"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." So Christ was cursed in the stead of you, and you are secure, if you are truly converted, and really a regenerated child of God.

But my hearer, I am solemnly convinced that a large proportion of this assembly dare not say so; and thou to-night (for I am speaking personally to thee), remember that thou art one of those who dare not say this, for thou art a stranger to the grace of God. Thou durst not lie before God, and thine own conscience, therefore thou dost honestly say, "I know I was never regenerated; I am now what I always was, and

that is the most I can say." Now, with you I have to deal, and I charge you by him who shall judge the quick and the dead, before whom you and I must soon appear, listen to the words I speak, for they may be the last warning you shall ever hear, and I charge my own soul also, be thou faithful to these dying men, lest haply on thy skirts at last should be found the blood of souls, and thou thyself shouldst be a castaway. O God, make us faithful this night and give the hearing ear, and the retentive memory, and the conscience touched by the Spirit, for Jesus' sake.

First, to-night we shall try the prisoner; secondly, we shall declare his sentence; and thirdly, if we find him confessing and penitent, we shall proclaim his deliverance; but not unless we find him so.

I. First, then, we are about to TRY THE PRISONER.

The text says--"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Unconverted man, are you guilty, or not guilty? Have you continued "in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them?" Methinks you will not dare to plead, "Not guilty." But I will suppose for one moment that you are bold enough to do so. So, then, sir, you mean to assert that you have continued "in all things which are written in the book of the law." Surely the very reading of the law would be enough to convince thee that thou art in error. Dost thou know what the law is? Why, I will give thee what I may call the outside of it, but remember that within it there is a broader spirit than the mere words. Hear thou these words of the law--"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." What! hast thou never loved anything better than God? Hast thou never made a god of thy belly, or of thy business, or of thy family, or of thine own person? Oh! surely thou durst not say thou art guiltless here. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness

of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." What! hast thou never in thy life set up anything in the place of God? If thou hast not, I have, full many a time. And I wot, if conscience would speak truly, it would say, "Man, thou hast been a mammon worshiper, thou hast been a belly worshiper, thou hast bowed down before gold and silver; thou hast cast thyself down before honor, thou hast bowed before pleasure, thou hast made a god of thy drunkenness, a god of thy lust, a god of thy uncleanness, a god of thy pleasures!" Wilt thou dare to say that thou hast never taken the name of the Lord thy of God in vain? If thou hast never sworn profanely, yet surely in common conversation thou hast sometimes made use of God's name when thou oughtest not to have done so. Say, hast thou always hallowed that most holy name? Hast thou never called upon God without necessity? Hast thou never read his book with a trifling spirit? Hast thou never heard his gospel without paying reverence to it? Surely thou art guilty here. And as for that fourth commandment, which relates to the keeping of the Sabbath--"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,"--hast thou never broken it? Oh, shut thy mouth and plead guilty, for these four commandments were enough to condemn thee! "Honor thy father and thy mother." What! wilt thou say thou has kept that? Hast thou never been disobedient in thy youth? Hast thou never kicked against a mother's love, and striven against a father's rebuke? Turn over a page of your history till you come to your childhood; see if you cannot find it written there; ay, and your manhood too may confess that you have not always spoken to your parents as you should, or always treated them with that honor they deserved, and which God commanded you to give unto them. "Thou shalt not kill;" you may never have killed any, but have you never been angry? He that is angry with his brother is a murderer; thou art guilty here. "Thou

shalt not commit adultery." Mayhap thou hast committed unclean things, and art here this very day stained with lust; but if thou hast been never so chaste, I am sure thou hast not been quite guiltless, when the Master says, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." Has no lascivious thought crossed thy mind? Has no impurity ever stirred thy imagination? Surely if thou shouldest dare to say so, thou wouldest be brazen-faced with impudence. And hast thou never stolen? "Thou shalt not steal;" you are here in the crowd to-night with the product of your theft mayhap, you have done the deed, you have committed robbery; but if you have been never so honest, yet surely there have been times in which you have felt an inclination to defraud your neighbor, and there may have been some petty, or mayhap some gross frauds which you have secretly and silently committed, on which the law of the land could not lay its hand, but which nevertheless, was a breach of this law. And who dare say he has not borne false witness against his neighbor? Have we never repeated a story to our neighbor's disadvantage, which was untrue? Have we never misconstrued his motives? Have we never misinterpreted his designs? And who among us can dare to say that he is guiltless of the last--"Thou shalt not covet?" for we have all desired to have more than God has given us; and at times our wandering heart has lusted after things which God has not bestowed upon us. Why, to plead not guilty, is to plead your own folly; for verily, my brethren, the very reading of the law is enough, when blessed by the Spirit, to make us cry, "Guilty, O Lord, guilty."

But one cries, "I shall not plead guilty, for though I am well aware that I have not continued in all things which are written in the book of the law,' yet I have done the best I could." That is a lie--before God a falsehood. You have not! You have not done the best you could.

There have been many occasions upon which you might have done better. Will that young man dare to tell me that he is doing the best he can now? that he cannot refrain from laughter in the house of God? It may be possible that it is hard for him to do so, but it is just possible he could, if he pleased, refrain from insulting his Maker to his face. Surely we have none of us done the best we could. At every period, at every time, there have been opportunities of escape from temptation. If we had had no freedom to escape from the sin, there might have been some excuse for it; but there have been turning points in our history when we might have decided for right or for wrong, but when we have chosen the evil and have eschewed the good, and have turned into that path which leadeth unto hell.

"Ah, but," saith another, "I declare, sir, that while I have broken that law, without a doubt, I have been no worse than my fellow-creatures." And a sorry argument is that, for what availeth it thee? To be damned in a crowd is no more comfortable than to be damned alone. It is true, thou hast been no worse than thy fellow-creatures, but this will be of very poor service to thee. When the wicked are cast into hell, it will be very little comfort to thee that God shall say, "Depart ye cursed" to a thousand with thee. Remember, God's curse, when it shall sweep a nation into hell, shall be as much felt by every individual of the crowd, as if there were but that one man to be punished. God is not like our earthly judges. If their courts were glutted with prisoners, they might be inclined to pass over many a case lightly; but not so with Jehovah. He is so infinite in his mind, that the abundance of criminals will not seem to be any difficulty with him. He will deal with thee as severely and as justly as it there were never another sinner in all the world. And pray, what hast thou to do with other men's sins? Thou art not responsible for them. God made thee to

stand or fall by thyself. According to thine own deeds thou shalt be judged. The harlot's sin may be grosser than thine, but thou wilt not be condemned for her iniquities. The murderers guilt may far exceed thy transgressions, but thou wilt not be damned for the murderer. Religion is a thing between God and thine own soul, O man; and therefore, I do beseech thee, do not look upon thy neighbor's, but upon thine own heart.

"Ay, but," cries another, "I have very many times striven to keep the law, and I think I have done so for a little." Hear ye the sentence read again--"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Oh! sirs; it is not some hectic flush upon the cheek of consumptive irresolution that God counts to be the health of obedience. It is not some slight obedience for an hour that God will accept at the day of judgment. He saith "continueth;" and unless from my early childhood to the day when my gray hairs descend into the tomb, I shall have continued to be obedient to God, I must be condemned. Unless I have from the first dawn of reason, when I first began to be responsible, obediently served God, until, like a shock of corn, I am gathered into my Master's garner, salvation by works must be impossible to me, and I must (standing on my own footing), be condemned. It is not I say, some slight obedience that will save the soul. Thou hast not continued "in all things which are written in the book of the law," and therefore thou art condemned.

"But," says another, "there are many things I have not done, but still I have been very virtuous." Poor excuse that, also. Suppose thou hast been virtuous; suppose thou hast avoided many vices: turn to my text. It is not my word, but God's--turn to it--"all things. It does not say "some things."--"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Now, hast thou

performed all virtues? Hast thou shunned all vices? Dost thou stand up and plead, "I never was a drunkard?"--Yet shalt thou be damned, if thou hast been a fornicator. Dost thou reply, "I never was unclean?" Yet thou hast broken the Sabbath. Dost thou plead guiltless of that charge? Dost thou declare thou hast never broken the Sabbath? Thou hast taken God's name in vain, hast thou not? Somewhere or other God's law can smite thee. It is certain (let thy conscience now speak and affirm what I assert)--it is certain thou hast not continued "in all things which are written in the book of the law." Nay, more, I do not believe thou hast even continued in any one commandment of God to the full, for the commandment is exceeding broad. It is not the overt act, merely, that will damn a man; it is the thought, the imagination, the conception of sin, that is sufficient to ruin a soul. Remember, my dear hearers, I am speaking now God's own word, not a harsh doctrine of my own. If you had never committed one single act of sin, yet the thought of sin, the imagination of it would be enough to sweep your soul to hell for ever. If you had been born in a cell, and had never been able to come out into the world, either to commit acts of lasciviousness, murder, or robbery, yet the thought of evil in that lone cell might be enough to cast your soul for ever from the face of God. Oh! there is no man here that can hope to escape. We must every one of us bow our heads before God, and cry, "Guilty, Lord, guilty--every one of us guilty--'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'" When I look into thy face, O law, my spirit shudders. When I hear thy thunders, my heart is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels. How can I endure thee? If I am to be tried at last for my life, surely I shall need no judge, for I shall be mine own swift accuser, and my conscience shall be a witness to condemn. I think I need not enlarge further on this point. O thou that art out

of Christ, and without God, dost thou not stand condemned before him? Off with all thy masks, and away with all excuses; let every one of us turn our idle pretences to the wind. Unless we have the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ to cover us, we must every one of us acknowledge that this sentence shuts the gates of heaven against us, and only prepares us for the flames of perdition.

II. Thus have I singled out the character, and he is found guilty; now I have TO DECLARE THE SENTENCE.

God's ministers love not such work as this. I would rather stand in this pulpit and preach twenty sermons on the love of Jesus, than one like this. It is very seldom that I meddle with the theme, because I do not know that it is often necessary; but I feel that if these things were kept altogether in the background, and the law were not preached, the Master would not own the gospel; for he will have both preached in their measure, and each must have its proper prominence. Now, therefore, hear me whilst I sorrowfully tell you what is the sentence passed upon all of you who this night are out of Christ. Sinner, thou art cursed to-night. Thou art cursed, not by some wizard whose fancied spell can only frighten the ignorant. Thou art cursed--not cursed by some earthly monarch who could turn his troops against thee, and swallow up thy house and thy patrimony quick. Cursed! Oh! what a thing a curse is anyhow! What an awful thing is the curse of a father. We have heard of fathers, driven to madness by the undutiful and ungracious conduct of their children, who have lifted their hands to heaven, and have implored a curse, a withering curse upon their children. We can not excuse the parent's mad and rash act. God forbid we should exempt him from sin; but oh, a father's curse must be awful. I can not think what it must be to be cursed by him that did beget me. Sure, it would put out the sunlight of my history for ever, if it were

deserved. But to be cursed of God--I have no words with which to tell what that must be. "Oh, no," you say, "that is a thing of the future; we do not care about the curse of God; it does not fall upon us now." Nay, soul, but it does. The wrath of God abideth on you even now. You have not yet come to know the fullness of that curse, but you are cursed this very hour. You are not yet in hell; not yet has God been pleased to shut up the bowels of his compassion, and cast you for ever from his presence; but notwithstanding all that, you are cursed. Turn to the passage in the book of Deuteronomy, and see how the curse is a present thing upon the sinner. In the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, at the 15th verse, we read all this as the sentence of the sinner: "Cursed shalt thou be in the city"--where you carry on your business God will curse you. "Cursed shalt thou be in the fields"--where you take your recreation; where you walk abroad, there shall the curse reach you. "Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out." There are some men upon whom this curse is very visible. Whatever they do is cursed. They get riches, but there is God's curse with the riches. I would not have some men's gold for all the stars, though they were gold: and if I might have all the wealth of the world, if I must have the miser's greed with it, I would rather be poor than have it. There art some men who are visibly cursed. Don't you see the drunkard? He is cursed, let him go where he may. When he goes into his house, his little children run up stairs to bed, for they are afraid to see their own father; and when they grow a little older, they begin to drink just as he did, and they will stand and imitate him; and they too will begin to swear, so that he is cursed in the fruit of his body. He thought it was not so bad for

him to be drunk and to swear; but O what a pang shoots through the fathers conscience, if he has a conscience at all, when he sees his child following his footsteps. Drunkenness brings such a curse upon a man, that he can not enjoy what he eats. He is cursed in his basket, cursed in his store. And truly, though one vice may seem to develop the curse more than others, all sin brings the curse, though we can not always see it. O! thou that art out of God, and out of Christ, and a stranger to Jesus, thou art cursed where thou sittest, cursed where thou standest; cursed is the bed thou liest on; cursed is the bread thou eatest; cursed is the air thou breathest. All is cursed to thee. Go where thou mayest, thou art a cursed man. Ah! that is a fearful thought. O! there are some of you that are cursed to-night. O, that a man should say that of his brethren! but we must say it, or be unfaithful to your poor dying souls. O! would to God that some poor soul in this place would say, "Then I am cursed to-night; I am cursed of God, and cursed of his holy angels--cursed! cursed! cursed!--for I am under the law." I do think, God the Spirit blessing it, it wants nothing more to slay our carelessness than that one word--"cursed!" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

But now, my hearer, thou that art in this state, impenitent and unbelieving, I have more work to do before I close. Remember, the curse that men have in this life is as nothing compared with the curse that is to come upon them hereafter. In a few short years, you and I must die. Come, friend, I will talk to you personally again--young man, we shall soon grow old, or, perhaps, we shall die before that time, and we shall lie upon our bed--the last bed upon which we shall ever sleep--we shall wake from our last slumber to hear the doleful tidings that there is no hope; the physician will feel our pulse, and solemnly assure our

relatives that it is all over! And we shall lie in that still room, where all is hushed except the ticking of the clock, and the weeping of our wife and children; and we must die. O! how solemn will it be that hour when we must struggle with that enemy, Death! The death-rattle is in our throat--we can scarce articulate--we try to speak; the death-glaze is on the eye: Death hath put his fingers on those windows of the body, and shut out the light for ever; the hands well-nigh refuse to lift themselves, and there we are, close on the borders of the grave! Ah! that moment, when the Spirit sees its destiny; that moment, of all moments the most solemn, when the soul looks through the bars of its cage, upon the world to come! No, I can not tell you how the spirit feels, if it be an ungodly spirit, when it sees a fiery throne of judgment, and hears the thunders of Almighty wrath, while there is but a moment between it and hell. I can not picture to you what must be the fright which men will feel, when they realize what they often heard of! Ah! it is a fine thing for you to laugh at me to-night. When you go away, it will be a very fine thing to crack a joke concerning what the preacher said; to talk to one another, and make merry with all this. But when you are lying on your death-bed, you will not laugh. Now, the curtain is drawn, you can not see the things of the future, it is a very fine thing to be merry. When God has removed that curtain, and you learn the solemn reality, you will not find it in your hearts to trifle. Ahab, on his throne laughed at Micaiah. You never read that Ahab laughed at Micaiah when the arrow was sticking between the joints of his harness. In Noah's time, they laughed at the old man; they called him a gray-headed fool, I doubt not, because he told them that God was about to destroy the earth with a flood. But ah! ye scorners, ye did not laugh in that day when the cataracts were falling from heaven, and when God had unloosed the doors

of the great deep, and bidden all the hidden waters leap upon the surface; then ye knew that Noah was right. And when ye come to die, mayhap ye will not laugh at me. You will say, when you lie there, "I remember such-and-such a night I strolled into Park street; I heard a man talk very solemnly; I thought at the time I did not like it, but I knew he was in earnest, I am quite certain that he meant good for me; oh, that I had hearkened to his advice; oh, that I had regarded his words! What would I give to hear him again!" Ah! it was not long ago that a man who had laughed and mocked at me full many a time, went down one Sabbath day to Brighton, to spend his day in the excursion--he came back that night to die! On Monday morning, when he was dying, who do you suppose he wanted? He wanted Mr. Spurgeon! the man he had laughed at always; he wanted him to come and tell him the way to heaven, and point him to the Saviour. And although I was glad enough to go, it was doleful work to talk to a man who had just been Sabbath breaking, spending his time in the service of Satan, and had come home to die. And die he did, without a Bible in his house, without having one prayer offered for him except that prayer which I alone did offer at his bedside. Ah! it is strange how the sight of a death-bed may be blessed to the stimulating of our zeal. I stood some year or so ago, by the bedside of a poor boy, about sixteen years of age, who had been drinking himself to death, in a drinking bout, about a week before, and when I talked to him about sin and righteousness, and judgment to come, I knew he trembled, and I thought that he had laid hold on Jesus. When I came down from those stairs, after praying for him many a time, and trying to point him to Jesus, and having but a faint hope of his ultimate salvation, I thought to myself, O God! I would that I might preach every hour, and every moment of the day, the unsearchable riches of Christ; for what an awful thing it is to die without a Saviour. And

then, I thought how many a time I had stood in the pulpit, and had not preached in earnest as I ought to have done; how I have coldly told out the tale of the Saviour, when I ought to have wept very showers of tears, in overwhelming emotion. I have gone to my bed full many a season, and have wept myself to sleep, because I have not preached as I have desired, and it will be even so to-night. But, oh, the wrath to come! the wrath to come! the wrath to come!

My hearers, the matters I now talk of are no dreams, no frauds, no whims, no old wives' stories. These are realities, and you will soon know them. O sinner, thou that hast not continued in all things written in the book of the law; thou that hast no Christ; the day is coming when these things will stand before thee, as dread, solemn, real things. And then; ah! then; ah! then; ah! then what wilt thou do?--"And after death the judgment."--O, can ye picture--

"The pomp of that tremendous day,
When Christ with clouds shall come."

I think I see that terrible day. The bell of time has tolled the last day. Now comes the funeral of damned souls. Your body has just started up from the grave, and you unwind your cerements, and you look up. What is that I see? O! what is that I hear? I hear one dread, tremendous blast, that shakes the pillars of heaven, and makes the firmament reel with affright; the trump, the trump, the trump of the arch-angel shakes creation's utmost bound. You look and wonder. Suddenly a voice is heard, and shrieks from some, and songs from others--he comes--he comes--he comes; and every eye must see him. There he is; the throne is set upon a cloud, which is white as alabaster. There he sits. Tis He, the Man that died on Calvary--I see his pierced hands--but ah, how changed! No thorn-crown now. He stood at Pilate's bar, but now the whole earth must stand at his bar. But hark! the trumpet sounds again:

the Judge opens the book, there is silence in heaven, a solemn silence: the universe is still. "Gather mine elect together, and my redeemed from the four winds of heaven." Swiftly they are gathered. As with a lightning flash, the angel's wing divides the crowd. Here are the righteous all in-gathered; and sinner, there art thou on the left hand, left out, left to abide the burning sentence of eternal wrath. Hark! the harps of heaven play sweet melodies; but to you they bring no joy, though the angels are repeating the Saviour's welcome to his saints. "Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world." You have had that moments respite, and now his face is gathering clouds of wrath, the thunder is on his brow; he looks on you that have despised him, you that scoffed his grace, that scorned his mercy, you that broke his Sabbath, you that mocked his cross, you that would not have him to reign over you; and with a voice louder than ten thousand thunders, he cries, "Depart, ye cursed. And then--No, I will not follow you. I will not tell of quenchless flames:
I will not talk of miseries of the body, and tortures for the spirit.
But hell is terrible; damnation is doleful. Oh, escape! escape! Escape, lest haply, being where you are, you should have to learn what the horrors of eternity must mean, in the gulf of everlasting perdition. "Cursed is the man that hath not continued in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them."

III. DELIVERANCE PROCLAIMED.

"You have condemned us all," cries one. Yes, but not I--God has done it. Are you condemned? Do you feel you are to night? Come, again, let me take thee by the hand, my brother: yes, I can look round upon the whole of this assembly, and I can say, there is not one now in this place whom I do not love as a brother. If I speak severely unto any of you, it is that you may know the right. My heart, and my whole spirit

are stirred for you. My harshest words are far more full of love than the smooth words of soft-speaking ministers, who say, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. Do you think it is any pleasure to me to preach like this? Oh? I had far rather be preaching of Jesus; his sweet, his glorious person, and his all-sufficient righteousness. Now, come, we will have a sweet word before we have done. Do you feel you are condemned? Do you say, "O God, I confess thou wouldest be just, if thou shouldest do all this to me?" Dost thou feel thou canst never be saved by thine own works, but that thou art utterly condemned through sin? Dost thou hate sin? Dost thou sincerely repent? Then, let me tell thee how thou mayest escape.

Men and brethren, Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was crucified, dead, and buried; he is now risen, and he sitteth on the right hand of God, where he also maketh intercession for us. He came into this world to save sinners, by his death. He saw that poor sinners were cursed: he took the curse on his own shoulders, and he delivered us from it. Now, if God has cursed Christ for any man, he will not curse that man again. You ask me, then, "Was Christ cursed for me?" Answer me this question, and I will tell you--Has God the Spirit taught you that you are accursed? Has he made you feel the bitterness of sin? Has he made you cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner?" Then, my dear friend, Christ was cursed for you; and you are not cursed. You are not cursed now. Christ was cursed for you. Be of good cheer; if Christ was cursed for you, you can not be cursed again. "Oh!" says one, "if I could but think he was cursed for me." Do you see him bleeding on the tree? Do you see his hands and feet all dripping gore? Look unto him, poor sinner. Look no longer at thyself, nor at thy sin; look unto him, and be saved. All he asks thee to do is to look, and even that he will help thee to do. Come to him, trust him, believe on him. God the Holy Spirit has taught

you that you are a condemned sinner. Now, I beseech you, hear this word and believe it: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Oh, can you say, "I believe this Word--it is true--blessed be his dear name; it is true to me, for whatever I may not be, I know that I am a sinner; the sermon of this night convinces me of that, if there were nothing else; and, good Lord, thou knowest when I say I am a sinner, I do not mean what I used to mean by that word. I mean that I am a real sinner. I mean that if thou shouldest damn me, I deserve it; if thou shouldest cast me from thy presence forever, it is only what I have merited richly. O my Lord I am a sinner; I am a hopeless sinner, unless thou savest me; I am a helpless sinner, unless thou dost deliver me. I have no hope in my self-righteousness; and Lord, I bless thy name, there is one thing else, I am a sorrowful sinner, for sin grieves me; I can not rest, I am troubled. Oh, if I could get rid of sin, I would be holy, even as God is holy. Lord, I believe. But I hear an objector cry out, "What, sir, believe that Christ died for me simply because I am a sinner!" Yes; even so. "No, sir; but if I had a little righteousness; if I could pray well, I should then think Christ died for me." No, that would not be faith at all, that would be self-confidence. Faith believes in Christ when it sees sin to be black, and trusts in him to remove it all. Now, poor sinner, with all thy sin about thee, take this promise in thy hands, go home to-night, or if thou canst, do it before thou gettest home--go home, I say, up stairs, alone, down by the bed-side, and pour out thine heart, "O Lord, it is all true that that man said; I am condemned, and Lord, I deserve it. O Lord, I have tried to be better, and have done nothing with it all, but have only grown worse. O Lord, I have slighted thy grace, I have despised thy gospel: I wonder thou hast not damned me years ago; Lord, I marvel at myself;

that thou sufferest such a base wretch as I am to live at all. I have despised a mother's teaching, I have forgotten a father's prayers. Lord, I have forgotten thee; I have broken thy Sabbath, taken thy name in vain. I have done everything that is wrong; and if thou dost condemn me, what can I say? Lord, I am dumb before thy presence. I have nothing to plead. But Lord; I come to tell thee to-night, thou hast said in the Word of God, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Lord, I come: my only plea is that thou hast said, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Lord, I am a sinner; he came to save me; I trust in it--sink or swim--Lord, this is my only hope: I cast away every other, and hate myself to think I ever should have had any other. Lord, I rely on Jesus only. Do but save me, and though I can not hope by my future life to blot out my past sin, O Lord, I will ask of thee to give me a new heart and a right spirit, that from this time forth even for ever I may run in the way of thy commandments: for, Lord, I desire nothing so much as to be thy child. Thou knowest, O Lord, I would give all, if thou wouldest but love me; and I am encouraged to think that thou dost love me; for my heart feels so. I am guilty, but I should never have known that I was guilty if thou hadst not taught it to me. I am vile, but I never should have known my vileness, unless thou hadst revealed it. Surely, thou wilt not destroy me, O God, after having taught me this. If thou dost, thou art just, but,

"Save a trembling sinner, Lord,
Whose hopes still hovering round thy Word,
Would light on some sweet promise there;
Some sure support against despair."

If you can not pray such a long prayer as that, I tell you what to go home and say. Say this, "Lord Jesus, I know I am nothing at all; be

thou my precious all in all."

Oh, I trust in God there will be some to-night that will be able to pray like that, and if it be so, ring, the bells of heaven; sing, ye seraphim; shout, ye redeemed; for the Lord hath done it, and glory be unto his name, for ever and ever.

Chapter 10

The Two Talents

A Sermon

(No. 175)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 31, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."--Matthew 25:22-23.

EVERY good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." All that men have they must trace to the Great Fountain, the giver of all good. Hast thou talents? They were given thee by the God of talents. Hast thou time? hast thou wealth, influence, power? Hast thou powers of tongue? Hast thou powers of thought? Art thou poet, statesman, or philosopher? Whatever be thy position, and whatever be thy gifts, remember that they are not thine, but they are lent thee from on high. No man hath anything of his own, except his sins. We are but tenants at will. God hath put us into his estates, and he hath said, "Occupy till I come." Though our vineyards bear never so much fruit, yet the vineyard belongs to the King, and though we are to take the hundred for our hire, yet King Solomon must have his thousand. All the honor of our ability and the use of it must be unto God, because he is the Giver. The parable tells us this very pointedly; for it makes every person acknowledge that his talents come

from the Lord. Even the man who digged in the earth and hid his Lords money, did not deny that his talent belonged to his Master; for though his reply, "Lo, there thou hast that is shine," was exceedingly impertinent, yet it was not a denial of this fact. So that even this man was ahead of those who deny their obligations to God, who superciliously toss their heads at the very mention of obedience to their Creator, and spend their time and their powers rather in rebellion against him than in his service. Oh, that we were all wise to believe and to act upon this most evident of all truths, that everything we have, we have received from the Most High.

Now, there are some men in the world who have but few talents. Our parable says, "One had five, and another two. To them I shall address myself this morning; and I pray that the few pointed things I may say, may be blessed of God to their edification or rebuke. First, I shall notice the fact that there are many persons who have but few talents, and I will try to account for God's dispensing but few to them. Secondly, I shall remind them that even for these few talents they must be brought to account. And thirdly, I shall conclude by making the comforting observation, that if our few talents be rightly used, neither our own conscience nor our Master's judgment shall condemn us for not having more.

I. First, then, GOD HAS MADE SOME MEN WITH FEW TALENTS. You very often hear men speak of one another as if God had made no mental differences at all. One man finds himself successful, and he supposes that if every one else could have been as industrious and as persevering as himself, every one must necessarily have been as successful. You will often hear remarks against ministers who are godly and earnest men, but who do not happen to have much attracting power, and they are called drones and lazy persons, because they cannot make much of a stir in the world,

whereas the reason may be, that they have but little talent, and are making the best use of what they have, and therefore ought not to be rebuked for the littleness of what they are able to accomplish. It is a fact, which every man must see, that even in our birth there is a difference. All children are not alike precocious, and all men certainly are not alike capable of learning or of teaching. God hath made eminent and marvelous differences. We are not to suppose that all the difference between a Milton and a man who lives and dies without being able to read, has been caused by education. There was doubtless a difference originally, and though education will do much, it cannot do every thing. Fertile ground, when well-tilled will necessarily bring forth more than the best tilled estate, the soil of which is hard and sterile. God has made great and decided differences; and we ought, in dealing with our fellow-men, to recollect this, lest we should say harsh things of those very men to whom God will afterwards say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

But why is it that God has not given to all men like talents? My first answer shall be, because God is a Sovereign, and of all attributes, next to his love, God is the most fond of displaying his sovereignty. The Lord God will have men know that he has a right to do what he wills with his own. Hence it is, that in salvation he gives it to some and not to others; and his only reply to any accusation of injustice is, "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" The worm is not to murmur because God did not make it an angel, and the fish that swims the sea must not complain because it hath not wings to fly into the highest heavens. God had a right to make his creatures just what he pleased, and though men may dispute his right, he will hold and keep it inviolate against all comers. That he may hedge his

right about and make vain man acknowledge it, in all his gifts he continually reminds us of his sovereignty. "I will give to this man," he says, "a mind so acute that he shall pry into all secrets; I will make another so obtuse, that none but the plainest elements of knowledge shall ever be attainable by him. I will give to one man such a wealth of imagination, that he shall pile mountain upon mountain of imagery, till his language seems to reach to celestial majesty; I will give to another man a soul so dull, that he shall never be able to originate a poetic thought." Why this, O God? The answer comes back, "Shall I not do what I will with mine own?" "So, then, the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was written, the elder shall serve the younger." And so it is written concerning men, that one of them shall be greater than another; one shall bow his neck, and the other put his foot upon it, for the Lord hath a right to dispose of places and of gifts, of talents and wealth, just as seemeth good in his sight.

Now, most men quarrel with this. But mark, the thing that you complain of in God, is the very thing that you love in yourselves. Every man likes to feel that he has a right to do with his own as he pleases. We all like to be little sovereigns. You will give your money freely and liberally to the poor; but if any man should impertinently urge that he had a claim upon your charity, would you give unto him? Certainly not; and who shall impeach the greatness of your generosity in so doing? It is even as that parable, that we have in one of the Evangelists, where, after the men had toiled, some of them twelve hours, some of them six, and some of them but one, the Lord gave every man a penny. Oh! I would meekly bow my head, and say, "My Lord, hast thou given me one talent? then I bless thee for it, and I pray thee bestow upon me grace to use

it rightly. Hast thou given to my brother ten talents? I thank thee for the greatness of thy kindness towards him; but I neither envy him, nor complain of thee." Oh! for a spirit that bows always before the sovereignty of God.

Again: God gives to one five, and to another two talents, because the Creator is a lover of variety. It was said that order is heaven's first law; surely variety is the second; for in all God's works, there is the most beautiful diversity. Look ye towards the heavens at night: all the stars shine not with the same brilliance, nor are they placed in straight lines, like the lamps of our streets. Then turn your eyes below; see in the vegetable world, how many great distinctions there are, ranging from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, or the moss that is smaller still. See, how from the huge mammoth tree, that seems as if beneath its branches it might shade an army, down to the tiny lichen, God hath made everything beautiful, but everything full of variety. Look on any one tree, if you please: see how every leaf differs from its fellow--how even the little tiny buds that are at this hour bursting at the scent of the approaching perfume of spring, differ from each other--not two of them alike. Look again, upon the animated world: God hath made every creature like unto another. How wide the range--from the colossal elephant, to the coney that burrows in the rock--from the whale, that makes the deep hoary with its lashings, to the tiny minnow that skims the brook; God hath made all things different, and we see variety everywhere. I doubt not it is the same, even in heaven, for there there are "thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers"--different ranks of angels, perhaps, rising tier upon tier. "One star differeth from another star in glory." And why should not the same rule stand good in manhood? Doth God cast us all in the same mold? It seems not so; for he hath not made our faces

alike; no two countenances can be said to be exactly the same, for if there be some likeness, yet is there a manifest diversity. Should minds, then, be alike? Should souls all be cast in the same fashion? Should God's creation dwindle down into a great manufactory, in which everything is melted in the same fire and poured into the same mould? No, for variety's sake, he will have one man a renowned David, and another David's unknown armor bearer; he will have one man a Jeremy, who shall prophesy, and another a Baruch, who shall only read the prophesy; one shall be rich as Dives, another poor as Lazarus; one shall speak with a voice loud as thunder, another shall be dumb; one shall be mighty in word and doctrine, another shall be feeble in speech and slow in words. God will have variety, and the day will come when, looking down upon the world we shall see the beauty of its history to be mightily indebted to the variety of the characters that entered into it.

But a little further. God hath a deeper reason than this. God gives to some men but few talents, because he has many small spheres, and he would have these filled. There is a great ocean, and it needs inhabitants. O Lord, thou hast made Leviathan to swim therein. There is a secret grotto, a hidden cavern, far away in the depths of the sea; its entrance is but small; if there were naught but a Leviathan, it must remain untenanted for ever: a little fish is made, and that small place becomes an ocean unto it. There are a thousand sprays and twigs upon the trees of the forest; were all eagles, how would the forests be made glad with song, and how could each twig bear its songster? But because God would have each twig have its own music, he has made the little songster to sit upon it. Each sphere must have the creature to occupy it adapted to the size of the sphere. God always acts economically. Does he intend a man to be the pastor of some small

parish with four or five hundred inhabitants? Of what use is it giving to that man the abilities of an apostle? Does he intend a woman to be a humble teacher of her own children at home, a quiet trainer of her own family? Would it not even disturb her and injure her if God should make her a poetess, and give her gifts that might electrify a nation? The littleness of her talents will to a degree fit her for the littleness of her sphere. There is some youth who is quite capable of assisting in a Ragged School: perhaps if he had a higher genius he might disdain the work, and so the Ragged School would be without its excellent teacher. There are little spheres, and God will have little men to occupy them. There are posts of important duty, and men shall be found with nerve and muscle fitted for the labor. He has made a statue for every niche, and a picture for every portion of the gallery; none shall be left vacant; but since some niches are small, so shall be the statuettes that occupy them. To some he gives two talents, because two are enough, and five would be too many.

Once more: God gives to men two talents, because in them very often he displays the greatness of his grace in saving souls. You have heard a minister who was deeply read in sacred lore; his wisdom was profound, and his speech graceful. Under his preaching many were converted. Have you never heard it not quite said, but almost hinted, that much of his success was traceable to his learning and to his graceful oratory? But, on the other hand, you have met with a man, rough in his dialect, uncouth in his manners, evidently without any great literary attainments; nevertheless, God has given that man the one talent of an earnest heart; he speaks like a son of thunder; with rough, stern language, he denounces and proclaims the gospel; under him hundreds are converted. The world sneers at him. "I can see no reason for all this," says the scholar; "it is all rubbish--cant; the man knows nothing." The

critic takes up his pen, nibs it afresh, dips it in the bitterest ink he can find, and writes a most delightful history of the man in which he goes so far as to say, not that he sees horns on his head, but almost everything but that. He is everything that is bad, and nothing that is good. He utterly denounces him. He is foolish, he is vain, he is base, he is proud, he is illiterate, he is vulgar. There was no word in the English language that was bad enough for him, but one must be coined. And now what says the church? What says the man himself? "Even so, O Lord; now must the glory be unto thee for ever, inasmuch as thou hast chosen the base things of this world, and the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are." So it seemeth that out of the little God sometimes winneth more glory than he doth out of the great; and I doubt not that he has made some of you with little power to do good, with little influence, and with a narrow sphere, that he may, in the last great day, manifest to angels how much he can do in a little space. You know, dear friends, there are two things that always will attract our attention. One is skill embodied in a stupendous mass. We see the huge ship, the Leviathan, and we wonder that man could have made it; at another time we see an elegant piece of workmanship that will stand upon less than a square inch, and we say, "Well, I can understand how men can make a great ship, but I can not comprehend how an artist could have the patience and the skill to make so minute a thing as this." And ah! my friends, it seems to me that God is not a greater God to our apprehension, when we see the boundless fields of ether and the unnumbered orbs swimming therein, than when we see a humble cottager, and behold Godly perfect word carried out in her soul, and God's highest glory wrought from her little talent. Surely if in the little, man can honor himself as well as in the great, the Infinite, and the Eternal, can most of all glorify himself when he

stoopeth to the littleness of mankind.

II. Our second proposition was, that even A FEW TALENTS MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR. We are very apt when we think of the day of judgment, to imagine that certain characters will undergo a more trying process than others. I know I have often involuntarily said, when reading the history of Napoleon, "Here is a man of tremendous ability, the world's master; a dozen centuries might be required to produce such another man; but here is a man who prostitutes all his ability to ambition, carries his armies like a destroying deluge across every country, widows wives, and renders children fatherless, not by hundreds but by thousands, if not by millions. What must be his solemn account when he stands before the throne of God? Shall not the witnesses rise up from the fields of Spain, of Russia, of Italy, of Egypt, of Palestine, and accuse the man who, to gratify his own bold ambition, led them to death?" But will you please to remember that though Napoleon must be a prisoner at the bar, each of us must stand there also P And though our position is not very high, and we have not stood upon the pinnacle of fame, yet we have stood quite high enough to be borne under the observation of the Most High, and we have had just ability enough and power enough to have done mischief in the world, and to be accountable for it. "Oh!" said one, "I thought that surely in the day of judgment he would pass me by; I have been no Tom Paine; I have not been a leader among low and vulgar infidels; I have not been a murderer; I have not been a prince among sinners; I have not been a disturber of the public peace; what few sins I have committed have taken place quietly; nobody has heard of them; I don't think my bad example has gone far; perhaps my children have not been much blessed by my behavior, but, nevertheless, mine has been a very small quantum of mischief, too small to have poisoned any one beside myself. I have been, on the whole, so

tolerably moral, that though I cannot say I have served God, yet my defalcations from the path of duty have been slight indeed!" Ah! truly friends! you may think yourselves never so little, but your making yourselves insignificant will not excuse you. You have had but little entrusted to you! Then the less trouble for you to make use of your talents. The man who has many talents requires much hard labor to use them all. He might make the excuse that he found five talents too many to put out in the market at once; you have only one; anybody can lend out his one talent to interest--it will cost you but little trouble to supply that; and inasmuch as you live, and inasmuch as you die, without having improved the one talent, your guilt will be exceedingly increased by the very fact that your talent was but little, and, consequently, the trouble of using it would have been but little too.

If you had but little, God required but little of you; why, then, did you not render that? If any man holds a house at a rental of a pound a year, let it be never so small a house for the money, if he brings not his rent there is not one half the excuse for him that there would be if his rent had been a hundred pounds, and he had failed to bring it. You shall be the more inexcusable on account of the little that was required of you. Let me, then, address you, and remind you that you must be brought to account.

Remember, my hearer, that in the day of judgment thy account must be personal; God will not ask you what your church did--he will ask you what you did yourself. Now there is a Sunday-school. If God should try all members of the church in a body, they would each of them say, O Lord, as a body we had an excellent Sunday-school, and had many teachers, and so they would excuse themselves. But no; one by one, all professors must come before him. "What did you do for the Sabbath-school? I gave you a gift for teaching children--what did you

do?" "O Lord, there was a Sabbath-school." That has nothing to do with it? What did you do? You are not to account now for the company with which you were united, but for yourself as an individual. "O," says one, "there were a number of poor ministers; I was at the Surrey Hall, and so much was done for them." No; what did you do? You must be held personally responsible for your own wealth, for your own ability. "Well, says one, "I am happy to say there is a great deal more preaching now than there used to be; the churches seem to be roused." Yes, sir, and you seem to take part of the credit to yourself. Do you preach more than you used to? You are a minister; do you make any greater efforts? Remember, it is not what your brethren are doing, but it is what you do that you will be called to account for at the bar of God; and each one of you will be asked this question, "What hast thou done with thy talent?" All your connection with churches will avail you nothing; it is your personal doings--your personal service towards God that is demanded of you as an evidence of saving grace. And if others are idle--if others pay not God his due--so much the more reason why you should have been more exceedingly diligent in doing so yourself. Recollect, again, that your account will have to be particular. God will go into all the items of it. At the day of judgment you will not have to cast up a hurried account in the gross, but every item shall be read. Can you prove that? Yes. "For every idle word that man shall speak, he shall be brought unto account at the day of judgment." Now, it is in the items that men go astray. "Well," says one, "If I look at my life in the bulk, I am not very much ashamed, but it is those items, those little items--they are the troublesome part of the account, that one does not care to meddle with." Do you know that all yesterday was made up of littles? And the things of to-day are all little, and what you do to-morrow will all be little things. Just as the tiny shells

make up the chalk hills, and the chalk hills together make up the range, so the trifing actions make up the whole account, and each of these must be pulled asunder separately. You had an hour to spare the other day--what did you do? You had a voice--how did you use it? You had a pen--you could use that--how did you employ it? Each particular shall be brought out, and there shall be demanded an account for each one. Oh, that you were wise, that ye did not slur this matter, but would take every note in the music of your behavior, and seek to make each note in harmony with its fellow, lest, after all, the psalm of your life may prove to be a hideous discord. Oh, that ye who are without God would remember that your life is assuredly such, that the trial of the last great day must end in your condemnation.

Again, that account will be very exact, and there will be no getting off without those little things. "Oh! there were a few pecadillos, and very small matters indeed; I never took stock of them at all." But they will all be taken stock of then. When God comes to look into our hearts at last, he will not only look at the great but at the little; every thing will be seen into, the pence sins as well as the pound iniquities--all must be brought against us, and an exact account given.

Again, remember, in the last place, upon this point, that the account will be very impartial at the day of judgment, when all will be tried without any reference to their station. The prince will be summoned to give an account of his talents, and side by side must stand his courtier and his slave. The mightiest emperor must stand at God's bar, as well as the meanest cottager. And all must appear and be tried according to the deeds they have done in the body. As to our professions, they will avail us nothing. We may have been the proudest hypocrites that ever made the world sick with our pride, but we must be searched and examined, as much as if we had been the vilest sinners. We

must take our own trial before God's eternal tribunal, and nothing can bias our judge, or give him an opinion for or against us, apart from the evidence. Oh, how solemn this will make the trial, especially if we have no blood of Christ to plead! The great Advocate will get his people an acquittal, through his imputed merits, even though our sin in itself would condemn them. But remember, that without him we shall never be able to stand the fiery ordeal of that last dread assize.

"Well," said an old preacher, "when the law was given, Sinai was on a smoke, and it melted like wax; but when the punishment of the law is given, the whole earth will quake and quail. For who shall be able to endure the day of the Lord, the day of God's fierce anger?"

III. The last point is, IF BY DIVINE GRACE (and it is only by divine grace that this can ever be accomplished)--OUR TWO TALENTS BE RIGHTLY USED, THE FACT THAT WE HAD NOT FIVE, WILL BE NO INJURY TO US. You say, when such a man dies, who stood in the midst of the church, a triumphant for the truth, the angels will crowd to heaven's gates to see him, for he has been a mighty hero, and done much for his Master. A Calvin or a Luther, with what plaudits shall they be received!--men with talents, who have been faithful to their trust. Yes, but know ye not, that there is many a humble village pastor whose flock scarcely numbers fifty, who toils for them as for his life, who spends hours in praying for their welfare, who uses all the little ability he has in his endeavor to win them to Christ; and do ye imagine that his entry into heaven shall be less triumphant than the entry of such a man as Luther? If so, ye know not how God dealeth with his people. He giveth them rewards, not according to the greatness of the goods with which they were entrusted, but according to their fidelity thereunto, and he that hath been faithful to the least, shall be as much rewarded, as he that hath been faithful in much. I want you briefly to turn to the

chapter, to see this. You will note first, that the man with two talents came to his Lord with as great a confidence as the man that had five. "And he said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold, I have gained two talents beside them." I will be bound to say, that while that poor man with the two talents was trading with them, he frequently looked upon his neighbor with the five talents, and said, "Oh, I wish I could do as much as he is doing! See now, he has five talents to put out, and how much interest he has coming every year; Oh, that I could do as much!" And as he went on he often prayed, "O my Lord, give me greater ability, and greater grace to serve thee, for I long to do more." And when he sat down to read his diary, he thought, "Ah, this diary does not tell much. There is no account of my journey through fifty counties; I can not tell how I have travelled from land to land, as Paul did, to preach the truth. No; I have just had to keep in this parish, and been pretty well starved to death, toiling for this people, and if I have added some ten or a dozen to the church, that has been a very great deal to me. Why, I hear that Mr. So-and-so, was privileged to add two or three hundred in a year, Oh, that I could do that! Surely when I go to heaven, I shall creep in at the door somehow, while he by grace will be enabled to go boldly in, bringing his sheaves with him." Now stop, poor little faith, stop; thy Master will not deal thus with thee. When thou shalt come to die, thou wilt through his grace feel as much confidence in dying with thy two well-used talents, as thy brother with his ten, for thou wilt, when thou comest there, have thy Lords sweet presence, and thou wilt say, "I am complete in Christ. Christ's righteousness covers me from head to foot, and now in looking back upon my past life, I can say, Blessed be his holy name. It is little that I could do, but I have done as much as I could for him. I know that he will pardon my defects, and forgive my miscarriages, and

I shall never look back upon my humble village charge without much joy, that the Lord allowed me to labor there." And, Oh, methinks, that man will have even a richer commendation in his own conscience, than the man who has been more publicly applauded, for he can say to himself, after putting all his trust in Christ, "Well, I am sure I did not do all this for fame, for I blushed unseen--I have lost my sweetness on the desert air. No one has ever read my deeds; what I did was between myself and my God, and I can render up my account to him and say, Lord, I did it for thee, and not to honor myself.'" Yes, friends, I might tell you now of many a score of earnest evangelists in this our land who are working harder than any one of us, and yet win far less honor. Yes, and I could bring you up many a score of city missionaries whose toil for Christ is beyond all measure of praise, who never got much reward here, nay, rather meet with slights and disrespect. You see the poor man start as soon as he goes from his place of worship to-day. He has got three hours this afternoon to go and spend among the sick, and then you will see him on Monday morning. He has to go from house to house, often with the door slammed in his face, often exposed to mobs and drunken men, sometimes jeered and scoffed at, meeting with persons of all religious persuasions and of no persuasion. He toils on; he has his little evening meeting, and there he gets a little flock together and tries to pray with them, and he gets now and then a man or a woman converted; but he has no honor. He just takes him off to the minister, and he says, "Sir, here is a good man; I think he is impressed; will you baptize him and receive him into your church?" The minister gets all the credit of that, but as for the poor city missionary, there is little or nothing said of him. There is, perhaps, just his name, Mr. Brown, or Mr. Smith, mentioned sometimes in the report, but people do not think much of him, except. perhaps, as an object of charity they

have to keep, whereas he is the man that gives them charity, giving all the sap and blood and marrow of his life for some poor sixty pounds a year, hardly enough to keep his family above want. But he, when he dies, my friend, shall have no less the approval of his conscience than the man who was permitted to stand before the multitudes and raised the nation into excitement on account of religion. He shall come before the Master clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and with unblushing face shall say, "I have received two talents; I have gained beside them two talents more."

Furthermore, and to conclude, you will notice there was no difference in his Master's commendation--none in the reward. In both cases, it was "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Here comes Whitfield, the man who stood before twenty thousand at a time to preach the gospel, who in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America has testified the truth of God, and who could count his converts by thousands, even under one sermon! Here he comes, the man that endured persecution and scorn, and yet was not moved--the man of whom the world was not worthy, who lived for his fellow men, and died at last for their cause; stand by angels and admire, while the Master takes him by the hand and says, "Well done, well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" See how free grace honors the man whom it enabled to do valiantly. Hark! Who is this that comes there? a poor thin-looking creature, that on earth was a consumptive; there was a hectic flush now and then upon her cheek, and she lay three long years upon her bed of sickness. Was she a prince's daughter, for it seems heaven is making much stir about her? No, she was a poor girl that earned her living by her needle, and she worked herself to death!--stitch, stitch, stitch, from morning to night! and

here she comes. She went prematurely to her grave, but she is coming, like a shock of corn fully ripe, into heaven; and her Master says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." She takes her place by the side of Whitfield. Ask what she ever did, and you find out that she used to live in some back garret down some dark alley in London; and there used to be another poor girl come to work with her, and that poor girl, when she first came to work with her, was a gay and volatile creature, and this consumptive child told her about Christ; and they used, when she was well enough, to creep out of an evening to go to chapel or to church together. It was hard at first to get the other one to go, but she used to press her lovingly; and when the girl went wild a little, she never gave her up. She used to say, "O Jane, I wish you loved the Saviour;" and when Jane was not there she used to pray for her, and when she was there she prayed with her: and now and then when she was stitching away, read a page out of the Bible to her, for poor Jane could not read. And with many tears she tried to tell her about the Saviour who loved her and gave himself for her. At last, after many a day of hard persuasion, and many an hour of sad disappointment, and many a night of sleepless tearful prayer, at last she lived to see the girl profess her love to Christ; and she left her and took sick, and there she lay till she was taken to the hospital, where she died. When she was in the hospital she used to have a few tracts, and she used to give them to those who came to see her; she would try, if she could, to get the women to come round, and she would give them a tract. When she first went into the hospital, if she could creep out of bed, she used to get by the side of one who was dying, and the nurse used to let her do it; till at last she got too ill, and then she used to ask a poor woman on

the other side of the ward, who was getting better, and was going out, if she would come and read a chapter to her; not that she wanted her to read to her on her own account, but for her sake, for she thought it might strike her heart while she was reading it. At last this poor girl died and fell asleep in Jesus; and the poor consumptive needle-woman had said to her, "Well done"--and what more could an archangel have said to her?--"she hath done what she could."

See, then, the Master's commendation, and the last reward will be equal to all men who have used their talents well. Ah! if there be degrees in glory, they will not be distributed according to our talents, but according to our faithfulness in using them. As to whether there are degrees or not, I know not; but this I know, he that doeth his Lord's will, shall have said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

And now, friends, this one word only. I have told you that there are many in our denomination who are preaching the gospel continually. I should bring some few of the letters, written by the poor ministers to us to read, but sometimes I think this a violation of delicacy, and I do not like to do it. But when I did that one year, the collection was almost twice as good; so I think I might almost commit a breach of etiquette in order to help them. However, I can solemnly assure you, that if there is poverty anywhere, it is to be found among the ministers in the Baptist churches, and I am sorry to say that one cause of it is the fault of the people themselves; they are so little in the habit of giving, that their ministers are starved. Now, if Christ will say, "Well done," hereafter, to many a humble preacher, do you think he intends the church to starve them while they are here on $30 or $40 a year? Now, brethren, if Christ will say, "Well done," at last, we may anticipate his verdict and say "Well done to-day." And can we better say, "well done" than by unmuzzling the ox that treadeth out the corn,

and give these poor ministers something out of our own wealth, as God may help us, that their necessities may be supplied? There will be pretty well a score of persons who will be dependent next year on what you give this year; perhaps you will remember that and assist them. One kind gentleman, who usually comes here, says, "I could not come to-day, so I forward my pound to be put in the box by the minister." And I trust, if there are any not here to-day who will be here next Sabbath, that they will not forget this collection. It is always very dear to the heart of my church.

Chapter 11

The Prodigal's Return

A Sermon

(No. 176)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 7, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"But when he was yet a great way off; his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."--Luke 15:20.

ALL PERSONS ENGAGED IN EDUCATION will tell you that they find it far more difficult to make the mind unlearn its errors than to make it receive truth. If we could suppose a man totally ignorant of anything, we should have a fairer chance of instructing him quickly and effectually than we should have had if his mind had been previously stored with falsehood. I have no doubt you, each of you, find it harder to unlearn than to learn. To get rid of old prejudices and preconceived notions is a very hard struggle indeed. It has been well said, that those few words, "I am mistaken," are the hardest in all the English language to pronounce, and certainly it takes very much force to compel us to pronounce them: and after having done so, it is even then difficult to wipe away the slime which an old serpentine error has left upon the heart. Better for us not to have known at all than to have known the wrong thing. Now, I am sure that this truth is never more true than when it applies to God. If I had been let alone to form my notion of God, entirely from Holy Scripture, I feel, that with the assistance of his Holy Spirit it would have been far more easy for me to understand what he is, and how he governs the world, than to learn

even the truths of his own Word, after the mind had become perverted by the opinions of others. Why, brethren, who is it that gives a fair representation of God? The Arminian slanders God by accusing him (not in his own intention, but really so) of unfaithfulness; for he teaches that God may promise what he never performs; that he may give eternal life, and promise that those who have it shall never perish, and yet they may perish after all. He speaks of God as if he were a mutable being, for he talks of his loving men one day, and hating them the next; of his writing their names in the Book of Life one hour, and then erasing their names in the next. And the influence of such an error as that, is very baneful. Many children of God, who have imbibed these errors in early youth, have had to drag along their poor wearied and broken frames for many a day, whereas they might have walked joyfully to heaven if they had known the truth from the beginning. On the other hand, those who hear the Calvinistic preacher, are very apt to misinterpret God. Although we trust we would never speak of God in any other sense than that in which we find him represented in sacred Scripture, yet are we well aware that many of our hearers, even through our assertions, when most guarded, are apt to get rather a caricature of God, than a true picture of him. They imagine that God is a severe being, angry and fierce, very easily to be moved to wrath, but not so easily to be induced to love; they are apt to think of him as one who sits in supreme and lofty state, either totally indifferent to the wishes of his creatures, or else determined to have his own way with them, as an arbitrary Sovereign, never listening to their desires, or compassionating their woes. O that we could unlearn all these fallacies, and believe God to be what he is! O that we could come to Scripture, and there look into that glass which reflects his sacred image, and then receive him as he is, the all-Wise, the all-Just, and

yet the all-Gracious, and all-Loving Jehovah! I shall endeavor this morning, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to represent the lovely character of Christ; and if I shall be happy enough to have some in my audience who are in the position of the prodigal son in the parable--coming to Christ, and yet a great way off from him--I shall trust that they will be led by the same Divine Spirit, to believe in the loving kindness of Jehovah, and so may find peace with God now, ere they leave this house of prayer.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." First, I shall notice the position intended in the words, "a great way off ;" secondly, I shall notice the peculiar troubles which agitate the minds of those, who are in this condition; and then, thirdly, I shall endeavor to teach the great loving-kindness of our own adorable God, inasmuch as when we are "a great way off," he runs to us, and embraces us in the arms of his love.

I. First, then, what is the POSITION signified by being "a great way off?" I must just notice what is not that position. It is not the position of the man who is careless and entirely regardless of God; for you notice that the prodigal is represented now as having come to himself, and as returning to his father's house. Though it be true that all sinners are a great way off from God, whether they know it or not, yet in this particular instance, the position of the poor prodigal is intended to signify the character of one, who has been aroused by conviction, who has been led to abhor his former life, and who sincerely desires to return to God. I shall not, then, this morning, specially address the blasphemer, and the profane. To him, there may be some incidental warning heard, but I shall not specially address such a character. It is another person for whom this text is intended: the man

who has been a blasphemer, if you please, who may have been a drunkard, and a swearer, and what not, but who has now renounced these things, and is steadfastly seeking after Christ, that he may obtain eternal life. That is the man who is here said to be, though coming to the Lord, "a great way off."

Once again, there is another person who is not intended by this description, namely, the very great man, the Pharisee who thinks himself extremely righteous, and has never learned to confess his sin. You, sir, in your apprehension, are not a great way off. You are so really in the sight of God; you are as far from him as light from darkness, as the east is from the west; but you are not spoken of here. You are like the prodigal son, only that instead of spending your life righteously, you have run away from your Father, and hidden in the earth the gold which he gave you, and are able to feed upon the husks which swine do eat, whilst by a miserable economy of good works you are hoping to save enough of your fortune to support yourself here and in eternity. Your hope of self-salvation is a fallacy, and you are not addressed in the words of the text. It is the man who knows himself lost, but desires to be saved, who is here declared to be met by God, and received with affectionate embraces.

And now we come to the question, Who is the man, and why is he said to be a great way off? For he seems to be very near the kingdom, now that he knows his need and is seeking the Saviour. I reply, in the first place, he is a great way off in his own apprehensions. You are here this morning, and you have an idea that never was man so far from God as you are. You look back upon your past life, and you recollect how you have slighted God, despised his Sabbath, neglected his Book, trampled upon the blood of sprinkling, and rejected all the invitations of his mercy. You turn over the pages of your history, and you remember

the sins which you have committed--the sins of your youth and your former transgressions, the crimes of your manhood, and the riper sins of your older years; like black waves dashing upon a dark shore, they roll in wave upon wave, upon your poor troubled memory. There comes a little wave of your childish folly, and over that there leaps one of your youthful transgressions, and over the head of this there comes a very Atlantic billow of your manhood's transgressions. At the sight of them you stand astonished and amazed. "O Lord my God, how deep is the gulf which divides me from thyself, and where is the power that can bridge it? I am separated from thee by leagues of sin, whole mountains of my guilt are piled upward between me and thyself. O God, shouldest thou destroy me now, thou wouldest be just; and if thou dost ever bring me to thyself, it must be nothing less than a power as Omnipotent as that which made the world, which can ever do it. O! how far am I from God!" Some of you would be startled this morning, if your neighbors were to give you revelations of their own feelings. If yonder man standing there in the crowd could come into this pulpit, and tell you what he now feels, you might perhaps be horrified at his description of his own heart. How many of you have no notion of the way in which a soul is cut and hacked about, when it is under the convictions of the law! If you should hear the man tell out what he feels, you would say, "Ah! he is a poor deluded enthusiast; men are not so bad as that;" or else you would be apt to think he had committed some nameless crime which be dare not mention. that was preying on his conscience. Nay, sir, he has been as moral and upright as you have been; but should he describe himself as he now discovers himself to be, he would shock you utterly. And yet you are the same, though you feel it not, and would indignantly deny it. When the light of God's grace comes into your heart, it is something like the opening of the windows of an old cellar

that has been shut up for many days. Down in that cellar, which has not been opened for many months, are all kinds of loathsome creatures, and a few sickly plants blanched by the darkness. The walls are dark and damp with the trail of reptiles; it is a horrid filthy place, in which no one would willingly enter. You may walk there in the dark very securely, and except now and then for the touch of some slimy creature, you would not believe the place was so bad and filthy. Open those shutters, clean a pane of glass, let a little light in, and now see how a thousand noxious things have made this place their habitation. Sure, twas not the light that made this place so horrible, but it was the light that showed how horrible it was before. So let God's grace just open a window and let the light into a man's soul, and he will stand astonished to see at what a distance he is from God. Yes, sir, to-day you think yourself second to none but the Eternal; you fancy that you can approach his throne with steady step; it is but a little that you have to do to be saved; you imagine that you can accomplish it at any hour, and save yourself upon your dying bed as well as now. Ah! sir, if you could but be touched by Ithuriel's wand, and made to be in appearance what you are in reality, then you would see that you are far enough from God even now, and so far from him that unless the arms of his grace were stretched out to bring you to himself, you must perish in your sin. Now I turn my eye again with hope, and trust I leave not a few in this large assembly who can say, "Sir, I feel I am far from God, and sometimes I fear I am so far from him that he will never have mercy upon me; I dare not lift so much as my eyes towards heaven; I smite on my breast, and say, Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner"' Oh! poor heart; here is a comforting passage for thee: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him."

But again, there is a second sense in which some now present may feel

themselves to be far off from God. Conscience tells every man that if he would be saved he must get rid of his sin. The Antinomian may possibly pretend to believe that men can be saved while they live in sin; but conscience will never allow any man to swallow so egregious a lie as that. I have not one person in this congregation who is not perfectly assured that if he is to be saved he must leave off his drunkenness and his vices. Sure there is not one here so stupefied with the laudanum of hellish indifference as to imagine that he can revel in his lusts, and afterwards wear the white robe of the redeemed in paradise. If ye imagine ye can be partakers of the blood of Christ, and yet drink the cup of Belial; if ye imagine that ye can be members of Satan and members of Christ at the same time, ye have less sense than one would give you credit for. No, you know that right arms must be out off, and right eyes plucked out--that the most darling sins must be renounced, if ye would enter into the kingdom of God. And I have a man here who is convinced of the unholiness of his life, and he has striven to reform, not because he thinks reformation would save him, for he knows better than that, but because he knows that this is one of the first-fruits of grace--reformation from sin. Well, poor man, he has for many years been an inveterate drunkard, and he struggles now to overcome the passion. He has almost effected it; but he never had such an Herculean labor to attempt before; for now some temptation comes upon him so strongly that it is as much as he can do to stand against it; and perhaps sometimes since his first conviction of sin he has even fallen into it. Or perhaps it is another vice, and you, my brother, have set your face against it; but there are many bonds and fetters that bind us to our vices, and you find that though it was easy enough to spin the warp and woof sin together, it is not so easy to unravel that which you have spun. You can not purge your house of your idols;

you do not yet know how to give up all your lustful pleasures. Not yet can you renounce the company of the ungodly. You have cut off one by one your most intimate acquaintances, but it is very hard to do it completely, and you are struggling to accomplish it, and you often fall on your knees and cry, "O, Lord, how far I am from thee! what high steps these are which I have to climb! Oh! how can I be saved? Sure, if I can not purge myself from my old sins, I shall never be able to hold on my way; and even should I get rid of them, I should plunge into them once more." You are crying out, "Oh, how great my distance from God! Lord, bring me near!"

Let me present you with one other aspect of our distance from God. You have read your Bibles, and you believe that faith alone can unite the soul to Christ. You feel that unless you can believe in him who died upon the cross for your sins, you can never see the kingdom of God; but you can say this morning, "Sir, I have striven to believe; I have searched the Scriptures, not hours, but days together, to find a promise on which my weary foot might rest; I have been upon my knees many and many a time, earnestly supplicating a Divine blessing; but though I have pleaded, all in vain I have urged my plea, for until now no whisper have I had of grace, no token for good, no sign of mercy. Sir, I have striven to believe, and I have said,

"O could I but believe
Then all would easy be;
I would, but can not--Lord, relieve,
My help must come from thee!"

I have used all the power I have, and have desperately striven to cast myself at the Saviour's feet and see my sins washed sway in his blood. I have not been indifferent to the story of the cross; I have read it a hundred times, and even wept over it; but when I strive to put my hand

upon the scape-goat's head, and labor to believe that my sins are transferred to him, some demon seems to stop the breath that would breathe itself forth in adoration, and something checks the hand that would lay itself upon the head that died for me. Well, poor soul, thou art indeed far from God. I will repeat the words of the text to thee. May the Holy Spirit repeat them in thine ear! "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." So shall it be with thee if thou hast come thus far, though great may be the distance, thy feet shall not have to travel it, but God, the Eternal One, shall from his throne look down and visit thy poor heart, though now thou tarriest by the way, afraid to approach him.

II. Our second point is the PECULIAR TROUBLES which agitate the breasts of those who are in this position. Let us introduce to you the poor ragged prodigal. After a life of ease, he is, by his own vice, plunged into penury and labor. After feeding swine for a time, and being almost starved, he sets about returning to his father's house. It is a long and weary journey. He walks many a mile, until his feet are sore, and at last, from the summit of a mountain, he views his father's house far away in the plain. There are yet many miles between him and his father whom he has neglected. Can you conceive his emotions when, for the first time after so long an absence, he sees the old house at home? He remembers it well in the distance, for though it is long since he trod its floors, he has never ceased to recollect it; and the remembrance of his father's kindness, and of his own prosperity when he was with him, has never yet been erased from his consciousness. You would imagine that for one moment he feels a flash of joy, like some flash of lightning in the midst of the tempest, but anon a black darkness comes over his spirit. In the first place, it is probable he will think, "Oh!

suppose I could reach my home, will my father receive me? Will he not shut the door in my face and tell me begone and spend the rest of my life where I have been spending the first of it?" Then another suggestion might arise: "Surely, the demon that led me first astray may lead me back again, before I salute my parent." "Or mayhap," thought he, "I may even die upon the road, and so, before I have received my father's blessing, my soul may stand before its God." I doubt not each of these three thoughts has crossed your mind if you are now in the position of one who is seeking Christ, but mourns to feel himself far away from him.

First, you have been afraid lest you should die before Christ has appeared to you. You have been for months seeking the Saviour without finding him, and now the black thought comes, "And what if I should die with all these prayers unanswered? Oh! if he would but hear me ere I departed this world I would be content, though he should keep me waiting in anguish for many years. But what, if before tomorrow morning I should be a corpse? At my bed I kneel to-night and cry for mercy. Oh! if he should not send the pardon before to-morrow morning, and in the night my spirit should stand before his bar!--What then?" It is singular that other men think they shall live for ever, but men convinced of sin, who seek a Saviour, are afraid they shall not live another moment. You have known the time, dear Christian brethren, when you dared not shut your eyes for feel you should not open them again on earth; when you dreaded the shadows of the night lest they should darken for ever the light of the sun, and you should dwell in outer darkness throughout eternity. You have mourned as each day has entered, and you have wept as it has departed, because you fancied that your next step might precipitate you into your eternal doom. I have known what it is to tread the earth and fear lest every tuft of grass should

but cover a door to hell; trembling, lest every particle, and every atom, and every stone, should be solar league with God against me, as to destroy me. John Bunyan says, that at one time in his experience, he felt that he had rather have been born a dog or a toad than a man; he felt so unutterably wretched on account of sin; and his great point of wretchedness was the fact, that though he had been three years seeking Christ, he might after all die without finding him. And in truth, this is no needless alarm. It may be perhaps too alarming to some who already feel their need of Christ, but the mass of us need perpetually to be startled with the thought of death. How few of you ever indulge that thought! Because ye live and are in health, and eat, and drink, and sleep, ye think ye shall not die. Do ye ever soberly look at your last end? Do ye ever, when ye come to your beds at night, think how one day ye shall undress for the last slumber? And when ye wake in the morning, do ye never think that the trump of the archangel shall startle you to appear before God in the last day of the great assize, wherein an universe shall stand before the Judge? No. "All men think all men mortal but themselves;" and thoughts of death we still push off, until at last we shall find ourselves waking up in torment, where to wake is to wake too late. But thou to whom I specially speak this morning, thou who feelest that thou art a great way off from Christ, thou shalt never die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord; if thou hast really sought him, thou shalt never die until thou hast found him. There was never a soul yet, that sincerely sought the Saviour, who perished before he found him. No; the gates of death shall never shut on thee till the gates of grace have opened for thee; till Christ has washed thy sins away thou shalt never be baptized in Jordan's flood. Thy life is secure, for this is God's constant plan--he keeps his own elect alive till the day of his grace, and then he takes them to

himself. And inasmuch as thou knowest thy need of a Saviour, thou art one of his, and thou shalt never die until thou hast found him.

Your second fear is, "Ah, sir! I am not afraid of dying before I find Christ, I have a worse fear than that; I have had convictions before, and they have often passed away; my greatest fear to-day is, that these will be the same." I have heard of a poor collier, who on one occasion, having been deeply impressed under a sermon, was led to repent of sin and forsake his former life; but he felt so great horror of ever returning to his former conversation, that one day he knelt down and cried thus unto God, "O Lord, let me die on this spot, rather than ever deny the religion which I have espoused, and turn back to my former conversation:" and we are credibly told, that he died on that very spot, and so his prayer was answered. God had rather take him home to heaven than suffer him to bear the brunt of temptation on earth. Now, when men come to Christ, they feel that they had rather suffer anything than lose their convictions. Scores of times have you and I been drawn to Christ under the preaching of the Word. We can look back upon dozens of occasions on which it seemed just the turning point with us. Something said in our hearts, "Now, believe in Christ, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." But we said, "To-morrow, to-morrow ;" and when to-morrow came our convictions were gone. We thought what we said yesterday would be the deed of to-day; but instead of it, the procrastination of yesterday became the hardened wickedness of to-day: we wandered farther from God and forgot him. Now you are crying to him for fear, lest he should give you up again. You have this morning prayed before you came here, and you said, "Father, suffer not my companions to laugh me out of my religion; let not my worldly business so engross my thoughts, as to prevent my due attention to the matters of another world. Oh, let not the trifles of to-day so absorb

my thoughts that I may not be preparing myself to meet my God--

'Deeply on my thoughtful heart,

Eternal things impress,'

and make this a real saving work that shall never die out, nor be taken from me." Is that your earnest prayer? O poor prodigal, it shall be heard, it shall be answered. Thou shalt not have time to go back. To-day thy Father views thee from his throne in heaven; to-day he runs to thee in the message of his gospel; today he falls upon thy neck and weeps for joy; to-day he says to thee, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven ;" to-day, by the preaching of the Word, he bids thee come and reason with him, "for though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though the be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow."

But the last and the most prominent thought which I suppose the prodigal would have, would be, that when he did get to his father, he would say to him, "Get along with you, I will have nothing more to do with you." "Ah!" thought he to himself, "I recollect the morning, when I rose up before day-break, because I knew I could not stand my mothers tears; I remember how I crept down the back staircase and took all the money with me, how I stole down the yard and ran away into the land where I spent my all. Oh! what will the old gentlemen say of me when I come back? Why, there he is! he is running to me. But he has got a horsewhip with him, to be sure, to whip me away. It is not at all possible that if he comes he will have a kind word for me. The most I can expect is that he will say, Well John, you have wasted all your money, you can not expect me to do anything for you again. I won't let you starve; you shall be one of my servants: there, come, I will take you as footman;' and if he will do that I will be obliged to him; nay, that is the very thing I will ask of him; I will say, Make me as one of

thy hired servants.'" "Oh," said the devil within him, "your father will never speak comfortably to you: you had better run away again. I tell you if he gets near you, you will have such a dressing as you never received in your life. You will die with a broken heart; you will very likely fall dead here; the old man will never bury you; the carrion crows win eat you. There is no hope for you: see how you have treated him. Put yourself in his place: what would you do if you had a son that had run away with half your living, and spent it upon harlots?" And the son thought if he were in his fathers place he should be very harsh and severe; and possibly, he almost turned upon his heel to run away. But he had not time to do that. When he was just thinking about running away, on a sudden his father's arms were about his neck, and he had received the paternal kiss. Nay, before he could get his whole prayer finished, he was arrayed in a white robe, the best in the house; and they had brought him to the table, and the fatted calf was being killed for his repast. And poor soul, it shall be so with you. Thou sayest, "If I go to God, he win never receive me. I am too vile and wretched: others he may have pressed to his heart, but he will not me. If my brother should go, he might be saved; but there are such aggravations in my crime; I have grown so old since; I have done such a deal of mischief; I have so often blasphemed him, so frequently broken his Sabbaths; ah! and I have so often deceived him; I have promised I would repent, and when I got well I have lied to God, and gone back to my old sin. Oh, if he would but let me creep inside the door of heaven! I win not ask to be one of his children; I win only ask that he will let me be where the Syro-Phoenician woman desired to be--to be a dog, to eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. That is all I ask; and oh! if he will but grant it to me, he shall never hear the last of it, for as long as I live I will sing his praise; and when the world

doth fade away, and the sun grow dim with age, my gratitude, immortal as my soul, shall never cease to sing his love, who pardoned my grossest sins and washed me in his blood." It shad be so. Come and try. Now, sinners, dry your tears; let hopeless sorrows cease; look to the wounds of Christ, who died; let all your griefs now be removed, there is no further cause for them; your Father loves you; he accepts and receives you to his heart.

III. Now, in conclusion, I may notice HOW THESE FEARS WERE MET IN THE PRODIGAL'S CASE, and how they shall be met in ours if we are in the same condition.

The text says, "The Father saw him." Yes, and God saw thee just now. That tear which was wiped away so hastily--as if thou wast ashamed of it--God saw it, and he stored it in his bottle. That prayer which thou didst breathe just a few moments ago, so faintly, and with such little faith--God heard it. The other day thou wast in thy chamber, where no ear heard thee; but God was there. Sinner, let this be thy comfort, that God sees thee when thou beginnest to repent. He does not see thee with his usual gaze, with which he looks on all men; but he sees thee with an eye of intense interest. He has been looking on thee in an thy sin, and in all thy sorrow, hoping that thou wouldst repent; and now he sees the first gleam of grace, and he beholds it with joy. Never warder on the lonely castle top saw the first grey light of morning with more joy than that with which God beholds the first desire in thy heart. Never physician rejoiced more when he saw the first heaving of the lungs in one that was supposed to be dead, than God doth rejoice over thee, now that he sees the first token for good. Think not that thou art despised and unknown, and forgotten. He is marking thee from his high throne in glory, and rejoicing in what he sees. He saw thee pray, he heard thee groan; he marked thy tear; he looked upon thee and

rejoiced to see that these were the first seeds of grace in thine heart.

And then, the text says, "he had compassion on him." He did not merely see him, but he wept within himself to think he should be in such a condition. The old father had a very long range of eye-sight; and though the prodigal could not see him in the distance, he could see the prodigal. And the fathers first thought when he saw him was this--"O my poor son, O my poor boy! that ever he should have brought himself into such a state as this!" He looked through his telescope of love, and he saw him, and said, "Ah! he did not go out of my house in such trim as that. Poor creature, his feet are bleeding; he has come a long way, I'll be bound. Look at his face, he doesn't look like the same boy he was when he left me. His eye that was so bright, is now sunken in its socket; his cheeks that once stood out with fatness, have now become hollow with famine. Poor wretch, I can tell all his bones, he is so emaciated." Instead of feeling any anger in his heart, he felt just the contrary; he felt such pity for his poor son. And so the Lord feels for you--you that are groaning and moaning on account of sin. He forgets your sins; he only weeps to think you should have brought yourself to be what you are: "Why didst thou rebel against me, and bring thyself into such a state as this?" It was just like that day when Adam sinned. God walked in the garden, and he missed Adam. He did not cry out, "Adam, come here and be judged!" No; with a soft, sorrowful, and plaintive voice, he said, "Adam, where art thou? Oh, my fair Adam, thou whom I made so happy, where art thou now? Oh, Adam! thou didst think to become a God; where art thou now? Thou hast walked with me: dost thou hide thyself from thy friend? Little dost thou know, O Adam, what woes thou hast brought on thyself, and thine offspring. Adam, where art thou?" And Jehovah bowels yearn to-day over you. He is not angry with

you; his anger is passed away, and his hands are stretched out still. Inasmuch as he has brought you to feel that you have sinned against him, and to desire reconciliation with him, there is no wrath in his heart. The only sorrow that he feels is sorrow that you should have brought yourself into a state so mournful as that in which you now are found.

But he did not stop in mere compassion. Having had compassion, "he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." This you do not understand yet; but you shall. As sure as God is God, if you this day are seeking him aright through Christ, the day shall come when the kiss of full assurance shall be on your lip, when the arms of sovereign love shall embrace you, and you shall know it to be so. Thou mayest have despised him, but thou shalt know him yet to be thy Father and thy Friend. Thou mayest have scoffed his name: thou shalt one day come to rejoice in it as better than pure gold. Thou mayest have broken his Sabbaths and despised his Word; the day is coming when the Sabbath shall be thy delight, and his Word thy treasure. Yes, marvel not; thou mayest have plunged into the kennel of sin, and made thy clothes black with iniquity; but thou shalt one day stand before his throne white as the angels be; and that tongue that once cursed him shall yet sing his praise. If thou be a real seeker, the hands that have been stained with lust shall one day grasp the harp of gold, and the head that has plotted against the Most High shall yet be girt with gold. Seemeth it not a strange thing that God should do so much for sinners? But strange though it seem, it shall be strangely true. Look at the staggering drunkard in the ale-house. Is there a possibility that one day he shall stand among the fairest sons of light? Possibility! ay, certainty, if he repents and turns from the error of his ways. Hear you yon curser and swearer? See you the man who labels himself as a servant of hell,

and is not ashamed to do so? Is it possible that he shall one day share the bliss of the redeemed? Possible! ay, more, it is sure, if he turneth from his evil ways. O sovereign grace, turn men that they may repent! "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

"Lord, do thou the sinner turn,
For thy tender mercy's sake."

One word or so, and I have done. If any of you to-day are under conviction of sin, let me solemnly warn you not to frequent places where those convictions are likely too be destroyed.

A correspondent of the New York Christian Advocate furnishes the following affecting narrative:--

"When I was travelling in the state of Massachusetts, twenty-six years ago, after preaching one evening in the town of _____, a very serious-looking young man arose, and wished to address the assembly. After obtaining leave, he spoke as follows:--'My friends, about one year ago, I set out in company with a young man of my intimate acquaintance, to seek the salvation of my soul. For several weeks we went on together, we laboured together, and often renewed our covenant not to give over seeking till we obtained the religion of Jesus. But, all at once, the young man neglected attending meeting, appeared to turn his back on all the means of grace, and grew so shy of me, that I could scarcely get an opportunity to speak with him. His strange conduct gave me much painful anxiety of mind; but still I felt resolved to obtain the salvation of my soul, or perish, making the publican's plea. After a few days, a friend informed me that my young companion had received an invitation to a ball, and was determined to go. I went immediately to him, and, with tears in my eyes, endeavoured to persuade him to change his purpose, and to go with me on that evening to a prayer-meeting. I pleaded with him in vain. He told me, when we parted,

that I must not give him up as lost, for after he had attended that ball, he intended to make a business of seeking religion. The appointed evening came, and he went to the ball, and I went to the prayer-meeting. Soon after the meeting opened, it pleased God, in answer to my prayer, to turn my spiritual captivity, and make my soul rejoice in his justifying love. Soon after the ball opened, my young friend was standing at the head of the ball-room, with the hand of a young lady in his hand, preparing to lead down the dance; and, while the musician was turning his violin,, without one moment's warning, the young man sallied back, and fell dead on the floor. I was immediately sent for, to assist in devising means to convey his remains to his father's house. You will be better able to judge what were the emotions of my heart, when I tell you that that young man was my own brother.'" Trifle not, then, with thy convictions, for eternity shall be too short for thee to utter thy lamentations over such trifling.

Chapter 12

God, the All-Seeing One

A Sermon

(No. 177)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 14, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"--Proverbs 15:11.

YOU HAVE OFTEN smiled at the ignorance of heathens who bow themselves before gods of wood and stone. You have quoted the words of Scripture, and you have said, "Eyes have they but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not." You have therefore argued that they could not be gods at all, because they could neither see nor hear, and you have smiled contemptuously at the men who could so debase their understandings as to make such things objects of adoration. May I ask you one question--but one? Your God can both see and hear: would your conduct be in any respect different, if you had a god such as those that the heathen worship? Suppose for one minute, that Jehovah, who is nominally adored in this land, could be (though it is almost blasphemy to suppose it) smitten with such a blindness, that he could not see the works and know the thoughts of man: would you then become more careless concerning him than you are now? I trow not. In nine cases out of ten, and perhaps in a far larger and sadder proportion, the doctrine of Divine Omniscience, although it is received and believed, has no practical effect upon our lives at all. The mass of mankind forget God: whole nations who know his existence and believe that he beholds them, live as if they had no God at all. Merchants, farmers, men in their

shops, and in their fields, husbands in their families, and wives in the midst of their households, live as if there were no God; no eye inspecting them; no ear listening to the voice of their lips, and no eternal mind always treasuring up the recollection of their acts. Ah! we are practical Atheists, the mass of us; yea, all but those that have been born again, and have passed from death unto life, be their creeds what they may, are Atheists, after all, in life; for if there were no God, and no hereafter, multitudes of men would never be affected by the change; they would live the same as they do now--their lives being so full of disregard of God and his ways, that the absence of a God could not affect them in any great degree. Permit me, then, this morning, as God shall help me, to stir up your hearts; and may God grant that something I may say, may drive some of your practical Atheism out of you. I would endeavor to set before you, God, the all-seeing one, and press upon your solemn consideration the tremendous fact, that in all our acts, in all our ways, and in all our thoughts, we are continually under his observing eye.

We have in our text, first of all, a great fact declared,--"Hell and destruction are before the Lord ;" we have, secondly, a great fact inferred,--"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

I. We will begin with THE GREAT FACT WHICH IS DECLARED--a fact which furnishes us with premises from which we deduce the practical conclusion of the second sentence--"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?" The best interpretation that you can give of those two words, "hell" and "destruction," is, I think, comprehended in a sentence something like this,--"Death and hell are before the Lord." The separate state of departed spirits, and destruction, Abaddon, as the Hebrew has it, the place of torment, are both of them, although solemnly mysterious to us, manifest enough to God.

1. First, then, the word here translated "hell," might just as well be translated "death," or the state of departed spirits. Now, death, with all its solemn consequences, is visible before the Lord. Between us and the hereafter of departed spirits a great black cloud is hanging. Here and there, the Holy Spirit hath made chinks, as it were, in the black wall of separation, through which, by faith we can see; for he hath "revealed unto us by the Spirit" the things which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard," and which the human intellect could never compass. Yet, what we know is but very little. When men die, they pass beyond the realm of our knowledge: both in body and in soul, they go beyond our understandings. But God understands all the secrets of death. Let us divide these into several heads, and enumerate them.

God knows the burial-places of all his people. He notes as well the resting-place of the man who is buried tombless and alone, as the man over whom a mighty mausoleum has been raised. The traveler who fell in the barren desert, whose body became the prey of the vulture, and whose bones were bleached in the sun--the mariner, who was wrecked far out at sea, and over whose corpse no dirge was ever wailed, except the howling of the winds, and the murmuring of the wild waves--the thousands who have perished in battle, unnumbered and unnoticed--the many who have died alone, amid dreary forests, frozen seas, and devouring snow-storms--all these, and the places of their sepulchre, are known to God. That silent grot within the sea, where pearls lie deep, where now the shipwrecked one is sleeping, is marked by God as the death-place of one of his redeemed; that place upon the mountain-side, the deep ravine into which the traveler fell and was buried in a snow-drift, is marked in the memory of God as the tomb of one of the human race. No body of man, however it may have been interred or uninterred, has passed beyond the range of God's knowledge. Blessed be his name, if I shall die, and

lie where the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep, in some neglected corner of the churchyard, I shall be known as well, and rise as well recognized by my glorious Father, as if interred in the cathedral, where forests of gothic pillars proudly stand erect, and where the songs of myriads perpetually salute high heaven. I shall be known as well as if I had been buried there in solemn pomp, and had been interred with music and with dread solemnities, and I shall be recognized as well as if the marble trophy and the famous pillar had been raised to my remembrance; for God knoweth no such thing as forgetfulness of the burying-places of his children. Moses sleeps in some spot that eye hath not seen. God kissed away his soul, and he buried him where Israel could never find him, though they may have searched for him. But God knoweth where Moses sleeps; and if he knows that, he understands where all his children are hidden. Ye cannot bell me where is the tomb of Adam; ye could not point out to me the sleeping place of Abel. Is any man able to discover the tomb of Methuselah and those long-lived dwellers in the time before the flood? Who shall tell where the once-treasured body of Joseph now sleeps in faith? Can any of you discover the tombs of the kings, and mark the exact spot where David and Solomon rest in solitary grandeur? No, those things have passed from human recollection, and we know not where the great and mighty of the past are buried; but God knoweth, for death and Hades are open before the Lord.

And again, further, not only does he know the place where they were buried, but he is cognizant of the history of all their bodies after sepulture or after death. It has often been asked by the infidel, "How can the body of man be restored, when it may have been eaten by the cannibal, or devoured by wild beasts?" Our simple reply is, that God can track every atom of it if he pleases. We do not think it necessary

to resurrection that he should do so, but if he so willed it, he could bring every atom of every body that hath ever died: although it hath passed through the most complicated machinery of nature, and become entangled in its passage with plants and beasts, yea, and with the bodies of other men, God hath it still within the range of his knowledge to know where every atom is, and it is within the might of his Omnipotence to call every atom from its wandering, and restore it to its proper sphere, and rebuild the body of which it was a part. It is true, we could not track the dust that long since has moldered. Buried with exactest care, preserved with the most scrupulous reverence, years passed away, and the body of the monarch, which had long slept well guarded and protected, was at last reached by the careless hand. The coffin had moldered, and the metal was broken for the sake of its own value; a handful of dust was discovered, the last relics of one who was master of many nations. That dust by sacrilegious hand was cast in the aisle of the church, or thrown into the churchyard and blown by the winds into the neighboring field. It was impossible for ever to preserve it; the greatest care was defeated; and at last the monarch was on a level with his slave, "alike unknowing and unknown." But God knows where every particle of the handful of dust has gone: he has marked in his book the wandering of every one of its atoms. He hath death so open before his view, that he can bring all these together, bone to bone, and clothe them with the very flesh that robed them in the days of yore, and make them live again. Death is open before the Lord.

And as the body, so the soul when separated from the body, is before the Lord. We look upon the countenance of our dying friend, and on a sudden a mysterious change passes over his frame. "His soul has fled," we say. But have we any idea of what his soul is? Can we form even a

conjecture of what the flying of that soul may be, and what the august presence into which it is ushered when it is disentangled from its earthly coil? Is it possible for us to guess what is that state where Spirits without bodies, perpetually blest, behold their God? It is possible for us to compass some imagination of what heaven is to be, when bodies and souls, reunited, shall before God's throne enjoy the highest bliss; but I do think, that so gross are our conceptions, whilst we are in our bodies, that it is almost, if not quite, impossible for any of us to form any idea whatever as to the position of souls, whilst in the disembodied state, between the hour of death and the time of resurrection.

"This much, and this is all, we know;
They are supremely blest:
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,
And with their Saviour rest."

But the best of the saints can tell us nothing more than this. They are blest, and in paradise they are reigning with their Lord. Brethren, these things are known to God. The separate state of the dead, the heaven of disembodied spirits, is within the gaze of the Most High, and at this hour, if so he pleased, he could reveal to us the condition of every man that is dead--whether he has mounted to Elysian fields, to dwell for ever in the sunlight of his Master's countenance, or has been plunged into hell, dragged down by iron chains, to wait in dreary woe the result of the awful trial, when "Depart ye cursed," must be the re-affirmation of a sentence once pronounced, and already in part endured. God understands the separate doom of every man's spirit before the great tribunal day--before the last sentence shall have been pronounced, death is open before the Lord.

2. The next word, "destruction," signifies hell, or the place of the

damned. That also is open before the Lord. Where hell is, and what its miseries, we know not; except "through a glass darkly," we have never seen the invisible things of horror. That land of terror is a land unknown. We have much reason to thank God that he has put it so far off from the habitations of living mortals, that the pains, the groans, the shrieks, the yells, are not to be heard here, or else earth itself would have become a hell, the solemn prelude and the ante-past of unutterable torment. God has put somewhere, far on the edge of his dominions, a tearful lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; into that he cast the rebel angels, who (though by a license they are now allowed to walk the earth) do carry a hell within their bosoms, and are by-and-by to be bound with chains, reserved in blackness and darkness for ever for them that kept not their first estate, but lifted the arm of their rebellion against God. Into that place we dare not look. Perhaps it would not be possible for any man to get a fair idea of the torments of the lost, without at once becoming mad. Reason would reel at such a sight of horror. One moment of listening to the shrill screams of spirits tortured, might forever drive us into the depths of despair, and make us only fit to be bound in chains whilst we lived on earth. Raving lunatics surely we must become. But whilst God has mercifully covered all these things from us, they are all known to him; he looks upon them; yea, it is his look that makes hell what it is. His eyes, full of fury, flash the lightnings that scathe his enemies; his lips, full of dreadful thunders, make the thunders that now Upright the wicked. O, could they escape the eye of God, could they shut out that dreary vision of the face of the incensed Majesty of heaven, then might hell be quenched; then might the wheels of Ixion stand still; then might doomed Tantalus quench his thirst and eat to his very full. But there, whilst they lie in their chains, they look upward, and they see

ever that fearful vision of the Most High; the dreadful hands that grasp the thunderbolts, the dreadful lips that speak the thunders, and the fearful eyes that flash the flames that burn their souls, with horrors deeper than despair. Yes, hell, horrible as it is, and veiled in many clouds, and covered over with darkness, is naked before the vision of the Most High.

There is the grand fact stated--"Hell and destruction are before the Lord." After this the inference seems to be easy--"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

II. We now come to the GRAND FACT INFERRED.

In briefly entering upon this second part I will discuss the subject thus: You notice there an argument--"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?" I will therefore begin by asking, why does it follow that the hearts of men are seen by God?

Why--how--what--when--shall be four questions into which we shall divide what we have now to say.

1. Why is it so clear, that "if hell and destruction are open before the Lord," the hearts of men must be very plainly viewed by him?

We answer, because the hearts of men are not so extensive as the realms of death and torment. What is man's heart? what is man's self? Is he not in Scripture compared to a grasshopper? Does not God declare that he "takes up the isles"--whole islands full of men--"as a very little thing; And the nations before him are but as the drop of a bucket?" If, then, the all-seeing eye of God takes in at one glance the wide regions of death--and wide they are, wide enough to startle any man who shall try to range them through--if, I say, with one glance God seeth death and seeth hell through, with all its bottomless depths, with all its boundlessness of misery, surely, then, he is quite able to behold all the actions of the little thing called man's heart. Suppose a man so

wise is to be able to know the wants of a nation and to remember the feelings of myriads of men, you can not suppose it difficult for him to know the actions of his own family and to understand the emotions of his oven household. If the man is able to stretch his arm over a great sphere, and to say, "I am monarch of all this," surely he shall be able to control the less. He who in his wisdom can walk through centuries shall not say that he is ignorant of the history of a year; he who can dive into the depths of science, and understand the history of the whole world from its creation, is not to be alarmed by some small riddle that happens at his own door. No, the God who seeth death and hell seeth our hearth for they are far less extensive.

Reflect again, that they are far less aged too. Death is an ancient monarch; he is the only king whose dynasty stands fast. Ever since the days of Adam he has never been succeeded by another, and has never had an interregnum in his reign. His black ebon sceptre hath swept away generation after generation; his scythe hath mowed the fair fields of this earth a hundred times, and is sharp to mow us down, and when another crop shall succeed us he is still ready to devour the multitudes, and sweep the earth clean again. The regions of death are old domains; his pillars of black granite are ancient as the eternal hills. Death made his prey on earth long ere Adam was here. Those mighty creatures that made the deep hoary with their strength, and stirred the earth with their tramplings--those elder born of natures sons, the mighty creatures that lived here long ere Adam walked in Eden--death made them his prey: like a mighty hunter he speared the mighty lizard and laid it low, and now we dig it from the stony tomb, and wonder at it. He is our ancient monarch; but ancient as he is, his whole monarchy is in the records of God, and until death itself is dead, and swallowed up in victory, death shall be open before the Lord.

How old, too, is death--old as the first sin. In that day when Satan tempted the angels, and led astray the third part of the stars of heaven, then hell was digger; then was that bottomless pit first struck out of solid rocks of vengeance, that it might stand a marvelous record of what God's wrath can do. The fires of hell are not the kindlings of yesterday: they are ancient flames that burned long ere Vesuvius cast forth its lurid flame. Long ere the first charred ashes tell upon the plain from earth's red volcanoes, hell's flames we're burning; for "Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. If, then, the ancient things, these old ones, death and hell, have been observed by God, and if their total history is known to him, how much more then shall he know the history of those mere animalculae, those ephemera of an hour, that we call men! You are here to-day, and gone to-morrow; born yesterday--the next hour shall see our tomb prepared, and another minute shall hear, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and the falling of the clod upon the coffin lid. We are the creatures of a day, and know nothing. We are scarcely here; we are only living and dead. "Gone!" is the greatest part of our history. Scarcely have we time enough to tell the story, ere it comes to its finis. Surely, then, God may easily understand the history of a beast, when he knows the history of the monarchies of death and hell.

This is the why. I need not give further arguments, though there be abundance deducible from the text. "How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

2. But now, how does God know the heart? I mean to what degree and to what extent does he understand and know that which is in man? I answer, Holy Scripture in divers places gives us most precise information. God knows the heart so well that he is said to "search" it. We all

understand the figure of a search. There is a search-warrant out against some man who is supposed to be harboring a traitor in his house. The officer goes into the lower room, opens the door of every cupboard, looks into every closet, peers into every cranny, takes the key, descends into the cellar, turns over the coals, disturbs the wood, lest any one should be hidden there. Up stairs he goes: there is an old room that has not been open for years,--it is opened. There is a huge chest: the lock is forced, and it is broken open. The very top of the house is searched, lest upon the slates or upon the tiles some one should be concealed. At last, when the search has been complete, the officer says, "It is impossible that there can be anybody here, for, from the tiles to the foundation, I have searched the house thoroughly through; I know the very spiders well, for I have seen the house completely." Now, it is just so that God knows our heart. He searches it--searches into every nook, corner, crevice, and secret part; and the figure of the Lord is pushed further still. "The candle of the Lord," we are told, "searches the secret parts of the belly." As when we wish to find something, we take a candle, and look down upon the ground with great care, and turn up the dust. If it is some little piece of money we desire to find, we light a candle and sweep the house, and search diligently till we find it. Even so it is with God. He searches Jerusalem with candles, and pulls every thing to day-light. No partial search, like that of Laban, when he went into Rachel's tent to look for his idols. She put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them; but God looks into the camel's furniture, and all. "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord." His eye searches the heart, and looks into every part of it.

In another passage we are told that God tries the reins. That is even more than searching. The goldsmith when he takes gold, looks at it, and

examines it carefully. "Ah!" says he, "but I don't understand this gold yet: I must try it." He thrusts it into the furnace; there coals are heaped upon it, and it is fused and melted, till he knows what there is of dross, and what there is of gold. Now, God knows to the very carat how much there is of sound gold in us, and how much of dross. There is no deceiving him. He has put our hearts into the furnace of his Omniscience; the furnace--his knowledge--tries us as completely as the goldsmith's crucible doth try the gold--how much there is of hypocrisy, how much of truth--how much of steam, how much of real--how much of ignorance, how much of knowledge--how much of devotion, how much of blasphemy--how much of carefulness, how much of carelessness. God knows the ingredients of the heart; he reduces the soul to its pristine metals; he divides it asunder--so much of quartz, so much of gold, so much of dung, of dross, of wood, of hay, of stubble, so much of gold, silver, and precious stones. "The Lord trieth the hearts and searcheth the reins of the children of men."

Here is another description of God's knowledge of the heart. In one place of Sacred Writ--(it will be well if you set your children to find out these places at home)--God is said to ponder the heart. Now, you know, the Latin word ponder means weigh. The Lord weighs the heart. Old Master Quarles has got a picture of a great one putting a heart into one scale, and then putting the law, the Bible, into the other scale, to weigh it. This is what God does with men's hearts. They are often great, puffed-up, blown-out things, and people say, "What a great-hearted man that is!" But God does not judge by the appearance of a man's great heart nor the outside appearance of a good heart; but he puts it in the scales and weighs it--puts his own Word in one scale and the heart in the other. He knows the exact weight--knows whether we have grace in the heart, which makes us good weight, or only pretence

in the heart, which makes us weigh light weight when put into the scale. He searches the heart in every possible way, he puts it into the fire, and then thrusts it into the balances. Oh, might not God say of many of you, "I have searched your heart, and I have found vanity therein? Reprobate silver shall men call you; for God has put you in the furnace and rejected you." And then he might conclude his verdict by saying, "Mene, mene, tekel--thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." This, then, is the answer to the question, How?

The next question was, What? What is it that God sees in man's heart? God sees in man's heart a great deal more than we think of God sees, and has seen in out hearts, lust, and blasphemy, and murder, and adultery, and malice and wrath, and all uncharitableness. The heart never can be painted too black, unless you daub it with something blacker than the devil himself. It is as base as it can be. You have never committed murder, but yet you have had murder in your heart; you may never have stained your hands with lusts and the aspersions of uncleanness, but still it is in the heart. Have you never imagined an evil thing? Has your soul never for a moment doted on a pleasure which you were too chaste to indulge in, but which for a moment you surveyed with at least some little complacency and delight? Has not imagination often pictured, even to the solitary monk in his cell, greater vice than men in public life have ever dreamed of? And may not even the divine in his closet be conscious that blasphemies, and murders, and lusts of the vilest class, can find a ready harbor even in the heart which he hopes is dedicated to God? Oh! beloved, it is a sight that no human eye could endure: the sight of a heart really laid bare before one's own inspection would startle us almost into insanity: but God sees the heart in all its bestial sensuousness, in all its wanderings and rebellions, in all its high mindedness and pride; God has searched

and knows it altogether.

God sees all the heart's imaginations, and what they are let us not presume to tell. O children of God, these have made you cry and groan full many a time, and though the worldling groans not over them, yet he hath them. Oh, what a filthy stye of Stygian imaginations is the heart; all full of every thing that is hideous, when it once begins to dance and make carnival and revelry concerning sin. But God sees the heart's imaginations.

Again, God sees the heart's devices. You, perhaps, O sinner, have determined to curse God; you have not done so, but you intend to do it. He knows your devices--reads them all. You perhaps will not be permitted to run into the excess of riotousness into which you purpose to go; but your very purpose is now undergoing the inspection of the Most High. There is never a design forged in the fires of the heart, before it is beaten on the anvil of resolve, that is not known, and seen, and noted by Jehovah our God.

He knows, next, the resolves of the heart. He knows, O sinner, how many times you have resolved to repent, and have resolved and re-resolved, and then have continued the same. He knows, O thou that hast been sick, how thou didst resolve to seek God, but how thou didst despise thine own resolution, when good health had put thee beyond the temporary danger. Thy resolves have been filed in heaven, and thy broken promises, and thy vows despised, shall be brought out in their order as swift witnesses for thy condemnation. All these things are known of God. We have often had very clear proof of God's knowing what is in man's heart, even in the ministry. Some months ago, whilst standing here preaching, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said these words--"There is a man sitting there that is a shoemaker, keeps his shop open on Sunday, had his shop open last

Sabbath morning, took ninepence, and -there was fourpence profit out of it. His soul is sold to Satan for fourpence." A City Missionary, when going round the West end of the town, met with a poor man, of whom he asked this question: "Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?" He found him reading a sermon. "Yes," he said, "I have every reason to know him; I have been to hear him, and under God's grace I have become a new man. "But," said he, "shall I tell you how it was? I went to the Music Hall, and took my seat in the middle of the place, and the man looked at me as if he knew me, and deliberately told the congregation that I was a shoemaker, and that I sold shoes on a Sunday; and I did, sir. But, sir, I should not have minded that; but he said I took ninepence the Sunday before, and that there was fourpence profit; and so I did take ninepence, and fourpence was just the profit, and how he should know that I'm sure I can not tell. It struck me it was God had spoken to my soul through him; and I shut my shop last Sunday, and was afraid to open it and go there, lest he should split about me again." I could tell as many as a dozen authentic stories of cases that have happened in this Hall, where I have deliberately pointed at some body, without the slightest knowledge of the person, or ever having in the least degree any inkling or idea that what I said was right, except that I believed I was moved thereto by the Spirit; and so striking has been the description, that the persons have gone away and said, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: he was sent of God to my soul, beyond a doubt, or else he could not have painted my case so clearly."

And not only so, but we have known cases in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge with their elbows, because they have got a smart hit, and I have heard them say, when they went out, "That is just what I said to you when I went in at the door." "Ah!" says the other, "I was thinking of the very

thing he said, and he told me of it." Now, if God thus proves his own Omniscience by helping his poor, ignorant servant, to state the very thing, thought and done, when he did not know it, then it must remain decisively proved that God does know everything that is secret, because we see he tells it to men, and enables them to tell it to others. Oh, ye may endeavor as much as ye can to hide your faults from God, but beyond a doubt he shall discover you. He discovers you this day. His Word is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and "pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and of the marrow;" and in that last day, when the book shall be opened, and he shall give to every man his sentence, then shall it be seen how exact, how careful, how precious, how personal was God's knowledge of the heart of every man whom he had made.

4. And now the last question: When? When does God see us? The answer is, he sees us everywhere and in every place. O foolish man, who thinks to hide himself from the Most High! It is night! no human eye sees thee; the curtain is drawn, and thou art hidden. There are his eyes lowering at thee through the gloom. It is a far-off country; no one knows thee; parents and friends have been left behind, restraints are cast off. There is a Father near thee, who looks upon thee even now. It is a lone spot, and if the deed be done, no tongue shall tell it. There is a tongue in heaven that shall tell it; yea, the beam out of the wall, and the stones in the field, shall raise up themselves as witnesses against thee. Canst thou hide thyself anywhere where God shall not detect thee? Is not this whole world like a glass hive, wherein we put our bees? and does not God stand and see all our motions when we think we are hidden? Ah, it is but a glass hiding-place. He looketh from heaven, and through stone walls and rocks; yea, to the very centre itself, does his eye pierce, and in the thickest darkness

he beholds our deeds.

Come, then, let me make a personal application of the matter, and I have done. If this be true, hypocrite, what a fool thou art! If God can read the heart, O man, what a sorry, sorry thing thy fair pretense must be! Ah! ah! ah! what a change will come over some of you! This world is a masquerade, and ye, many of you, wear the mask of religion. Ye dance your giddy hours, and men think you to be the saints of God. How changed will you be, when, at the door of eternity, you must drop the visor, and must announce the theatricals in which you live! How you will blush when the paint is washed from off your cheek--when you stand before God naked to your own shame, a hypocrite, unclean, diseased, covered up before with the gew-gaws and the trickery of pretended formality in religion, but now standing there, base, vile, and hideous! There is many a man that bears about him a cancer that would make one sick to see. Oh, how shall hypocrites look when their cancerous hearts are laid bare! Deacon! how you will tremble when your old heart is torn open, and your vile pretences rent away! Minister! how black you will look when your surplice is off, and when your grand pretensions are cast to the dogs! How will you tremble! There will be no sermonizing others then. You yourself will be preached to, and the sermon shall be from that text, "Depart ye cursed." O brethren, above all things shun hypocrisy. If ye mean to be damned, make up your minds to it, and be damned like honest men; but do not, I beseech you, pretend to go to heaven while all the time you are going to hell. If ye mean to make your abodes in torment forever, then serve the devil, and do not be ashamed of it; stand it right out, and let the world know what you are. But oh! never put on the cloak of religion. I beseech you, do not add to your eternal misery being a wolf in sheep's clothing. Show the cloven foot; do not hide it. If you mean to go to hell, say so. "If God

be God, serve him. If Baal be God, serve him." Do not serve Baal and then pretend to be serving God.

One other practical conclusion. If God sees and knows everything, how this ought to make you tremble--you that have lived in sin for many years! I have known a man who was once stopped from an act of sin by the fact of there being a cat in the room. He could not bear even the eyes of that poor creature to see him. Oh, I would ye could carry about with you the recollection of those eyes that are always on you. Swearer! could you swear if you could see God's eye looking at you? Thief! drunkard! harlot! could ye indulge in your sins, if ye saw his eyes on you? Oh, methinks they would startle you and bid you pause, before ye did in God's own sight rebel against his law. There is a story told of the American War, that one of the prisoners taken by the Americans was subjected to a torture of the most refined character. He says, "I was put into a narrow dungeon; I was comfortably provided for with all I needed; but there was a round slit in the wall, and through that, both night and day, a soldier always looked at me." He says, "I could not rest, I could not eat nor drink, nor do anything in comfort, because there was always that eye--an eye that seemed never to be turned away, and never shut--always following me round that little apartment. Nothing ever hidden from it." Now take home that figure. Recollect that is your position; you are shut in by the narrow walls of time, when ye eat, and when ye drink, when ye rise, and when ye lie upon your beds; when ye walk the streets, or when ye sit at home, that eye is always fixed upon you. Go home now and sin against God, if ye dare; go home now and break his laws to his face, and despise him, and set him at nought! Rush on your own destruction; dash yourselves against the buckler of Jehovah, and destroy your selves upon his own sword! Nay, rather, "turn ye, turn ye." Turn ye, ye that have followed

the ways of sin, turn ye to Christ, and live; and then the same Omniscience which is now your horror, shall be your pleasure. Sinner! if thou now dost pray, he seeth thee; if thou now dost weep he seeth thee. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." It shall be even so with thee, if now thou turnest to God and dost believe in his Son Jesus Christ.

Chapter 13

The Work of the Holy Spirit

A Sermon

(No. 178)

Delivered on Thursday Evening, November 5, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

"Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"--Galatians 3:3.

YES, we are just so foolish. Folly is bound up not only in the heart of a child, but in the heart of even a child of God; and though the rod may be said to bring folly out of a child, it will take many a repetition of the rod of affliction upon the shoulders of a Christian before that folly is taken out of him. I suppose we are all of us very sound as a matter of theory upon this point. If any should ask us how we hope to have our salvation worked in us, we should without the slightest hesitation aver our belief that salvation is of the Lord alone, and we should declare that, as the Holy Spirit first of all commenced our piety in us, we look alone to his might to continue and to preserve, and at last to perfect the sacred work. I say we are sound enough on that point as a matter of theory, but we are all of us very heretical and unsound as a matter of practice; for alas! you will not find a Christian who does not have to mourn over his self-righteous tendencies; you will not discover a believer who has not at certain periods in his life, to groan because the spirit of self-confidence has risen in his heart, and prevented him from feeling the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit--has led him to put his confidence in the mere strength of nature, the strength of good intentions, the strength

of strong resolutions, instead of relying upon the might of God the Holy Spirit alone. This one thing I know, brethren, that whilst as a preacher I can tell you all, that the Holy Spirit must work all our works in us, and that without him we can do nothing, yet as a man I find myself tempted to deny my own preachings, not in my words, but to deny them in fact by endeavoring to do deeds without looking first to the Holy Spirit. Whilst I should never be unsound in the didactic part of it, yet in that part which concerns the working of it out, in common with all that love the Lord Jesus, but who are still subject to the infirmities of flesh and blood, I have to groan that I repeatedly find myself, having begun in the Spirit, seeking to be made perfect in the flesh. Yes, we are just as foolish as that; and my brethren, it is well for us if we have a consciousness that we are foolish, for when a man is foolish and knows it, there is the hope that he will one day be wise: to know one's-self to be foolish is to stand upon the doorstep of the temple of wisdom; to understand the wrongness of any position is half way towards amending it; to be quite sure that our self-confidence is a heinous sin and folly, and an offense towards God, and to have that thought burned into us by God's Holy Spirit, is going a great length towards the absolute casting our self-confidence away, and the bringing of our souls in practice, as well as in theory, to rely wholly upon the power of God's Holy Spirit.

This evening, however, I shall run away from my text somewhat. Having just in a few words endeavored to explain the meaning of the whole sentence, I intend only this evening to dwell upon the doctrine which incidentally the apostle teaches us. He teaches us that we begin in the Spirit--"Having begun in the Spirit" I have already illustrated the whole text sufficiently for our understanding if God the Holy Spirit shall enlighten us; and I shall now, I say, confine myself to the

thought that Christians begin in the Spirit; that the early part of Christianity is of God's Spirit, and of God's Spirit only, while it is equally true that all the way through we must lean upon the same power and depend upon the same strength. And I have selected this text for this reason: we have a very large influx of young believers, month after month--week after week I may say, for every week we receive additions to the church to a considerable number, and month after month these hands baptize into a profession of faith of the Lord Jesus many of those who are yet young in the faith of the Gospel. Now I am astonished to find those persons that thus come before me so well instructed in the doctrines of grace and so sound in all the truths of the covenant, insomuch that I may think it my boast and glory, in the name of Jesus, that I know not that we have any members, whom we have received into the church, who do not give their full assent and consent unto all the doctrines of the Christian religion, commonly called Calvinistic doctrines Those which men are wont to laugh at as being high doctrinal points, are those which they most readily receive, believe, and rejoice in. I find, however, that the greatest deficiency lies in this point, forgetfulness of the work of the Holy Spirit. I find them very easily remembering the work of God the Father; they do not deny the great doctrine of election; they can see clearly the great sentence of justification passed by the Father upon the elect through the vicarious sacrifice and perfect righteousness of Jesus; and they are not backward in understanding the work of Jesus either: they can see how Christ was the substitute for his people and stood in their room, place and stead; nor do they for one moment impugn any doctrine concerning God's Spirit; but they are not clear upon the point: they can talk upon the other points better than they can upon those which more particularly concern the blessed work of that all adorable person

of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit. I thought, therefore, that I would just preach as simply as ever I could upon the work of the Holy Spirit, and begin at the beginning; hoping on succeeding evening, at different times, as God the Holy Spirit shall guide me, to enter more fully into the subject of the work of the Spirit from the beginning even to the end. But let me say, it is no use your expecting me to preach a course of sermons. I know a great deal better than that. I don't believe God the Holy Spirit ever intended men to publish three months before hand, lists of sermons that they were going to preach; because there always will arise changes in Providence, and different states of mind both in the preacher and the hearer, and he will be a very wise man who has got an Old Moore's Almanack correct enough to let him know what would be the best sort of sermon to preach three months ahead. He had better leave it to his God to give him in the same hour what he shall speak, and look for his sermons, as the Israelites looked for the manna, day by day. However, we now commence by endeavoring to narrate the different points of the Spirit's work in the beginning of salvation.

And first, let me start by asserting that THE COMMENCEMENT OF SALVATION IS THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK. Salvation is not begun in the soul by the means of grace apart from the Holy Spirit. No man in the world is at liberty to neglect the means that God has appointed. If a house be builded for prayer, that man must expect no blessing who neglects to tread its floor. If a pulpit be erected for the ministration of the Word, no man must expect (although we do sometimes get more than we expect) to be saved except by the hearing of the Word. If the Bible be printed in our own native language, and we can read it, he who neglecteth Holy Scripture. and ceaseth from its study, has lost one great and grand opportunity of being blessed. There are many means of grace, and let us speak as highly of them as ever we can; we would be

far from depreciating them; they are of the highest value; blessed are the people who have them; happy is the nation which is blessed with the means of grace. But my brethren, no man was ever saved by the means of grace apart from the Holy Spirit. You may hear the sermons of the man whom God delighteth to honor; ye may select from all your puritanical divines the writings of the man whom God did bless with a double portion of his Holy Spirit; ye may attend every meeting for prayer; ye may turn over the leaves of this blessed book; but in all this, there is no life for the soul apart from the breath of the Divine Spirit. Use these means, we exhort you to use them, and use them diligently: but recollect that in none of these means is there.anything that can benefit you unless God the Holy Spirit shall own and crown them. These are like the conduit pipes of the market place; when the fountain-head floweth with water then they are full, and we do derive a blessing from them; but if the stream be stayed, if the fountain head doth cease to give forth its current, then these are wells without water, clouds without rain; and ye may go to ordinances as an Arab turns to his skin bottle when it is dry, and with your parched lips ye may suck the wind and drink the whirlwind, but receive neither comfort, nor blessing, nor instruction, from the means of grace.

Nor is the salvation of any sinner commenced in him by a minister or by a priest, God forgive the man that ever called himself a priest, or suffered anyone else to call him so since the days of our Lord Jesus. The other morning at family prayer, I read the case of King Uzziah, who, having the kingly office, must needs thrust himself into the tabernacle of the Lord, and take the place of the priests. You remember how the priests withstood him, and said, "This is not thy portion, O Uzziah;" and you remember how he seized the censer and would burn incense as a priest before the Lord God; and whilst they yet spake, lo!

the leprosy did rise in his face and he went out a leper, as white as snow, from the house of God. Ah! my brethren, it is no mean offense against God for any man to call himself a priest; not but that all the saints have a priestly office through Christ Jesus; but when any man putteth to the idea a speciality as applicable to himself above his fellows, and claimeth to be a priest among men, he committeth a sin before God, which, even though it be a sin of ignorance, is indeed great and grievous, and leadeth unto divers great and deadly errors, the guilt of which must lie partly upon the head of the man who gave foot-hold for those errors by allowing the title to be applied to himself. Well, there is no man--call him priest if you like, by way of ill courtesy--that can begin the work with us--no, not in the use of the ceremony. The Papist may tell us, and the Papist masked,--the devil in white, the Puseyite,--may tell us that grace begins in the heart at the dropping of the water upon the child's brow; but he telleth a lie, a lie before God, that hath not even so much as the shadow of truth to justify the liar. There is no power in man, though he were ordained by one who could most assuredly claim succession from the apostles--though he were endowed with miraculous gifts, though he were the apostle Paul himself--if he did assert that he had in himself power to convert, power to regenerate, let him be accursed, for he hath denied the truth and Paul himself would have declared him anathema, maranatha, for having departed from the everlasting gospel, one cardinal point of which is--regeneration, the work of God the Holy Spirit; the new birth, a thing that is from above.

And, my brethren, it is quite certain that no man ever begins the new birth himself. The work of salvation never was commenced by any man. God the Holy Spirit must commence it. Now, the reasons why no man ever commenced the work of grace in his own heart, is very plain and

palpable. First, because he cannot; secondly, because he won't. The best reason of all is, because he cannot--he is dead. Well the dead may be made alive, but the dead cannot make themselves alive, for the dead can do nothing. Besides, the new thing to be created as yet hath no being. The uncreated cannot create. "Nay," but you say, "that man can create." Yes, can hell create heaven? Then sin may create grace. What! will you tell me that fallen human nature, that has come almost to a level with the brutes, is competent to rival God; that it can emulate the divinity in working as great marvels, and in imparting as divine a life as even God himself can give? It cannot. Besides, it is a creation; we are created anew in Christ Jesus. Let any man create a fly, and afterwards let him create a new heart in himself; until he hath done the less he cannot do the greater. Besides, no man will. If any man could convert himself, there is no man that would. If any man saith he would, if that be true, he is already converted; for the will to be converted is in great part conversion. The will to love God, the desire to be in unison with Christ, is not to be found in any man who hath not already been brought to be reconciled with God through the death of his Son. There may be a false desire, a desire grounded upon a misrepresentation of the truth; but a true desire after true salvation by the true Spirit, is a certain index that the salvation already is there in the germ and in the bud, and only needs time and grace to develope itself. But certain it is, that man neither can nor will, being on the one hand utterly impotent and dead, and on the other hand utterly depraved and unwilling; hating the change when he sees it in others, and most of all despising it in himself. Be certain, therefore, that God the Holy Spirit must begin, since none else can do so.

And now, my brethren, I must just enter into the subject very briefly, by showing what the Holy Spirit does in the beginning. Permit me to say

that in describing the work, the true work of salvation in the soul, you must not expect me to exhibit any critical nicety of judgment. We have heard of an assembly of divines, who once debated whether men did repent first or believe first; and after a long discussion, some one wiser than the rest suggested another question, whether in the new-born child the lungs did first heave, or the blood did first circulate. "Now," said he, "when you shall ascertain the one, you may be able to ascertain the other." You shall not know which cometh first; they are, very likely, begotten in us at the same moment. We are not able, when we mention these things in order, exactly to declare and testify that these do all happen according to the order in which we mention them; but we only, according to the judgment of men, according to our own experience, seek now to set forth what is the usual way of acting with God the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation.

The first thing, then, that God the Holy Spirit doth in the soul is, to regenerate it. We must always learn to distinguish between regeneration and conversion. A man may be converted a great many times in his life, but regenerated only once. Conversion is a thing which is caused by regeneration, but regeneration is the very first act of God the Spirit in the soul. "What," say you, "does regeneration come before conviction of sin?" most certainly; there could be no conviction in the dead sinner. Now, regeneration quickens the sinner, and makes him live. He is not competent to have true spiritual conviction worked in him until, first of all he has received life. It is true that one of the earliest developments of life is conviction of sin; but before any man can see his need of a Saviour he must be a living man; before he can really, I mean, in a spiritual position, in a saving, effectual manner, understand his own deep depravity, he must have eyes with which to see the depravity, he must have ears with which to hear the sentence of the

law, he must have been quickened and made alive; otherwise he could not be capable of feeling, or seeing, or discerning at all. I believe, then, the first thing the Spirit does is this--he finds the sinner dead in sin, just where Adam left him; he breathes into him a divine influence. The sinner knows nothing about how it is done, nor do any of us understand it. "Thou understandest not the wind--it bloweth where it listeth;" but we see its effects. Now, none of us can tell how the Holy Spirit works in men. I doubt not there have been some who have sat in these pews, and in the middle of a sermon or in prayer, or singing--they knew not how it was--the Spirit of God was in their hearts; he had entered into their souls; they were no longer dead in sin, no longer without thought, without hope, without spiritual capacity, but they had begun to live. And I believe this work of regeneration, when it is done effectually--and God the Spirit would not do it without doing it effectually--is done mysteriously, often suddenly, and it is done in divers manners; but still it hath always this mark about it--that the man although he may not understand how it is done, feels that something is done. The what, the how, he doth not know; but he knows that something is done; and he now begins to think thoughts he never thought before; he begins to feel as he never felt before; he is brought into a new state, there is a change wrought in him--as if a dead post standing in the street were on a sudden to find itself possessed of a soul, and did hear the sound of the passing carriages, and listen to the words of the foot-passengers; there is something quite new about it. The fact is, the man has got a spirit; he never had one before; he was nothing but a body and a soul; but now, God has breathed into him the third great principle, the new life, the Spirit, and he has become a spiritual man. Now, he is not only capable of mental exercise, but of spiritual exercise; as, having a soul

before, he could repent, he could believe, as a mere mental exercise; he could think thoughts of God, and have some desires after him; but he could not have one spiritual thought, nor one spiritual wish or desire, for he had no powers that could educe these things; but now, in regeneration, he has got something given to him, and being given, you soon see its effects. The man begins to feel that he is a sinner; why did he not feel that before? Ah, my brethren, he could not, he was not in a state to feel; he was a dead sinner; and though he used to tell you, and tell God, by way of compliment, that he was a sinner, he did not know anything about it. He said he was a sinner; yes, but he talked about being a sinner just as the blind man talks about the stars that be has never seen, as he talks about the light, the existence of which he would not know unless he were told of it; but now it is a deep reality. You may laugh at him, ye who have not been regenerated; but now he has got something that really puts him beyond your laughter. He begins to feel the exceeding weight and evil of transgression; his heart trembles, his very flesh quivers--in some cases the whole frame is affected. The man is sick by day and night; his flesh creepeth on his bones for fear; he cannot eat, his appetite fails him. He cannot bear the sound of melody and mirth; all his animal spirits are dried up. He cannot rejoice; he is unhappy, he is miserable. downcast, distressed; in some cases, almost ready to go mad; though in the majority of cases it takes a lighter phase, and there are the gentle whispers of the Spirit; but even then, the pangs and pains caused by regeneration, while the new life discovers the sin and evil of the past condition of the man are things that are not to be well described or mentioned without tears. This is all the work of the Spirit.

And having brought the soul thus far, the next thing the Holy Spirit doth is, to teach the soul that it is utterly incapable of saving

itself. It knew that before, mayhap, if the man sat under a Gospel ministry; but he only knew it with the ear, and understood it with the mind. Now, it has become part of his very life; he feels it; it has entered into his soul, and he knows it to be true. Once he thought he would be good, and thought that would save him; the Holy Spirit just knocks the brains out of that thought. "Then," he says, "I will try ceremonies. and see whether I cannot gain merit so;" God the Holy Spirit shoots the arrow right through the heart of that thought, and it falls dead before him, and he cannot bear the sight of the carcase, so that, like Abraham said of Sarah, he exclaims, "Bury the dead out of my sight." Though once he loved it dearly, now he hates the sight thereof. He thought once that he could believe; he had an Arminian notion in his head, that he could believe when he liked, and repent when he liked. Now, God the Spirit has brought him in such a condition, that he says, "I can do nothing." He begins to discover his own death, now that he is made alive; he did not know anything about it before. He now finds that he has no hand of faith to lift, though the minister tells him to do it. He now discovers, when he is bidden to pray, that he would, but cannot pray. He now finds that he is powerless, and he dies in the hand of God like clay in the hand of the potter, and is made to cry out, "O Lord, my God, unless thou save me, I am damned to all eternity; for I cannot lift a finger in this matter until thou first of all givest me strength." And if you urge him to do anything, he longs to be doing, but he is so afraid that it should only be fleshly doings, and not the doings of the Spirit, that he meditates, and stops, and stays, until he groans and cries; and feeling that these groans and cries are the real work of the Spirit, and prove that he has spiritual life, he then begins in right earnest to look to Jesus Christ the Saviour. But mark, all these things are by the Spirit, and none of them can ever be

produced in the soul of any man or woman, apart from the divine influence of God the Holy Ghost.

This being done, the soul being now weaned from all confidence, and despairing and brought to its last standing place, yea, laid prostrate on the ground, the rope being about its neck, and the ashes and sackcloth on its head; God the Holy Ghost next applies the blood of Jesus to the soul, gives the soul the grace of faith whereby it lays hold of Jesus, and gives it an anointing of holy consolation and unction of assurance, whereby, casting itself wholly on the blood and righteousness of Jesus, it receiveth joy, knoweth itself to be saved, and rejoiceth in pardon. But mark, that is the work of the Spirit. Some preachers will tell their people, "Believe, only believe." Yes, it is right they should tell them so; but they should remember it is also right to tell them that even this must be the work of the Spirit; for though we say, "Only believe," that is the greatest only in the world; and what some men say is so easy is just what those who want to believe find to be the hardest thing in all the world. It is simple enough for a man that hath the Spirit in him to believe, when he hath the written Word before him and the witness of the Spirit in him; that is easy enough. But for the poor, tried sinner, who cannot see anything in the Word of God but thunder and threatening--for him to believe--ah my brethren, it is not such a little matter as some make it to be. It needs the fullness of the power of God's Spirit to bring any man to such faith as that.

Well, when the sinner hath thus believed, then the Holy Spirit bringeth all the precious things to him. There is the blood of Jesus; that can never save my soul, unless God the Spirit takes that blood, and sprinkles it upon my conscience. There is the perfect spotless righteousness of Jesus; it is a robe that will fit me and adorn me from

head to foot, but it is no use to me till I have put it on; and I cannot put it on myself; God the Holy Spirit must put the robe of Jesus' righteousness on me. There is the covenant of adoption, whereby God gives me the privileges of a son; but I cannot rejoice in my adoption until I receive the spirit of adoption whereby I may be able to cry, "Abba, Father." So, beloved, you see--I might enlarge, but my time fails me--you see that every point that is brought out in the experience of the new-born Christian, every point in that part of salvation which we may call its beginning in the soul, has to do with God the Holy Spirit. There is no step that can be taken without him, there is nothing which can be accomplished aright without him; yea, though ye had the best of means, the rightest of ceremonies, the most orthodox of truths, and though ye did exercise, your minds upon all these things, and though the blood of Jesus Christ were shed for you, and God himself had ordained you from before the foundations of the world to be saved, yet still there must be that one link always inserted in the golden chain of the plan of salvation; for without that it were all incomplete. You must be quickened by the Spirit; you must be called out of darkness into light; you must be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Now, I wonder how many of you know anything about this. That is the practical part of it. Now my hearer, dost thou understand this? Perhaps, sir, thou art one exceeding wise, and thou turnest on thy heel with a sneer, and thou sayest "Supernaturalism in one of its phases; these Methodists are always talking about supernatural things." You are very wise, exceeding so, doubtless; but it seemeth to me that Nicodemus of old had gotten as far as you, and you have gotten no farther than he; for he asked "How could a man be born again when he is old?" And though every Sunday-school child has had a smile at the expense of

Nicodemus's ignorance, you are not wiser. And yet you are a Rabbi, sir, and you would teach us, would you? And you would teach us about these things, and yet you sneer about supernaturalism. Well, the day may come--I pray it may come to you before the day of your death and your doom--when the Christ of the supernaturalists will be the only Christ for you; when you shall come into the floods of death, where you shall need something more than nature, then you will be crying for a work that is supernatural within your hearts; and it may be that then, when you first of all awake to know that your wisdom was but one of the methods of madness, you may perhaps have to cry in vain, having for your only answer, "I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded; I also will mock at your calamity, and laugh when your fear cometh."

I hear another of you say, "Well, sir, I know nothing of this work of God the Holy Spirit, in my heart; I am just as good as other people, I never make a profession of religion; it is very rarely that I go into a place of worship at all, but I am as good as the saints, any of them: look at some of them--very fine fellows certainly." Stop, now, religion is a thing between yourself and your Maker, and you have nothing to do with those very fine fellows you have spoken of. Suppose I make a confession that a large number of those who are called saints deserve a great deal more to be called sinners double-dyed, and then white-washed,--suppose I make a confession of that, what has that to do with you? Your religion must be for yourself, and it must be between you and your God. If all the world were hypocrites, that would not exonerate you before your God. When you came before the Master, if you were still at enmity to him, could you venture to plead such an excuse as this--"All the world was full of hypocrites?" "Well," he would say, "what had that to do with you? so much the more reason why you should

have been a honest man. If you say the church was thus drifting away upon the quicksands, through the evil conduct and folly of the members thereof, so much the more reason why you should have helped to make it sound, if you thought you could have done so." Another cries, "Well, I do not see that I need it; I am as moral a man as I can be; I never break the Sabbath; I am one of the most punctillious of Christians; I always go to church twice a Sabbath; I hear a thoroughly evangelical minister, and you would not find fault with him." Or perhaps says another, "I go to a Baptist chapel, I am always found there, I am scrupulously correct in my conduct; I am a good father, a good husband; I do not know that any man can find fault with me in business." Well certainly that is very good, and if you will be so good to-morrow morning as to go into Saint Paul's and wash one of those statues till you make it alive, then you will be saved by your morality; but since you, even you, are dead in trespasses and sins, without the Spirit you may wash yourself never so clean, but you cannot wash life into you any more than those statues, by all your washing, could be made to walk, or think, or breathe. You must be quickened by the Holy Spirit, for you are dead in trespasses and sins.

Yes, my comely maiden, thou that art everything excellent; thou that art not to be blamed in aught; thou that art affectionate, tender, kind, and dutiful; whose very life seems to be so pure, that all who see thee think thou seemest an angel; even thou, except thou be born again, canst not see the kingdom of God; the golden gate of heaven must grind upon its hinges with a doleful sound and shut thee out for ever, unless thou art the subject of a divine change, for this knows no exception. And, O ye vilest of the vile, ye who have wandered farthest from the paths of rectitude, "ye must be born again," ye must be quickened by a divine life; and it is comforting for you to recollect,

that the very same power which can awaken the moral man, which can save the man of rectitude and honesty, is able to work in you, is able to change you; to turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove.

O my hearers, ask yourselves, are you the subjects of this change? And if you be, rejoice with joy unspeakable, for happy is that mother's child. and full of glory, that can say, "I am born of God;" blessed is that man: God and the holy angels call him blessed who hath received the quickening of the Spirit, and is born of God. For him there may be many troubles, but there is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" to counterbalance all his woe; for him there may be wars and fightings; but let him tarry, there are trumpets of victory, there are better wreaths than the laurels of conquerors, there is a crown of immortal glory, there is bliss unfading, there is acceptance in the breast of God for aye, and perpetual fellowship with Jehovah. But oh! if thou be not born again this night I can but tremble for thee, and lift my heart in prayer to God, and pray for thee, that he may now by his Divine Spirit make thee alive, give thee to know thy need of him, and then direct thee to the cross of Jesus. But if thou knowest thy need of a Saviour tonight, if thou art this night conscious of thy death in sin, hear me preach the gospel and I have done. The Lord Jesus Christ died for you. Dost thou know thyself to be guilty, not as the hypocrite pretendeth to know it, but dost thou know it consciously, sensitively, dost thou weep over it? Dost thou lament it? Dost thou feel that thou canst not save thyself? Art thou sick of all fleshly ways of saving? Canst thou say to-night, "Unless God shall put out the hand of his mercy, I know I deserve to be lost for ever, and I am?" Then, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, my Master bought you with his blood, and those whom he bought with blood he will have; from the fangs of the lion and the jaws of the bear will he pluck them.

He will save thee, for thou art a part of his bloody purchase; he has taken thy sins upon his heal; he suffered in thy room and place, he has been punished for thee; thou shalt not die; "thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven," and I am the Master's glad herald to tell thee to night what his Word tells thee also, that thou mayest rejoice in the fullness of faith, for "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation"

May the Lord now be pleased to add his blessing for Jesus' sake.

Chapter 14

The Great Reservoir

A Sermon

(No. 179)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 21, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."--Proverbs 4:23.

WF I SHOULD VAINLY ATTEMPT to fashion my discourse after lofty models, I should this morning compare the human heart to the ancient city of Thebes, out of whose hundred gates multitudes of warriors were wont to march. As was the city, such were her armies, as was her inward strength, such were they who came forth of her. I might then urge the necessity of keeping the heart, because it is the metropolis of our manhood, the citadel and armory of our humanity. Let the chief fortress surrender to the enemy, and the occupation of the rest must be an easy task. Let the principal stronghold be possessed by evil, the whole land must be overrun thereby. Instead, however, of doing this, I shall attempt what possibly I may be able to perform, by a humble metaphor and a simple figure, which will be easily understood; I shall endeavor to set forth the wise man's doctrine, that our life issues from the heart, and thus I shall labor to show the absolute necessity of keeping the heart with all diligence.

You have seen the great reservoirs provided by our water companies, in which the water which is to supply hundreds of streets and thousands of houses is kept. Now, the heart is just the reservoir of man, and our life is allowed to flow in its proper season. That life may flow

through different pipes--the mouth, the hand, the eye; but still all the issues of hand, of eye, of lip, derive their source from the great fountain and central reservoir, the heart; and hence there is no difficulty in showing the great necessity that exists for keeping this reservoir, the heart, in a proper state and condition, since otherwise that which flows through the pipes must be touted and corrupt. May the Holy Spirit now direct our meditations.

Mere moralists very often forget the heart, and deal exclusively with the lesser powers. Some of them say, "If a man's life be wrong, it is better to alter the principles upon which his conduct is modeled: we had better adopt another scheme of living; society must be re-modeled, so that man may have an opportunity for the display of virtues, and less temptation to indulge in vice." It is as if, when the reservoir was filled with poisonous or polluted fluid, some sage counsellor should propose that all the piping had better be taken up, and fresh pipes laid down, so that the water might run through fresh channels; but who does not perceive that it would be all in vain, if the fountain-head were polluted, however good the channels. So in vain the rules by which men hope to fashion their lives; in vain the regimen by which we seek to constrain ourselves to the semblance of goodness, unless the heart be right, the very best scheme of life shall fall to the ground, and fail to effect its design. Others say, "Well, if the life be wrong, it would be better to set the understanding right: you must inform man's judgment, educate him, teach him better, and when his head is well informed, then his life will be improved. Now, understanding is, if I may use such a figure, the stopcock which controls the emotions, lets them flow on, or stops them; and it is as if some very wise man, when a reservoir had been poisoned, proposed that there should be a new person employed to turn the water off or on,

in hope that the whole difficulty would thus be obviated. If we followed his advice, if we found the wisest man in the world to have control of the fountain, Mr. Understanding would still be incapable of supplying us with healthy streams, until we had first of all purged the cistern whence they flowed. The Arminian divine, too, sometimes suggests another way of improving man's life. He deals with the will. He says, the will must first of all be conquered, and if the will be right, then every thing will be in order. Now, will is like the great engine which forces the water out of the fountain-head along the pipes, so that it is made to flow into our dwellings. The learned counsellor proposes that there should be a new steam-engine employed to force the water along the pipes. "If," says he, "we had the proper machinery for forcing the fluid, then all would be well." No, sir, if the stream be poisonous, you may have axles to turn on diamonds, and you may have a machine that is made of gold, and a force as potent as Omnipotence, but even then you have not accomplished your purpose until you have cleansed the polluted fountain, and purged the issues of life which flow therefrom. The wise man in our text seems to say, "Beware of misapplying your energies, be careful to begin in the right place." It is very necessary the understanding should be right; it is quite needful the will should have its proper predominance; it is very necessary that you should keep every part of man in a healthy condition; "but," says he, "if you want to promote true holiness, you must begin with the heart, for out of it are the issues of life; and when you have purged it, when you have made its waters pure and limpid, then shall the current flow and bless the inhabitants with clear water; but not till then." Here let us pause and ask the solemn and vital question, "Is my heart right in the sight of God?" For unless the inner man has been renewed by the grace of God, through the Holy Spirit, our

heart is full of rottenness, filth, and abominations. And if so, here must all our cleansing begin, if it be real and satisfactory. Unrenewed men, I beseech you ponder the words of an ancient Christian which I here repeat in thine ear:--"It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel, that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell therein. New trimmings upon an old garment will not make it new, only give it a new appearance; and truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in mending up an old suit, that will soon drop to tatters and rags, when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labor to get a new heart, that all thou dost may be accepted, and thou saved, than to lose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also for want of it?"

Now, ye who love the Lord, let me take you to the reservoir of your heart, and let, me urge upon you the great necessity of keeping the heart right, if you would have the stream of your life happy for yourselves and beneficial to others.

I. First, keep the heart full. However pure the water may be in the central reservoir, it will not be possible for the company to provide us with an abundant supply of water, unless the reservoir itself be full. An empty fountain will most assuredly beget empty pipes; and let the machinery be never so accurate, let every thing else be well ordered, yet if that reservoir be dry, we may wait in vain for any of the water that we require. Now, you know many people--(you are sure to meet with them in your own society, and your own circle; for I know of no one so happy as to be without such acquaintances)--whose lives are just dry, good-for-nothing emptiness. They never accomplish anything; they have no mental force; they have no moral power; what they say, nobody thinks of noticing; what they do is scarcely ever imitated. We have known fathers whose moral force has been so despicable, that even

their children have scarcely been able to imitate them. Though imitation was strong enough in them, yet have they unconsciously felt, even in their childhood, that their father was, after all, but a child like themselves, and had not grown to be a man. Do you not know many people, who if they were to espouse a cause, and it were entrusted to them, would most certainly pilot it to shipwreck. Failure would be the total result. You could not use them as clerks in your office, without feeling certain that your business would be nearly murdered. If you were to employ them to manage a concern for you, you would be sure they would manage to spend all the money, but could never produce a doit. If they were placed in comfortable circumstances for a few months, they would go on carelessly till all was gone. They are just the flats, preyed on by the sharpers in the world; they have no manly strength, no power at all. See these people in religion: it does not matter much what are their doctrinal sentiments, it is quite certain they will never affect the minds of others. Put them in the pulpit: they are the slaves of the deacons, or else the, are over-ridden by the church; they never have an opinion of their own, can not come out with a thing; they have not the heart to say, "Such a thing is, and I know it is." These men just live on, but as far as any utility to the world is concerned, they might almost as well never have been created, except it were to be fed upon by other people. Now, some say that this is the fault of men's heads: "Such a one," they say, "could not get on; he had a small head; it was clean impossible for him to prosper, his head was small, he could not do anything; he had not enough force." Now, that may be true; but I know what was truer still--he had got a small heart and that heart was empty. For, mark you, a man's force in the world, other things being equal, is just in the ratio of the force and strength of his heart. A full-hearted man is always a powerful man: if he be

erroneous, then he is powerful for error; if the thing is in his heart, he is sure to make it notorious, even though it may be a downright falsehood. Let a man be never so ignorant, still if his heart be full of love to a cause, he becomes a powerful man for that object, because he has got heart-power, heart-force. A man may be deficient in many of the advantages of education, in many of those niceties which are so much looked upon in society; but once give him a good strong heart, that beats hard, and there is no mistake about his power. Let him have a heart that is right full up to the brim with an object, and that man will do the thing, or else he will die gloriously defeated, and will glory in his defeat. HEART IS POWER. It is the emptiness of men's hearts that makes them so feeble. Men do not feel what they are at. Now, the man in business that goes heart and soul into his business, is more likely to prosper than anybody else. That is the preacher we want, the man that has a full soul. Let him have a head--the more he knows the better; but, after all, give him a big heart; and when his heart beats, if his heart be full, it will, under God, either make the hearts of his congregation beat after him; or else make them conscious that he is laboring hard to compel them to follow. O! if we had more heart in our Master's service, how much more labor we could endure. You are a Sunday-school teacher, young man, and you are complaining that you can not get on in the Sunday-school. Sir, the service-pipe would give out plenty of water if the heart were full. Perhaps you do not love your work. O, strive to love your work more, and then when your heart is full, you will go on well enough. "O," saith the preacher, "I am weary of my work in preaching; I have little success; I find it a hard toil." The answer to that question is, "Your heart is not full of it, for if you loved preaching, you would breathe preaching, feed upon preaching, and find a compulsion upon you to follow preaching; and your heart

being full of the thing, you would be happy in the employment. O for a heart that is full, and deep, and broad! Find the man that hath such a soul as that, and that is the man from whom the living waters shall flow, to make the world glad with their refreshing streams.

Learn, then, the necessity of keeping the heart full; and let the necessity make you ask this question--"But how can I keep my heart full? How can my emotions be strong? How can I keep my desires burning and my zeal inflamed?" Christian! there is one text which will explain all this. "All my springs are in thee," said David. If thou hast all thy springs in God, thy heart will be full enough. If thou dost go to the foot of Calvary, there will thy heart be bathed in love and gratitude. If thou dost frequent the vale of retirement, and there talk with thy God, it is there that thy heart shall be full of calm resolve. If thou goest out with thy Master to the hill of Olivet, and dost with him look down upon a wicked Jerusalem, and weep over it with him, then will thy heart be full of love for never-dying souls. If thou dost continually draw thine impulse, thy life, the whole of thy being from the Holy Spirit, without whom thou canst do nothing; and if thou dost live in close communion with Christ, there will be no fear of thy having a dry heart. He who lives without prayer--he who lives with little prayer--he who seldom reads the Word--he who seldom looks up to heaven for a fresh influence from on high--he will be the man whose heart will become dry and barren; but he who calls in secret on his God--who spends much time in holy retirement--who delights to meditate on the words of the Most High--whose soul is given up to Christ--who delights in his fullness, rejoices in his all-sufficiency, prays for his second coming, and delights in the thought of his glorious advent--such a man, I say, must have an overflowing heart; and as his heart is, such will his life be. It will be a full life; it will be a

life that will speak from the sepulcher, and wake the echoes of the future. "Keep thine heart with all diligence," and entreat the Holy Spirit to keep it full; for, otherwise, the issues of thy life will be feeble, shallow, and superficial; and thou mayest as well not have lived at all.

2. Secondly, it would be of little use for our water companies to keep their reservoirs full, if they did not also keep them pure. I remember to have read a complaint in the newspaper of a certain provincial town, that a tradesman had been frequently supplied with fish from the water company, large eels having crept down the pipe, and sometimes creatures a little more loathsome. We have known such a thing as water companies supplying us with solids when they ought to have given us nothing but pure crystal. Now, no one likes that. The reservoir should be kept pure and clean; and unless the water comes from a pure spring, and is not impregnated with deleterious substances, however full the reservoir may be, the company will fail of satisfying or of benefiting its customers. Now it is essential for us to do with our hearts as the company must do with its reservoir. We must keep our hearts pure; for if the heart be not pure, the life can not be pure. It is quite impossible that it should be so. You see a man whose whole conversation is impure and unholy; when he speaks he lards his language with oaths; his mind is low and groveling; none but the things of unrighteousness are sweet to him, for he has no soul above the kennel and the dunghill. You meet with another man who understands enough to avoid violating the decencies of life; but still, at the same time he likes filthiness; any low joke, anything that will in some way stir unholy thoughts is just the thing that he desires. For the ways of God he has no relish; in God's house he finds no pleasure, in his Word no delight. What is the cause of this? Say some, it is because of his family

connections--because of the situation in which he stands--because of his early education, and all that. No, no; the simple answer to that is the answer we gave to the other inquiry; the heart is not right; for, if the heart were pure, the life would be pure too. The unclean stream betrays the fountain. A valuable book of German parables, by old Christian Scriver, contains the following homely metaphor:--"A drink was brought to Gotthold, which tasted of the vessel in which it had been contained; and this led him to observe. We have here an emblem of our thoughts, words, and works. Our heart is defiled by sin, and hence a taint if sinfulness cleaves unfortunately to everything we take in hand; and although, from the force of habit, this may be imperceptible to us, it does not escape the eye of the omniscient, holy, and righteous God." Whence come our carnality, covetuousness, pride, sloth and unbelief? Are they not all to be traced to the corruption of our hearts? When the hands of a clock move in an irregular manner, and when the bell strikes the wrong hour, be assured there is something wrong within. O how needful that the main-spring of our motives be in proper order, and the wheels in a right condition.

Ah! Christian keep thy heart pure. Thou sayest, "How can I do this?" Well, there was of old a stream of Marah, to which the thirsty pilgrims in the desert came to drink; and when they came to taste of it, it was so brackish that though their tongues were like torches, and the roofs of their mouths were parched with heat, yet they could not drink of that bitter water. Do you remember the remedy which Moses prescribed? It is the remedy which we prescribe to you this morning. He took a certain tree, and he cast it into the waters, and they became sweet and clear. Your heart is by nature like Marah's water, bitter and impure. There is a certain tree, you know its name, that tree on which the Saviour hung, the cross. Take that tree, put it into your heart, and

though it were even more impure than it is, that sweet cross, applied by the Holy Spirit, would soon transform it into its own nature, and make it pure. Christ Jesus in the heart is the sweet purification. He is made unto us sanctification. Elijah cast salt into the waters; but we must cast the blood of Jesus there. Once let us know and love Jesus, once let his cross become the object of our adoration and the theme of our delight, the heart will beam its cleansing, and the life will become pure also. Oh! that we all did learn the sacred lesson of fixing the cross in the heart! Christian man! love thy Saviour more; cry to the Holy Spirit that thou mayest have more affection for Jesus; and then, how ever gainful may be thy sin, thou wilt say with the poet,

"Now for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross."

The cross in the heart is the purifier of the soul; it purges and it cleanses the chambers of the mind. Christian! keep thy heart pure, "for out of it are the issues of life."

3. In the third place, there is one thing to which our water companies need never pay much attention; that is to say, if their water be pure, and the reservoir be full, they need not care to keep it peaceable and quiet, for let it be stirred to a storm, we should receive our water in the same condition as usual. It is not so, however, with the heart. Unless the heart be kept peaceable, the life will not be happy. If calm doth not reign over that inner lake within the soul which feeds the rivers of our life, the rivers themselves will always be in storm. Our outward acts will always tell that they were born in tempests, by rolling in tempests themselves. Let us just understand this, first, with regard to ourselves. We all desire to lead a joyous life; the

bright eye and the elastic foot are things which we each of us desire; to carry about a contented mind is that to which most men are continually aspiring. Let us all remember, that the only way to keep our life peaceful and happy is to keep the heart at rest; for come poverty, come wealth, come honor, come shame, come plenty, or come scarcity, if the heart be quiet there will be happiness anywhere. But whatever the sunshine and the brightness, if the heart be troubled the whole life must be troubled too. There is a sweet story told in one of the German martyrologies well worth both my telling and your remembering. A holy martyr who had been kept for a long time in prison, and had there exhibited, to the wonderment of all who saw him, the strongest constancy and patience, was at last, upon the day of execution, brought out, and tied to the stake preparatory to the lighting of the fire. While in this position he craved permission to speak once more to the Judge, who, according to the Swiss custom, was required to be also present at the execution. After repeatedly refusing, the judge at last came forward, when the peasant addressed him thus: You have this day condemned me to death. Now, I freely admit that I am a poor sinner, but positively deny that I am a heretic, because from my heart I believe and confess all that is contained in the Apostles' Creed (which he thereupon repeated from beginning to end). Now, then, sir, he proceeded to say, I have but one last request to make, which is, that you will approach and place your hand, first upon my breast and then upon your own, and afterwards frankly and truthfully declare, before this assembled multitude, which of the two, mine or yours, is beating most violently with fear and anxiety. For my part, I quit the world with alacrity and joy, to go and be with Christ, in whom I have always believed; what your feelings are at this moment is best known to yourself. The judge could make no answer, and

commanded them instantly to light the pile. It was evident, however, from his looks, that he was more afraid than the martyr."

Now, keep your heart right. Do not let it smite you. The Holy Spirit says of David, "David's heart smote him." The smiting of the heart is more painful to a good man than the rough blows of the fist. It is a blow that can be felt; it is iron that enters into the soul. Keep your heart in good temper. Do not let that get fighting with you. Seek that the peace of God which passeth all understanding, may keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Bend your knee at night, and with a full confession of sin, express your faith in Christ, then you may "dread the grave as little as your bed." Rise in the morning and give your heart to God, and put the sweet angels of perfect love and holy faith therein, and you may go into the world, and were it full of lions and of tigers you would no more need to dread it than Daniel when he was cast into the lion's den. Keep the heart peaceable and your life will be happy.

Remember, in the second place, that it is just the same with regard to other men. I should hope we all wish to lead quiet lives, and as much as lieth in us to live peaceably with all men. There is a particular breed of men--I do not know where they come from, but they are mixed up now with the English race and to be met with here and there--men who seem to be born for no other reason whatever but to fight--always quarreling, and never pleased. They say that all Englishmen are a little that way--that we are never happy unless we have something to grumble at, and that the worst thing that ever could be done with us would be to give us some entertainment at which we could not grumble, because we should be mortally offended, because we had not the opportunity of displaying our English propensities. I do not know whether that is true of all of us, but it is of some. You can not sit

with them in a room but they introduce a topic upon which you are quite certain to disagree with them. You could not walk with them half a mile along the public streets but they would be sure to make an observation against every body and every thing they saw. They talk about ministers: one man's doctrine is too high, another's is too low; one man they think is a great deal too effeminate and precise, another they say is so vulgar they would not hear him at all. They say of another man that they do not think he attends to visiting his people; of another, that he visits so much that he never prepares for the pulpit. No one can be right for them.

Why is this? Whence arises this continual snarling? The heart must again supply the answer, they are morose and sullen in the inward parts, and hence their speech betrayeth them. They have not had their hearts brought to feel that God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, or if they have felt that, they have never been brought to spell in their hearts--"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Whichever may have been put there of the other ten, the eleventh commandment was never written there. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." That they forgot. Oh! dear Christian people, seek to have your hearts full of love, and if you have had little hearts till now that could not hold love enough for more than your own denomination, get your hearts enlarged, so that you may have enough to send out service-pipes to all God's people throughout the habitable globe; so that whenever you meet a man who is a true-born heir of heaven, he has nothing to do but to turn to the tap, and out of your loving heart will begin to flow issues of true, fervent, unconstrained, willing, living love. Keep thine heart peaceable, that thy life may be so; for out of the heart are the issues of life.

How is this to be done? We reply again, we must ask the Holy Spirit to pacify the heart. No voice but that which on Galilee lake said to the storm "Be still," can ever lay the troubled waters of a stormy heart. No strength but Omnipotence can still the tempest of human nature. Cry out mightily unto him. He still sleeps in the vessel with his church. Ask him to awake, lest your piety should perish in the waters of contention. Cry unto him that he may give your heart peace and happiness. Then shall your life be peaceful; spend ye it where ye may, in trouble or in joy.

4. A little further. When the water-works company have gathered an abundance of water in the reservoir, there is one thing they must always attend to, and that is, they must take care they do not attempt too much, or otherwise they will fail. Suppose they lay on a great main pipe in one place to serve one city, and another main pipe to serve another, and the supply which was intended to fill one channel is diverted into a score of streams, what would be the result? Why nothing would be done well, but everyone would have cause to complain. Now, man's heart is after all so little, that there is only one great direction in which its living water can ever flow; and my fourth piece of advice to you from this text is, Keep your heart undivided. Suppose you see a lake, and there are twenty or thirty streamlets running from it: why, there will not be one strong river in the whole country; there will be a number of little brooks which will be dried up in the summer, and will be temporary torrents in the winter. They will every one of them be useless for any great purposes, because there is not water enough in the lake to feed more than one great stream. Now, a man's heart has only enough life in it to pursue one object fully. Ye must not give half your love to Christ, and the other half to the world. No man can serve God and mammon because there is not enough life in the

heart to serve the two. Alas! many people try this, and they fail both ways. I have known a man who has tried to let some of his heart run into the world, and another part he allowed to drip into the church, and the effect has been this: when he came into the church he was suspected of hypocrisy. "Why," they said, "if he were truly with us, could he have done yesterday what he did, and then come and profess so much to-day?" The church looks upon him as a suspicious one: or if he deceive them they feel he is not of much use to them, because they have not got all his heart. What is the effect of his conduct in the world? Why, his religion is a fetter to him there. The world will not have him, and the church will not have him; he wants to go between the two, and both despise him. I never saw anybody try to walk on both sides of the street but a drunken man: he tried it, and it was very awkward work indeed; but I have seen many people in a moral point of view try to walk on both sides of the street, and I thought there was some kind of intoxication in them, or else they would have given it up as a very foolish thing. Now, if I thought this world and the pleasures thereof worth my seeking, I would just seek them and go after them, and I would not pretend to be religious; but if Christ be Christ, and if God be God, let us give our whole hearts to him, and not go shares with the world. Many a church member manages to walk on both sides of the street in the following manner: His sun is very low indeed--it has not much light, not much heat, and is come almost to its setting. Now sinking suns cast long shadows, and this man stands on the world's side of the street, and casts a long shadow right across the road, to the opposite side of the wall just across the pavement. Ay, it is all we get with many of you. You come and you take the sacramental bread and wine; you are capsized; you join the church; and what we get is just your shadow; there is your substance on the other side of the street, after all.

What is the good of the empty chrysalis of a man? And yet many of our church members are little better. They just do as the snake does that leaves its slough behind. They give us their slough, their skin, the chrysalis case in which life once was, and then they go themselves hither and thither after their own wanton wills; they give us the outward, and then give the world the inward. O how foolish this, Christian! Thy master gave himself wholly for thee; give thyself unreservedly to him. Keep not back part of the price. Make a full surrender of every motion of thy heart; labor to have but one object, and one aim. And for this purpose give God the keeping of thine heart. Cry out for more of the divine influences of the Holy Spirit, that so when thy soul is preserved and protected by him, it may be directed into one channel, and one only, that thy life may run deep and pure, and clear and peaceful; its only banks being God's will, its only channel the love of Christ and a desire to please him. Thus wrote Spencer in days long gone by: "Indeed, by nature, man's heart is a very divided, broken thing, scattered and parceled out, a piece to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while this vanity hires him (as Leah did Jacob of Rachel), anon when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets out himself to another: thus divided is man and his affections. Now the elect, whom God hath decreed to be vessels of honor, consecrated for his holy use and service, he throws into the fire of his word, that being there softened and melted, he may by his transforming Spirit cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that he who before was divided from God, and lost among the creatures, and his lusts, that shared him among them, now, his heart is gathered into God from them all; it looks with a single eye on God, and acts for him in all that he doth: if therefore thou wouldest know whether thy heart be sincere, inquire whether it be thus made anew."

5. Now, my last point is rather a strange one perhaps. Once upon a time, when one of our kings came back from a captivity, old historians tell us that there were fountains in Cheapside that did run with wine. So bounteous was the king, and so glad the people, that instead of water, they made wine flow free to everybody. There is a way of making our life so rich, so full, so blessed to our fellow men, that the metaphor may be applicable to us, and men may say, that our life flows with wine when other men's lives flow with water. Ye have known some such men. There was a Howard. John Howard's life was not like our poor common lives; he was so benevolent, his sympathy with the race so self-denying, that the streams of his life were like generous wine. You have known another, an eminent saint, one who lived very near to Jesus: when you talked yourself, you felt your conversation was poor watery stuff; but when he talked to you, there was an unction and a savor about his words, a solidity, and a strength about his utterances, which you could appreciate, though you could not attain unto it. You have sometimes said, "I wish my words were as full, as sweet, as mellow, and as unctuous as the words of such an one! Oh! I wish my actions were just as rich, had as deep a color, and as pure a taste as the acts of so-and-so. All I can do seems but little and empty when compared with his high attainments. Oh, that I could do more! Oh, that I could send streams of pure gold into every house, instead of my poor dross," Well, Christian, this should teach thee to keep thine heart full of rich things. Never, never neglect the Word of God; that will make thy heart rich with precept, rich with understanding; and then thy conversation, when it flows from thy mouth, will be like thine heart, rich, unctuous, and savory. Make thy heart full of rich, generous love, and then the stream that flows from thy hand will be just as rich and generous as thine heart. Above all, get Jesus to live in thine heart, and then out

of thy belly shall flow rivers of living water, more rich, more satisfying than the water of the well of Sychar of which Jacob drank. Oh! go, Christians, to the great mine of riches, and cry unto the Holy Spirit to make thy heart rich unto salvation. So shall thy life and conversation be a boon to thy fellows; and when they see thee, thy face shall be as the angel of God. Thou shalt wash thy feet in butter and thy steps in oil; they that sit in the gate shall rise up when they see thee, and men shall do thee reverence.

But one single sentence, and we have done. Some of your hearts are not worth keeping. The sooner you get rid of them the better. They are hearts of stone. Do you feel today that you have a stony heart? Go home, and I pray the Lord hear my desire that thy polluted heart may be removed. Cry unto God and say, "Take away my heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh;" for a stony heart is an impure heart, a divided heart, an unpeaceful heart. It is a heart that is poor and poverty-stricken, a heart that is void of all goodness, and thou canst neither bless thyself nor others, if thy heart be such. O Lord Jesus! wilt thou be pleased this day to renew many hearts? Wilt thou break the rock in pieces, and put flesh instead of stone, and thou shalt have the glory, world without end!

Chapter 15

How To Keep the Heart

A Sermon

(No. 180)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, February 21, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."--Philippians 4:7.

IT IS REMARKABLE, that when we find an exhortation given to God's people in one part of the Holy Scripture, we almost invariably find the very thing which they are exhorted to do guaranteed to them, and provided for them, in some other part of the same blessed volume. This morning, my text was, "Keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Now, this evening we have the promise upon which we must rest, if we desire to fulfill the precept:--"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."

This evening we shall use another figure, distinct from the one used in the morning, of the reservoir. We shall use the figure of a fortress, which is to be kept. And the promise saith that it shall be kept--kept by "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, through Christ Jesus."

Inasmuch as the heart is the most important part of man--for out of it are the issues of life--it would be natural to expect that Satan, when he intended to do mischief to manhood, would be sure to make his strongest and most perpetual attacks upon the heart. What we might have guessed in wisdom, is certainly true in experience; for although Satan

will tempt and try us in every way, though every gate of the town of Mansoul may be battered, though, against every part of the walls thereof he will be sure to bring out his great guns, yet the place against which he levels his deadliest malice, and his most furious strength, is the heart. Into the heart, already of itself evil enough, he thrusts the seeds of every evil thing, and doth his utmost to make it a den of unclean birds, a garden of poisonous trees, a river flowing with destructive water. Hence, again, arises the second necessity that we should be doubly cautious in keeping the heart with all diligence; for if, on the one hand, it be the most important, and, on the other hand, Satan, knowing this, makes his most furious and determined attacks against it, then, with double force the exhortation comes, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." And the promise also becomes doubly sweet, from the very fact of the double danger--the promise which says, "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord."

We shall notice, first of all, that which keeps the heart and mind. Secondly, we shall note how to obtain it--for we are to understand this promise as connected with certain precepts which come before it. And then, when we have had this, we shall try to show how it is true that the peace of God does keep the mind free from the attacks of Satan, or delivers it from those attacks when they are made.

I. First, then, beloved, the preservation which God in this promise confers upon the saints, is "THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING," to keep us through Jesus Christ. It is called PEACE; and we are to understand this in a double sense. There is a peace of God which exists between the child of God, and God his Judge, a peace which may be truly said to pass all understanding. Jesus Christ has offered so all-sufficient a satisfaction for all the claims of injured

justice, that now God hath no fault to find with his children. "He seeth no sin in Jacob, nor iniquity in Israel;" nor is he angry with them on account of their sins--a peace unbroken, and unspeakable being established by the atonement which Christ hath made on their behalf. Hence flows a peace experienced in the conscience, which is the second part of this peace of God: for, when the conscience sees that God is satisfied, and is no longer at war with it, then it also becomes satisfied with man; and conscience, which was wont to be a great disturber of the peace of the heart, now gives its verdict of acquittal, and the heart sleeps in the arms of conscience, finds a quiet resting-place there. Against the child of God conscience brings no accusation, or if it brings the accusation, it is but a gentle one--a gentle chiding of a loving friend, who hints that we have done amiss; and that we had better change, but doth not afterward thunder in our ears the threat of a penalty. Conscience knows full well that peace is made betwixt the soul and God, and, therefore, it does not hint that there is anything else but joy and peace to be looked forward to by the believer. Do we understand anything of this double peace? Let us pause here, and ask ourselves a question upon this doctrinal part of the matter--Let us make it an experimental question with our own hearts:--"Come, my soul, art thou at peace with God? Hast thou seen thy pardon signed and sealed with the Redeemer's blood? Come, answer this, my heart; hast thou cast thy sins upon the head of Christ, and hast thou seen them all washed away in the crimson streams of blood? Canst thou feel that now there is a lasting peace between thyself and God, so that, come what may, God shall not be angry with thee--shall not condemn thee shall not consume thee in his wrath, nor crush thee in his hot displeasure? If it be so, then, my heart, thou canst scarcely need to stop and ask the second question--Is my conscience at peace? For, if

my heart condemn me not, God is greater than my heart, and doth know all things; if my conscience bears witness with me, that I am a partaker of the precious grace of salvation, then happy am I! I am one of those to whom God hath given the peace which passeth all understanding. Now, why is this called "the peace of God?" We suppose it is because it comes from God--because it was planned by God--because God gave his Son to make the peace--because God gives his Spirit to give the peace in the conscience--because, indeed, it is God himself in the soul, reconciled to man, whose is the peace. And while it is true that this man shall have the peace--even the Man-Christ, yet we know it is because he was the God-Christ that he was our peace. And hence we may clearly perceive how Godhead is mixed up with the peace which we enjoy with our Maker, and with our conscience.

Then we are told that it is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." What does he mean by this? He means such a peace, that the understanding can never understand it, can never attain to it. The understanding of mere carnal man can never comprehend this peace. He who tries with a philosophic look to discover the secret of the Christian's peace, finds himself in a maze. "I know not how it is, nor why it is," saith he; "I see these men hunted through the earth; I turn the pages of history, and I find them hunted to their graves. They wandered about in sheepskins and goat skins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented; yet, I also see upon the Christian's brow a calm serenity. I can not understand this; I do not know what it is. I know that I myself, even in my merriest moments, am disturbed; that when my enjoyments run the highest, still there are waves of doubt and fear across my mind. Then why is this? How is it that the Christian can attain a rest so calm, so peaceful, and so quiet?" Understanding can never get to that peace which the Christian hath attained. The

philosopher may teach us much; he can never give us rules whereby to reach the peace that Christians have in their conscience. Diogenes may tell us to do without everything, and may live in his tub, and then think himself happier than Alexander, and that he enjoys peace; but we look upon the poor creature after all, and though we may be astonished at his courage, yet we are obliged to despise his folly. We do not believe that even when he had dispensed with everything, he possessed a quiet of mind, a total and entire peace, such as the true believer can enjoy. We find the greatest philosophers of old laying down maxims for life, which they thought would certainly promote happiness. We find that they were not always able to practise them themselves, and many of their disciples, when they labored hard to put them in execution, found themselves encumbered with impossible rules to accomplish impossible objects. But the Christian man does with faith what a man can never do himself. While the poor understanding is climbing up the craigs, faith stands on the summit; while the poor understanding is getting into a calm atmosphere, faith flies aloft and mounts higher than the storm, and then looks down on the valley, and smiles while the tempest blows beneath its feet. Faith goes further than understanding, and the peace which the Christian enjoys is one which the worldling can not comprehend, and can not himself attain. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

And this peace is said to "keep the mind through Christ Jesus." Without Christ Jesus this peace would not exist; without Christ Jesus this peace, even where it has existed, can not be maintained. Daily visits from the Saviour, continual lookings by the eye of faith to him who bled upon the cross, continual drawings from his ever-flowing fountain, make this peace broad, and long, and enduring. But take Jesus Christ, the channel of our peace away, and it fades and dies, and droops, and

comes to naught. A Christian hath no peace with God except through the atonement of his Lord Jesus Christ.

I have thus gone over what some will call the dry doctrinal part of the subject--"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." I can not show you what that peace is, if you have never felt it; but yet I think I could tell you where to look for it, for I have sometimes seen it. I have seen the Christian man in the depths of poverty, when he lived from hand to mouth, and scarcely knew where he should find the next meal, still with his mind unruffled, calm, and quiet. If he had been as rich as an Indian prince, yet could he not have had less care; if he had been told that his bread should always come to his door, and the stream which ran hard by should never dry--if he had been quite sure that ravens would bring him bread and meat in the morning, and again in the evening, he would not have been one whit more calm. There is his neighbor on the other side of the street not half so poor, but wearied from morning to night, working his fingers to the bone, bringing himself to the grave with anxiety; but this poor good man, after having industriously labored, though he found he had gained little with all his toil, yet hath sanctified his little by prayer, and hath thanked his Father for what he had; and though he doth not know whether he will have more, still he trusted in God, and declared that his faith should not fail him, though providence should run to a lower ebb than he had ever seen. There is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." I have seen that peace, too, in the case of those who have lost their friends. There is a widow--her much-loved husband lies in the coffin; she is soon to part with him. Parted with him she has before: but now, of his poor clay-cold corpse--even of that she has to be bereaved. She looks upon it for the last time, and her heart is heavy. For herself and her

children, she thinks how they shall be provided for. That broad tree that once sheltered them from the sunbeam has been cut down. Now, she thinks there is a broad heaven above her head, and her Maker is her husband; the fatherless children are left with God for their father, and the widow is trusting in him. With tears in her eyes she still looks up, and she says, "Lord, thou hast given and thou hast taken away, blessed be thy name." Her husband is carried to the tomb; she doth not smile, but though she weeps, there is a calm composure on her brow, and she tells you she would not have it otherwise, even if she could, for Jehovah's will is right. There, again, is "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." Picture another man. There is Martin Luther standing up in the midst of the Diet of Worms; there are the kings and the princes, and there are the bloodhounds of Rome with their tongues thirsting for his blood--there is Martin rising in the morning as comfortable as possible, and he goes to the Diet, and delivers himself of the truth, solemnly declares that the things which he has spoken are the things which he believes, and God helping him he will stand by them till the last. There is his life in his hands; they have him entirely in their power. The smell of John Huss's corpse has not yet passed away, and he recollects that princes before this have violated their words; but there he stands, calm and quiet; he fears no man, for he has naught to fear; "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ. There is an other scene: there is John Bradford in Newgate. He is to be burned the next morning in Smithfield, and he swings himself on the bedpost in very glee, and delights, for to-morrow is his wedding-day; and he says to another, "Fine shining we shall make to-morrow, when the flame is kindled." And he smiles and laughs, and enjoys the very thought that he is about to wear the blood-red crown of martyrdom. Is Bradford mad? Ah,

no; but he has got the peace of God that passeth all understanding. But perhaps the most beautiful, as well as the most common illustration of this sweet peace, is the dying bed of the believer. Oh, brethren, you have seen this sometimes that calm, quiet serenity; you have said, Lord, let us die with him. It has been so good to be in that solitary chamber where all was quiet and so still, all the world shut out, and heaven shut in, and the poor heart nearing its God, and far away from all its past burdens and griefs--now nearing the portals of eternal bliss. And ye have said, "How is this? Is not death a black and grim thing? Are not the terrors of the grave things which make the strong man tremble?" Oh yes, they are; but, then, this one has the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." However, if you want to know about this, you must be a child of God, and possess it yourselves; and when you have once felt it, when you can stand calm amid the bewildering cry, confident of victory, when you can sing in the midst of the storm, when you can smile when surrounded by adversity, and can trust your God, be your way never so rough, ne'er so stormy; when you can always repose confidence in the wisdom and goodness of Jehovah, then it is you will have "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

II. Thus we have discussed the first point, what is this peace? Now the second thing was, HOW IS THIS PEACE TO BE OBTAINED? You will note that although this is a promise, it hath precepts preceding, and it is only by the practice of the precepts that we can get the promise. Turn now to the fourth verse, and you will see the first rule and regulation for getting peace. Christian, would you enjoy "the peace of God which passeth all understanding?"

The first thing you have to do is to "rejoice evermore." The man who never rejoices, but who is always sorrowing, and groaning, and crying,

who forgets his God, who forgets the fullness of Jehovah, and is always murmuring concerning the trials of the road and the infirmities of the flesh, that man will lose the prospect of enjoying a peace that passeth all understanding. Cultivate, my friends, a cheerful disposition; endeavor, as much as lieth in you, always to bear a smile about with you; recollect that this is as much a command of God as that one which says, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart." "Rejoice evermore," is one of Godly commands; and it is your duty, as well as your privilege, to try and practice it. Not to rejoice, remember, is a sin. To rejoice is a duty, and such a duty that the richest fruits and the best rewards are appended to it. Rejoice always, and then the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds. Many of us, by giving way to disastrous doubts, spoil our peace. It is as I once remember to have heard a woman say, when I was passing down a lane; a child stood crying at the door, and I heard her calling out, "Ah, you are crying for nothing; I will give you something to cry for." Brethren, it is often so with God's children. They get crying for nothing. They have a miserable disposition, or a turn of mind always making miseries for themselves, and thus they have something to cry for. Their peace is disturbed, some sad trouble comes, God hides his face, and then they lose their peace. But keep on singing even when the sun does not keep on shining; keep a song for all weathers; get a joy that will stand clouds and storms; and then, when you know how always to rejoice, you shall have this peace.

The next precept is, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." If you would have peace of mind, be moderate. Merchant, you can not push that speculation too far, and then have peace of mind. Young man, you can not be so fast in trying to rise in the world, and yet have the peace of God which passeth all understanding. You must be moderate, and

when you have got a moderation in your desires, then you shall have peace. Sir, you with the red cheek, you must be moderate in your anger. You must not be quite so fast in flying into a passion with your fellows, and not quite so long in getting cool again; because the angry man can not have peace in his conscience. Be moderate in that; let your vengeance stay itself; for if you give way to wrath, if you are angry, "be ye angry and sin not." Be moderate in this; be moderate in all things which thou undertakes, Christian; moderate in your expectations. Blessed is he who expects little, for he shall have but little disappointment. Remember never to set thy desires very high. He that has aspirations to the moon, will be disappointed if he only reaches half as high; whereas, if he had aspired lower, he would be agreeably disappointed when he found himself mounting higher than he first expected. Keep moderation, whatsoever you do, in all things, but in your desires after God; and so shall you obey the second precept, and get the glimpse of this promise, "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

The last precept that you have to obey is, "be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication make known your requests unto God." You can not have peace unless you turn your troubles up. You have no place in which to pour your troubles except the ear of God. If you tell them to your friends, you but put your troubles out a moment, and they will return again. If you tell them to God, you put your troubles into the grave; they will never rise again when you have committed them to him. If you roll your burden anywhere else it will roll back again, just like the stone of Sysiphus; but just roll your burden unto God, and you have rolled it into a great deep, out of which it will never by any possibility rise. Cast your troubles where you have cast your sins; you have cast your sins into the depth of the sea, there cast your

troubles also. Never keep a trouble half an hour on your own mind before you tell it to God. As soon as the trouble comes, quick, the first thing, tell it to your father. Remember, that the longer you take telling your trouble to God, the more your peace will be impaired. The longer the frost lasts, the more likely the ponds will be frozen. Your frost will last till you go to the sun; and when you go to God - the sun, then your frost will soon become a thaw, and your troubles will melt away. But do not be long, because the longer you are in waiting, the longer will your trouble be in thawing afterwards. Wait a long time till your troubles gets frozen thick and firm, and it will take many a day of prayer to get your trouble thawed again. Away to the throne as quick as ever you can. Do as the child did, when he ran and told his mother as soon as his little trouble happened to him; run and tell your Father the first moment you are in affliction. Do this in every thing, in every little thing--"in every thing by prayer and supplication make known your wants unto God." Take your husband's head-ache, take your children's sicknesses, take all things, little family troubles as well as great commercial trials--take them all to God; pour them all out at once. And so by an obedient practice of this command in every thing making known your wants unto God, you shall preserve that peace "which shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ."

These, then, are the precepts. May God the Holy Spirit enable us to obey them, and we shall then have the continual peace of God.

III. Now, the third thing, was to show HOW THE PEACE, which I attempted to describe in the first place, KEEPS THE HEART. You will clearly see how this peace will keep the heart full. That man who has continued peace with God, will not have an empty heart. He feels that God has done so much for him that he must love his God. The eternal basis of his peace lays in divine election--the solid pillars of his peace, the

incarnation of Christ, his righteousness, his death-- the climax of his peace, the heaven hereafter where his joy and his peace shall be consummated; all these are subjects for grateful reflection, and will, when meditated upon, cause more love. Now, where much love is, there is a large heart and a full one. Keep, then, this peace with God, and thou wilt keep thy heart full to the brim. And, remember, that in proportion to the fullness of thine heart will be the fullness of thy life. Be empty-hearted and thy life will be a meager, skeleton existence. Be full-hearted, and thy life will be full, fleshy, gigantic, strong, a thing that will tell upon the world. Keep, then, thy peace with God firm within thee. Keep thou close to this, that Jesus Christ hath made peace between thee and God. And keep thy conscience still; then shall thy heart be full and thy soul strong to do thy Master's work. Keep thy peace with God. This will keep thy heart pure. Thou wilt say if temptation comes, "What dost thou offer me? Thou offerest me pleasure; lo! I have got it. Thou offerest me gold; lo! I have got it; all things are mine, the gift of God; I have a city that hands have not made, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' I will not barter this for your poor gold." "I will give you honor," saith Satan. "I have honor enough," says the peaceful heart; "God will honor me in the last great day of his account." "I will give thee everything that thou canst desire," saith Satan. "I have everything that I can desire," says the Christian.

"I nothing want on earth;
Happy in my Saviour's love,
I am at peace with God."

Avaunt, then, Satan! While I am at peace with God, I am a match for all thy temptations. Thou offerest me silver; I have gold. Thou bringest before me the riches of the earth; I have something more substantial

than these. Avaunt, tempter of human kind! Avaunt, thou fiend! Your temptations and blandishments are lost on one who has peace with God. This peace, too, will keep the heart undivided. He who has peace with God will set his whole heart on God. "Oh!" says he, "why should I go to seek anything else on earth, now that I have found my rest in God? As the bird by wandering, so should I be if I went elsewhere. I have found a fountain; why should I go and drink at the broken cistern that will hold no water? I lean on the arm of my beloved; why should I rest on the arm of another? I know that religion is a thing worth my following; why should I leave the pure snows of Lebanon to follow something else? I know and feel that religion is rich when it brings forth to me a hundredfold the fruits of peace; why should I go and sow elsewhere? I will be like the maiden Ruth, I will stop in the fields of Boaz. Here will I ever stay and never wander."

Again, this peace keeps the heart rich. My hearers will notice that I am passing over the heads of the mornings discourse, and showing how this peace fulfills the requisites that we thought necessary in the morning. Peace with God keeps the heart rich. The man who doubts and is distressed has got a poor heart; it is a heart that has nothing in it. But when a man has peace with God, his heart is rich. If I am at peace with God I am enabled to go where I can get riches. The throne is the place where God gives riches. If I am at peace with him, then I can have access with boldness. Meditation is a great and another field of enrichment. When my heart is at peace with God, then I can enjoy meditation; but if I have not peace with God, then I can not meditate profitably; for "the birds come down on the sacrifice," and I can not drive them away, except my soul is at peace with God. Hearing the word is another way of getting rich. If my mind is disturbed I can not hear the word with profit. If I have to bring my family into the chapel; if

I have to bring my business, my ships, or my horses, I can not hear. When I have cows, and dogs, and horses in the pew, I can not hear the Gospel preached. When I have got a whole week's business, and a ledger on my heart, I can not hear then; but when I have peace, peace concerning all things, and rest in my Fathers will, then I can hear with pleasure, and every word of the gospel is profitable to me; for my mouth is empty, and I can fill it with the heavenly treasures of his Word. So you see the peace of God is a soul-enriching thing. And because it keeps the heart rich, thus it is it keeps the heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord. I need hardly say that the peace of God fulfills the only other requisite which I did not mention, because it was unnecessary to do so. It keeps the heart always peaceable. Of course, peace makes it full of peace--peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Now, then, brother and sister, it is of the first importance that you keep your heart aright. You can not keep your heart right but by one way. That one way is by getting, maintaining, and enjoying peace of God to your own conscience. I beseech you then, you that are professors of religion, do not let this night pass over your heads till you have a confident assurance that you are now the possessor of the peace of God. For let me tell you, if you go out to the world next Monday morning without first having peace with God in your own conscience, you will not be able to keep your heart during the week. If this night, ere you rest, you could say that with God as well as all the world you are at peace, you may go out to-morrow, and whatever your business, I am not afraid for you. You are more than a match for all the temptations to false doctrine, to false living, or to false speech that may meet you. For he that has peace with God is armed cap-a-pie; he is covered from head to foot in a panoply. The arrow may fly against it, but it can not

pierce it, for peace with God is a mail so strong that the broad sword of Satan itself may be broken in twain ere it can pierce the flesh. O! take care that you are at peace with God; for if you are not, you ride forth to to-morrow's fight unarmed, naked; and God help the man that is unarmed when he has to fight with hell and earth. O, be not foolish, but "put on the whole armor of God," and then be confident for you need not fear.

As for the rest of you, you can not have peace with God, because "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." How shall I address you. As I said this morning, I can not exhort you to keep your hearts. My best advice to you is, to get rid of your hearts, and as soon as you can, to get new ones. Your prayer should be, "Lord, take away my stony heart, and give me a heart of flesh." But though I can not address you from this text, I may address you from another. Though your heart is bad, there is another heart that is good; and the goodness of that heart is a ground of exhortation to you. You remember Christ said, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" and then his argument would come to this, "for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Your heart is proud, and high, and black, and lustful; but look at Christ's heart, it is meek and lowly. There is your encouragement. Do you feel to-night your sin? Christ is meek; if you come to him he will not spurn you. Do you feel your insignificance and worthlessness? Christ is lowly; he will not despise you. If Christ's heart were like your heart, you would be damned to a certainty. But Christ's heart is not as your heart, nor his ways like your ways. I can see no hope for you when I look into your hearts, but I can see plenty of hope when I look into Christ's heart.

O, think of his blessed heart; and if you go home to-night sad and sorrowful, under a sense of sin, when you go to your chamber, shut to

your door--you need not be afraid--and talk to that heart so meek and lowly; and though your words be ungrammatical, and your sentences incoherent, he will hear and answer you from heaven, his dwelling place; and when he hears, he will forgive and accept, for his own name's sake.

Chapter 16

Particular Redemption

A Sermon

(No. 181)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 28, 1858 by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."--Matthew 20:28.

WHEN first it was my duty to occupy this pulpit, and preach in this hall, my congregation assumed the appearance of an irregular mass of persons collected from all the streets of this city to listen to the Word. Twas then simply an evangelist, preaching to many who had not heard the Gospel before. By the grace of God, the most blessed change has taken place; and now, instead of having an irregular multitude gathered together, my congregation is as fixed as that of any minister in the whole city of London. I can from this pulpit observe the countenance of my friends, who have occupied the same places, as nearly as possible, for these many months; and I have the privilege and the pleasure of knowing that a very large proportion, certainly three-fourths of the persons who meet together here, are not persons who stray hither from curiosity, but are my regular and constant hearers. And observe, that my character also has been changed. From being an evangelist, it is now my business to become your pastor. You were once a motley group assembled to listen to me, but now we are bound together by the ties of love; through association we have grown to love and respect each other, and now you have become the sheep of my pasture, and members of my flock; and I have now the privilege of

assuming the position of a pastor in this place, as well as in the chapel where I labour in the evening. I think, then, it will strike the judgment of every person, that as both the congregation and office have now changed, the teaching itself should in some measure suffer a difference. It has been my wont to address you from the simple truths of the Gospel; I have very seldom, in this place, attempted to dive into the deep things of God. A text which I have thought suitable for my congregation in the evening, I should not have made the subject of discussion in this place in the morning. There are many high and mysterious doctrines which I have often taken the opportunity of handling in my own place, that I have not taken the liberty of introducing here, regarding you as a company of people casually gathered together to hear the Word. But now, since the circumstances are changed, the teaching will be changed also. I shall not now simply confine myself to the doctrine of faith, or the teaching of believer's baptism; I shall not stay upon the surface of matters, but shall venture, as God shall guide me, to enter into those things that lie at the basis of the religion that we hold so dear. I shall not blush to preach before you the doctrine of God's Divine Sovereignty; I shall not stagger to preach in the most unreserved and unguarded manner the doctrine of election. I shall not be afraid to propound the great truth of the final perseverance of the saints; I shall not withhold that undoubted truth of Scripture, the effectual calling of God's elect; I shall endeavour, as God shall help me, to keep back nothing from you who have become my flock. Seeing that many of you have now "tasted that the Lord is gracious," we will endeavour to go through the whole system of the doctrines of grace, that saints may be edified and built up in their most holy faith.

I begin this morning with the doctrine of Redemption. "He gave his life

a ransom for many."

The doctrine of Redemption is one of the most important doctrines of the system of faith. A mistake on this point will inevitably lead to a mistake through the entire system of our belief.

Now, you are aware that there are different theories of Redemption. All Christians hold that Christ died to redeem, but all Christians do not teach the same redemption. We differ as to the nature of atonement, and as to the design of redemption. For instance, the Arminian holds that Christ, when He died, did not die with an intent to save any particular person; and they teach that Christ's death does not in itself secure, beyond doubt, the salvation of any one man living. They believe that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible, or that by the doing of something else, any man who pleases may attain unto eternal life; consequently, they are obliged to hold that if man's will would not give way and voluntarily surrender to grace, then Christ's atonement would be unavailing. They hold that there was no particularity and speciality in the death of Christ. Christ died, according to them, as much for Judas in Hell as for Peter who mounted to Heaven. They believe that for those who are consigned to eternal fire, there was a true and real a redemption made as for those who now stand before the throne of the Most High. Now, we believe no such thing. We hold that Christ, when He died, had an object in view, and that object will most assuredly, and beyond a doubt, be accomplished. We measure the design of Christ's death by the effect of it. If any one asks us, "What did Christ design to do by His death?" we answer that question by asking him another--"What has Christ done, or what will Christ do by His death?" For we declare that the measure of the effect of Christ's love, is the measure of the design of it. We cannot so belie our reason as to think that the intention of Almighty God could

be frustrated, or that the design of so great a thing as the atonement, can by any way whatever, be missed of. We hold--we are not afraid to say that we believe--that Christ came into this world with the intention of saving "a multitude which no man can number;" and we believe that as the result of this, every person for whom He died must, beyond the shadow of a doubt, be cleansed from sin, and stand, washed in blood, before the Father's throne. We do not believe that Christ made any effectual atonement for those who are for ever damned; we dare not think that the blood of Christ was ever shed with the intention of saving those whom God foreknew never could be saved, and some of whom were even in Hell when Christ, according to some men's account, died to save them.

I have thus just stated our theory of redemption, and hinted at the differences which exist between two great parties in the professing church. It shall be now my endeavour to show the greatness of the redemption of Christ Jesus; and by so doing, I hope to be enabled by God's Spirit, to bring out the whole of the great system of redemption, so that it may be understood by us all, even if all of us cannot receive it. For you must bear this in mind, that some of you, perhaps, may be ready to dispute things which I assert; but you will remember that this is nothing to me; I shall at all times teach those things which I hold to be true, without let or hindrance from any man breathing. You have the like liberty to do the same in your own places, and to preach your own views in your own assemblies, as I claim the right to preach mine, fully, and without hesitation.

Christ Jesus "gave his life a ransom for many;" and by that ransom He wrought out for us a great redemption. I shall endeavour to show the greatness of this redemption, measuring it in five ways. We shall note its greatness, first of all from the heinousness of our own guilt, from

which He has delivered us; secondly, we shall measure His redemption by the sternness of divine justice; thirdly, we shall measure it by the price which He paid, the pangs which He endured; then we shall endeavour to magnify it, by noting the deliverance which He actually wrought out; and we shall close by noticing the vast number for whom this redemption is made, who in our text are described as "many."

I. First, then we shall see that the redemption of Christ was no little thing, if we do but measure it, first by OUR OWN SINS. My brethren, for a moment look at the hole of the pit whence ye were digged, and the quarry whence you were hewn. Ye, who have been washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, pause for a moment, and look back at the former state of your ignorance; the sins in which you indulged, the crimes into which you were hurried, the continual rebellion against God in which it was your habit to live. One sin can ruin a soul for ever; it is not in the power of the human mind to grasp the infinity of evil that slumbereth in the bowels of one solitary sin. There is a very infinity of guilt couched in one transgression against the majesty of Heaven. If, then, you and I had sinned but once, nothing but an atonement infinite in value could ever have washed away the sin and made satisfaction for it. But has it been once that you and I have transgressed? Nay, my brethren, our iniquities are more in number than the hairs of our head; they have mightily prevailed against us. We might as well attempt to number the sands upon the sea-shore, or count the drops which in their aggregate do make the ocean, as attempt to count the transgressions which have marked our lives. Let us go back to our childhood. How early we began to sin! How we disobeyed our parents, and even then learned to make our mouth the house of lies! In our childhood, how full of wantonness and waywardness we were! Headstrong and giddy, we preferred our own way, and burst through all restraint

which godly parents put upon us. Nor did our youth sober us. Wildly we dashed, many of us, into the very midst of the dance of sin. We became leaders in iniquity; we not only sinned ourselves, but we taught others to sin. And as for your manhood, ye that have entered upon the prime of life, ye may be more outwardly sober, ye may be somewhat free from the dissipation of your youth; but how little has the man become bettered! Unless the sovereign grace of God hath renewed us, we are now no better than we were when we began; and even if it has operated, we have still sins to repent of, for we all lay our mouths in the dust, and cast ashes on our head, and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" And oh! ye that lean wearily on your staff, the support of your old age, have ye not sins still clinging to your garments? Are your lives as white as the snowy hairs that crown your head? Do you not still feel that transgression besmears the skirts of your robe, and mars its spotlessness? How often are you now plunged into the ditch, till your own clothes do abhor you! Cast your eyes over the sixty, the seventy, the eighty years, during which God hath spared your lives; and can ye for a moment think it possible, that ye can number up your innumerable transgressions, or compute the weight of the crimes which you have committed? O ye stars of Heaven! the astronomers may measure your distance and tell your height, but O ye sins of mankind! ye surpass all thought. O ye lofty mountains! the home of the tempest, the birthplace of the storm! man may climb your summits and stand wonderingly upon your snows; but ye hills of sin! ye tower higher than our thoughts; ye chasms of transgressions! ye are deeper than our imagination dares to dive. Do you accuse me of slandering human nature? It is because you know it not. If God had once manifested your heart to yourself, you would bear me witness, that so far from exaggerating, my poor words fail to describe the desperateness of our evil. Oh! if we could each of us look

into our hearts today--if our eyes could be turned within, so as to see the iniquity that is graven as with the point of the diamond upon our stony hearts, we should then say to the minister, that however he may depict the desperateness of guilt, yet can he not by any means surpass it. How great then, beloved, must be the ransom of Christ, when He saved us from all these sins! The men for whom Jesus died, however great their sin, when they believe, are justified from all their transgressions. Though they may have indulged in every vice and every lust which Satan could suggest, and which human nature could perform, yet once believing, all their guilt is washed away. Year after year may have coated them with blackness, till their sin hath become of double dye; but in one moment of faith, one triumphant moment of confidence in Christ, the great redemption takes away the guilt of numerous years. Nay, more, if it were possible for all the sins that men have done, in thought, or word, or deed, since worlds were made, or time began, to meet on one poor head--the great redemption is all-sufficient to take all these sins away, and wash the sinner whiter than the driven snow. Oh! who shall measure the heights of the Saviour's all-sufficiency? First, tell how high is sin, and, then, remember that as Noah's flood prevailed over the tops of earth's mountains, so the flood of Christ's redemption prevails over the tops of the mountains of our sins. In Heaven's courts there are today men that once were murderers, and thieves, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and blasphemers, and persecutors; but they have been washed--they have been sanctified. Ask them whence the brightness of their robes hath come, and where their purity hath been achieved, and they, with united breath, tell you that they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. O ye troubled consciences! O ye weary and heavy-laden ones! O ye that are groaning on account of sin! the great redemption now

proclaimed to you is all-sufficient for your wants; and though your numerous sins exceed the stars that deck the sky, here is an atonement made for them all--a river which can overflow the whole of them, and carry them away from you for ever.

This, then, is the first measure of the atonement--the greatness of our guilt.

II. Now, secondly, we must measure the great redemption BY THE STERNNESS OF DIVINE JUSTICE. "God is love," always loving; but my next proposition does not at all interfere with this assertion. God is sternly just, inflexibly severe in His dealings with mankind. The God of the Bible is not the God of some men's imagination, Who thinks so little of sin that He passes it by without demanding any punishment for it. He is not the God of the men who imagine that our transgressions are such little things, such mere peccadilloes that the God of Heaven winks at them, and suffers them to die forgotten. No; Jehovah, Israel's God, hath declared concerning Himself, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." It is His own declaration, "I will by no means clear the guilty." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Learn ye, my friends, to look upon God as being as severe in His justice as if He were not loving, and yet as loving as if He were not severe. His love does not diminish His justice, nor does His justice, in the least degree, make warfare upon His love. The two things are sweetly linked together in the atonement of Christ. But, mark, we can never understand the fullness of the atonement till we have first grasped the Scriptural truth of God's immense justice. There was never an ill word spoken, nor an ill thought conceived, nor an evil deed done, for which God will not have punishment from some one or another. He will either have satisfaction from you, or else from Christ. If you have no atonement to bring through Christ, you must for ever lie paying the debt which you never

can pay, in eternal misery; for as surely as God is God, He will sooner lose His Godhead than suffer one sin to go unpunished, or one particle of rebellion unrevenged. You may say that this character of God is cold, and stern, and severe. I cannot help what you say of it; it is nevertheless true. Such is the God of the Bible; and though we repeat it is true that He is love, it is no more true that He is love than that He is full of justice, for every good thing meets in God, and is carried to perfection, whilst love reaches to consummate loveliness, justice reaches to the sternness of inflexibility in Him. He has no bend, no warp in His character; no attribute so predominates as to cast a shadow upon the other. Love hath its full sway, and justice hath no narrower limit than His love. Oh! then, beloved, think how great must have been the substitution of Christ, when it satisfied God for all the sins of His people. For man's sin God demands eternal punishment; and God hath prepared a Hell into which He casts those who die impenitent. Oh! my brethren, can ye think what must have been the greatness of the atonement which was the substitution for all this agony which God would have cast upon us, if He had not poured it upon Christ. Look! look! look with solemn eye through the shades that part us from the world of spirits, and see that house of misery which men call Hell! Ye cannot endure the spectacle. Remember that in that place there are spirits for ever paying their debt to divine justice; but though some of them have been for these four thousand years sweltering in the flame, they are no nearer a discharge than when they began; and when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled away, they will no more have made satisfaction to God for their guilt than they have done up till now.

And now can you grasp the thought of the greatness of your Saviour's mediation when He paid your debt, and paid it all at once; so that there now remaineth not one farthing of debt owing from Christ's people

to their God, except a debt of love. To justice the believer oweth nothing; though he owed originally so much that eternity would not have been long enough to suffice for the paying of it, yet, in one moment Christ did pay it all, so that the man who believeth is entirely justified from all guilt, and set free from all punishment, through what Jesus hath done. Think ye, then, how great His atonement if He hath done all this.

I must just pause here, and utter another sentence. There are times when God the Holy Spirit shows to men the sternness of justice in their own consciences. There is a man here today who has just been cut to the heart with a sense of sin. He was once a free man, a libertine, in bondage to none; but now the arrow of the Lord sticks fast in his heart, and he has come under a bondage worse than that of Egypt. I see him today, he tells me that his guilt haunts him everywhere. The Negro slave, guided by the pole star, may escape the cruel ties of his master and reach another land where he may be free; but this man feels that if he were to wander the wide world over he could not escape from guilt. He that hath been bound by many irons, can yet find a file that can unbind him and set him at liberty; but this man tells you that he has tried prayers and tears and good works, but cannot escape the gyves from his wrist; he feels as a lost sinner still, and emancipation, do what he may, seems to him impossible. The captive in the dungeon is sometimes free in thought, though not in body; through his dungeon walls his spirit leaps, and flies to the stars, free as the eagle that is no man's slave. But this man is a slave in his thoughts; he cannot think one bright, one happy thought. His soul is cast down within him; the iron has entered into his spirit, and he is sorely afflicted. The captive sometimes forgets his slavery in sleep, but this man cannot sleep; by night he dreams of hell, by day he seems to feel it; he bears

a burning furnace of flame within his heart, and do what he may he cannot quench it. He has been confirmed, he has been baptized, he takes the sacrament, he attends a church or he frequents a chapel, he regards every rubric and obeys every canon, but the fire burns still. He gives his money to the poor, he is ready to give his body to be burned, he feeds the hungry, he visits the sick, he clothes the naked, but the fire burns still, and do what he may he cannot quench it. O, ye sons of weariness and woe, this that you feel is God's justice in full pursuit of you, and happy are you that you feel this, for now to you I preach this glorious Gospel of the blessed God. You are the man for whom Jesus Christ has died; for you He has satisfied stern justice; and now all you have to do to obtain peace of conscience, is just to say to your adversary who pursues you, "Look you there! Christ died for me; my good works would not stop you, my tears would not appease you: look you there! There stands the cross; there hangs the bleeding God! Hark to His death-shriek! See Him die! Art thou not satisfied now?" And when thou hast done that, thou shalt have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which shall keep thy heart and mind through Jesus Christ thy Lord; and then shalt thou know the greatness of His atonement.

III. In the third place, we may measure the greatness of Christ's Redemption by THE PRICE HE PAID. It is impossible for us to know how great were the pangs of our Saviour; but yet some glimpse of them will afford us a little idea of the greatness of the price He paid for us. O Jesus, who shall describe thine agony?

"Come, all ye springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain!
My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things,
That nature hath produc'd. Let ev'ry vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,

My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree."

O Jesus! thou wast a sufferer from thy birth, a man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. Thy sufferings fell on thee in one perpetual shower, until the last dread hour of darkness. Then not in a shower, but in a cloud, a torrent, a cataract of grief, thine agonies did dash upon thee. See Him yonder! It is a night of frost and cold; but He is all abroad. It is night; He sleeps not, but He is in prayer. Hark to His groans! Did ever man wrestle as He wrestles? Go and look in His face! Was ever such suffering depicted upon mortal countenance as you can there behold? Hear His own words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He rises: He is seized by traitors and is dragged away. Let us step to the place when just now He was engaged in agony. O God! and what is this we see? What is this that stains the ground? It is blood! Whence came it? Had He some wound which oozed afresh through His dire struggle? Ah! no. "He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." O agonies that surpass the word by which we name you! O sufferings that cannot be compassed in language! What could ye be that thus could work upon the Saviour's blessed frame, and force a bloody sweat to fall from His entire body? This is the beginning; this is the opening of the tragedy. Follow Him mournfully, thou sorrowing church, to witness the consummation of it. He is hurried through the streets; He is dragged first to one bar and then to another; He is cast and condemned before the Sanhedrin; He is mocked by Herod; He is tried by Pilate. His sentence is pronounced--"Let Him be crucified!" And now the tragedy cometh to its height. His back is bared; He is tied to the low Roman column; the bloody scourge ploughs furrows on His back, and with one stream of blood His back is red--a

crimson robe that proclaims Him emperor of misery. He is taken into the guard room; His eyes are bound, and then they buffet Him, and say, "Prophesy who it was that smote thee?" They spit into His face; they plait a crown of thorns, and press His temples with it; they array Him in a purple robe; they bow their knees, and mock Him. All silently He sits; He answers not a word. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again," but committed Himself unto Him whom He came to serve. And now they take Him, and with many a jeer and jibe they drive Him from the place, and hurry Him through the streets. Emaciated by continual fastings, and depressed with agony of spirit He stumbles beneath His cross. Daughters of Jerusalem! He faints in your streets. They raise Him up; they put His cross upon another's shoulders, and they urge Him on, perhaps with many a spear-prick, till at last He reaches the mount of doom. Rough soldiers seize Him, and hurl Him on His back; the transverse wood is laid beneath Him; His arms are stretched to reach the necessary distance; the nails are grasped; four hammers at one moment drive four nails through the tenderest parts of His body; and there He lies upon His own place of execution dying on His cross. It is not done yet. The cross is lifted by the rough soldiers. There is the socket prepared for it. It is dashed into its place: they fill up the place with earth; and there it stands.

But see the Saviour's limbs, how they quiver! Every bone has been put out of joint by the dashing of the cross in that socket! How He weeps! How He sighs! How He sobs! Nay, more hark how at last He shrieks in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" O sun, no wonder thou didst shut thine eye, and look no longer upon a deed so cruel! O rocks! no wonder that ye did melt and rend your hearts with sympathy, when your Creator died! Never man suffered as this man suffered, Even death itself relented, and many of those who had been in their graves

arose and came into the city. This, however, is but the outward. Believe me, brethren, the inward was far worse. What our Saviour suffered in His body was nothing compared to what He endured in His soul. You cannot guess, and I cannot help you to guess, what He endured within. Suppose for one moment--to repeat a sentence I have often used--suppose a man who has passed into Hell--suppose his eternal torment could all be brought into one hour; and then suppose it could be multiplied by the number of the saved, which is a number past all human enumeration. Can you now think what a vast aggregate of misery there would have been in the sufferings of all God's people, if they had been punished through all eternity? And recollect that Christ had to suffer an equivalent for all the hells of all His redeemed. I can never express that thought better than by using those oft-repeated words: it seemed as if Hell were put into His cup; He seized it, and, "At one tremendous draught of love, He drank damnation dry." So that there was nothing left of all the pangs and miseries of Hell for His people ever to endure. I say not that He suffered the same, but He did endure an equivalent for all this, and gave God the satisfaction for all the sins of all His people, and consequently gave Him an equivalent for all their punishment. Now can ye dream, can ye guess the great redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ?

IV. I shall be very brief upon the next head. The fourth way of measuring the Saviour's agonies is this: we must compute them by THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE WHICH HE HAS EFFECTED.

Rise up, believer; stand up in thy place, and this day testify to the greatness of what the Lord hath done for thee! Let me tell it for thee. I will tell thy experience and mine in one breath. Once my soul was laden with sin; I had revolted against God, and grievously transgressed. The terrors of the law gat hold upon me; the pangs of

conviction seized me. I saw myself guilty. I looked to Heaven, and I saw an angry God sworn to punish me; I looked beneath me and I saw a yawning Hell ready to devour me. I sought by good works to satisfy my conscience; but all in vain, I endeavoured by attending to the ceremonies of religion to appease the pangs that I felt within; but all without effect. My soul was exceeding sorrowful, almost unto death. I could have said with the ancient mourner, "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life." This was the great question that always perplexed me: "I have sinned; God must punish me; how can He be just if He does not? Then, since He is just, what is to become of me?" At last mine eyes turned to that sweet word which says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." I took that text to my chamber; I sat there and meditated. I saw one hanging on a cross. It was my Lord Jesus. There was the thorn-crown, and there the emblems of unequalled and peerless misery. I looked upon Him, and my thoughts recalled that word which says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Then said I within myself, "Did this man die for sinners? I am a sinner; then He died for me. Those He died for He will save. He died for sinners; I am a sinner; He died for me; He will save me." My soul relied upon that truth. I looked to Him, and as I "viewed the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood," my spirit rejoiced, for I could say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to this cross I cling;
Naked look to Him for dress;
Helpless come to Him for grace!
Black, I to this fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!"

And now, believer, you shall tell the rest. The moment that you

believed, your burden rolled from your shoulder, and you became light as air. Instead of darkness you had light; for the garments of heaviness you had the robes of praise. Who shall tell your joy since then? You have sung on earth hymns of Heaven, and in your peaceful soul you have anticipated the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed. Because you have believed you have entered into rest. Yes, tell it the wide world over; they that believe, by Jesus' death are justified from all things from which they could not be freed by the works of the law. Tell it in Heaven, that none can lay anything to the charge of Gods' elect. Tell it upon earth, that God's redeemed are free from sin in Jehovah's sight. Tell it even in Hell, that God's elect can never come there; for Christ hath died for them, and who is he that shall condemn them?

V. I have hurried over that, to come to the last point, which is the sweetest of all. Jesus Christ, we are told in our text, came into the world "to give his life a ransom for many." The greatness of Christ's redemption may be measured by the EXTENT OF THE DESIGN OF IT. He gave His life "a ransom for many." I must now return to that controverted point again. We are often told (I mean those of us who are commonly nicknamed by the title of Calvinists--and we are not very much ashamed of that; we think that Calvin, after all, knew more about the Gospel than almost any man who has ever lived, uninspired), we are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, "No, certainly not." We ask them the next question--Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer "No." They are obliged to admit this, if they are consistent.

They say, "No; Christ has died that any man may be saved if"--and then follow certain conditions of salvation. We say, then, we will go back to the old statement--Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did He? You must say "No;" you are obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, he may yet fall from grace, and perish. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ's death; we say, "No, my dear sir, it is you that do it." We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.

Now, beloved, when you hear any one laughing or jeering at a limited atonement, you may tell him this. General atonement is like a great wide bridge with only half an arch; it does not go across the stream: it only professes to go half way; it does not secure the salvation of anybody. Now, I had rather put my foot upon a bridge as narrow as Hungerford, which went all the way across, than on a bridge that was as wide as the world, if it did not go all the way across the stream. I am told it is my duty to say that all men have been redeemed, and I am told that there is a Scriptural warrant for it--"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Now, that looks like a very, very great argument indeed on the other side of the question. For instance, look here. "The whole world is gone after Him." Did all the world go after Christ? "Then went all Judea, and were baptized of him in Jordan." Was all Judea, or all Jerusalem baptized in Jordan? "Ye are

of God, little children," and "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Does "the whole world" there mean everybody? If so, how was it, then, that there were some who were "of God?" The words "world" and "all" are used in seven or eight senses in Scripture; and it is very rarely that "all" means all persons, taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed some of all sorts--some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor, and has not restricted His redemption to either Jew or Gentile.

Leaving controversy, however, I will now answer a question. Tell me, then, sir, whom did Christ die for? Will you answer me a question or two, and I will tell you whether He died for you. Do you want a Saviour? Do you feel that you need a Saviour? Are you this morning conscious of sin? Has the Holy Spirit taught you that you are lost? Then Christ died for you and you will be saved. Are you this morning conscious that you have no hope in the world but Christ? Do you feel that you of yourself cannot offer an atonement that can satisfy God's justice? Have you given up all confidence in yourselves? And can you say upon your bended knees, "Lord, save, or I perish"? Christ died for you. If you are saying this morning, "I am as good as I ought to be; I can get to Heaven by my own good works," then, remember, the Scripture says of Jesus, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So long as you are in that state I have no atonement to preach to you. But if this morning you feel guilty, wretched, conscious of your guilt, and are ready to take Christ to be your only Saviour, I can not only say to you that you may be saved, but what is better still, that you will be saved. When you are stripped of everything, but hope in Christ, when you are prepared to come empty-handed and take Christ to be your all, and to be yourself nothing at all, then you may look up to Christ, and you may say, "Thou dear, Thou bleeding Lamb of

God! thy griefs were endured for me; by thy stripes I am healed, and by thy sufferings I am pardoned." And then see what peace of mind you will have; for if Christ has died for you, you cannot be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sin, He will never punish you. "Payment, God's justice cannot demand, first, at the bleeding surety's hand, and then again at mine." We can today, if we believe in Christ, march to the very throne of God, stand there, and if it is said, "Art thou guilty?" we can say, "Yes, guilty." But if the question is put, "What have you to say why you should not be punished for your guilt?" We can answer, "Great God, Thy justice and Thy love are both guarantees that Thou wilt not punish us for sin; for didst Thou not punish Christ for sin for us? How canst Thou, then, be just--how canst Thou be God at all, if Thou dost punish Christ the substitute, and then punish man himself afterwards?" Your only question is, "Did Christ die for me?" And the only answer we can give is--"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners." Can you write your name down among the sinners--not among the complimentary sinners, but among those that feel it, bemoan it, lament it, seek mercy on account of it? Are you a sinner? That felt, that known, that professed, you are now invited to believe that Jesus Christ died for you, because you are a sinner; and you are bidden to cast yourself upon this great immovable rock, and find eternal security in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter 17

Human Inability

A Sermon

(No. 182)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 7, 1858 by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."--John 6:44.

COMING to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening; where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in

trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavour this morning, first of all, to notice man's inability, wherein it consists. Secondly, the Father's drawings--what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a sweet consolation which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, MAN'S INABILITY. The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any physical defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as

easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does this inability lie in any mental lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep in his nature. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God

the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it ?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it cannot do so. Can it not be tamed? cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature.

Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit. But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart.

But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that

child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

I. First, it lies in the obstinacy of the human will. "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if they will that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ himself declares it--"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;' and as long as that "ye will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful. supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer--Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old,

but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this--"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the understanding is darkened. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man--that the understanding of man is so dark, that hecannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. "Well," says one, "I think I

have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be for ever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, the affections, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere--there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love

sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more--conscience, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me feel that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man s conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of

eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Saviour, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say,"No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that the can here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word will. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe. but you have had to pray, Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say,"Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God ?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say,

even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless--if such be his experience,--does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between will and power: might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving or the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that

both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner--there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world

which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues for ever. Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public--house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform, lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both

from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other, What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be some thing more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the minister draw him, but except the Father draw him. Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by

the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God--the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling!" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to himself" I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that, he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion;" he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour's blood while he is striving to run away from the Saviour. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart,

the text is fulfilled--"draw me and I will run after thee." We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess. The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man's heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," saith the man within himself, "I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony, and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

"Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and thou alone."'

Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, "I

never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross. that Man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to save you." And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one, "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of

account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbours and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God. "Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, "Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say "Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,' I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished." But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou

hast sinned against him, and if he wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou canst do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little,"

Now, the comfortable reflection is this:--Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing,

"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive of my Lord,
To sing the triumph of his Word"?

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart--"Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust Is in thee: I know that no righteousness of my own can save

me, but only thou, O Christ--sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Saviour's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

Chapter 18

The Solar Eclipse

A Sermon

(No. 183)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 14th, 1858 by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"I form the light, and create darkness.'--Isaiah 45:7.

WE ARE ALL expecting to-morrow to witness one of the greatest sights in the universe--the annular eclipse of the sun. It is possible that many of us shall have gone the way of all flesh before such a sight shall again be seen in this country and we are therefore looking for it with some degree of expectation. It is probable that hundreds and thousands of the human race will be attracted by it, to study for a few hours at least, the science of astronomy. Certain it is that our astronomers are making the most capital they possibly can of it by endeavouring to thrust it in every way under our notice, in order to induce us to make the sun, the moon, and the stars a little more the object of' our attention than they have been hitherto. Surely I need offer no apology whatever if religion comes forward to-day, and asks that attention should be drawn to her, even by the eclipse itself. Without a doubt, if there be sermons in stones, there must be a great sermon in the sun; and if there be books in the running brooks, no doubt there is many a huge volume to be found in a sun suffering eclipse. All things teach us, if we have but a mind to learn. There is nothing which we can see, or hear, or feel, which may not be the channels of great instruction to us. Let us see whether this may not lead us this morning into a train of thought which may, under God's blessing, be something far better to

us than the seeing of an eclipse.

I shall note this morning, in addressing you, that since the Lord creates darkness as well as light; first of all, eclipses of every kind are part of God's way of governing the world; in the second place, we shall notice that since God creates the darkness as well as the light, we may conclude beyond a doubt that he has a design in the eclipse--in the darkness as well as the light; and then, thirdly, we shall notice that as all things that God has created, whether they be light or whether they be dark, have a sermon for us, no doubt there are some sermons to be found in this.

I. First of all, ECLIPSES ARE A PART OF GOD'S PLAN. In the olden times the ignorant people in England were frightened at an eclipse, they could not understand what it meant. They were quite sure that there was about to be a war, or a famine, or a terrible fire. They were absolutely certain that something fearful would happen; for they regarded it as being a prophecy of coming ills. They were totally at a loss to account for it, and knew nothing about the theory which now so satisfactorily sets our minds at rest. And you are aware, that till this day, in the East and in other parts of the world still in the ignorance of barbarism, an eclipse is looked upon as a very horrible and a very unaccountable thing. The Hindoos still believe that a great dragon swallows the sun, and they may be seen by thousands plunging into their sacred river, the Ganges, praying to the gods that they may set the sun at liberty, that the dragon may be compelled to disgorge him. Hundreds of other most stupid and absurd theories are still prominently believed and held in different parts of the world, and I believe that here amongst a very great number of us, an eclipse is looked upon as something contrary to the general law of nature. Now, beloved, all that understand anything of God's works, know very well

that eclipses are as much a part of nature's laws as the regular sunshine, that an eclipse is no deviation from God's plan, but that it is a necessary consequence of the natural motion of the moon and the earth around the sun and each other, that there should at some stated periods be eclipses, and when we see the eclipse to-morrow, we shall not look upon it as a miracle or anything out of the ordinary course of God's providence, but we shall say it was a necessity involved in the very plan whereby God governs the earth.

And now, beloved, I have only said these things to draw your attention to other eclipses. There are certain eclipses which happen in God's providence as well as in God's grace. As in nature an eclipse is part of God's plan, and is in fact involved in it, so we believe that in providence the eclipse shall sometimes overshadow the earth. I mean, the adversities, the wars, the famines, which sometimes fall on the human race, are but a part of God's divine plan of governing the earth, and have some beneficial object in their falling upon us.

First, let me invite your attention to providence at large. How many times have we seen providence itself eclipsed with regard to the whole race. Behold, the Lord creates the world, and placed man upon it. "Increase and multiply," is his law. Man multiplies, fills the earth, and replenishes it. The whole earth is populated, and its valleys and hills rejoice with the voice of song. On a sudden comes an eclipse. God sends a flood of rain; he draws the plugs of the great fountains of the mighty deep, and lets the water burst up upon the earth. He bids his rain descend, not in showers, but in whole cataracts at once, and the earth becomes a void waste covered with water, and afterwards a dreary swamp covered with mud, the whole human race, with the solitary exception of eight persons, having been swept away. This is what I mean by a providential eclipse. After that God again suffers man to

multiply, and the earth to be replenished. Year after year the earth laughs with harvest, and the fields are made glad with God's bounties. For seven years following each other there is such an abundance of plenty on the earth that men know not how to gather up by handfuls the stores which God has east. These seven years are overpassed, and lo! there comes an eclipse of God's bounty. There is no calf in the stall, the olive fails, and the fields yield no meat, all the land goes to Egypt to buy corn, for only in Egypt is there corn to be found. There is a great eclipse of God's bounty which happens to the world. But I need not stop to particularize the thousand instances that have happened in history. Nations have grown strong and mighty; anon there has come an eclipse of their glories, and all that has been builded has crumbled to the earth. Vast empires have been builded, and they have become great, and beneath their sway some of their people have become happy. Some savage conqueror from the north has descended with his barbarous hordes, and swept away every vestige of civilization, and the earth seems to have gone back hundreds of years. There has been a dark eclipse. Or it may have happened differently. A city is prosperous and rich. In one unhappy night a fire seizes upon it, and like the stubble before the flame, the whole city is consumed, and over the ashes of their houses the inhabitants sit down to weep and die. At another time a plague is upon the multitudes, and the pits are filled with the dead. Nations die and perish, and whole hosts of men are carried to their graves. Now, all these great eclipses of God's favour, these darkenings of the heavens, these sudden glooms that fall upon the human race, are parts of God's plan of providence. Beloved, believe me, it is God's providence, when his paths drop fatness, and when the valleys rejoice on every side. It is a part of his plan when the fields are covered with corn, and when there is grass for the cattle; but it is equally as

much a part of the plan of his providence to reduce the earth to famine, and bring the human race to misery at certain stated seasons, when he sees that an eclipse is absolutely necessary for their good. It is just the same with you in your own private concerns. There is a God of providence to you. Lo, these many years has he fed you, and has never denied you the supply of your wants. Bread has been given to you, and your water has been sure. Your children have been about you. You have washed your feet with butter, you have rejoiced; you have stood fast in the ways of God, and in the ways of happiness. You have been able to say, "Our ways are ways of pleasant ness, and all our paths are peace." You have not been, of all men, the most miser able, but in some respects connected with your life, and blessed by God's providence, you have been the happiest amongst the human race; and now a dark cloud has fallen upon you. The sunlight of God's providence has set while it was yet noon. When you were rejoicing in the brightness of your light, on a sudden a midday-midnight has fallen upon you, to your horror and dismay. You are made to say, "Whence does all this evil come upon me? Is this also sent of God?" Most assuredly it is. Your penury, your sickness, your bereavement, your contempt, all these things are as much ordained for you, and settled in the path of providence, as your wealth, your comfort, and your joy. Think not that God has changed. It involves no change of the sun when an eclipse overshadows it. The sun has not moved from its predestined spot. There standeth it, fixed and secure; or if it be true that it moveth, still it moveth with such regularity that to us it seemeth still. Beloved, so it is with God. It may be that his purposes are moving onward to some great and distant goal, which yet we cannot see, circling around himself in some greater circle than human knowledge yet can guess; but this is certain, that, so far as we are concerned, God is the same, and of his years there is

no end, and from his fixed and settled path he hath not swerved. His glory is undimmed, even when eye cannot see it. His love is just as bright, even when the shinings of it are concealed. He hath not moved to the right hand nor to the left. With the Father of lights there is no variableness, neither the shadow of turning. He abideth fast and fixed, though all things pass away. Let me confide then in him.

Eclipses in providence, like eclipses in nature, are but a part of his own grand plan, and necessarily involved in it.

I suppose that it is impossible that the earth should revolve around the sun, and that the moon should spin continually round the earth, in the same plane of their orbit, without there being eclipses. Since God has made the ellipse, or the circle, the great rule of nature, it is impossible but that eclipses should occur. Now, did you ever notice that in providence the circle is God's rule still. The earth is here to-day; it will be in the same place this day next year; it will go round the circle; it gets no further. It is just so in providence. God began the circle of his providence in Eden. That is where he will end. There was a paradise on earth, when God began his providential dealings with mankind; there will be a paradise at the end. It is the same with your providence. Naked came ye forth from your mother's womb, and naked must ye return to the earth. It is a circle. Where God has begun, there will he end; and as God has taken the rule of the circle in providence, as well as in nature, eclipses must be sure to occur. Moving in the pre destined orbit of divine wisdom, the eclipse is absolutely and imperatively necessary in God's plan of government. Troubles must come; afflictions must befall; it must, needs be that for a season ye should be in heaviness, through manifold temptations.

But I have said, that eclipses must also occur in grace, and it is so. God's rule in grace is still the circle. Man was originally pure and

holy; that is what God's grace will make him at last, He was pure when he was made by God in the garden. That is what God shall make him, when he comes to fashion him like unto his own glorious image, and present him complete in heaven. We begin our piety by denying the world, by being full of love to God; we often decline in grace, and God will bring us back to the state in which we were when we first began, so that we shall rejoice in none but Christ, and give our hearts to him as we did at first. Hence, there must be an eclipse in grace, because even there the circle seems to be the rule of God's gracious government. Now beloved, you are in the eclipse some of you to-day. I hear you crying, "Oh that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me! I looked for light, but lo, darkness came; for peace, but behold, trouble. I said in my soul, my mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved. Lord, thou didst hide thy face, and I am troubled. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me. It was but yesterday that I could read my title clear; to-day my evidences are bedimmed, and my hopes clouded. Yesterday I could climb to Pisgah's top and view the landscape o'er, and count the fields that were flowing with milk and honey, and rejoice with confidence in my future inheritance. To-day my spirit sees no heaven, it has no hopes, but many fears; no joys, but much distress;" and you are apt to say, dear friends, "Is this a part of God's plan with me? Can this be the way in which God would bring me to heaven?" Yes, it is even so. The eclipse of your faith, the darkness of your minds, the fainting of your hopes, all these things are but the parts of God's plan for making you ripe for the great inheritance into which you shall soon enter. These trials are but waves that wash you on to the rocks; they are but winds that waft your ship the more swiftly towards the desired haven. As David says in the psalm, so might I say

to you, "So he bringeth them to their desired haven." By honour and dishonour, by evil report and by good report, by plenty and by poverty, by joy and by distress, by persecution and by comforts, by all these things is the life of your soul, and by each of these are you helped to hold on your way, and to be brought at last to the great goal and haven of your hopes. Oh! think not, Christian, that your sorrows are out of God's plan; they are necessary parts of it; and inasmuch as he will bring many heirs of God unto glory, it is necessary that through much tribulation he should bring them thither.

I have thus tried to bring out the first truth, that the eclipse is a part of God's government, and that our temporal afflictions, and our own sorrows of heart, are but a part of that grand scheme. Permit me to trespass on your patience one minute more, when I notice, that in God's great plan of grace to the world, it is just the same. Sometimes we see a mighty reformation worked in the church. God raises up men who lead the van of the armies of Jehovah. See! error flies before them like shadows before the sunlight. Behold! the strongest towers of the enemy are tottering to their fall. The shout of a King is heard in the midst, and the saints of the Lord take courage, that their great and final victory at last is come. A few more years and those reformers are dead, and their mantle has not fallen upon any. After great mountains come deep valleys. The sons of great men are often small and drivelling; so there cometh a poor lukewarm church. After the Philadelphian, state of love, there comes the Laodicean state of lukewarmness. The church sinks! and in proportion as she sinks the enemy advances. Victory! victory! victory! shout the hosts of hell; and pushing on their course, they drive back the Lord's host, and the world trembles as in the balances, for victory seems to be on the side of the enemy. Again there comes another time of refreshing, another Pentecost; some other leader

is raised up of God. Another mighty judge is brought into Israel, to drive out the Hittites and the Amorites that have invaded God's Canaan. Once more, the world rejoices and the creature that hath toiled so long, hopeth to be delivered from its bondage--alas! it sinks again. The rising hath its ebb, the summer hath its winter, and the joyous time hath its season of despondency to follow it; but, beloved, all this is a part of God's plan. Do you see how God governs the ocean? When he means to produce a flood-tide, he does not make the water come marching straight up upon the shore, but as you stand there you are absolutely certain that the sand will be covered, and that the flood will dash against the cliff at the foot of which you are standing. But you see a wave come marching up, and then it returns again, and then another wave, then it dies and rolls back and another follows it. Now, it is even so in the church of God. The day must be, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But this must be accomplished by different waves, by up-growing and decrease, by multiplying and by division. It must be by triumph and by victory, by conquest and by defeat, that at last God's great purpose shall ripen, and the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. Think not then that eclipses of our holy religion, or the failure of great men in the midst of us, or the decline of piety, is at all apart from God's plan; it is involved in it, and as God's great purpose moving in the circle to bring forth another gracious purpose on earth must be accomplished, so beloved, an eclipse must necessarily follow, being involved in God's very way of governing the world in his grace.

II. But, secondly, EVERYTHING THAT GOD DOES HAS A DESIGN. When God creates light he has a reason for it, and when he creates darkness he has a reason for it too. God does not always tell us his reason; he always has one, We call him a sovereign God, because sometimes he acts

from reasons which are beyond our knowledge; but he is never an unreasoning God. It is according to the counsel of his will that he works; not according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will, to show you that there is a reason, a wisdom and counsel in everything that he does. Now I cannot tell you what is God's design in eclipsing the sun to-morrow; we can see many gracious purposes answered by it in our minds, but I do not know of what use it is to the world. It may be that if there never were an eclipse some great change might happen in the atmosphere, something far beyond the reach of all philosophical knowledge at present, but which may yet be discovered. It may be that the eclipse, like the tornado and the hurricane, has its virtue in operating upon this lower world in some mysterious way, but that we know not. However, we are not left in any darkness about other kind of eclipses; we are quite certain that providential eclipses, and gracious eclipses, have both of them their reasons. When God sends a providential eclipse he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nought. When pestilence stalks through the land and sweeps away its myriads, think not that God has done an unthought-of act without an intention in it. When war, with its blood-red sword, sweeps the nations and lays the mother bleeding with her child, imagine not that this cometh in vain; God hath some design in all these things, and permit me to tell you what I believe to be God's design, when he sends troubles into the world, and when he sends troubles upon us. It is this, it is to draw our attention to himself. Well, said an old divine," Nobody ever looks at the sun except when he is in an eclipse." You never thought about the sun yesterday; you will all of you be staring at him to-morrow. Pieces of smoked glass, telescopes, and all kinds of inventions down to a pail of water, will be used in order to look at the sun. Why don't you look at him when he is shining brightly?

There is nothing interesting in that, because it is an ordinary object. Now do you not notice, that when everything goes well with the world they never think about God? People always get religious when they get into trouble. The churches were fuller in London when we had the cholera here, than they had been for many a long day. There were more ministers went to see sick people in those times than had ever been known before. People that never read their Bible, never prayed, never thought of going to God's house, were hurrying off to a place of worship, or reading their Bibles, or pretending at least to pray, though, afterwards, when it went away, they forgot all about it; yet they did think a little of it when they were in trouble. "Surely in trouble they will seek the Lord; in the day of their distress they will seek me early." Doubtless, we should entirely forget God, if it were not for some of those eclipses which now and then happen. God would not have his name remembered on earth at all by the race of man if he did not make them recollect his name, when he scourged it into them with his rod. Famine, pestilence, the sword, the flood, all these must come upon us to be terrible remembrancers, to make us think of the dread King who holds the thunders in his hand, and keeps the lightnings in his power. Doubtless, this is God's great design in his afflictive providences, to make us think of him. But there is another design. Some times troublous times tend to prepare the world for something better afterwards. War is an awful thing; but I doubt not, it purges the moral atmosphere, just as a hurricane sweeps away a pestilence. It is a fearful thing to hear of famine, or to hear of plague; but each of these things has some effect upon the human race. An evil generally goes to make room for a greater good. Men may bewail the fire of London, but it was the greatest blessing God could have sent to London. It burnt down a set of old houses that were placed so close together

that it was impossible for them to be without the plague; and when these old things had been burnt down, there was then room for a healthier action; and there has been less plague, and less disease ever since. Many of the troubles that come to the great wide world, are meant to be like axes, to cut down some deadly upas tree, and lay it level with the ground. That tree, when it stood, scattered greater evil, though it scattered it gradually, than the injury which God sent on a sudden, did inflict, though it was more apparent to the mind, having come all at once. Ah, my hearer, God has sent thee providential trouble. Thou art not his child; thou dost not fear his name nor love him. Thou art saying, "Why has this trouble happened to me?" God has a gracious design in it. There are many men that are brought to Christ by trouble. Many a sinner has sought the Saviour on his sick bed who never would have sought him anywhere else. Many a merchant whose trade has prospered, has lived without God; he has been glad to find the Saviour when his house has tottered into bankruptcy. We have known many a person who could afford to despise God while the stream flowed smoothly on, but that same man has been compelled to bow his knee, and seek peace through the blood of Christ, when he has come into the whirlpool of distress, and the whirlwind of trouble hath got hold upon him. There is a story told, that in the olden times, Artaxerxes and another great king were engaged in a furious fight. In the middle of the battle a sudden eclipse happened, and such was the horror of all the warriors, that they made peace there and then. Oh, if an eclipse of trouble should induce you to ground arms and seek to be reconciled unto God! Sinner, you are fighting against God, lifting the arm of your rebellion against him. Happy shall you be if that trouble which is now fallen upon you should lead you to throw down the weapons of your rebellion, and fly to the arms of God and say, "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner."

It will be the best thing that thou hast ever had. Thy trouble will be far better to thee than joys could have been, if thy sorrows shall induce thee to fly to Jesus who can make peace through the blood of his cross. May this be the happy result of thine own troubles and sorrows. But furthermore, eclipses of grace have also their end and design. The Christian asks why it is that God does not seem to favour him in his conscience as much as he did aforetime. "Why is it that I have not more faith? Why have the promises lost their sweetness? Why has the Word of God seemed to fail in its power in operating upon my soul? Why has God hidden his face from me?" Christian, it is that thou mayest begin to search thyself, and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." God's people are afflicted in order that they may not go astray. "Before I was afflicted," said the Psalmist, "I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word." Leave a Christian alone, and he becomes like a piece of iron covered with rust; he loses all his brightness. Take the file of affliction, and once more the brightness becomes apparent. Christians without trouble would be like oysters without the sickness; they would not have produced pearls. The pearl oyster would have no pearl unless some disease had fallen upon it; and were it not that trouble lights upon the Christian, he would live without producing the pearl of a holy and contented piety. God's rods are improvers; when they are laid upon us they always mend us. God scarifies the Christian, that he may cleanse him of his weeds; he ploughs him deep that he may turn up the subsoil to the air, that the influence of the Divine Spirit may rest upon him. He puts us into the crucible and into the furnace, that the heat may burn away our dross, and may consume all our impurities. He sends us into the deep waters, that they may be like a sacred baptism to us, and may help in sanctifying us, by delivering us from our pride, our lust, our worldliness, and our conceit. Happy is

the man who understands this --who knows that all things work together for good to them that love God, and believes that even an eclipse of God's countenance hath its end and design, in making him perfectly conformed to the image of Christ Jesus the Lord.

III. And now not to detain you longer, I have got a sermon or two more to preach to you from the eclipse. To-morrow, Christians, if you will just remember what I am about to say you will learn a useful lesson. What is that which will hide the sun from us to-morrow? It is the ungrateful moon. She has borrowed all her light from the sun month after month; she would be a black blot, if the sun did not shine upon her, and now see all the return she makes is, she goes impudently before his face and prevents his light from shining upon us. Do you know anything at all like that in your own history? Have you not a great many comforts which you enjoy upon earth that are just like the moon? They borrow all their light from the sun. They would be no comforts to you unless God shone in them and they reflected back the light from his countenance. What is your husband, your wife; what are your children, your friends, your house, your home? What are all these but moons that borrow their light from the sun? Oh how ungrateful it is when we let our comforts get before our God; no wonder that we get an eclipse when we put these things that God gave to be our comforts into God's own throne and make them our idols. Oh! if our children take half of our hearts, if our friends take away our souls from Jesus, if like it was with Solomon, the wife leads the heart astray, if our goods, our house, our lands become the object of our life, if we set our affections upon them instead of setting them upon the things above, no wonder that there is an eclipse. Oh ungrateful heart that allows these moons of comfort to hide the sun. Old Master Brookes very prettily says, the husband gives his wife rings which she wears upon her finger

as remembrances of his love. Suppose a wife should be so foolish as to love her jewels better than her husband, suppose she should set her heart more upon his love-tokens than upon his person, oh, what marvel if he should then take the rings and the jewels away that she might again love him. It is even so with us; God loves his children and he gives us strong faith and gives us joy and comfort, and then if we begin to set our hearts upon these more than upon him, he will come and take them away, for saith he, "I must have all thy love. I gave thee these to win thy love, not to rob me of it, and inasmuch as thou dost divert thine heart into them, instead of allowing thy love to flow in one channel towards me; I will stop up the channel of thy comfort, that thy heart may cleave to me, and to me alone.' Oh. for a heart that is like Anacreon's lyre, that would sing of love alone, that whatever subject you tried to bring to it, it would not resound with anything save love! Oh, that our hearts were like that towards God, so that when we tried to sing of comforts and of mercies, our hearts would only sing of God! Oh, that every string were made so divine, that it would never trill to any finger but the finger of the chief player upon my stringed instruments, the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, that we had a heart like David's harp, that none but David could play; a soul that none but Jesus could make glad and cause to rejoice! Take care Christian, lest thy comforts like the moon eclipse thy sun. That is a sermon for thee, remember it, and be wise from it.

And let the Christian recollect another sermon. Let him take his child out, and when he takes him outside the door, and he sees the sun begin to grow dark and all things fade away, and a strange colour coming over the landscape, the child will begin to cry and say, "Father the sun is going out, he is dying; we shall never have any light again." And as gradually the black moon creeps over the sun's broad surface and there

remains only a solitary streak of light, the tears run down the child's eyes as he says, "The sun is nearly quenched; God has blown it out, it will never shine upon us again. We shall have to live in darkness;" and he would begin to weep for sorrow of heart. You would touch your child on the head, and say, "No, my little boy, the sun has not gone out; it is only the moon passing across its face; it will shine bright enough presently." And your boy would soon believe you; and as he saw the light returning, he would feel thankful, and would believe what you had said, that the sun was always the same. Now, you will be like a child to-morrow. When you get into trouble you will be saying, "God has changed." Then let God's Word speak to you as unto children, and let it say, "No, he has not changed; with him is no variableness, neither shadow of a turning."

"My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

And now, last of all, a total eclipse is one of the most terrific and grand sights that ever will be seen. We shall not see the eclipse here in all its majestic terror, but when the eclipse of the sun is total it is sublime. Travellers have given us some records of their own experience. When the sun has been setting far away, the mountains seemed to be covered with darkness, except upon their summits, where there was just a streak of light, when all below was swathed in darkness. The heavens grew darker and darker and darker, until at last it became as black as night, and here and there the stars might be seen shining, but beside them there was no light, and nothing could be discerned. I was thinking that if on a sudden the sun should set in ten-fold darkness, and never should rise again, what a horrid world this would be! If to-morrow the sun should actually die out, and never shine any more, what a fearful world this would be to live in! And then

the thought strikes me--;Are there not some men, and are there not some here, who will one day have a total eclipse of all their comforts? Thank God, whatever eclipse happens to a Christian, it is never a total eclipse: there is always a ring of comfort left; there is always a crescent of love and mercy to shine upon him. But mark thee, sinner, when thou comest to die, bright though thy joys be now, and fair thy prospects, thou wilt suffer a total eclipse. Soon shall your sun set, and set in everlasting night. A few more months, and your gaiety shall be over; your dreams of pleasure shall be dissipated by the terrible wailing of the judgment-trump; a few more months, and this gay dance of revelry on earth shall all have passed away; and that passed away, remember, you have nothing to expect in the world to come but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Can you guess what the Saviour meant, when he said "outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth?" Can any tell except those eclipsed spirits that have been these many years writhing in the torments of eternal judgement; can any tell what is meant by that "Outer darkness !" It is darkness so thick, that hope, which lives anywhere, cannot dart even a feeble ray through its impenetrable gloom; it is a darkness so black that you have no candle of your own fancy, no fair imagination to illuminate. A horror thicker than the darkness of Egypt, a darkness that may be felt will get hold upon the spirit. "Depart, ye cursed," shall roll, like volumes of cloud and darkness over the accursed spirit. "Cursed, cursed, cursed," pronounced by the Sacred Trinity thrice, shall come, come like a three-fold ocean of unutterable depth, and shall in its caverns hide the soul beyond the reach of hope.

I am but talking in simile and figure of a matter which none of us can thoroughly understand, but which each of us must know, unless we are saved by grace. My fellow-sinner, hast thou to-day any hope that when

death shall come thou shalt be found in Christ? If thou hast none, beware and tremble; if thou hast any, take care it is "a good hope through grace." If thou hast no hope, but art seeking one, hear me while I tell thee the way of salvation. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man; he lived in this world, he suffered and he died; and the object of his death was this--that all who believe may be saved. What you are required to believe is simply this. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: do you feel that you are a sinner? If so, he came to save you. All you have to do--and that grace makes you do--is to believe that he came to save sinners, and therefore came to save you. Mark, he did not come to save all; he came to save sinners. All men who can claim the title of sinners, Christ came to save. If you are too good to be a sinner, then you have no part in this matter; if you are too proud to confess that you are a sinner, then this has nothing to do with you; but if with a humble heart, with a penitential lip, you can say, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner," then Christ was punished for your sins, and you cannot be punished for them. Christ has died instead of you; believe on him, and you may go your way rejoicing that you are saved now, and shall be saved eternally. May God the Holy Spirit first teach you that you are a sinner, then lead you to believe that Christ died for sinners and then apply the promise, so that you may see that he died for you; and that done, you may "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," and your sun shall never set in an eclipse, but shall set on earth to rise with tenfold splendour in the upper sphere where it shall never know a cloud, a setting, or an eclipse.

Chapter 19

The Glorious Gospel

A Sermon

(No. 184)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 21, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."--1 Timothy 1:15.

I SUPPOSE that the message delivered by God's servants to the people must always be called "the burden of the Lord." When the old prophets came forth from their Master, they had such dooms, and threatenings, and lamentations, and woe to preach, that their countenances were wan with sorrow, and their hearts heavy within them. They usually commenced their discourses by announcing, "The burden of the Lord, the burden of the Lord." But now, our message is no heavy one. No threatening and no thunders compose the theme of the gospel minister. All is mercy; love is the sum and substance of our gospel--love undeserved; love to the very chief of sinners. But it is still a burden to us. So far as the matter of our preaching is concerned, it is our joy and our delight to preach it; but if others feel as I feel now, they will all acknowledge it to be a hard matter to preach the gospel. For now I am sore vexed, and my heart is troubled, not concerning what I have to preach, but how I shall preach it. What if so good a message should fail because of so ill an ambassador? What if my hearers should reject this saying which is worthy of all acceptation, because I may announce it with lack of earnestness? Surely--surely such a supposition is enough to draw the

tears to the eyes of any man! But may God in his mercy prevent a consummation so fearfully to be dreaded; and, however I may now preach, may this Word of God commend itself to every man's conscience; and may many of you now gathered together, who have never as yet find to Jesus for refuge, by the simple preaching of the Word, now be persuaded to come in, that you may taste and see that the Lord is good.

Our text is one that pride would never prompt a man to select. It is quite impossible to flourish about it, it is so simple. Human nature is apt to cry, "Well I cannot preach upon that text--it is too plain; there is no mystery in it; I cannot show my learning: it is just a plain, common-sense announcement--I scarcely would wish to take it, for it lowers the man, however much it may exalt the Master." So, expect nothing but the text from me this morning, and the simplest possible explanation of it.

We shall have two heads: first there is the text; then there is a double commendation appended to the text--"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation."

II. First, there is THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TEXT--"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." In that there are three things very prominent. There is the Saviour, there is the sinner, and there is the salvation.

1. There is first of all, the Saviour. And in explaining the Christian religion, this is where we must begin. The person of the Saviour is the foundation-stone of our hope. Upon that person depends the usefulness of our gospel. Should someone arise and preach a Saviour, who was man, he would be unworthy of our hopes, and the salvation preached would be inadequate to what we need. Should another preach salvation by an angel, our sins are so heavy that an angelic atonement would have been insufficient; and therefore his gospel totters to the ground. I repeat

it, upon the person of the Saviour rests the whole of the salvation. If he be not able, if he be not commissioned to perform the work, then indeed, the work itself is worthless to us, and falls short of its design. But, men and brethren, when we preach the gospel, we need not stop and stammer. We have to show you this day such a Saviour that earth and heaven could not show his fellow. He is one so loving, so great, so mighty, and so well adapted to all our needs, that it is evident enough that he was prepared of old to meet our deepest wants. We know that Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners was God; and that long before his descent to this lower world, he was adored by angels as the Son of the Highest. When we preach the Saviour to you, we tell you that although Jesus Christ was the Son of man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, yet was he eternally the Son of God, and hath in himself all the attributes which constitute perfect Godhead. What more of a Saviour can any man want than God? Is not he who made the heavens able to purge the soul? If he of old stretched the curtains of the skies, and made the earth, that man should dwell upon it, is he not able to rescue a sinner from the destruction that is to come? When we tell you he is God, we have at once declared his omnipotence and his infinity; and when these two things work together, what can be impossible? Let God undertake a work, it cannot meet with failure. Let him enter into an enterprise, and it is sure of its accomplishment. Since, then, Christ Jesus the man was also Christ Jesus the God, in announcing the Saviour, we have the fullest confidence that we are offering you something that is worthy of all acceptation.

The name given to Christ suggests something concerning his person. He is called in our text, "Christ Jesus." The two words mean, the "Anointed Saviour."-The Anointed Saviour "came into the world to save sinners."

Pause here, my soul, and read this o'er again:--He is the anointed Saviour. God the Father from before all worlds anointed Christ to the office of a Saviour of men; and, therefore, when I behold my Redeemer coming from heaven to redeem man from sin, I note that he does not come unsent, or uncommissioned. He has his Father's authority to back him in his work. Hence, there are two immutable things whereon our soul may rest,--there is the person of Christ, divine in itself; there is the anointing from on high, giving to him the stamp of a commission received from Jehovah his Father. O sinner, what greater Saviour dost thou want than he whom God anointed? What more canst thou require than the eternal Son of God to be thy ransom, and the anointing of the Father to be the ratification of the treaty?

Yet we have not fully described the parson of the Redeemer, until we have noted that He was man. We read that he came into the world; by which coming into the world we do not understand his usual coming. for he often came into the world before. We read in Scripture, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." In fact, he is always here. The goings of God are to be seen in the sanctuary; both in providence and in nature they are to be seen most visibly. Does not God visit the earth when he makes the tempest his chariot, and rides upon the wings of the wind? But this visitation was different from all these. Christ came into the world in the sense of the fullest and most complete union with human nature. Oh, sinner, when we preach a Divine Saviour, perhaps the name of God is so terrible to thee, that thou canst scarcely think the Saviour is adapted to thee. But hear thou again the old story. Although Christ was the Son of God he left his highest throne in glory and stooped to the manger. There he is, an infant of a span long. See, he grows from boyhood up to manhood, and he

come. forth into the world to preach and suffer! See him as he groans under the yoke of oppression; he is mocked and despised; his visage more marred than that of any other man, and his form more than the sons of men! See him in the garden, as he sweats drops of blood! See him in Pilate's chamber, in which he is scourged and his shoulders run with gore! On the bloody tree behold him! See him dying with agony too exquisite to be imagined, much less to be described! Behold him in the silent tomb! See him at last bursting the bonds of death, and rising the third day, and afterwards ascending up on high, "leading captivity captive!" Sinner, thou hast now the Saviour before thee, plainly manifested. He who was called Jesus of Nazareth, who died upon the cross, who had his superscription written, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," this man was the Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Father, "begotten by his Father before all worlds, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father." He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Oh, could I bring him before you, could I now bring him here to show you his hands and his side, if ye could now, like Thomas, put your fingers in the holes of the nails and thrust your hand into his side, methinks you would not be faithless, but believing. This much I know, if there be anything that can make men believe under the hand of God's most Holy Spirit, it is a true picture of the person of Christ. Seeing is believing in his case. A true view of Christ, a right-looking at him, will most assuredly beget faith in the soul. Oh, I doubt not if ye knew our Master, some of you who are now doubting, and fearing, and trembling, would say, "Oh, I can trust him; a person

so divine, and yet so human, ordained and anointed of God, must be worthy of my faith I can trust him; nay more, if I had a hundred souls I could trust him with them all. or, if I stood accountable for all the sins of all mankind, and were myself the very reservoir and sink of this world's infamy, I could trust him even then--for such a Saviour must be "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." This, then, is the person of the Saviour.

2. Now. the second point is the sinner. If we had never heard this passage before, or any of similar import, I can suppose that the most breathless silence would reign over this place if for the first time I should commence to read them in your hearing, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save--" I know how you would thrust foreward your heads. I know how you would put your hand against your ear, and look as if you would hear with the eye as well as with the ear, to know for whom the Saviour died. Every heart would say, whom did he come to save? And if we had never heard the message before, how would our hearts palpitate with fear lest the character described should be one unto which it would be impossible for us to attain! Oh, how pleasant it is to hear again that one word which describes the character of those Christ came to save:--"He came into the world to save sinners." Monarch, there is here no distinction; princes, he hath not singled you out to be the objects of his love; but beggars and the poor shall taste his grace. Ye learned men, ye masters of Israel, Christ does not say he came specially to save you; the unlearned and illiterate peasant is equally welcome to his grace. Jew, with all thy pedigree of honor, thou art not justified more than the Gentile. Men of Britain, with all your civilization and your freedom, Christ does not say he came to save you: he names not you as the distinguishing class who are the objects of his

love--no, and ye that have good works, and reckon yourselves saints among men, he doth not distinguish you either. The one simple title, large and broad as humanity itself, is simply this;--"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Now, mark, we are to understand this in a general sense when we read it,¨~ viz.¨~, that all whom Jesus came to save are sinners. but if any man asks, may I infer from this that I am saved; we must then put another question to him. To begin then, with the general sense:--"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." The men whom Christ came to save were by nature sinners, nothing less and nothing more than sinners. I have often said that Christ came into the world to save awakened sinners. It is quite true; so he did. But those sinners were not awakened sinners when he came to save them--they were nothing but "sinners dead in trespasses and sins" when he came to them. It is a common notion that we are to preach that Christ died to save what are called sensible sinners. Now that is true, but they were not sensible sinners when Christ died to save them. He makes them sensible or feeling sinners as the effect of his death. Those he died for are described, without any adjective to diminish the breadth of it, as being sinners, and simply sinners, without any badge of merit or mark of goodness which could distinguish them above their fellows. Sinners! Now, the term includes some of all kinds of sinners. There are some men whose sins appear but little. Trained up religiously, and educated in a moral way, they do not dash into the deeps of sin; they are content to coast along the shores of vice--they do not launch out into the depths. Now, Christ hath died for such as these, for many of these have been brought to know and love him. Let no man think, because he is a less sinner than others, that therefore there is less hope for him. Strange it is that some have often thought that. "If I had been a blasphemer," says one, "or injurious, I could have had more hope;

though I know I have sinned greatly in my own eyes yet so little have I erred in the eye of the world, that I can scarcely think myself included." Oh, say not so. It says, "Sinners." If thou canst put thyself in that catalogue, whether it be at the top or at the bottom, thou art still within it; and the truth still holds good that those Jesus came to save were originally sinners, and thou being such, thou hast no reason to believe that thou art shut out. Again, Christ died to save sinners of an opposite sort. We have some men whom we dare not describe; it would be a shame to speak of the things which are done by them in private. There have been men who have invented vices of which the devil himself was ignorant until they invented them. There have been men so bestial that the very dog was a more honorable creature than they. We have heard of beings whose crimes have been more diabolical, more detestable, than any action ascribed even to the devil himself. Yet my text does not shut out these. Have we not met with blasphemers so profane that they could not speak without an oath? Blasphemy, which at first was something terrible to them, has now become so common that they would curse themselves before they said their prayers, and swear when they were singing God's praises. It has come to be part of their meat and drink, a thing so natural to them that the very sinfulness of it does not shock them, they so continually do it. As for God's laws, they delight to know them for the mere sake of breaking them. Tell them of a new vice and you will please them. They have become like that Roman emperor whose parasites could never please him better than by inventing some new crime--men who have gone head over ears in the Stygian gulf of hellish sin--men, who not content with fouling their feet while walking through the mire have lifted up the trap-door with which we seal down depravity, and have dived into the very kennel--rebelling in the very filth of human iniquity. But

there is nothing in my text which can exclude even these. Many of these shall yet be washed in the Saviour's blood, and be made partakers of the Saviour's love.

Nor does this text make a distinction as to the age of sinners. I see many among you here whose hairs if they were the color of your character would be the very reverse of what they are; ye have become white without, but ye are blackened all within with sin. Ye have added layer to layer of crime; and, now, if one were to dig down through the various deposits of numerous years, he would discover stony relics of youthful sins, hidden down in the depths of your rocky hearts. Where once all was tender, everything has become sere and hardened. You have gone far into sin. If you were to be converted now, would it not, indeed, be a wonder of grace? For the old oak to be bent, oh, how hard! Now, that it has grown so rugged and tough, can it be bent? Can the Great Husbandman train it? Can he graft on so old and so rough a stem something that shall bring forth heavenly fruit? Ah, he can, for age is not mentioned in the text, and many of the most ancient of men have proved the love of Jesus in their latest years. "But," says one, "my sin has had peculiar aggravations connected with it. I have sinned against light and against knowledge. I have trampled on a mother's prayers; I have despised a father's tears. Warnings given to me have been neglected. On my sick bed God himself has rebuked me. My resolves have been frequent and as frequently forgotten. As for my guilt, it is not to be measured by any ordinary standard. My little grimes are greater than other men's deepest iniquities, for I have sinned against the light, against the prickings of conscience, and against everything that should have taught me better. "Well, my friend, I do not see that thou art shut out here; my text makes no distinction but just this;--"Sinners!" And as far as my text is concerned there is no limit

whatever: I must deal with the text as it stands; and even for you I cannot consent to limit it; it says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." There have been men of your sort saved; why, then, should you not be saved? There have been the grossest blackguards, and the vilest thieves, and the most debauched harlots saved; then, why not you, even if you be such as they are? Sinners a hundred years old have been saved; we have instance on record of such cases; then, why not you? If from one of God's instances we may generally infer a rule, and moreover, we have his own Word to back us, where lives the man who is so wickedly arrogant as to shut himself out, and close the door of mercy in his own face? No, beloved, the text says "Sinner;" and why should it not include you and me within its list? "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

But I said, and I must return to it if any-one wishes to make a particular application of the text to his own case it is necessary he should read this text in another way. Every man in this place must not infer that Christ came to save him. Those whom Christ came to save were sinners; but Christ will not save all sinners. There are some sinners who undoubtedly will be lost, because they reject Christ. They despise him; they will not repent; they choose their own self-righteousness; they do not turn to Christ, they will have none of his ways and none of his love. For such sinners, there is no promise of mercy, for there remains no other way of salvation. Despise Christ, and you despise your own mercy. Turn away from him, and you have proved that in his blood there is no efficacy for you. Despise him, and die doing so, die without giving your soul into his hands, and you have given a most awful proof that though the blood of Christ was mighty, yet never was it applied to you, never was it sprinkled on your hearts to the taking away of your sins. If, then, I want to know did Christ so die for me

that I may now believe in him, and feel myself to be a saved man, I must answer this question;--Do I feel to-day that I am a sinner? Not, do I say so, as a compliment, but do I feel it? In my inmost soul is that a truth printed in great capitals of burning fire--I am a sinner? Then, if it be so, Christ died for me. I am included in his special purpose. The covenant of grace includes my name in the ancient roll of eternal election. there my person is recorded, and I shall, without a doubt, be saved, if now, feeling myself to be a sinner, I cast myself upon that simple truth, believing it and trusting in it to be my sheet anchor in every time of trouble Come, man and brother, are you not prepared to trust in him. Are not many of you able to say that you feel yourself sinners? Oh, I beseech you, whoever you are, believe this great truth which is worthy of all acceptation--Christ Jesus came to save you, I know your doubts, I know your fears, for I have suffered them myself; and the only way whereby I can keep my hopes alive is just this:--I am brought every day to the cross; I believe that to my dying hour I shall never have any hope but this--

"Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling."

And my only reason at this hour for believing Jesus Christ is my Redeemer is just this:--I know that I am a sinner: this I feel, and over this I mourn; and though I mourn it much, when Satan tells me that I cannot be the Lord's, I draw from my very mourning the comfortable inference, that inasmuch as he has made me feel I am lost, he would not have done this if he had not intended to save me; and inasmuch as he has given me to see that I belong to that great class of characters whom he came to save, I infer from that, beyond a doubt, that he will save me. Oh, can you do the same, ye sin stricken, weary, sad, and disappointed souls, to whom the world has become an empty thing? Ye

weary spirits who have gone your round of pleasure, now exhausted with satiety, or even with disease, are longing to be rid of it--oh, ye spirits that are looking for something better than this mad world can ever give you here, I preach to you the blessed Gospel of the blessed God:--Jesus Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; dead and buried, and raised again the third day to save you--even you, for he came into the world to save sinners.

3. And, now, very briefly, the third point: What is meant by saving sinners? "Christ came to save sinners." Brethren, if you want a picture to show you what is meant by being saved, let me give it to you here. There is a poor wretch who has lived many a year in the grossest sin; so inured to sin has he become, that the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin than he could learn to do well. Drunkenness, and vice, and folly have cast their iron net about him, and he has become loathsome and unable to escape from his loathsomeness. Do you see him? He is tottering onwards to his ruin. From childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, he has sinned right on, and now he is going towards his last days. The pit of hell is flaring across his path, flinging its frightful rays immediately before his face, and yet he sees it not: he still goes on in his wickedness, despising God and hating his own salvation. Leave him there. A few years have and now hear another story. Do you see that spirit yonder--foremost among the ranks most sweetly singing the praises of God? Do you mark it robed in white, an emblem of its purity? Do you see it as it casts its crown before the feet of Jesus, and acknowledges him the Lord of all? Hark! do you hear it as it sings the sweetest song that ever charmed Paradise itself? Listen to it, its song is this:--

"I, the chief of sinners am,

But Jesus died for me."

"Unto him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in his blood, unto him be glory and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, world without end." And who is that whose song thus emulates the seraph's strains The same person who a little while ago was so frightfully depraved, the selfsame man! But he has been washed, he has been sanctified, he has been justified. If you ask me, then, what is meant by salvation, I tell you that it reaches all the way from that poor, desperately fallen piece of humanity, to that high-soaring spirit up yonder, praising God. That is to be saved--to have our old thoughts made into new ones, to have our old habits broken off, and to have new habits given; to have our old sins pardoned, and to have righteousness imputed; to have peace in the conscience, peace to man, and peace with God; to have the spotless robe of imputed righteousness cast about our loins, and ourselves healed and cleansed. To be saved is to be rescued from the gulf of perdition; to be raised to the throne of heaven; to be delivered from the wrath and curse! and the thunders of an angry God, and brought to feel and taste the love, the approval, and applause of Jehovah, our Father and our Friend. And all this Christ gives to sinners. When I preach this simple gospel, I have nothing to do with those who will not call themselves sinners. If you must be canonized, if you claim a saintly perfection of your own, I have nothing to do with you. My gospel is to sinners, and sinners alone; and the whole of this salvation, so broad and brilliant, and unspeakably precious, and everlastingly secure, is addressed this day to the outcast, to the offscouring--in one word, it is addressed to sinners.

Now, I think I have announced the truth of the text. Certainly, no man can misunderstand me unless he does so intentionally:--"Christ Jesus came to save sinners."

II. And, now, I have but little to do, but yet I have the hardest work--THE DOUBLE COMMENDATION of the text. First, "it is a faithful saying; that is a commendation to the doubter: secondly, it is worthy of all acceptation; "that is a commendation to the careless--nay, to the anxious, too.

1. First, "it is a faithful saying;" that is a commendation to the doubter. Oh, the devil, as soon as he finds men under the sound of the word of God, slips along through the crowd, and he whispers in one heart, "Don't believe it!" and in another, "Laugh at it!" and in another, "Away with it!" And when he finds a person for whom the message was intended--one who feels himself a sinner, he is generally doubly in earnest, that he may not believe it at all. I know what Satan said to you, poor friend, over there. He said, "Don't believe it--it's too good to be true." Let me answer the devil by God's own words: "This is a faithful saying." It is good, and it is as true as it is good. It is too good to be true if God had not himself said it; but, inasmuch as he said it, it is not too good to be true. I will tell thee why thou thickest it to too good to be true, it is because thou measurest God's corn by thine own bushel. Please to remember, that his ways are not as thy ways, nor his thoughts as thy thoughts; for as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways high above thy ways, and his thoughts above thy thoughts. Why, thou thinkest that if any man had offended thee, thou couldst not have forgiven him. Ay, but God is not a man: he can forgive where thou canst not; and where thou wouldst take thy brother by the throat, God would forgive him seventy times seven. Thou dost not know Jesus, or else thou wouldest believe him. We think that we are honoring God when we think great thoughts of our sin. Let us recollect, that while we ought to think very greatly of our own sin, we dishonor God if we think our sin greater than his grace. God's grace is

infinitely greater than the greatest of our crimes. There is but one exception that he has ever made, and a penitent cannot be included in that. I beseech you, therefore, get better thoughts of him. Think how good he is, and how great he is; and when you know this to be a true saying, I hope you will thrust Satan away from you, and not think it too good to be true I know what he will say to you next;--"Well, if it is true, it is not true to you: it is true to all the world, but not to you. Christ died to save sinners; it is true you are a sinner, but you are not included in it." Tell the devil he is a liar to his face. There is no way of answering him except by straightforward language. We do not believe in the individuality of the existence of the devil, as Martin Luther did. When the devil came to him, he served him as he did other impostors; he turned him out of doors, with a good hard saying. Tell him on the authority of Christ himself, that he is a liar. Christ says, he came to save sinners; the devil says he did not. He says, virtually, he did not, for he declares that he did not come to save you, and you feel that you are a sinner. Tell him he is a liar, and send him about his business. At any rate, never put his testimony in comparison with that of Christ. He looks today on thee from Calvary's cross with those same dear tearful eyes that once wept over Jerusalem. He looks on thee my brother, my sister, and says through these lips of mine, "I came into the world to save sinners." Sinner! wilt thou not believe on him, and trust thy soul in his hands? Wilt thou not say,--"Sweet Lord Jesus, thou shalt be our confidence henceforth! For thee all other hopes I resign, thou art, thou ever shalt be mine.' " Come, poor timid one, I must endeavor to re-assure you, by repeating again this text:--"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." It is a true saying, I cannot have you reject it You say you cannot believe it. Let me ask you, "Do you not believe the Bible?" "Yes," you

say, "every word of it." Then, this is one word of it--"Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I charge thee by thy honesty--as thou sayest, "I believe the Bible," believe this. There it stands. Dost thou believe Jesus Christ? Come, answer me Dost thou think he lieth? Would a God of Truth stoop to deceit? "No," thou sayest, "whatever God says, I believe." It is God that says it to thee, then, in his own book. He died to save sinners.-Come, once again. Dost thou not believe facts? Did not Jesus Christ rise from the dead? Does not that prove his gospel to be authentic? If, then, the gospel be authentic, the whole of what Christ declares to be the gospel must be true. I charge thee, as thou believest his resurrection, believe that he died for sinners, and cast thyself upon this truth. Once again. Wilt thou deny the testimony of all the saints in heaven and of all the saints on earth? Ask every one of them, and they will tell you this is true--he died to save sinners.

I, as one of the least of his servants, must bear my testimony. When Jesus came to save me, I protest he found nothing good in me. I know of a surety, that there was nothing in me to recommend me to Christ; and if he loved me, he loved me because he would do so; for there was nothing loveable, nothing that he could desire in me. What I am, I am by his grace; he made me what I am. But a sinner he found me at first, and his own sovereign love was the only reason for his choice. Ask all the people of God, and they will all say the same.

But you say you are too great a sinner. Why. you are not greater than some in heaven already. You say that you are the greatest sinner that ever lived. I say you are mistaken. The greatest sinner died some years ago and went to heaven. My text says so:--"Of whom I am chief" So, you see, the chief one has been saved before you; and if the chief one has been saved, why should you not be? There are the sinners standing in a line, and I see one starting out from the ranks, and he says, "Make

way, make way; I stand at the head of you, I am the chief of sinners. give me the lowest place; let me take the lowest room." "No," cries another, "not you; I am a greater sinner than you." Then the apostle Paul comes, and says: "I challenge you all, Manasseh and Magdalene, I challenge you. I will have the lowest place. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, but I have obtained mercy, that in me first God might show his long-suffering." Now, if Christ has saved the greatest sinner that ever lived, oh, sinner, great as you may be, you cannot be greater than the greatest, and he is able to save you. Oh, I beseech you by the myriads of witnesses around the throne, and by the thousands of witnesses on earth, by Jesus Christ, the witness on Calvary, by the blood of sprinkling that is a witness even now, by God himself, and by his Word which is faithful, I beseech you believe this faithful saying, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

2. And, now, to close. The second commendation of the text is to the careless and to the anxious too To the careless one this text is worthy of all acceptation. Oh, man, thou scornest it. I saw thee curl thy lip in derision. The story was badly told, and therefore thou didst scorn it. Thou saidst in thine heart, "What is that to me? If this be what the man preaches, I care not to hear it: if this be the gospel it is nothing." Ah, sir, it is something, though thou knowest it not. It is worthy of thy acceptation: the thing I have preached, however poor the way in which it is preached, is well worthy of thy attention I care not what orator may lecture to you, he can never have a subject greater than mine. Damosthenes himself, might stand here, or Cicero, his later compeer, they could never have a weightier subject. Though a child should tell you of it, the subject might well excuse him, for it is so important. Man it is not your house that is in danger, it is not your

body only, it is your soul I beseech you, by eternity, by its dreadful terrors, by the horrors of hell, by that fearful word, "Eternity--Eternity," I beseech thee as a man, thy brother, one who loves thee, and who would fain snatch thee from the burning, I beseech thee do not despise thine own mercies; for this is worthy of thee, man, worthy of all thy attention, and worthy of thy heartiest acceptation. Art thou wise? This is more worthy than thy wisdom. Art thou rich? This is worthier than all thy wealth. Art thou famous? This is worthier than all thy honor. Art thou princely? This is worthier than thine ancestry, or than all thy goodly heritage. The thing I preach is the worthiest thing under heaven, because it will last thee when an things else fade away. It will stand by thee when thou hast to stand alone. In the hour of death it will plead for thee when thou hast to answer the summons of justice at God's bar. And it shall be thine eternal consolation through never ending ages. It is worthy of thy acceptation.

And, now, dost thou feel anxious? Is thy heart sad? Dost thou say, "I desire to be saved. Can I trust to this gospel? Is it strong enough to bear me? I am an elephantine sinner; will not its pillars crumble like leaves beneath my weight of sin?" "I the chief of sinners am;" will its portals be wide enough to receive me? My spirit is diseased with sin; can this medicine cure it? Yes, it is worthy of you: it is equal to your disease, it is equal to your wants, it is all-sufficient for your demands. If I had a half-gospel to preach, or a defective one, I would not preach it earnestly; but I have one that is worthy of all acceptation. "But, sir I have been a thief, a whoremonger, a drunkard." It is worthy of thee, for he came to save sinners, and thou art one. "But, sir, I have been a blasphemer." It does not exclude even thee; it is worthy of thy acceptation. But, mark, it is worthy of all the acceptation you can give it. You may not only accept it in your head

but in your heart; you may press it to your soul and call it all in an, you may feed on it, and live on it. And if you live for it, and suffer for it, and die for it, it is worthy of all.

I must let you go now; but my spirit feels as if it would linger here. Strange it should be that many men should not care for their own souls, when your minister this day cares for you. What matters it to me whether men be lost or saved? Shall I be any the better for your salvation? Assuredly there is little gain there. And yet I feel more for you, many of you, than you feel for yourselves. Oh, strange hardening of the heart, that a man should not care for his men salvation, that he should, without a thought, reject the most precious truth. Stay, sinner stay, ere thou turnest from thine own mercy--stay, once more--perhaps this shall be thy last warning, or worse, it may be the last warning thou shalt ever feel. Thou feelest it now. Oh I beseech thee quench not the Spirit. Go not forth from this place to talk with idle gossip on thy way home. Go not forth to forget what manner of man thou art. But hasten to thy home; seek thy chamber; shut to the door; fall on thy face by thy bedside; confess thy sin; cry unto Jesus, tell him thou art a wretch undone without his sovereign grace, tell him thou has heard this morning that he came to save sinners, and that the thought of such a love as that hath made thee lay down the weapons of thy rebellion, and that thou art desirous to be his. There on thy face plead with him, and say unto him, "Lord save me, or I perish."

The Lord bless you all for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 20

The Great Revival

A Sermon

(No. 185)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 28th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our
God."--Isaiah 52:10.

WHEN THE HEROES of old prepared for the fight they put on their armour; but when God prepares for battle he makes bare his arm. Man has to look two ways--to his own defence, as well as to the offence of his enemy; God hath but one direction in which to cast his eye--the overthrow of his foeman, and he disregards all measures of defence, and scorns all armour. He makes bare his arm in the sight of all the people. When men would do their work in earnest, too, they sometimes strip themselves, like that warrior of old, who, when he went to battle with the Turks, would never fight them except with the bare arm. "Such things as they," said he, "I need not fear; they have more reason to fear my bare arm than I their scimitar." Men feel that they are prepared for a work when they have cast away their cumbrous garments. And so the prophet represents the Lord as laying aside for awhile the garments of his dignity, and making bare his arm, that he may do his work in earnest, and accomplish his purpose for the establishment of his church.

Now, leaving the figure, which is a very great one, I would remind you that its meaning is fully carried out, whenever God is pleased to send a great revival of religion. My heart is glad within me this day, for I

am the bearer of good tidings. My soul has been made exceedingly full of happiness, by the tidings of a great revival of religion throughout the United States. Some hundred years, or more, ago, it pleased the Lord to send one of the most marvellous religious awakenings that was ever known; the whole of the United States seemed shaken from end to end with enthusiasm for hearing the Word of God; and now, after the lapse of a century, the like has occurred again. The monetary pressure has at length departed; but it has left behind it the wreck of many mighty fortunes. Many men, who were once princes, have now become beggars, and in America. more than in England, men have learned the instability of all human things. The minds of men, thus weaned from the earth by terrible and unexpected panic, seem prepared to receive tidings from a better land, and to turn their exertions in a heavenly direction. You will be told by any one--who is conversant with the present state of America, that wherever you go there are the most remarkable signs that religion is progressing with majestic strides. The great revival, as it is now called, has become the common market talk of merchants; it is the theme of every newspaper; even the secular press remark it, for it has become so astonishing that all ranks and classes of men seem to have been affected by it. Apparently without any cause whatever, fear has taken hold of the hearts of men; a thrill seems to be shot through every breast at once; and it is affirmed by men of good repute, that there are, at this time, towns in New England where you could not, even if you searched, find one solitary unconverted person. So marvellous--I had almost said, so miraculous--has been the sudden and instantaneous spread of religion throughout the great empire, that it is scarcely possible for us to believe the half of it, even though it should be told us. Now, as you are aware, I have at all times been peculiarly jealous and suspicious

of revivals. Whenever I see a man who is called a revivalist, I always set him down for a cipher. I would scorn the taking of such a title as that to myself. If God pleases to make use of a man for the promoting of a revival, well and good; but for any man to assume the title and office of a revivalist, and go about the country, believing that wherever he goes he is the vessel of mercy appointed to convey a revival of religion, is, I think, an assumption far too arrogant for any man who has the slightest degree of modesty. And again, there are a large number of revivals, which occur every now and then in our towns, and sometimes in our city, which I believe to be spurious and worthless. I have heard of the people crowding in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening, to hear some noted revivalist, and under his preaching some have screamed, have shrieked, have fallen down on the floor, have rolled themselves in convulsions, and afterwards, when he has set a form for penitents, employing one or two decoy ducks to run out from the rest and make a confession of sin, hundreds have come forward, impressed by that one sermon, and declared that they were, there and then, turned from the error of their ways; and it was only last week I saw a record of a certain place, in our own country, giving an account, that on such a day, under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. So-and-so, seventeen persons were thoroughly sanctified, twenty-eight were convinced of sin, and twenty-nine received the blessing of justification. Then comes the next day, so many more; the following day, so many more; and afterwards they are all cast up together, making a grand total of some hundreds, who have been blessed during three services, under the ministry of Mr. So-and-so. All that I call farce! There may be something very good in it; but the outside looks to me to be so rotten, that I should scarcely trust myself to think that the good within comes to any very great amount. When people go to work to

calculate so exactly by arithmetic, it always strikes me they have mistaken what they are at. We may easily say that so many were added to the church on a certain occasion, but to take a separate census of the convinced, the justified, and the sanctified, is absurd. You will, therefore, be surprised at finding me speaking of revival; but you will, perhaps, not be quite so surprised when I endeavour to explain what I mean by an earnest and intense desire, which I feel in my heart, that God would be pleased to send throughout this country a revival like that which has just commenced in America, and which, we trust, will long continue there.

I should endeavour to mark, in the first place, the cause of every revival of true religion; secondly,the consequences of such revival; then, thirdly, I shall give a caution or two, that we make not mistakes in this matter, and conceive that to be God's work which is only man's; and then I shall conclude by making an exhortation to all my brethren in the faith of Christ, to labour and pray for a revival of religion in the midst of our churches.

I. First, then, THE CAUSE: OF A TRUE REVIVAL. The mere worldly man does not understand a revival; he cannot make it out. Why is it, that a sudden fit of godliness, as he would call it, a kind of sacred epidemic, should seize upon a mass of people all at once? What can be the cause of it? It frequently occurs in the absence of all great evangelists; it cannot be traced to any particular means. There have been no special agencies used in order to bring it about--no machinery supplied, no societies established; and yet it has come, just like a heavenly hurricane, sweeping everything before it. It has rushed across the land, and of it men have said, "The wind bloweth, where it listeth; we hear the sound thereof, but we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." What is then, the cause? Our answer is, If a revival

be true and real, it is caused by the Holy Spirit, and by him alone. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost, and preached that memorable sermon by which three thousand persons were converted, can we attribute the remarkable success of his ministry to anything else but the ministry of the Holy Spirit? I read the notes of Peter's discourse; it was certainly very simple; it was a plain narration of facts; it was certainly very bold, very cutting, and pointed, and personal, for he did not blush to tell them that they had put to death the Lord of life and glory, and were guilty of his blood; but on the mere surface of the thing, I should be apt to say that I had read many a sermon far more likely to be effective than Peter's; and I believe there have been many preachers who have lived, whose sermons when read would have been far more notable and far more regarded, at least by the critic, than the sermon of Peter. It seems to have been exceedingly simple and suitable, and extremely earnest, but none of these things are so eminently remarkable as to be the cause of such extraordinary success.

What, then, was the reason? And we reply, once more, the same word which the Holy Spirit blesses to the conversion of one, he might, if he pleased, bless to the conversion of a thousand: and I am persuaded that the meanest preacher in Christendom might come into this pulpit this morning, and preach the most simple sermon, in the most uneducated style, and the Holy Spirit, if so he willed it, might bless that sermon to the conversion of every man, woman, and child, within this place: for his arm is not shortened, his power is not straitened, and as long as he is Omnipotent, it is ours to believe that he can do whatsoever seemeth him good. Do not imagine, when you hear of a sermon being made useful, that it was the sermon itself that did the work. Conceive not, because a certain preacher may have been greatly blessed in the conversion of souls, that there is anything in the preacher. God forbid

that any preacher should arrogate such a thing to himself. Any other preacher, blessed in the same manner, would be as useful, and any other sermon, provided it be truthful and earnest, might be as much blessed as that particular sermon which has become notable by reason of the multitudes who by it have been brought to Christ. The Spirit of God, when he pleaseth, blows upon the sons of men. He finds a people hard and careless; he casts a desire into their minds--he sows it broadcast in their spirits--a thought towards the house of the Lord, and straightway, they know not why, they flock in multitudes to hear the Word preached. He casts the seed, the same seed, into the preacher's mind, and he knows not how, but he feels more earnest than he did before. When he goes to his pulpit, he goes to it as to a solemn sacrifice, and there he preaches, believing that great things will be the effect of his ministry. The time of prayer cometh round; Christians are found meeting together in large numbers; they cannot tell what it is that influences them, but they feel they must go up to the house of the Lord to pray. There are earnest prayers lifted up; there are earnest sermons preached, and there are earnest hearers. Then God the Almighty One is pleased to, soften hard hearts, and subdue the stout-hearted, and bring them to know the truth. The only real cause is, his Spirit working in the minds of men.

But while this is the only actual cause, yet there are instrumental causes; and the main instrumental cause of a great revival must be the bold, faithful, fearless preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus. Why, brethren, we want every now and then a reformation. One reformation will never serve the church; she need's continually to be wound up, and set a-going afresh; for her works run down, and she does not act as she used to do. The bold, bald doctrines that Luther brought out, began to be a little modified, until layer after layer was deposited upon them,

and at last the old rocky truth was covered up, and there grew upon the superficial subsoil an abundance of green and flowery errors, that looked fair and beautiful, but were in no way whatever related to the truth, except as they were the products of its decay. Then there came bold men who brought the truth out again, and said, "Clear away this rubbish; let the blast light upon these deceitful beauties; we want them not; bring out the old truth once more!" And it came out. But the tendency of the church perpetually is, to be covering up its own naked simplicity, forgetting that the truth is never so beautiful as when it stands in its own unadorned, God-given glory. And now, at this time, we want to have the old truths restored to their places. The subtleties and the refinements of the preacher must be laid aside. We must give up the grand distinctions of the school-men, and all the lettered technicalities of men who have studied theology as a system, but have not felt the power of it in their hearts; and when the good old truth is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal from off the altar, this shall be the instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land.

But added to this, there must be the earnest prayers of the church. All in vain the most indefatigable ministry, unless the church waters the seed sown, with her abundant tears. Every revival has been commenced and attended by a large amount of prayer. In the city of New York at the present moment, there is not, I believe, one single hour of the day, wherein Christians are not gathered together for prayer. One church opens its doors from five o'clock till six, for prayer; another church opens from six to seven, and summons its praying men to offer the sacrifice of supplication. Six o'clock is past, and men are gone to their labour. Another class find it then convenient--such as those,

perhaps, who go to business at eight or nine-and from seven to eight there is another prayer meeting. From eight to nine there is another, in another part of the city, and what is most marvellous, at high noon, from twelve to one, in the midst of the city of New York, there is held a prayer meeting in a large room, which is crammed to the doors every day, with hundreds standing outside. This prayer meeting is made up of merchants of the city, who can spare a quarter of an hour to go in and say a word of prayer, and then leave again; and then a fresh company come in to fill up the ranks, so that it is supposed that many hundreds assemble in that one place for prayer during the appointed hour. This is the explanation of the revival. If this were done in London-if we for once would outvie old Rome, who kept her monks in her sanctuaries, always at prayer, both by night and by day,--if we together could keep up one golden chain of prayer, link after link of holy brotherhood being joined together in supplication, then might we expect an abundant outpouring of the Divine Spirit from the Lord our God. The Holy Spirit, as the actual agent--the Word preached, and the prayers of the people, as the instruments--and we have thus explained the cause of a true revival of religion.

II. But now what are THE CONSEQUENCES OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION? Why, the consequences are everything that our hearts could desire for the church's good. When the revival of religion comes into a nation, the minister begins to be warmed. It is said that in America the most sleepy preachers have begun to wake up; they have warmed themselves at the general fire, and men who could not preach without notes, and could not preach with them to any purpose at all, have found it in their hearts to speak right out, and speak with all their might to the people. When there comes a revival, the minister all of a sudden finds that the usual forms and conventionalities of the pulpit are not

exactly suitable to the times. He breaks through one hedge; then he finds himself in an awkward position, and he has to break through another. He finds himself perhaps on a Sunday morning, though a Doctor of Divinity, actually telling an anecdote--lowering the dignity of the pulpit by actually using a simile or metaphor--sometimes perhaps accidentally making his people smile, and what is also a great sin in these solid theologians, now and then dropping a tear. He does not exactly know how it is, but the people catch up his words. "I must have something good for them," he says. He just burns that old lot of sermons; or he puts them under the bed, and gets some new ones, or gets none at all, but just gets his text, and begins to cry, "Men and brethren, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The old deacons say, "What is the matter with our minister?" The old ladies, who have heard him for many years, and slept in the front of the gallery so regularly, begin to rouse, and say, "I wonder what has happened to him; how can it be?" Why, he preaches like a man on fire. The tear runs over at his eye; his soul is full of love for souls." They cannot make it out; they have often said he was dull and dreary and drowsy. How is it all this is changed? Why, it is the revival. The revival has touched the minister; the sun, shining so brightly, has melted some of the snow on the mountain-top, and it is running down in fertilizing streams, to bless the valleys; and the people down below are refreshed by the ministrations of the man of God who has awakened himself up from his sleep, and finds himself, like another Elijah, made strong for forty days of labour. Well, then, directly after that the revival begins to touch the people at large. The congregation was once numbered by the empty seats, rather than by the full ones. But on a sudden--the minister does not understand it--he finds the people coming to hear him. He never was popular, never hoped to be. All at once he

wakes up and finds himself famous, so far as a large congregation can make him so. There are the people, and how they listen! They are all awake, all in earnest; they lean their heads forward, they put their hands to their ears. His voice is feeble; they try to help him; they are doing anything so that they may hear the Word of Life. And then the members of the church open their eyes and see the chapel full, and they say, "How has this come about? We ought to pray." A prayer-meeting is summoned. There had been five or six in the vestry: now there are five or six hundred, and they turn into the chapel. And Oh! how they pray! That old stager, who used to pray for twenty minutes, finds it now convenient to confine himself to five; and that good old man, who always used to repeat the same form of prayer when he stood up, and talked about the horse that rushed into the battle, and the oil from vessel to vessel, and all that, leaves all these things at home, and just prays, "O Lord, save sinners, for Jesus Christ's sake." And there are sobs and groans heard in the prayer meetings. It is evident that not one, but all, are praying; the whole mass seems moved to supplication. How is this again? Why, it Is just the effect of the revival, for when the revival truly comes, the minister and the congregation and the church will receive good by it.

But it does not end here. The members of the church grow more solemn, more serious. Family duties are better attended to; the home circle is brought under better culture. Those who could not spare time for family prayer, find they can do so now; those who had no opportunity for teaching their children, now dare not go a day without doing it; for they hear that there are children converted in the Sunday school. There are twice as many in the Sunday school now as there used to be; and, what is wonderful, the little children meet together to pray; their little hearts are touched, and many of them show signs of a work of

grace begun; and fathers and mothers think they must try what they can do for their families: if God is blessing little children, why should he not bless theirs?

And then, when you see the members of the church going up to the house of God, you mark with what a steady and sober air they go. Perhaps they talk on the way, but they talk of Jesus; and if they whisper together at the gates of the sanctuary, it is no longer idle gossip; it is no remark about, "how do you like the preacher? What did you think of him? Did you notice So-and-so?" Oh, no! "I pray the Lord that he might bless the word of his servant, that he might send an unction from on high, that the dying flame may be kindled, and that where there is life, it may be promoted and strengthened, and receive fresh vigour." This is their whole conversation.

And then comes the great result. There is an inquirers' meeting held: the good brother who presides over it is astonished; he never saw so many coming in his life before. "Why," says he, "there is a hundred, at least, come to confess what the Lord has done for their souls! Here are fifty come all at once to say that under such a sermon they were brought to the knowledge of the truth. Who hath begotten me these? How hath it come about? How can it be? Is not the Lord a great God that hath wrought such a work as this?" And then the converts who are thus brought into the church, if the revival continues, are very earnest ones. You never saw such a people. The outsiders call them fanatics. It is a blessed fanaticism. Others say, they are nothing but enthusiasts. It is a heavenly enthusiasm. Everything that is done is done with such spirit. If they sing, it is like the crashing thunder; if they pray, it is like the swift, sharp flash of lightning, lighting up the darkness of the cold hearted, and making them for a moment feel that there is something in prayer. When the minister preaches, he preaches like a

Boanerges, and when the church is gathered together, it is with a hearty good will. When they give, they give with enlarged liberality; when they visit the sick, they do it with gentleness, meekness, and love. Everything is done with a single eye to God's glory; not of men, but by the power of God. Oh! that we might see such a revival as this! But, blessed be God, it does not end here. The revival of the church then touches the rest of society. Men, who do not come forward and profess religion, are more punctual in attending the means of grace. Men that used to swear, give it up; they find it is not suitable for the times. Men that profaned the Sabbath, and that despised God, find it will not do; they give it all up. Times get changed; morality prevails; the lower ranks are affected. They buy a sermon where they used to buy some penny tract of nonsense. The higher orders are also touched; they too are brought to hear the word. Her ladyship, in her carriage, who never would have thought of going to so mean a place as a conventicle, does not now care where she goes so long as she is blessed. She wants to hear the truth; and a drayman pulls his horses up by the side of her ladyship's pair of grays, and they both go in and bend together before the throne of sovereign grace. All classes are affected. Even the senate feels it; the statesman himself is surprised at it, and wonders what all these things mean. Even the monarch on the throne feels she has become the monarch of a people better than she knew before, and that God is doing something in her realms past all her thought--that a great King is swaying a better sceptre and exerting a better influence than even her excellent example. Nor does it even end there. Heaven is filled. One by one the converts die, and heaven gets fuller; the harps of heaven are louder, the songs of angels are inspired with new melody, for they rejoice to see the sons of men prostrate before the throne. The universe is made glad: it is God's own

summer; it is the universal spring. The time of the singing of birds is come; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Oh! that God might send us such a revival of religion as this!

I thank God, that we, as a people, have had great cause to thank him that we had great measure of revival of this kind, but nothing compared with what we desire. I have heard of revivals, where twenties, and thirties, and forties, and fifties, were gathered in; but, tell it to the honour of our God, there is never a month passes, but our baptismal pool is opened, and never a communion Sabbath, but we receive many into the fold of the Lord. As many as three hundred in one year have we added to the church, and still the cry is, "They come! they come!" and were but our new sanctuary built, I am persuaded, that in six months from its erection, instead of having twelve hundred members, I should be the pastor of at least two thousand. For I believe there are many of you who attend this hall in the morning, who find it quite impossible to crowd into the chapel in the evening, and are only waiting and anxious, that you may tell to me and to the brethren, what God has done for your souls. This I know, the Lord hath been very gracious to us, and to him be the honour of it. But we want more. Our souls are greedy--covetous for God. Oh! that we might be all converted!

"We long to see the churches full,
That all the chosen race,
May with one voice, and heart, and tongue,
Sing his redeeming grace."

And we have to thank God, too, that it has not ended there; for we had last Sabbath evening, Exeter Hall full, Westminster Abbey full, and this place full too; and though we may not altogether agree in sentiment with all that preach, yet God bless them all! So long as Christ is preached, I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; and I would to

God that every large building in London were crowded too, and that every man who preached the Word were followed by tens of thousands, who would hear the truth. May that day soon come! and there is one heart which will rejoice in such a day more than any of you--a heart that shall always beat the highest when it sees God glorified, though our own honour should decrease.

III. Now we shall have to turn to the third point, which was A CAUTION. When Christmas Evans preached in Wales, during a time of revival, he used to make the people dance; the congregation were so excited under his ministry that they positively danced. Now I do not believe that dancing was the work of the Spirit. Their being stirred in their hearts might be the Holy Spirit's work, but the Holy Spirit does not care to make people dance under sermons; no good comes of it. Now and then among our Methodist friends there is a great break out, and we hear of a young woman in the middle of a sermon getting on the top of a form and turning round and round in ecstacy, till she falls down in a fainting fit, and they cry, "Glory be to God." Now we do not believe that is the work of the Spirit; we believe it is ridiculous nonsense, and nothing more. In the old revivals in America a hundred years ago, commonly called "the great awakening," there were many strange things, such as continual shrieks and screams, and knockings, and twitchings, under the services. We cannot call that the work of the Spirit. Even the great Whitfield's revival at Cambuslang, one of the greatest and most remarkable revivals that were ever known, was attended by some things that we cannot but regard as superstitious wonders. People were so excited, that they did not know what they did. Now, if in any revival you see any of these strange contortions of the body, always distinguish between things that differ. The Holy Spirit's work is with the mind, not with the body in that way. It is not the will of God that

such things should disgrace the proceedings. I believe that such things are the result of Satanic malice. The devil sees that there is a great deal of good doing; "Now," says he, "I'll spoil it all. I'll put my hoof in there, and do a world of mischief. There are souls being converted; I will let them get so excited that they will do ludicrous things, and then it will all be brought into contempt." Now, if you see any of these strange things arising look out. There is that old Apollyon busy, trying to mar the work. Put such vagaries down as soon as you can, for where the Spirit works, he never works against his own precept, and his precept is, "Let all things be done decently and in order." It is neither decent nor orderly for people to dance under the sermon, nor howl, nor scream, while the gospel is being preached to them, and therefore it is not the Spirit's work at all, but mere human excitement.

And again, remember that you must always distinguish between man and men in the work of revival. While, during a revival of religion, a very large number of people will be really converted, there will be a very considerable portion who will be merely excited with animal excitement, and whose conversion will not be genuine. Always expect that, and do not be surprised if you see it. It is but a law of the mind that men should imitate one another, and it seems but reasonable, that when one person is truly converted, there should be a kind of desire to imitate it in another, who yet is not a possessor of true and sovereign grace. Be not discouraged, then, if you should meet with this in the midst of a revival. It is no proof that it is not a true revival; it is only a proof that it is not true in that particular case.

I must say, once more, that if God should send us a great revival of religion, it will be our duty not to relax the bonds of discipline. Some churches, when they increase very largely, are apt to take people

into their number by wholesale, without due and proper examination. We ought to be just as strict in the paroxysms of a revival as in the cooler times of a gradual increase, and if the Lord sends his Spirit like a hurricane, it is ours to deal with skill with the sails, lest the hurricane should wreck us by driving us upon some fell rock that may do us serious injury. Take care, ye that are officers in the church, when ye see the people stirred up, that ye exercise still a holy caution, lest the church become lowered in its standard of piety by the admission of persons not truly saved.

IV. With these words of caution, I shall now gather up my strength, and with all my might labour to stir you up to seek of God a great revival of religion throughout the length and breadth of this land.

Men, brethren and fathers, the Lord God hath sent us a blessing. One blessing is the earnest of many. Drops precede the April showers. The mercies which he has already bestowed upon us are but the forerunners and the preludes of something greater and better yet to come. He has given us the former, let us seek of him the latter rain, that his grace may be multiplied among us, and his glory may be increased. There are some of you to whom I address myself this morning who stand in the way of any revival of religion. I would affectionately admonish you, and beseech you, not to impede the Lord's own work. There be some of you, perhaps, here present to-day who are not consistent in your living. And yet you are professors of religion; you take the sacramental cup into your hand and drink its sacred wine, but still you live as worldlings live, and are as carnal and as covetous as they. Oh, my brother, you are a serious drawback to the church's increase. God will never bless an unholy people, and in proportion to our unholiness, he will withhold the blessing from us. Tell me of a church that is inconsistent, you shall tell me of a church that is unblest. God will first sweep the

house before be will come to dwell in it. He will have his church pure before he will bless it with all the blessings of his grace. Remember that, ye inconsistent ones, and turn unto God, and ask to be rendered holy. There are others of you that are so cold-hearted, that you stand in the way of all progress. You are a skid upon the wheels of the church. It cannot move for you. If we would be earnest, you put your cold band on everything that is bold and daring. You are not prudent and zealous; if you were so, we would bless God for giving you that prudence, which is a jewel for which we ought ever to thank God, if we have a prudent man among us. But there are some of you to whom I allude, who are prudent, but you are cold. You have no earnestness, you do not labour for Christ, you do not serve him with all your strength. And there are others of you who are imprudent enough to push others on, but never go forward yourselves. O ye Laodiceans, ye that are neither hot nor cold, remember what the Lord hath said of you--"So then, because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." And so will he do with you. Take heed, take heed, you are not only hurting yourselves, but you are injuring the church. And then there are others of you who are such sticklers for order, so given to everything that has been, that you do not care for any revival, for fear we should hurt you. You would not have the church repaired, lest we should touch one piece of the venerable moss that coats it. You would not cleanse your own garment, because there is ancient dirt upon it. You think that because a thing is ancient, therefore it must be venerable. You are lovers of the antique. You would not have a road mended, because your grandfather drove his waggon along the rut that is there. "Let it always be there," you say; "Let it always be knee-deep." Did not your grandfather go through it when it was knee deep with mud, and why should not you do the same? It was good enough for him, and it

is good enough for you. You always have taken an easy seat in the chapel. You never saw a revival; you do not want to see it. You believe it is all nonsense, and that it is not to be desired. You look back; you find no precedent for it. Doctor So-and-so did not talk about it. Your venerable minister who is dead did not talk so, you say; therefore it is not needed. We need not tell you it is scriptural; that you do not care for. It is not orderly, you say. We need not tell you the thing is right; you care more about the thing being ancient than being good. Ah, you will have to get out of the way now, it isn't any good; you may try to stop us, but we will run over you if you do not get out of the way. With a little warning we shall have to run over your prejudices and incur your anger. But your prejudices must not, cannot, restrain us. The chain may be never so rusty with age, and ever so stamped with authority, the prisoner is always happy to break it, and however your fetters may shackle us, we will dash them in pieces if they stand in the way of the progress of the kingdom of Christ.

Having thus spoken to those who hinder, I want to speak to you who love Jesus with all your hearts, and want to promote it. Dear friends, I beseech you remember that men are dying around you by thousands. Will you let your eye follow them into the world of shades? Myriads of them die without God, without Christ, without hope. My brother, does not their fearful fate awake your sympathy. You believe, from Scriptural warrant, that those who die without faith go to that place where "their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched." Believing this, is not your soul stirred within you in pity for their fate? Look around you to-day. You see a vast host gathered together, professedly for the service of God. You know also how many there are here who fear him not, but are strangers to themselves and strangers to the cross. What! Do you know yourself what a solemn thing it is to be under the curse, and

will you not pray and labour for those around you that are under the curse to-day? Remember your Master's cross. He died for sinners; will not you weep for them?

"Did Christ o'er sinners weep;
And shall your cheek be dry?"

Did he give his whole life for them, and will not you stir up your life to wrestle with God, that his purposes may be accomplished on their behalf? You have unconverted children--do you not want them saved? You have brothers, husbands, wives, fathers, that are this day in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity; do you not want a revival, even if it were only for their sakes? Behold, how much of robbery, of murder, of crime, stains this poor land. Do you not want a revival of religion, if it were merely for quenching the flames of crime? See how God's name every day is blasphemed. Mark how, this day, trades are carried on, as if it were man's day, and not God's. Mark how multitudes are going the downward course, merry on their way to destruction. Do you not feel for them? Are your hearts hard and stolid? Has your soul become steeled? Has it become frozen like an iceberg? O sun of righteousness arise, and melt the icy heart, and make us all feel how fearful it is for immortal souls to perish; for men to be hurried into eternity without God, and without hope. Oh, will you not now, from this time forth, begin to pray that God may send forth his Word and save them, that his own name may be glorified?

As for you that fear not God, see how much ado we are making about you. Your souls are worth more than you think for. O that ye would believe in Christ, to the salvation of your souls!

Chapter 21

The Form and Spirit of Religion

A Sermon

(No. 186)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 4, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."--1 Samuel 4:3.

THESE MEN made a great mistake: what they wanted was the Lord in their midst; whereas they imagined that the symbol of God's presence, the ark of the covenant, would be amply sufficient to bestow upon them the assistance which they required in the day of battle. As is man, such must his religion be. Now, man is a compound being. To speak correctly, man is a spiritual being: he hath within him a soul, a substance far beyond the bounds of matter. But man is also made up of a body as well as a soul. He is not pure spirit; his spirit is incarnate in flesh and blood. Now, such is our religion. The religion of God is, as to its vitality, purely spiritual--always so; but since man is made of flesh as well as of spirit, it seemed necessary that his religion should have something of the outward, external, and material, in which to embody the spiritual, or else man would not have been able to lay hold upon it. This was especially the case under the old dispensation. The religion of the Jew is really a heavenly and spiritual thing; a thing of thought, a thing that concerns the mind and spirit; but the Jew was untaught; he was but a babe, unable to understand spiritual things unless he saw them pictured out to him, or, (to repeat what I have just

said) unless he saw them embodied in some outward type and symbol: and therefore God was pleased to give the Jew a great number of ceremonies, which were to his religion what the body is to man's soul. The Jewish religion taught the doctrine of the atonement, but the Jew could not understand it, and therefore God gave him a lamb to be slain every morning and every evening, and he gave him a goat over which the sins of the people were to be confessed, and which was to be driven into the depths of the wilderness, to show the great doctrine of a substitute and atonement through him. The Jewish religion teaches, as one of its prominent doctrines, the unity of the Godhead; but the Jew was ever apt to forget that there was but one God; and God, to teach him that, would have but one temple, and but one altar upon which the sacrifice might rightly be offered. So that the idea of the one God was (as I have already said) made incarnate in the fact that there was but one temple, but one altar, and but one great high priest. And mark, this is true of our religion--Christianity: not true to so full an extent as of Judaism--for the religion of the Jew had a gross and heavy body--but our religion has a body transparent, and having but little of materialism in it. If you ask me what I would call the materialism of our religion, the embodiment of the spiritual part of that in which we trust and hope, I would point, first of all, to the two ordinances of the Lord, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I would point you next to the services of God's house, to the Sabbath day, to the outward ritual of our worship: I would point you to our solemn song, to our sacred service of prayer; and I would point you also--and I think I am right in so doing--to the form of sound words, which we ever desire to hold fast and firm, as containing that creed which it is necessary for men to believe if they would hold the truth as it is in Jesus. Our religion, then, has an outward form even to this day; for the Apostle

Paul, when he spoke of professing Christians, spoke of some who had "a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof." So that it is still true, though I confess not to the same extent as it was in the days of Moses, that religion must have a body, that the spiritual thing may come out palpably before our vision, and that we may see it.

Now, three points this morning inferred from our narrative. The first point is this--that the outward form of religion is to be carefully and reverently observed. But my second and most important head is this--you will notice that the very men who have the least of the spirit of religion are the most superstitiously observant of the form of it; just as you find the people here, who did not care for God, had a very superstitious regard for that chest called the ark of the covenant. And then, my third point will be, that those who trust in the outward form of religion, apart from the spirit of it, are fearfully deceived, and the result of their deception must be of the most fatal character. The first point I feel is necessary, lest I should lead any to despise the form of religion, while endeavoring to insist upon the absolute necessity of attending in the first place to the spirit of it.

I. In the first place then, THE FORM OF RELIGION IS TO BE REVERENTLY OBSERVED. This ark of the covenant was with the Jew the most sacred instrument of his religion. There were many other things which he held holy: but this ark always stood in the most holy place, and it was rendered doubly sacred, because, between the outstretched wings of those cherubic figures that rested upon the mercy-seat, there was usually to be seen a bright light, called the Shekinah, which manifested that Jehovah, the God of Israel, who dwelt between the cherubims, was there. And, indeed, they had great reason in the days of Samuel to reverence this ark, for you will recollect that when Moses went to war with the Midianites, a great slaughter of that people was

occasioned by the fact that Eleazar, the high priest, with a silver trumpet, stood in the forefront of the battle, bearing in his hands the holy instruments of the law--that is , the ark; and it was by the presence of this ark that the victory was achieved. It was by this ark, too, that the river Jordan was dried up. When the tribes came to it, there was no ford, but the priests put the staves of the ark upon their shoulders, and they marched with solemn pace down to the waters' edge, and before the presence of the ark the waters receded, so that the people went through dry-shod. And when then had landed in the promised country, you remember it was by this ark that the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground; for the priests, blowing the trumpets and carrying the ark, went before, when they compassed the city seven days, and at last, by the power of the ark, or rather by the power of that God who dwelt within the ark, the walls of Jericho fell flat down, and every man went straight up to the slaughter. These people, therefore, thought if they could once get the ark, it would be all right, and they would be sure to triumph; and, while I shall have in the second head, to insist upon it that they were wrong in superstitiously imputing strength to the poor chest, yet the ark was to be reverently observed, for it was the outward symbol of a high spiritual truth, and it was never to be treated with any indignity.

It is quite certain, in the first place, that the form of religion must never be altered. You remember that this ark was made by Moses, according to the pattern that God had given him in the mount. Now, the outward forms of our religion, if they be correct, are made by God. His two great ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sent for us from on high. I dare not alter either of them. I should think it is a high sin and treason against heaven, if, believing that baptism signifieth immersion, and immersion only, I should pretend to

administer it by sprinkling; or, believing that baptism appertaineth to believers only, I should consider myself a criminal in the sight of God if I should give it to any but those who believe. Even so with the Lord's Supper. Believing that it consists of bread and wine, I hold it to be highly blasphemous in the Church of Rome to withhold the cup from the people; and knowing that this ordinance was intended for the Lord's people only, I consider it an act of high treason against the Majesty of Heaven, when any are admitted to the Lord's Supper who have not made a profession of their faith and of their repentance, and who do not declare themselves to be the true children of God. And with regard to the doctrines of the Gospel, no alteration must be allowed here. I know that forms of doctrine are very little, compared with the spirit and the heart; but still we must not alter even the form of it. It has often been said, that we ought not to have a strict religion. I believe that is just the very thing we ought to have: a religion that is of such a cast that it does not know how to alter; a religion that comes from the Infallible Head of the Church, that is, Jesus Christ our Lord, and which to the latest time is to be like the Law and the Prophets--not on jot or tittle of it must fail while the earth endureth. The men who think that we may alter this and alter that, and still maintain the spirit of religion, have some truth on their side; but let them remember, that while the spirit of religion may be maintained in the midst of many errors, yet every error tends to weaken our spirituality. And, beside that, have no right to consider the effect upon ourselves merely. Whatever form of religion God has ordained, it is ours to practise without the slightest alteration; and to alter any one of the ordinances of God is an act of dire profanation; however reasonable that alteration may seem to be, it is treason against high heaven, and is not to be permitted in the Church

of Christ. "Hold fast the form of sound words," said Paul, "which thou hast heard of me;" or, as I remember to have said before, while the form of religion is not power, yet unless the form be carefully observed, it is not easy to maintain the power. It is like an egg-shell enclosing the egg; there is no life in the shell, but you must take care you do not crack it, or else you may destroy the life within. The ordinances and doctrines of our faith are only the shell of religion--they are not the life; but we must take care that we do not hurt so much as the outward shell, for if we do, we may endanger the life within; though that may manage to live, it must be weakened by any injury done to the outward form thereof.

And as the form must not be altered, so it must not be despised. These Philistines despised the ark. They took it and set it in their idol temple, and the result was that their idol god, Dagon, was broken in pieces. They then sent it through their cities, and they were smitten with emerods. And then, being afraid to put it within walls, they set it in the open country, and they were invaded with mice, so that everything was eaten up. God would not have any dishonour put even upon the outward form of his religion; he would have men reverently take care that they did no dishonour even to his ark; it might be nothing but gopher-wood, but because, between the wings of those cherubim God had dwelt, the ark was to be held sacred, and God would not have it dishonoured. Take care, ye that despise God, lest ye despise his outward ordinances. To laugh at the Sabbath, to despise the ordinances of God's House, to neglect the means of grace, to call the outward form of religion a vain thing--all this is highly offensive in the sight of God. He will have us remember that while the form is not the life, yet the form is to be respected for the sake of the life which it contains; the body is to be venerated for the sake of the inward soul; and as I

would have no man maim my body, even though in maiming it he might not be able to wound my soul, so God would have no man maim the outward parts of religion, although it is true no man can touch the real vitality of it.

Yet one more remark, and that a very solemn one. As the outward form is neither to be altered nor despised, so neither is it to be intruded upon by unworthy persons. You remember that this ark of the covenant, after it was brought back from the land of the Philistines, was set in the field of Joshua the Bethshemite, and the Bethshemites took off the lid, and looked into the ark of the Lord, and, for this, the Lord "smote of that people fifty-thousand and three-score and ten men; and the people lamented because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter." These Bethshemites had no intention whatever of dishonouring the ark. They had a vain curiosity to look within, and the sight of those marvellous tables of stone struck them with death; for the law, when it is not covered by the mercy-seat, is death to any man, and it was death to them. Now, you will easily remember how very solemn a penalty is attached to any man's intruding into the outward form of religion when he is not called to do so. Let me quote this awful passage: "He" (speaking of the Lord's Supper) "that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." How frightful an announcement is that! A curse is pronounced upon the man who dares to touch even the outward form of religion, unless he hath the power of it; and we know there is nothing which excites God's holy anger more swiftly than a man's attending to the ordinances of his house and making an outward profession of being in Christ, while he has no part nor lot in the matter. Oh, take heed. The outward ordinances of Christ are not the vitality of religion, but nevertheless they are so solemnly important,

that we must neither alter nor despise them, nor rush into them without being invited; for if we do so, the curse of God must light upon us for having despised the holy thing of the Most High God of Israel.

And now, before I close this first head, let me remark, that the outward things of God are to be diligently cared for and loved. We have in our reading had two instances of that. There was holy Eli: he knew very well that the ark of God was not God; he understood that it was but the outward sign of the inward and spiritual; yet when the ark of God was taken, mark the poor old man's trouble: his heart broke, and then he fell down and broke his neck. Then there was that nameless woman. Her husband was the priest who attended to this very ark, but he was a man whose character I cannot describe better than by saying that he was a son of Belial. It is hard for a woman to believe religion if she has a minister for a husband who is profane and wicked. This woman's husband not only committed wrongs against God, but against her. He was a filthy and unclean person, who polluted the very courts of the Lord's house with his fornications; and yet she had such faith in her God, that she knew how to love the religion which her husband, by his awful character, brought into disrepute. She knew how to distinguish between the man and his duty, between the priest and the priesthood, between the officer and the office. I do wonder at her. I am sure there is nothing that staggers our faith like seeing a minister walking inconsistently; but this man was the chief minister, and her own husband, living in known sin, and a sin which came home to her, because he sinned against her. I am sure it was wonderful that she believed at all; but so strong was her faith and attachment to her religion, that though, like Eli, she knew that the ark was not God, that the form was not the inward thing, yet the form itself was so precious to her, that the pangs of child-birth were hurried on prematurely and in the midst

of her pain, this still was uppermost--that the ark of the Lord was taken. It was in vain to cheer her with the news that her child was born; it was an idle tale to her, and she rejoiced not in it. She lay in a swoon; but at last, opening her eyes, and remembering that her husband was dead, and that therefore, according to Jewish usage, it was her duty to give the child a name, she faintly opened her lips before she died, and said, "Call his name Inglorious (Ichabod) for the glory is departed;" and then she added this reason for it: she did not say, "because my husband is dead," though she loved him; she did not say, "because my father-in-law, Eli, is dead" or "because my nation has been defeated," but she added that all-significant reason, "because the ark of the Lord was taken;" and she died. Oh, I would to God that we all loved God's house, and loved the ways of God, and the ordinances of God as much as she did. While we attach no superstitious importance to the outward ceremony, I wish we thought as much of holy things, because of the Holy One of Israel. as did Eli, and this nameless, but noble woman. Thus I have preached upon the first head, and no ceremonialist here, I am sure, can differ from me, for they must all say it is true. Even the Puseyite will confess that this is just what he believes--that ceremonies ought to be carefully observed. But I shall not agree with Mr. Puseyite in the second head.

II. Now, it is a notorious fact, that THE VERY MEN WHO HAVE THE LEAST IDEA OF WHAT SPIRITUAL RELIGION IS, ARE THE MEN WHO PAY THE MOST SUPERSTITIOUS ATTENTION TO OUTWARD FORMS. We refer you again to this instance. These people would neither repent, nor pray, nor seek God and his prophets; yet they sought out this ark and trusted in it with superstitious veneration. Now, in every country where there had been any religion at all that is true, the great fact has come out very plainly, that the people who don't know anything about true religion,

have always been the most careful about the forms. Do you want to know the man who used to swallow widows' houses, and devour the patrimonies of the fatherless? Do you want to know the hypocrites, the deceivers, in the days of Christ? Why, they were the Pharisees, who "for a show made long prayers;" they were the men who gave alms to the poor in the corners of the street--the men that tithed the anise, and the mint, and the cummin, and forgot the weightier matters of the law, such as justice and righteousness. If you wanted to find the seducer, the unjust judge, the liar, the perjured man, in the days of Christ, you had only to ask for the man who had fasted thrice in the week, and gave tithes of all he possessed. These Pharisees would do any wicked action, and never stick at it; yet if in drinking wine a small gnat should have fallen in and been swallowed with it, they would have considered themselves defiled, because their law did not allow them to eat a creature from which the blood had not been withdrawn. Thus they strained at the gnat, thus getting the reputation of being very religious, and swallowed the camel, hump and all. You smile; but what they did in their day is done now. You know the Romanists; did you ever know one of them who would not think it to be a very high offence against the Majesty of Heaven, if he were to eat any meat on Good Friday? Do you know anyone of them who did not think it necessary to keep Lent with strict punctilious observance? Notice how carefully they go to their places of worship on the Sabbath morning, how diligently they observe that sacred rite of crossing their foreheads with holy water. How necessary is it, that the holy water and everything else of the same kind, should be tenderly cared for. And do not the same persons in their own countries keep their theatres open on the Sabbath day? Do you not find the very men, who are so solemnly observant of their religion in the morning, forgetting it all in the evening;

thinking no more of the Sabbath, which they call holy, than if it were any other day, but making it more a day of merriment than any day of the week? Look again at our Church of England; God be thanked that there are so many true Evangelical men in the midst of it; but there are certain sections there to whom my remarks will apply. Do you want to know the men who know nothing at all about the new birth, who do not know what it is to be justified by faith, who have not a spark of religion? Do you know where to find them? They are the men that never said their creed without turning their heads the right way, that never said the name of Jesus without bowing their heads most reverently; they are the men who always take care that the church should be builded so as to be a goodly edifice, in order that the parishioners going there may see the glory of God in the glory of his house; they are the people who mark every red letter day, who take care that every rubric is attended to, who think that holly on Christmas is a most heavenly thing, and a few flowers upon the altar almost equal to the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. These are the gentlemen who could no more preach without a cassock than they could live without a head. Of course they have not any religion at all, and because the inner life is clean gone, evaporated, dissipated, they have to be so extremely particular that they observe the outward form of it. I know many Evangelical Churchmen (and they are generally precise enough) that would break through every form. I could point you out this morning some two or three clergymen of the Church of England who are heretical enough to be sitting here and listening to the words of one who is a Dissenter, and of course a Schismatic, but who would no more think of calling me a Schismatic than they would think of flying, and would give me the right hand of fellowship with all their hearts. I believe that many of them would forget the rubrics if they could, and, if it were in

their power, would cut their catechism all to pieces, and turn half of their church prayer-book out of doors. And these are the men that have most religion; they care least about the form but they have most of the grace within; they have more true religion, more evangelism, more of the grace of God in their hearts, than fifty of their Puseyite brethren.

But let me come to Dissenters, for we are just as bad. I must deal with all alike. We have among us a certain class of people, a sort of dissenting Puseyites, Where the Puseyite thinks it necessary to keep Good Friday and Easter Sunday, these good brethren take as much care to keep holy day the wrong way, as the others the right way. They think it would be a grievous sin to go to chapel on Good Friday, and they are solemnly in earnest that they should never break the law of the church not to observe holy days. To them it is a very sacred thing that they should always be found in their chapel twice on the Sunday; they think it highly necessary that they should have their children baptized, or that they should be baptized themselves, and that they should take the Lord's Supper. That is all well and good; but alas! we must confess it, there are some among us who, if they are orthodox in their opinions and precise in their outward practice, are quite content to be utterly destitute of the power of religion. I must deal faithfully with all. I know in all our dissenting denominations there are to be found many self-righteous persons, who have not any religion at all, but who are the most precise people in all the world to stick up for the outward form of it. Do you not know some old member of the church here and there? Well, you say, if anybody in the church is a hypocrite, I should say old So-and-so is one. If you were to propose any alteration in anything, oh! how these gentlemen would bristle up; how they would draw their swords. They! they love every nail in the chapel door, they would

not have a different colour for the pulpit for the world. They will have everything strictly observed. Their whole salvation seems to depend upon the rightness of the form. Oh no, not they; they could not think of altering may of the forms of their church. You know it is quite as easy for a man to trust in ceremonials, when the are severely simple, as for a man to rely upon them with they are gorgeous and superb. A man may as much trust in the simple ordinance of immersion and the breaking of bread, as another may trust in the high mass and in the prayers of priests. We man have Rome in Dissent, and Rome in the Church of England, and Rome anywhere; for wherever there is a trust in ceremonies, there is the essence of Popery, there is anti-Christ and the man of sin. Oh! take heed of this any of you who have been relying upon your ceremonies. This is just the truth, that the more zeal for ceremonies, generally the less power of vital godliness within. But now, how is it that the man who would not eat anything but salt-fish on Good Friday, cheats his neighbour on Saturday? How is it that the man who never would by any means go to anything but an orthodox sixteen-ounces-to-the-pound Baptist Chapel, can be found committing acts of injustice in his daily business, and perhaps more filthy deeds still? I will tell you, the man feels he must have some righteousness or other, and when he knows himself to be a good-for-nothing rascal, he feels he has not got a moral righteousness, and therefore he tries to get a ceremonial one. Mark the man that drinks and swears, that commits all kinds of iniquity, and you will very often find him (I have known such cases) the most superstitiously reverent man that can be found. He would not go inside a place of worship without taking off his hat immediately. He will curse and swear outside, perhaps, and it never pricks his conscience; but to walk up the aisle of a church with his hat on--oh! how frightful. He feels, if he did so, he would be lost for

ever. He would not forget to tithe the mint, anise, and cummin, but all the while the weightier matters of the law are left totally unregarded.

Another reason is, because a religion of ceremonies is so much easier than true religion. To say Ava Maria and Pater Nosters is easy enough; you may soon get it over, and it does not check the conscience much. To go to chapel twice on the Sunday--there is nothing very hard in that. It is not half so hard as turning to the Lord with full purpose of heart. It is not half so hard as breaking off one's sin by righteousness, and putting one's trust in Christ Jesus alone. Therefore, because the thing is so easy, people like it better. Again it is so complimentary. When the Romanist beasts his back, and flogs his flesh, why is it that he likes that better than the simple gospel, "Believe and live?" Why, because it just flatters his pride. He thinks he is beating the devil out of himself, but he is in reality beating him in--the devil of pride is coming in. He whispers, "Ah! you are a good man to have flogged yourself like that! you will carry yourself to heaven by the merit of your wounds and bruises." Poor human nature always like that. In fact, the more exacting a religion is, the better people like it. The more religion ties you up, and binds you, if it does not touch the heart, the better people like to carry it out. Hindooism has its great hold upon the people, because they can get a great stock of merit by walking with spikes in their shoes; or rolling themselves many thousands of miles, or drinking the filthy waters of the Ganges, or offering themselves to die. All these things please human nature. "Believe and live" is too humbling; to trust alone in Christ casts down man's high looks; therefore man says, "Away with it!" and he turns to anything rather than to Christ.

Besides, there is another reason. Men always like the religion of ceremonies, because it does not need the giving up of their favourite

sins. "Why", says a man, "if all that is needed for me to be saved, is to have the Sacrament given me by the priest when I come to die, what a delightful religion that is! I can drink, swear, and do just as I like. I have nothing to do but to get greased at last with holy oil, and off I go to heaven with all my sins about me." Says another, "We can have all our gaieties and frivolities, all the pomp of life and the pride of flesh; all that we need is to get confirmed; then, afterwards, sometimes to go to church, take a handsomely bound prayer-book and Bible, be very attentive and observant, and the bishop will no doubt set us all right." This just suits many men, because there is no trouble about it. They can keep on with their gaieties and with their sins, and yet they believe they can go to heaven with them. Men do not like that old-fashioned gospel which tells them that sin and the sinner must part, or else they must be damned. They do not like to be told that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and that old-fashioned text, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," will never be palatable to human nature. Human nature does not mind what you tell it to do, so long as you do not tell it what to believe. You may tell it to observe this, that, and the other, and the man will do it, and thank you , and the harder it is, the better he will like you; but once tell him, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Believe on him and thou shalt be saved," his pride is all up at once; he cannot endure it, and he hates the man that preaches it to him, and drives the very thought of the gospel from his soul.

III. And now, in the last place, it is mine to warn you that TO TRUST IN CEREMONIES IS A MOST DECEITFUL THING, AND WILL END IN THE MOST TERIFFIC CONSEQUENCES. When these people had got the ark into the camp, they shouted for joy , because they thought themselves quite safe; but, alas, they met with a greater defeat than before. Only four thousand

men had been killed in the first battle, but in the second, thirty thousand footmen of Israel fell down dead. How vain are the hopes that men build upon their good works, and ceremonial observances! How frightful is that delusion which teaches for the gospel a thing which is not "the gospel," nor "another gospel;" but it is a thing that would pervert the gospel of Christ. My hearer, let me ask thee solemnly, what is thy ground of hope? Dost thou rely on baptism? O man, how foolish art thou! What can a few drops of water, put upon an infant's forehead, do? Some lying hypocrites tell us that children are regenerated by drops of water. What kind of regeneration is that? We have seen people hanged that were regenerated in this fashion. There have been men that have lived all their lives whoremongers, adulterers, thieves, and murderers, who have been regenerated in their baptism by that kind of regeneration. Oh, be not deceived by a regeneration so absurd, so palpable even to flesh and blood, as one of the lying wonders that have come from hell itself. But mayhap thou sayest, "Sir, I rely upon my baptism, in after life." Ah, my friends, what can washing in water do? As the Lord liveth, if thou trusteth in baptism thou trusteth in a thing that will fail thee at last. For what is washing in water, unless it is preceded by faith and repentance? We baptize you, not in order to wash away your sins, but because we believe they are washed away beforehand; and if we did not think you believed so, we would not admit you to participation in that ordinance. But if you will pervert this to your own destruction, by trusting in it, take heed; you are warned this morning. For as "circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," so baptism availeth nothing.

I may have some here who are saying within themselves, "Well, if I do not go to heaven, nobody will, for I have been brought up to my church as regularly as possible; I was regularly confirmed; my godfathers and

godmothers stood for me in my childhood, and all after the right fashion. I have come here, it is true, but it is about the first offence I ever committed, coming into this Schismatic conventicle; if it please God to forgive, I will never do so again. I always go to church, and I have no doubt that by taking the Sacrament and saying my prayers I shall go to heaven." Ah! you are awfully deceived, for unless you are born again you must come back to the old standard after all--unless you are in blessed union with the Lamb, unless you have found repentance for sin, unless you have true living faith in the Lord Jesus, you may keep all these things, you may observe every jot and tittle, but the gates of heaven must be shut in your face, and "depart from me, I never knew you," must be your doom, even though you reply, "Thou hast eaten and drunk in our streets, and we have listened to thy voice." No, my friends, be ye Presbyterians, Episcopalians, or Dissenters, it matters not, ye have your ceremonies; and there are some among us that rely upon them. This one truth cuts at the root of us all. If this be our hope, it is a foul delusion. We just have faith in Jesus, we must have the new heart and the right spirit; no outward forms can make us clean. The leprosy lies deep within; and unless there be an inward work, no outward work can ever satisfy God, and give us an entrance into Paradise.

But before I close, there is one thing I want you to notice, and that is, that this ark not only could not give victory to Israel, but it could not preserve the lives of the priests themselves who carried it. This is a fatal blow to all who trust in the forms of religion. What would the Romanist think, if I should tell him that his outward forms can never save him; and how would he grind his teeth if I were to tell him, as I do, that the outward forms can never save his priest, for his priest and he must be lost together unless they have some better trust

than this! But we have even in Protestant churches too much priestcraft. People say, "Well, if the Gospel does not save me, I am confident of the salvation of my minister." Rest assured that he that serveth at God's altar is no more secure from destruction, unless he hath a living faith in Christ, than you yourselves. Hophni and Phinehas are slain, and so must every priest be if he relies on ceremonies himself or teaches others to do so. I cannot imagine a more frightful death-bed than that of a man who has been a priest--I mean a man who has taught others to trust in ceremonies. When he is buried, it will be said of him that he died in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection; but oh! the moment after death, when he opens his eyes to see his delusion! while he was on earth he was fool enough to think that drops of water could save him, that a piece of bread and a cup of wine could renew his heart, and save his soul, but when he gets into another world he will lose this folly, and then will the thought flash upon him, like a lightning flash, writhing his soul with misery--Ah! I am destitute of the one thing needful; I had no love to Christ, I never had that repentance which needed not to be repented of; I never fled to Jesus, and now I know that that hymn is true--

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise the soul to heaven."

Oh! how frightful then afterwards to meet his parishioners, to see those to whom he had preached, and to be howled at through the pit by men whom he was the instrument of destroying, by telling them to trust in a rotten foundation. Let me free myself from any such fear as that. As the Lord my God liveth before whom I stand this day--man, woman, my brother, my sister, in the race of Adam, if thou reliest on anything

short of the blood of Jesus Christ, thou trustest in a lie; and if thy salvation ends in anything short of a thorough change of heart, if it makes thee anything less than a new creature in Christ Jesus, the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it, thou hast a religion which is not equal to the necessities of thy case, and when thou needest it most, it will reel beneath thy feet and leave thee without a standing place whereon to rest, overwhelmed with dismay and overcome by dispair.

Now, before I send you away, let me make this last remark. I hear one say, "Sir, I renounce all trust in good works and ceremonies. Tell me how can I be saved?" The way is simply this. Our sins deserve punishment; God must and will punish sin; Jesus Christ came into this world and was punished in the room, place, and stead of all that believe on him. Your business, then, this morning is to make this inquiry, Do I want a Saviour? Do I feel that I want him? And my business, if you answer that question aright is to say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and thou shalt be saved.

Al! there is one in heaven to-day, I firmly believe, who was always a worshipper in this place, and at New Park Street--a young man who was led here to listen to the gospel, and was converted to God; and last Sabbath morning was caught away to heaven in the burning house at Bloomsbury--one of those young men who was taken out of the ruins, one who had been brought to a knowledge of the truth here. It is stated in some of the papers, that his mother was far from a religious woman, and was somewhat given to drink; he had to struggle with some temptation and opposition, but he was enabled to hold on his way, and then, in such an hour as he thought not, the Son of Man came for him, and caught him to himself in the midst of flames and crashing timbers and the uprising of smoke. Oh! I may have one here, that, ere another Sabbath

morning comes, may be launched into eternity, if not by the same deplorable process, yet in as hasty a manner; and as my soul rejoices over that young man, to think that God should have honoured me in bringing him to Christ before he took him up to heaven, I must lament that there are any of you in a peril so frightful, as to be living without God, without Christ, without a hope of heaven; to have death hanging over you, and yet not to tremble at it. Oh! this morning I beseech you, close with Christ. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little: for blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Chapter 22

Providence

A Sermon

(No. 187)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 11, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."--Matthew 10:30.

DURING THIS WEEK my mind has been much directed to the subject of Providence, and you will not wonder when I relate a portion of one day's story. I was engaged to preach last Wednesday at Halifax, where there was a heavy snow storm. Preparations had been made for a congregation of 8000 persons, and a huge wooden structure had been erected. I considered that owing to the severe weather, few persons could possibly assemble, and I looked forward to the dreary task of addressing an insignificant handful of people in a vast place. However, when I arrived, I found from 5000 to 6000 people gathered together to hear the Word; and a more substantial looking place it has not been my lot to see. It certainly was a huge uncomely building, but, nevertheless, it seemed well adapted to answer the purpose. We met together in the afternoon and worshipped God, and again in the evening, and we separated to our homes, or rather, we were about to separate, and all this while the kind providence of God was watching over us. Immediately in front of me there was a huge gallery, which looked an exceedingly massive structure, capable of holding 2000 persons. This, in the afternoon, was crowded, and it seemed to stand as firm as a rock. Again in the evening there it stood, and neither moved nor shook. But mark the provident hand of God: in the evening, when the people

were about to retire, and when there was scarcely more than a hundred persons there, a huge beam gave way, and down came a portion of the flooring of the gallery with a fearful crash. Several persons were precipitated with the planks, but still the good hand of God watched over us, and only two persons were severely injured with broken legs, which it is trusted will be re-set without the necessity of amputation. Now, had this happened any earlier, not only must many more have been injured, but there are a thousand chances to one, as we say, that a panic must necessarily have ensued similar to that which we still remember, and deplore as having occurred in this place. Had such a thing occurred, and had I been the unhappy preacher on the occasion, I feel certain that I should never have been able to occupy the pulpit again. Such was the effect of the first calamity, that I marvel that I ever survived. No human tongue can possibly tell what I experienced. The Lord, however, graciously preserved us; the fewness of the people in the gallery prevented any such catastrophe, and thus a most fearful accident was averted. But we have a more marvellous providence still to record. Overloaded by the immense weight of snow which fell upon it, and beaten by a heavy wind, the entire building fell with an enormous crash three hours after we had left it, splitting the huge timbers into shivers, and rendering very much of the material utterly useless for any future building. Now mark this--had the snow begun three hours earlier, the building must have fallen upon us, and how few of us would have escaped we cannot guess. But mark another thing. All day long it thawed so fast, that the snow as it fell seemed to leave a mass, not of white snow, but of snow and water together. This ran through the roof upon us, to our considerable annoyance, and I was almost ready to complain that we had hard dealing from God's providence. But if it had been a frost instead of a thaw, you can easily perceive that the place

must have fallen several hours beforehand, and then your minister, and the greater part of his congregation, would probably have been in the other world. Some there may be who deny providence altogether. I cannot conceive that there were any partakers of the scene who could have done so. This I know, if I had been an unbeliever to this day in the doctrine of the supervision and wise care of God, I must have been a believer in it at this hour. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together; he hath been very gracious unto us, and remembered us for good.

Now, when we look abroad into the world we see, as we think, such abundant proofs that there is a God, that we are apt to treat a man who denies the existence of a God with very little respect or patience. We believe him to be wilfully blind, for we see God's name so legible upon the very surface of creation, that we cannot have patience with him if he dares to deny the existence of a Creator. And in the matter of salvation: we have each of us seen in our own salvation such positive marks of the Lord's dealings with us, that we are apt to be somewhat censorious and harsh towards any who propound a doctrine which would teach salvation apart from God. And I think we shall be very apt this morning to think hardly of the man, who, having seen and heard of such a providence as that which I have just related, could fail to see God's hand. It seems to me that the hand of God in providence is as clear as in creation; and whilst I am sure that if saved at all I must be saved by God, I feel equally certain that every matter which concerns all of us in daily life, bears upon itself the evident trace of being the handiwork of Jehovah, our God. We must, if we would be true believers in God, and would avoid all atheism, give unto him the kingship in the three kingdoms of creation, grace, and providence. It is in the last, however, that I think we are the most apt to forget him; we may easily

see God in creation if we be at all enlightened, and if saved, we cannot avoid confessing that salvation is of the Lord alone. The very way in which we are saved, and the effect of grace in our hearts, always compels us to feel that God is just. But providence is such a chequered thing, and you and I are so prone to misjudge God and to come to rash conclusions concerning his dealings with us, that perhaps this is the greatest stronghold of our natural Atheism--a doubt of God's dealings with us in the arrangements of outward affairs. This morning I shall not be able to go deeply into the subject, but very heartily can I enter into it, after being so great a partaker of his wonder-working power.

From the text I shall draw one or two points. First of all, the text says, "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." From this I shall infer the minuteness of providence. Again, inasmuch as it is said of believers that the hairs of their head are all numbered, I shall infer the kind consideration, the generous care, which God exercises over Christians. And then, from the text, and from our Saviour's reason for uttering these words, I shall draw a practical conclusion of what should be the spirit and temper of the men who believe this truth--that the very hairs of their head are all numbered.

I. First, then, our text very clearly teaches us THE MINUTENESS OF PROVIDENCE. Every man can see providence in great things; it is very seldom that you find any person denying that when an avalanche falls from the summit of the Alps, the hand, the terrible hand of God is there. There are very few men who do not feel that God is present in the whirlwind, and in the storm. Most men will acknowledge that the earthquake, the hurricane, the devastation of war, and the ravages of pestilence, come from the hand of God. We find most men very willing to confess that God is God of the hills, but they forget that he is also

Lord of the valleys. They will grant that he deals with great masses, but not with individuals; with seas in the bulk, but not with drops. Most men forget, however, that the fact which they believe of providence being in great things involves a providence in the little, for it were an inconsistent belief that the mass were in God's hand, whilst the atom was left to chance; it is indeed a belief that contradicts itself; we must believe all chance or else all God. We must have all ordained and arranged, or else we must have everything left to the wild whirlwind of chance and accident. But I believe that it is in little things that we fail to see God; therefore, it is to the little things that I call your attention this morning.

I believe my text means literally what it says. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." God's wisdom and knowledge are so great, that he even knows the number of the hairs upon our head. His providence descends to the minute particles of dust in the summer gale; he numbers the gnats in the sunshine, and the fishes in the sea. While it certainly doth control the massive orbs that shine in heaven, it doth not blush to deal with the drop that trickleth from the eye.

Now, I shall want you to notice, how little circumstances of daily life, when we come to put them all together, evidently betray their origin. I will take a Scripture history, and show how the little events must have been of God, as well as the great results. When Joseph was sent into Egypt by his brethren, in order to provide for them against a day of famine, we all agree with Joseph's declaration, "It was God that sent me hither." But now, if we notice each of the little ways through which this great result was brought to pass, we shall see God in each of them. One day, Joseph's brethren are gone out with the sheep; Jacob wants to send to them. Why does he send Joseph? He was his darling son; he loved him better than all his brethren. Why does he send him away?

He sends him, however. Then why should it have happened at that particular time, that Jacob should want to send at all? However, he did want to send, and he did send Joseph. A mere accident you will say, but quite necessary as the basement of the structure. Joseph goes; his brethren are in want of pasture, and therefore leave Shechem, where Joseph expected to find them, and journey on to Dothan. Why go to Dothan? Was not the whole land before them? However Joseph goes there; he arrives at Dothan just when they are thinking of him and his dreams, and they put him into a pit. As they are about to eat bread, some Ishmaelites came by. Why did they come there at all? Why did they come at that particular time? Why were they going to Egypt? Why might they not have been going any other way? Why was it that the Ishmaelites wanted to buy slaves? Why might they not have been trading in some other commodity? However, Joseph is sold; but he is not disposed of on the road to Egypt, he is taken to the land. Why is it that Potiphar is to buy him? Why is it that Potiphar has a wife, at all? Why is it again that Potiphar's wife should be so full of lust? Why should Joseph get into prison? How is it that the baker and the butler should offend their master? All chance, as the world has it, but every link necessary to make the chain. They do both offend their master; they are both put into prison. How is it that they both dream? How is it that Joseph interprets the dreams? How is it that the butler forgets him? Why, just because if he had recollected him, it would have spoiled it all. Why is it Pharaoh dreams? How can dreams be under the arrangement of God's providence? However, Pharaoh does dream; the butler then thinks of Joseph; Joseph is brought out of prison and taken before Pharaoh. But take away any of those simple circumstances, break any one of the links of the chain, and the whole of the design is scattered to the winds. You cannot get the machine to work; if any of the minute cogs of the

wheels are taken away, everything is disarranged. I think it seems very clear to any man who will dissect not only that, but any other history he likes to fix upon, that there must be a God in the little accidents and dealings of daily life, as well as in the great results that tell upon the page of history, and are recounted in our songs. God is to be seen in little things.

We will now notice, in the minutiae of providence, how punctual providence always is. You will never wonder more at providence, than when you consider how well God keeps time with himself. To return to our history--how is it that the Ishmaelites should come by just at that time? How many thousand chances there were that their journey might have been taken just before! There certainly was no special train to call at that station at that particular time, so that Joseph's brethren might arrange to go and call him. No such thing. And yet if there had been all this arrangement, it could not have happened better. You know Reuben intended to fetch Joseph out of the pit half an hour later, and "the child was not." God had these Ishmaelites ready: you do not know how he may have sped them on their journey, or delayed them, so as to bring them on the spot punctually at the identical moment.

To give another instance, there was a poor woman whose son had been raised from the dead by Elisha; she, however, had left her country at the time of famine, and had lost her estate. She wanted to get it back; God determined that she should have it. How was it to be done? The king sends for Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, and he talks to him: he tells him one instance about a woman who had had a child raised from the dead. How strange! in comes the woman herself. My lord, this is the woman; she comes to obtain her suit. Her desire is granted, just because at the very moment the king's mind is interested concerning her. All chance, was it not? Nothing but chance? So fools say; but

those who read Bibles, and those who have judgment, say there is something more than chance in such a coalition of circumstances. It could not be a mere coincidence, as men sometimes say; there must be God here, for it is harder to think that there is not God than that there is. And whilst a belief in God may be said by some to involve a great stretch of faith, the putting him out of such things as this, would involve an infinitely greater amount of credulity. No, there was God there.

There is another instance that I remember in the New Testament history. Paul goes into the temple, and the Jews rush upon him in a moment to kill him. They drag him out of the temple, and the doors are shut against him. They are just in the very act of killing him, and what is to become of poor Paul's life? Five minutes longer and Paul will be dead, when up comes the chief captain and delivers him. How was it that the chief captain knew of it? Very probably some young man of the crowd who knew Paul and loved him, ran to tell him. But why was it that the chief captain was at home? How was it that the ruler was able to come on a moment's emergency? How was it that he did come at all? It was only just a Hebrew, a man that was good for nothing, being killed. How was it that he came, and when he came the streets were full; there was a mob about Jerusalem? How did he come to the right street? How did he come at the exact nick of time? Say, "It is all chance!" I laugh at you; it is providence. If there be anything in the world that is plain to any man that thinks, it is plain that God

"Overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs."

But mark, that the running of the youth, and his arrival at the precise time, and the coming of the chief governor at the precise time, just proved the punctuality of Divine providence; and if God has a design

that a thing shall happen at twelve, if you have appointed it for eleven, it shall not happen till twelve; and if he means it to be delayed till one, it is in vain that you propose any earlier or any later. God's punctuality in providence is always sure, and very often apparent.

Nor is it only in the minutes of time that we get an idea of the minuteness of providence, but it is in the use of little things. A sparrow has turned the fate of an empire. You remember the old story of Mohammed flying from his pursuers. He enters a cave, and a sparrow chirps at the entrance, and flies away as the pursuers pass. "Oh," say they, "there is no fear that Mohammed is there, otherwise the bird would have gone a long while ago;" and the imposter's life is saved by a sparrow. We think, perhaps, that God directs the motions of the leviathan, and guides him in the sea, when he makes the deep to be hoary. Will we please to recollect, that the guidance of a minnow in its tiny pool, is as much in the hand of providence as the motion of the great serpent in the depths. You see the birds congregate in the autumn, ready for their flight across the purple sea. They fly hither and thither in strange confusion. The believer in providence holds that the wing of every bird has stamped upon it the place where it shall fly, and fly with never such vagaries of its own wild will, it cannot diverge so much as the millionth part of an inch from its predestinated track. It may whirl about, above, beneath,--east, west, north, south--wherever it pleases; still, it is all according to the providential hand of God. And although we see it not, it may be, that if that swallow did not take the precise track which it does take, something a little greater might be affected thereby; and again, something a little greater still might be affected, until at last a great thing would be involved in a little. Blessed is that man who

seeth God in trifles! It is there that it is the hardest to see him; but he who believes that God is there, may go from the little providence up to the God of providence. Rest assured, when the fish in the sea take their migration, they have a captain and a leader, as well as the stars; for he who marshals the stars in their courses, and guides the planets in their march, is the master of the fly, and wings the bat, and guides the minnow, and doth not despise the tiniest of his creatures. You say there is predestination in the path of the earth; you believe that in the shining of the sun there is the ordinance of God; there is as much his ordinance in the creeping of an insect or in the glimmering of a glow-worm in the darkness. In nothing is there chance, but in everything there is a God. All things live and move in him, and have their being; nor could they live or move otherwise; for God hath so ordained them.

I hear one say, "Well, sir, you seem to be a fatalist!" No, far from it. There is just this difference between fate and providence. Fate is blind; providence has eyes. Fate is blind, a thing that must be; it is just an arrow shot from a bow, that must fly onward, but hath no target. Not so, providence; providence is full of eyes. There is a design in everything, and an end to be answered; all things are working together, and working together for good. They are not done because they must be done, but they are done because there is some reason for it. It is not only that the thing is, because it must be; but the thing is, because it is right it should be. God hath not arbitrarily marked out the world's history; he had an eye to the great architecture of perfection, when he marked all the aisles of history, and placed all the pillars of events in the building of time.

There is another thing that we have to recollect also, which will strike us perhaps more than the smallness of things. The minuteness of

providence may be seen in the fact, that even the thoughts of men are under God's hand. Now, thoughts are things which generally escape our attention, when we speak of providence. But how much may depend upon a thought! Oftentimes a monarch has had a thought which has cost a nation many a bloody battle. Sometimes a good man has had a thought, which has been the means of rescuing multitudes from hell, and bearing thousands safely to heaven. Beyond a doubt, every imagination, every passing thought, every conception, that is only born to die, is under the hand of God. And in turning over the page of history, you will often be struck, when you see how great a thing has been brought about by an idle word. Depend upon it, then, that the will of man, the thought of man, the desire of man, that every purpose of man, is immediately under the hand of God. Take an instance--Jesus Christ is to be born at Bethlehem; his mother is living at Nazareth: he will be born there to a dead certainty. No, not so. Caesar takes a whim into his head. All the world shall be taxed, and he will have all of them go to their own city. What necessity for that? Stupid idea of Caesar's! If he had had a parliament, they would have voted against him. They would have said, "Why make all the people go to their own peculiar city to the census? Take the census where they live; that will be abundantly sufficient." "No," says he, "it is my will, and Caesar cannot be opposed." Some think Caesar mad. God knows what he means to do with Caesar. Mary, great with child, must take a laborious journey to Bethlehem; and there is her child born in a manger. We should not have had the prophecy fulfilled, that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, and our very faith in the Messiah might have been shaken, if it had not been for that whim of Caesar's. So that even the will of man; the tyranny, the despotism of the tyrant, is in the hand of God, and he turneth it whithersoever he pleaseth, to work his own will.

Gathering up all our heads into one short statement, it is our firm belief that he who wings an angel guides a sparrow. We believe that he who supports the dignity of his throne amidst the splendors of heaven maintains it also in the depths of the dark sea. We believe that there is nothing above, beneath, around, which is not according to the determination of his own counsel and will; and while we are not fatalists, we do most truly and sternly hold the doctrine, that God hath decreed all things whatsoever that come to pass, and that he overruleth all things for his own glory and good; so that with Martin Luther, we can say,

"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light."

II. The second point is, THE KIND CONSIDERATION OF GOD, IN TAKING CARE OF HIS PEOPLE. In reading the text, I thought, "There is better care taken of me than I can take care of myself." You all take care of yourselves to some extent, but which of you ever took so much care of himself as to count the hairs of his head? But God will not only protect our limbs, but even the excrescence of hair is to be seen after. And how much this excels all the care of our tenderest friends! Look at the mother, how careful she is. If her child has a little cough, she notices it: the slightest weakness is sure to be observed. She has watched all its motions anxiously, to see whether it walked right, whether all its limbs were sound, and whether it had the use of all its powers in perfection; but she has never thought of numbering the hairs of her child's head, and the absence of one or two of them would give her no great concern. But our God is more careful of us, even than a mother with her child--so careful that he numbers the hairs

of our head. How safe are we, then, beneath the hand of God!

However, leaving the figure, let us again notice the kind, guardian care, which God exerts over his people in the way of providence. I have often been struck with the providence of God, in keeping his people alive before they were converted. How many are there here who would have been in hell at this hour, if some special providence had not kept them alive till the time of their conversion! I remember mentioning this in company, and almost every person in the room had some half-miracle to tell, concerning his own deliverance before conversion. One gentleman, I remember, was a sporting man, who afterwards became an eminent Christian. He told me, that a little time before his conversion he was shooting, and his gun burst in four pieces, which stood upright in the earth as near as possible in the exact form of a square, having been driven nearly a foot into the ground, while he stood there unharmed and quite safe, having scarcely felt the shock. I was noticing in Hervey's works, one day, a very pretty thought on this subject. He says, "Two persons who had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream, and, having run the whole circle of the chase, came at last to the fall of the stag; upon this he cries out with a determined ardor, I'll kill him, I'll kill him; and immediately feels for the knife which he carried in his pocket. His companion happening to awake, and observing what passed, leaped from the bed. Being secure from danger, and the moon shining in the room, he stood to view the event, when, to his inexpressible surprise, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs in the very place where a moment before the throat and the life of his friend lay.--This I mention, as a proof, that nothing hinders us, even from being assassins of others, or murderers of ourselves, amidst the mad sallies of sleep, only the preventing care

of our Heavenly Father."

How wonderful the providence of God with regard to Christian people, in keeping them out of temptation. I have often noticed this fact, and I believe you are able to confirm it, that there are times when if a temptation should come you would be overtaken by it; but the temptation does not come. And at other times, when the temptation comes, you have supernatural strength to resist it. Yes! the best Christian in the world will tell you, that such is still the strength of his lust, that there are moments when if the object were presented to him, he would certainly fall into the commission of a foul sin; but then the object is not there, or there is no opportunity of committing the sin. At another time, when we are called to go through a burning fiery furnace of temptation, we have no desire towards the peculiar sin, in fact we feel an aversion to it, or are even incapable of it. Strange it is, but many a man's character has been saved by providence. The best man that ever lived, little knows how much he owes for preservation to the providence as well as to the grace of God.

How marvellously too has providence arranged all our places. I cannot but recur to my own personal history, for, after all, we are obliged to speak more of what we know of ourselves as matters of fact than of others. I shall always regard the fact of my being here to-day as a remarkable instance of providence. I should not have occupied this hall probably, and been blessed of God in preaching to multitudes if it had not been for what I considered an untoward accident. I should have been at this time studying in College, instead of preaching here, but for a singular circumstance which happened. I had agreed to go to College: the tutor had come to see me, and I went to see him at the house of a mutual friend; I was shown by the servant into one drawing-room in the house, he was shown into another. He sat and waited for me for two

hours; I sat and waited for him two hours. He could wait no longer, and went away thinking I had not treated him well; I went away and thought that he had not treated me well. As I went away this text came into my mind, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." So I wrote to say that I must positively decline, I was happy enough amongst my own country people, and got on very well in preaching, and I did not care to go to College. I have now had four years of labor. But, speaking after the manner of men, those who have been saved during that time would not have been saved, by my instrumentality at any rate, if it had not been for the remarkable providence turning the whole tenour of my thoughts, and putting things into a new track. You have often had strange accidents like that. When you have resolved to do a thing, you could not do it any how; it was quite impossible. God turned you another way, and proved that providence is indeed the master of all human events.

And how good, too, has God been in providence to some of you, in providing your daily bread. It is remarkable how a little poverty makes a person believe in providence, especially if he is helped through it. If a person has to live from hand to mouth, when day by day the manna falls, he begins to think there is a providence then. The gentleman who sows his broad acres, reaps his wheat and puts it into his barn, or takes his regular income, gets on so nicely that he can do without providence; he does not care a bit about it. The rents of his houses all come in, and his money in the Three per Cents is quite safe--what does he want with providence? But the poor man who has to work at day labor, and sometimes runs very short, and just then happens to meet with somebody who gives him precisely what he wants, he exclaims, "Well, I know there is a providence--I cannot help believing it; these things could not have come by chance."

III. And now, in conclusion, brethren and sisters, if these things be so, if the hairs of our head are all numbered, and if providence provides for his people all things necessary for this life, and godliness, and arranges everything with infinite and unerring wisdom, what manner of persons ought we to be?

In the first place, we ought to be a bold race of people. What have we to fear? Another man looks up, and if he sees a lightning-flash, he trembles at its mysterious power. We believe it has its predestined path. We may stand and contemplate it; although we would not presumptuously expose ourselves to it, yet can we confide in our God in the midst of the storm. We are out at sea, the waves are dashing against the ship, she reels to and fro; other men shake, because they think this is all chance; we, however, see an order in the waves, and hear a music in the winds. It is for us to be peaceful and calm. To other men the tempest is a fearful thing; we believe that the tempest is in the hand of God. Why should we shake? Why should we quiver? In all convulsions of the world, in all temporal distress and danger, it is for us to stand calm and collected, looking boldly on. Our confidence should be very much the same, in comparison with the man who is not a believer in providence, as the confidence of some learned surgeon, who, when he is going through an operation, sees something very marvellous, but yet never shudders at it, while the ignorant peasant, who has never seen any thing so wonderful, is alarmed and fearful, and even thinks that evil spirits are at work. We are to say--let others say what they please--"I know God is here, and I am his child, and this is all working for my good; therefore will not I fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Especially may I address this remark to timid people. There are some of

you who are frightened at every little thing. Oh! if you could but believe that God manages all, why, you would not be screaming because your husband is not home when there is a little thunder and lightning, or because there is a mouse in the parlour, or because there is a great tree blown down in the garden. There is no necessity you should believe that your brother-in-law, who has gone to Australia was wrecked, because there was a storm when he was at sea. There is no need for you to imagine, that your son in the army was necessarily killed, because he happened to be before Lucknow; or, if you think the thing necessary, still, as a believer in God's providence, you should just stand and say that God has done it, and it is yours to resign all things into his hands.

I may say to those of you also who have been bereaved--if you believe in providence you may grieve; but your grief must not be excessive. I remember at a funeral of a friend hearing a pretty parable which I have told before, and will tell again. There was much weeping on account of the loss of a loved one, and the minister put it thus. He said, "Suppose you are a gardener employed by another; it is not your garden, but you are called upon to tend it, and you have your wages paid you. You have taken great care with a certain number of roses; you have trained them up, and there they are, blooming in their beauty. You pride yourself upon them. You come one morning into the garden, and you find that the best rose has been taken away. You are angry: you go to your fellow-servants, and charge them with having taken the rose. They will declare that they had nothing at all to do with it; and one says, "I saw the master walking here this morning; I think he took it." Is the gardener angry then? No, at once he says, "I am happy that my rose should have been so fair as to attract the attention of the master. It is his own: he hath taken it; let him do what seemeth him good."

It is even so with your friends. They wither not by chance; the grave is not filled by accident; men die according to God's will. Your child is gone, but the Master took it; your husband is gone, your wife is buried,--the Master took them; thank him that he let you have the pleasure of caring for them and tending them while they were here, and thank him that as he gave, he himself has taken away. If others had done it, you would have had cause to be angry; but the Lord has done it. Can you, then, murmur? Will you not say--

"Thee at all times will I bless;
Having thee I all possess;
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with thee."

And pardon me when I say, finally, that I think this doctrine, if fully believed, ought to keep us always in an equable frame of mind. One of the things we most want is, to have our equilibrium always kept up. Sometimes we are elated. If I ever find myself elated I know what is coming. I know that I shall be depressed in a very few hours. If the balance goes too much up, it is sure to come down again. The happiest state of mind is to be always on the equilibrium. If good things come, thank God for them; but do not set your heart upon them. If good things go, thank God that he has taken them himself, and still bless his name. Bear all. He who feels that everything cometh to pass according to God's will, hath a great main-stay to his soul. He need not be shaken to and fro by every wind that bloweth; for he is fast bound, so that he need not move. This is an anchor cast into the sea. While the other ships are drifting far away, he can ride calmly through.

Strive, dear friends, to believe this, and maintain as the consequence of it, that continual calm and peace which renders life so happy. Do not get fearing ills that may come to-morrow; either they will not

come, or else they will bring good with them. If you have evils to-day, do not multiply them by fearing those of to-morrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Oh, I would to God, that some of you who are full of carking care and anxiety, could be delivered from it by a belief in providence; and when you once get into that quiet frame, which this doctrine engenders, you will be prepared for those higher exercises of communion and fellowship with Christ, to which distracting care is ever a fearful detriment, if not an entire preventive.

But as for you who fear not God, remember, the stones of the field are in league against you; the heavens cry to the earth and the earth answereth to the heavens, for vengeance upon you on account of your sins. For you there is nothing good, everything is in rebellion against you. Oh that God might bring you into peace with him, and then you would be at rest with all beside. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." The Lord bless you in this, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 23

The Redeemer's Prayer

A Sermon

(No. 188)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 18th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundations of the world."--John 17:24.

WHEN the High Priest of old entered into the most holy place, he kindled the incense in his censer, and waving it before him, he perfumed the air with its sweet fragrance, and veiled the mercy seat with the denseness of its smoke. Thus was it written concerning him, "He shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." Even so our Lord Jesus Christ, when he would once for all enter within the vail with his own blood to make an atonement for sin, did first offer strong crying and prayers. In this 17th chapter of John, we have, as it were, the smoking of the Saviour's pontifical center. He prayed for the people for whom he was about to die, and ere he sprinkled them with his blood, he did sanctify them with his supplications. This prayer therefore stands pre-eminent in Holy Writ as the Lord's Prayer--the special and peculiar prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ; and "if," as an old divine hath it, "it be lawful to prefer one Scripture above

another, we may say, though all be gold, yet this is a pearl in the gold; though all be like the heavens, this is as the sun and stars." Or if one part of Scripture be more dear to the believer than any other, it must be this which contains his Master's last prayer before he entered through the rent vail of his own crucified body. How sweet it is to see that not himself, but his people, constituted the staple of his prayer! He did pray for himself--he said, "Father, glorify thou me!" but while he had one prayer for himself, he had many for his people. Continually did he pray for them--"father, sanctify them!" "Father, keep them!" "Father, make them one!" And then he concluded his supplication with, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Melancthon well said there was never a more excellent, more holy, more fruitful, and more affectionate voice ever heard in heaven or in earth, than this prayer.

We shall first notice the style of the prayer; secondly, the persons interested in it; and thirdly, the great petitions offered--the last head constituting the main part of our discourse.

I. First, notice THE STYLE OF THE PRAYER--it is singular: it is, "Father, I will". Now, I cannot but conceive that there is something more in the expression, "I will" than a mere wish.It seems to one, that when Jesus said "I will," although perhaps it might not be proper to say that he made a demand, yet we may say that he pleaded with authority, asking for that which he knew to be his own, and uttering an "I will" as potent as any fiat that ever sprang from the lips of the Almighty "Father, I will." It is an unusual thing to find Jesus Christ saying to God, "I will" You know that before the mountains were brought forth, it was said of Christ, "in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God." and we find whilst he was on earth, that he never mentioned his own will, that he expressly

declared, "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." It is true you do hear him when addressing men, saying "I will," for he saith, "I will, be thou clean;" but in his prayers to his Father he prayed with all humility;

"With sighs and groans he offered up,
His humble suit below."

"I will," therefore, seems to be an exception to the rule; but we must remember that Christ was now in an exceptional condition. He had never been before where he was now. He was now come to the end of his work; he could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," and therefore, looking forward to the time when the sacrifice would be complete and he should ascend on high, he sees that his work is done, and takes his own will back again and saith, "Father, I will."

Now, mark, that such a prayer as this would be totally unbecoming in our lips. We are never to say, "Father, I will." Our prayer is to be, "Not my will, but thine be done." We are to mention our wishes, but our wills are to subside into the will of God. We are to feel that whilst it is ours to desire, it is God's to will. But how pleasant, I repeat, it is to find the Saviour pleading with such authority as this, for this puts the stamp of certainty upon his prayer. Whatsoever he has asked for in that chapter he shall have beyond a doubt. At other times, when he pleaded as a Mediator, in his humility he was eminently successful in his intercessions; how much more shall his prayer prevail now that he takes to himself his great power, and with authority cries, "Father, I will." I love that opening to the prayer, it is a blessed guarantee of its fulfillment, rendering it so sure that we may now look upon Christ's prayer as a promise which shall be assuredly fulfilled.

II. Thus much concerning the style of the prayer; and now we NOTICE THE PERSONS FOR WHOM HE PRAYED, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou

hast given me, be with me where I am." This was not an universal prayer. It was a prayer including within it a certain class and portion of mankind, who are designated as "those whom the Father had given him." Now we are taught to believe that God the Father did, from before the foundation of the world, give unto his Son Jesus Christ a number whom no man can number, who were to be the reward of his death, the purchase of the travail of his soul; who were to be infallibly brought unto everlasting glory by the merits of his passion, and the power of his resurrection. These are the people here referred to. Sometimes in Scripture they are called the elect, because when the Father gave them to Christ he chose them out from among men. At other times they are called the beloved, because God's love was set upon them of old. They are called Israel; for like Israel of old, they are a chosen people, a royal generation. They are called God's inheritance, for they are especially dear to God's heart; and as a man careth for his inheritance and his portion, so the Lord careth especially for them.

Let me not be misunderstood. The people whom Christ here prays for, are those whom God the Father out of his own free love and sovereign good pleasure ordained unto eternal life, and who, in order that his design might be accomplished, were given into the hands of Christ the Mediator, by him to be redeemed, sanctified, and perfected, and by him to be glorified everlastingly. These people, and none others, are the object of our Saviour's prayer. It is not for me to defend the doctrine; it is Scriptural, that is my only defense. It is not for me to vindicate God from any profane charge of partiality or injustice. If there be any wicked enough to impute this to him, let them settle the matter with their Maker. Let the thing formed, if it have arrogance enough, say to him that formed it, "Why hast thou made me thus?" I am not God's apologist, he needs no defender. "Who art thou, O man, that

repliest against God? Hath he not, like the potter, power over the clay, to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor?" Instead of disputing, let us enquire who are these people? Do we belong to them? Oh! let each heart now put the solemn query, "Am I included in that happy throng whom God the Father gave to Christ?" Beloved, I cannot tell you by the mere hearing of your names; but if I know your character, I can tell you decisively--or rather, you will need no telling, for the Holy Spirit will bear witness in your hearts that you are amongst the number. Answer this question--Have you given yourselves to Christ? Have you been brought, by the constraining power of his own free love, to make a voluntary surrender of yourself to him? Have you said, "O Lord other lords have had dominion over me; but now I reject them, and I give myself up to thee.

'Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on thee;'

and as I have no other refuge, so I have no other Lord. Little am I worth, but such as I am, I give all I have and all I am to thee. It is true, I was never worth thy purchasing, but since thou hast bought me, thou shalt have me. Lord, I make a full surrender of myself to thee." Well, soul, if thou hast done this, if thou hast given thyself to Christ, it is but the result of that ancient grant made by Jehovah to his son long ere the worlds were made. And, once again, canst thou feel to-day that thou art Christ's? If thou canst not remember the time when he sought thee and brought thee to himself, yet canst thou say with the spouse "I am my beloved's?" Can you now from your inmost soul say, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! If so, trouble not your minds about election, there is nothing troublesome in election to you. He that believes is elected, he who is given to Christ now, was given to Christ from before the

foundation of the world. You need not dispute divine decrees, but sit down and draw honey out of this rock, and wine out of this flinty rock. Oh, it is a hard, hard doctrine to a man who has no interest in it, but when a man has once a title to it, then it is like the rock in the wilderness, it streams with refreshing water whereat myriads may drink and never thirst again. Well does the Church of England say of that doctrine, "is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons." And though it be like the Tarpeian rock, whence many a malefactor has been dashed to pieces in presumption, yet it is like Pisgah, from whose lofty summit the spires of heaven may be seen in the distance. Again, I say, be not cast down, neither let your hearts be disconsolate. If you be given to Christ now, you are among the happy number for whom he intercedes above, and you shall be gathered amongst the glorious throng, to be with him where he is, and to behold his glory.

III. I very briefly pass over these two points, because I desire to dwell upon the third, which is, THE PETITIONS WHICH THE Saviour OFFERS. Christ prayed, if I understand his prayer, for three things--things which constitute Heaven's greatest joy, Heaven's sweetest employment, and Heaven's highest privilege.

1. The first great thing he prayed for, is that which is heaven's greatest joy--"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." If you notice, every word in the sentence is necessary to its fullness. He does not say--"I pray that those, whom thou hast given me, may be where I am;" but, "with me where I am." And he does not only pray that they might be with him, but that they might be with him in the same place where he is. And mark! he did not say he wished his people to be in heaven, but with him in heaven, because that makes heaven heaven. It is the very pith and marrow of heaven to be

with Christ. Heaven without Christ would be but an empty place it would lose its happiness, it would be a harp without strings; and where would be the music?--a sea without water, a very pool of Tantalus. He prayed then that we might be with Christ--that is our companionship, with him where he is--that is our position. It seems as if he would tell us, that heaven is both a condition and a state--in the company of Christ, and in the place where Christ is.

I might, if I expose, enlarge very much on these points, but I just throw out the raw material of a few thoughts, that will furnish you with topics of meditation in the afternoon. Let us now pause and think how sweet this prayer is, by contrasting it with our attainments on earth. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Ah! brothers and sisters, we know a little of what it is to be with Christ. There are some happy moments, sweet pauses between the din of the continued battles of this wearied life there are some soft times, like couches of rest, wherein we do repose. There are hour when our Master comes to us, and makes us, or ever we are aware, like the chariots of Amminadib. It is true, we have not been caught up to the third heaven, like Paul, to hear words which it is unlawful for us to utter; but we have sometimes thought that the third heavens have come down to us. Sometimes I have said within myself, "Well, if this be not heaven, it is next door to it" and we have thought that we were dwelling in the suburbs of the celestial city. You were in that land which Bunyan calls the land Beulah. You were so near to heaven, that the angels did flit across the stream and bring you sweet bunches of myrrh, and bundles of frankincense, which grow in the beds of spices on the hills, and you pressed these to your heart and said with the spouse, "A bundle of myrrh, is my well beloved unto me. he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts," for I am ravished with his love and

filled with his delights He hath made himself near to me, he hath unveiled his countenance and manifested all his love. But, beloved, while this gives us a foretaste of heaven, we may nevertheless use our state on earth as a complete contrast to the state of the glorified above. For here, when we see our Master, it is but at a distance. We are sometimes we think in his company, but still we cannot help feeling that there is a great gulf fixed between us, even when we come the nearest to him. We talk, you know, about laying our head upon his bosom, and sitting at his feet; but alas! we find it after all to be very metaphorical, compared with the reality which we shall enjoy above. We have seen his face, we trust we have sometimes looked into his heart, and tasted that he is gracious, but still long nights of darkness lay between us. We have cried again and again with the bride, "Oh, that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." We were with him but still he was in an upper-room of the house, and we below; we were with him but still we felt that we were absent from him, even when we were the nearest to him.

Again, even the sweetest visits from Christ, how short they are! Christ comes and goes very much like an angel; his visits are few and far between with the most of us, and oh! so short--alas, too short for bliss. One moment our eyes see him, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but again a little time and we do not see him, our beloved withdraws himself from us; like a roe or a young hart he leaps over the mountain of division; he is gone back to the land of spices, and feeds no more among the lilies.

"If to-day he deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He to-morrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within"

Oh, how sweet the prospect of the time when we shall not see him at a distance, but face to face. There is a sermon in those words, "face to face." And then we shall not see him for a little time, but

"Millions of years our wondering eyes,
Shall o'er our Saviour's beauties rove;
And myriad ages we'll adore,
The wonders of his love."

Oh, if it is sweet to see him now and then, how sweet to gaze on that blessed face for aye, and never have a cloud rolling between, and never have to turn one's eyes away to look on a world of weariness and woe! Blest days! when shall ye come, when our companionship with Christ shall be close and uninterrupted?

And let us remark, again, that when we get a glimpse of Christ, many step in to interfere. We have our hours of contemplation, when we do draw near to Jesus, but alas! how the world steps in and interrupts even our most quiet moments--the shop, the field, the child, the wife, the head, perhaps the very heart, all these are interlopers between ourselves and Jesus. Christ loves quiet; he will not talk to our souls in the busy market place, but he says, "Come, my love, into the vineyard, get thee away into the villages, there will I show thee my love." But when we go to the villages, behold the Philistine is there, the Canaanite has invaded the land. When we would be free from all thought except thought of Jesus, the wandering band of Bedouin thoughts come upon us, and they take away our treasures, and spoil our tents. We are like Abraham with his sacrifice; we lay out the pieces ready for

the burning, but foul birds come to feast on the sacrifice which we desire to keep for our God and for him alone. We have to do as Abraham did; "When the birds came down upon the sacrifice, Abraham drove them away." But in heaven there shall be no interruption, no weeping eyes shall make us for a moment pause in our vision, no earthly joys, no sensual delights, shall create a discord in our melody; there shall we have no fields to till, no garment to spin, no wearied limb, no dark distress, no burning thirst, no pangs of hunger, no weepings of bereavement; we shall have nought to do or think upon, but for ever to gaze upon that Sun of Righteousness, with eyes that cannot be blinded, and with a heart that can never be weary; to lie in those arms for ever; throughout a whole eternity to be pressed to his bosom, to feel the beatings of his ever faithful heart; to drink his love; to be satisfied for ever with his favor, and full with the goodness of the Lord! Oh! if we have only to die to get to such delights as these,--death is gain, it is swallowed up in victory.

Nor must we turn away from the sweet thought, that we are to be with Christ where he is, until we have remembered, that though we often draw near to Jesus on earth, yet the most we ever have of him, is but a sip of the well. We sometimes come to the wells of Elim and the seventy palm trees, but when sitting beneath the palm trees, we feel that it is just like an oasis; to-morrow we shall have to be treading the burning sands, with the scorching sky above us. One day we sit down and we drink from the sweet soft spring, to-morrow we know that we have to be standing with parched lips over Marah's fount, and crying, "Alas, alas! it is bitter; I cannot drink thereof" But oh, in heaven, we shall do what holy Rutherford says, we shall put the well head to our lips and drink right on from that well that never can be drained, we shall drink to our souls utmost full. Ay, as much of Jesus as the finite can hold

of infinity shall the believer receive. We shall not then see him for the twinkling of an eye and then lose him, but we shall see him ever. We shall not eat of manna that shall be like a small round thing, a coriander seed, but the manna whereof we feed shall be mountains, the broad hills of food, there we shall have rivers of delight, and oceans of ecstatic joy. Oh, it is very hard for us to tell, with all that we can guess of heaven, how large, how deep, how high, how broad it is. When Israel ate of that one fair branch which came from Esheol, they guessed what the clusters of Canaan must be; and when they tasted the honey they guessed the sweetness. But I warrant no man in all that host, had any idea of how full that land was of fertility and sweetness; how the very brooks ran with honey, and the very rocks did teem with fatness. Nor can any of us who have lived the nearest to our Master, form more than the faintest guess of what it is to be with Jesus where he is.

Now all that is wanted to help my feeble description of being with Jesus, is this--if you have faith in Christ, just think over this fact, that in a few more months you will know more about it than the wisest mortal ere can tell. A few more rolling suns, and you and I shall be in heaven. Go on, O Time! with thy swiftest pinions fly! A few more years, and I shall see his face. O canst thou say, my hearer, "I shall see his face?" Come, thou gray-headed one, nearing the goal of life, canst thou with confidence say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth?" If thou canst say that, it will fill thy soul with joy. I can never think of it without being moved to tears. To think that this head shall wear a crown; that these poor fingers shall strike the harp-strings of everlasting song; that this poor lip, which now faintly tells the wonders of redeeming grace, shall join with cherubim and seraphim, and rival them in melody. Is it not too good to be true? Does it not seem

sometimes as if the very greatness of the thought overwhelmed our faith? But true it is, and though too great for us to receive it, it is not too great for God to give. We shall be with him where he is. Yes, John; thou laidst thy head upon thy Saviour's bosom once, and I have ofttimes envied thee; but I shall have thy place by-and-bye. Yes, Mary; it was thy sweet delight to sit at thy Master's feet, while Martha was cumbered with her much serving. I too, am too much cumbered with this world; but I shall leave my Martha's cares in the tomb and sit to hear thy Master's voice. Yes, O spouse, thou didst ask to be kissed with the kisses of his lips, and what thou askedst for poor humanity shall yet see. And the poorest, meanest, and most illiterate of you, who have trusted in Jesus, shall yet put your lip to the lip of your Saviour, not as Judas did, but with a true "Hail, Master!" you shall kiss him. And then, wrapped in the beams of his love, as a dim star is eclipsed in the sunlight, so shall you sink into the sweet forgetfulness of ecstacy, which is the best description we can give of the joys of the redeemed. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." That is heaven's sweetest joy,--to be with Christ.

2. And now the next prayer is, "that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." This is heaven's sweetest employment. I doubt not there are many joys in heaven which will amplify the grand joy with which are have just started; I feel confident that the meeting of departed friends, the society of apostles, prophets priests, and martyrs, will amplify the joy of the redeemed. But still the sun that will give them the greatest light to their joy, will be the fact that they are with Jesus Christ and behold his face. And now there may be other employments in heaven, but that mentioned in the text is the chief one, "That they may behold my glory." O for the tongue of angel-O for the lip of Cherubim! for one moment to depict the mighty scenes

which the Christian shall behold when he seeth the glory of his Master, Jesus Christ! Let us pass as in a panorama before your eyes the great scenes of glory which you shall behold after death. The moment the soul departs from this body, it will behold the glory of Christ. The glory of his person will he the first thing that will arrest our attention. There will he sit in the midst of the throne, and our eyes will first be caught with the glory of his appearance. Perhaps we shall be struck with astonishment. Is this the visage that was more marred than that of any man? Are these the hands that once rude iron tore? Is that the head that once was crowned with thorns. Oh, how shall our admiration rise, and rise, and rise to the very highest pitch, when we shall see him who was--

"The weary man, and full of woes
The humble man before his foes,"

now King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. What! are those fire-darting eyes the very eyes that once wept over Jerusalem? Are those feet shod with sandals of light; the feet that once were torn by the flinty acres of the Holy Land? Is that the man, who scarred and bruised was carried to his tomb? Yes, tis he. And that shall absorb our thoughts--the godhead and the manhood of Christ; the wondrous feet that he is God over all blessed for ever, and yet man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. And when for an instant we have noted this, I doubt not the next glory we shall see will be the glory of his enthronement. Oh, how will the Christian stop at the foot of his Master's throne and look upward, and if there could be tears in heaven, tears of rich delight will roll down his cheeks when he looks and sees the man enthroned. "Oh," saith he "I often used to sing on earth Crown him! crown him! crown him! King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!" And now I see him, up those hills of glorious light, my soul doth not dare to climb. There, there he sits!

Dark with unsufferable light his skirts appear. Millions of angels bow themselves around him. The redeemed before his throne prostrate themselves with rapture. Ah! we shall not deliberate many moments but taking our crowns in our hands we shall help to swell that solemn pomp, and casting our crowns at his feet, we shall join the everlasting song, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever." Can you imagine the magnificence of the Saviour? Can you conceive how thrones and princes, principalities and powers, all wait at his beck and command? Ye cannot tell how well the tiara of the universe doth fit his brow, or how the regal purple of all worlds doth gird his shoulders; but certain it is, from the highest heaven to the deepest hell, he is Lord of Lords--from the furthest east to the remotest west, he is master of all. The songs of all creatures find a focus in him. He is the grand reservoir of praise. All the rivers run into the sea, and all the hallelujahs come to him, for he is Lord of all. Oh, this is heaven--it is all the heaven I wish, to see my Master exalted; for, this has often braced my loins when I have been weary, and often steeled my courage when I have been faint "The Lord also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, both of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth."

And then the believer will have to wait a little while, and then he shall see more glorious things yet. After a few years, he will see the glories of the latter day. We are told in prophecy, that this world is to become the dominion of Christ. At present, idolatry, and bloodshed, and cruelty, and lusts, do reign. But the hour is coming; when this Augean stable shall be cleansed once and for ever, when these huge shambles of Aceldama shall yet become the temple of the living God. We

believe that in these times, Christ with solemn pomp will descend from heaven to reign upon this earth. We cannot read our Bibles and believe them literally, without believing that there are bright days coming, when Christ shall sit upon the throne of his father David, when he shall hold his court on earth, and reign amongst his ancients gloriously. But oh, if it be so, you and I shall see it, if we belong to the happy number, who have put their trust in Christ. These eyes shall see that pompous appearance, when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. "Mine eyes shall see him, and not another's." I could almost weep to think, that I have lost the opportunity of seeing Christ on earth as crucified. I do think the twelve apostles were very highly favored, but when we shall see our Saviour here, and shall be like our head, we shall think that all deficiencies are made up in the eternal weight of glory. When from the center to the poles the harmony of this world shall all be given to his praise, these ears shall hear it, and when all nations shall join the shout, this tongue shall join the shout also. Happy men and happy women who have such a hope, so to behold the Saviour's glory.

And then, after that a little pause. A thousand years shall run their golden cycle, and then shall come the judgment Christ, with sound of trumpet, in pomp terrific, shall descend from heaven--Angels shall form his body-guard. surrounding him on either hand. The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The whole sky shall be clad with wonders. Prodigies, and miracles shall be as rife and as plentiful as the leaves upon the trees. The earth shall totter at the tramp of the Omnipotent; the pillars of the heavens shall stagger like drunken men, beneath the weight of the eternal splendour--heaven shall display itself in the sky, while on earth all men shall be assembled. The sea shall give up its dead; the graves shall yield their tenants

from the cemetery, and the graveyard, and the battle-field, men shall start in their thousands; and every eye shall see him, and they who have crucified him. And while the unbelieving world shall weep and wail because of him, seeking to hide themselves from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, believers shall come forward, and, with songs and choral symphonies, shall meet their Lord Then shall they be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and after he hath said, "Come, ye blessed" they shall sit upon his throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; they shall take their seats as assessors upon that awful judgment bench. and when at the last he shall say, "Depart, ye cursed," and his left hand shall open the door of thunder, and let loose the flames of fire, they shall cry, Amen; and when the earth shall vanish, and men shall sink into their appointed doom, they gladly seeing the triumph of their Master, shall shout again, again, again the shout of victory--"Hallelujah, for the Lord God hath triumphed over all."

And to complete the scene, when the Saviour shall ascend on high for the last time, his victories all completed, and death himself being slain, he, like a mighty conqueror about to ride through heaven's bright streets, shall drag at his chariot wheel hell and death. You and I, attendants at his side, shall shout the victor to his throne, and while the angels clap their bright wings and cry, "the Mediator's work is done," you and I

"Louder than them all shall sing
While heaven's resounding mansions ring,
With shouts of sovreign grace."

We shall behold his glory. Picture whatever splendor and magnificence you please if you do but conceive it rightly, you shall behold it.

You see people in this world running through the streets a king or a queen ride through them. How they do climb to their house-tops to see

some warrior return from battle. Ah! what a trifle! What is it to see a piece of flesh and blood though it be crowned with gold. But oh! what is it to see the Son of God with heaven's highest honors to attend him, entering within the pearly gates, while the vast universe resounds with "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

3. I must close by noticing the last point, which is this. In our Saviour's prayer heaven's greatest privilege is also included. Mark, we are not only to be with Christ and to behold his glory, but we are to be like Christ and to be glorified with him. Is he bright? So shall you be. Is he enthroned? So shall you be. Does he wear a crown? So shall you. Is he a priest? So shall you be a priest and a king to offer acceptable sacrifices for ever. Mark, that in all Christ has, a believer has a share. This seems to me to be the sum total, and the crowning of it all--to reign with Christ, to ride in his triumphal chariot, and have a portion of his joy; to be honored with him, to be accepted in him, to be glorified with him. This is heaven, this is heaven indeed.

And now, how many of you are there here who have any hope that this shall be your lot? Well said Chrysostom, "The pains of hell are not the greatest part of hell; the loss of heaven is the weightiest woe of hell;" to lose the sight of Christ, the company of Christ, to lose the beholding of his glories, this must be the greatest part of the damnation of the lost.

Oh, you that have not this bright hope, how is it that you can live? You are going through a dark world, to a darker eternity. I beseech you stop and pause. Consider for a moment whether it is worth while to lose heaven for this poor earth. What! pawn eternal glories for the pitiful pence of a few moments of the world's enjoyments. No, stop I beseech you; weigh the bargain ere you accept it. What shall it profit you to

gain the whole world and lose your soul, and lose such a heaven as this?

But as for you who have a hope, I beseech you hold it fast, live on it, rejoice in it--

"A hope so much divine,
May trials well endure,
May purge your soul from sense and sin,
As Christ the Lord is pure."

Live near your Master now, so shall your evidences be bright; and when you come to cross the flood, you shall see him face to face, and what that is only they can tell who enjoy it every hour.

Chapter 24

The Cry Of The Heathen

A Sermon

(No. 189)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 25th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."--Acts 16:9.

THIS WAS NO DOUBT a special vision sent of God for the direction of the apostle. For we are told in the next verse, that they assuredly gathered from this vision, that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel in Macedonia. And yet the vision may be very readily accounted for by natural causes. Men usually dream of that which is most upon their minds. Who would marvel that the miser should, in his restless sleep, be pictured to his own sight as counting over his gold? Who wonders that the mother's dream is often concerning her fair infant? Who marvels that the wife frequently dreams of shipwrecks, when, in the stormy night, she lies upon her bed, her last thoughts having been exercised concerning her husband at sea? You wonder not that the soldier in the trenches dreams of battle. And hence we cannot marvel that the apostle Paul, whose whole soul was full of his Master's cause, should have a vision in the night concerning a new field of labor, which God had intended to open up to him. You will remember that the apostle was, on this occasion, in a peculiar condition. He at first endeavored to preach the gospel in Phrygia and Galatia, but he was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia. And "after they

had come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not." The apostle was like Abraham of old; he went forth, not knowing whither he went. There was a certain path which he must take, and when he strove to turn either to the right hand or to the left, the Spirit directly forbade him, and he was compelled to go on till he came to the sea-port of Troas. There, wearied with his journey, he cast himself upon his couch, and in the midst of the night a vision appeared unto him. A man who by his brogue and his dress was discovered to be a Macedonian, said to him, "Come over and help us." God sometimes tells men in their sleep the secret they could not discover when they were awake. We have heard of the preacher who, tired late on Saturday evening, has been unable to think of a discourse, in the middle of the night has dreamed it through, and on the morrow he ascended his pulpit and preached it. What wonder then, that the apostle Paul, specially directed by the Spirit of God, after an day long wearily exercising his mind an to the journey God intended him to take, should, after all, when in his sleep, have a vision from on high, teaching him where he should go.

And now, beloved, having thus prefaced our discourse, we have another observation to make before we proceed to a full discussion of the text. What an instance of Divine sovereignty we have in our text! He who is wise can see sovereignty everywhere in the work of salvation, but how clearly is it present here. Bithynia must not hear the gospel; the apostle desires to go and preach it there; but as yet, it seems, God does not intend that Bithynia should be evangelised. He desires to tarry in Asia, and there throughout its length and breadth preach the gospel; but he is strictly forbidden, and the command comes to him that he is to go across to Europe, and there proclaim the gospel. Was not this sovereignty? Why was it that God shut the door in Bithynia, and

opened it in Philippi! Was it that Philippi was more worthy, or that Bithynia needed it less? Assuredly not. It was of God's mercy that he sent the gospel at any time, and when he sent to Philippi the most eminent of apostles to preach it, who shall blame him? Has he not a right to do what he wills with his own? But we may rest quite assured, that his sovereignty was not an arbitrary exercise of despotic will. It was a sovereignty dictated by the highest wisdom; for while God rules all things according to his own will, yet we are expressly told, that he doeth it according to the counsels of his will, his will being no blind headstrong thing, willing for no reason whatever, but being always subject to his own sense of that which is the wisest, and which will promote his glory and his creature's profit. However, we must still observe, Divine sovereignty is that which casts a rich lustre upon grace, when we recollect that it is sovereign and free. Oh ye, of the race of Britain! bless the Lord, that he hath sent the gospel unto you; for while doubtless there is wisdom in it, remember there is also sovereignty in it. "He hath not dealt so with any nation. Praise ye the Lord." Had he willed it, had he seen fit, the gospel had this day been flourishing in the center of Africa, and you might at this moment have been destitute of the word of the gospel, living barbarians like your fathers, embruing your hands in blood. Unto the great, dread Sovereign, who ruleth as he wills on earth as in heaven, be glory for ever and ever.

And now we turn to our text. "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." First, we shall observe, that the best help that can be rendered to any people is the preaching of the gospel. "Come over and help us," that is, preach to us. Secondly, we shall notice that although we have no visions or dreary in the night,

yet, the nations on the earth are calling to the church of the living God, and are saying to us, "Come over to us, and help us." And then, thirdly, I shall conclude, by solemnly asking the question, what do you who love the Lord intend to say to those, who are now asking at your hands the help of a preached gospel?

I. First, then, THE GREATEST HELP THAT CAN BE GIVEN TO ANY PEOPLE, IS THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL, and when I say this, I am uttering a truth which I need not guard. The gospel is a help, not in one way, but in every way. Those who have not the gospel stand in the greatest need of help; but when the gospel is carried, you carry everything within it. In the folds of the gospel sleepeth the manifold wisdom of God, and his manifold goodness also toward the sons of men. Behold, the nations of the earth this day are still the bond-slaves of tyrants--many lands are still subject to despotic dynasties, who trample men beneath their feet, as if men were but earthen pitchers to be broken in pieces by the iron wills of kings. How is liberty to be established in these lands? Shall the point of the bayonet bring liberty to these nations that still are slaves? Never, never. Iron makes our fetters, iron rivets them, but iron never can unloose them. We need something more potent than steel to carve out the liberty of mankind. Love, love of the Gospel, must be the ground work of liberty, and if liberty, equality, and fraternity, the three great words that are the world's heir loom, are ever to be fully known and realised, it must be by the preaching of the Word of Jesus. The preaching of the gospel is the terror of despots. If you ask what makes this land free, every candid man must say it is the open gospel and the unfettered preaching of the Word. Glasgow's motto is, "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word." It is the coat of arms of liberty herself. Liberty flourishes by the preaching of the Word of God. Certain it is that wherever you find

Protestantism, you find liberty, and wherever you leave Protestantism behind you, you begin to feel the yoke, and to hear the groans of the oppressed. It is true that Protestantism doth not in every place produce perfect liberty, because it is not sufficiently true to itself. There are still places where the slave feels the lash, while his master calls himself a Christian; but this is not the legitimate effect of our religion, but rather the effect of a delusion which hell itself did first invent, and which nought but the deep depravity of men could ever permit to stand before the face of God's sun. Yes, ye tyrants on your thrones, the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall yet break you in pieces! O great statue of tyranny with thy head of gold, and thy feet of clay, thou shalt yet totter, for this shall break thee in pieces, for the breaker is come out before us, and the king at the head of us, and who can withstand his might? What shall hold out against the mighty principle wherewith Christ makes men free?

Look, brethren, too, and see how the nations of the earth are lying under gloomy superstition. Perhaps there is one thing in the world worse than kingcraft, and that is priestcraft. May God save us from two things--from tyrannical kings, and from priests of all sorts. Priests of any sort are bad, but superstitious priests are the worst of all. Oh, how many nations of the earth have their intellect blighted, their hopes blasted, their progress shipped, their whole history eclipsed of its glory, their state robbed of its riches, by the cursed dominancy of priests. Men are compelled to believe just what the priest chooses. Because he wears a cassock; because he has been educated in the deep mysteries of craftiness, he is to be lord over men's consciences, and consciences and hearts are to bow before him; wherever he comes his word is to be law, his will is to open and shut the gates of heaven, for he pretends that the keys of heaven and of hades are hanging at his

girdle. How shall we deliver men from these enthralling superstitions! No how, but by the preaching of the gospel. You cannot make men free, even by governments; you cannot give them a thorough freedom by giving them a republic itself; for that republic must fall so long as priestcraft is there, for liberty and priestcraft agree as well together as God and devil, and no better; and until the one falls the other can never stand.

But the preaching of the gospel which teaches that believers are all priests and kings; which lifts every one of us into the high places of princes and monarchs and puts every one of us on a level with pontiffs and priests--this is the gospel which shall yet set men free, and the preaching of this, and this only, is the world's great and grandest hope of its deliverance from the slavery of the body and the yet more accursed bondage of the soul.

But, beloved, there are some nations of the earth that have never as yet tasted of the sweets of salvation. Large tracts of country have been discovered, where the people are still debased and degraded; the kraal of the Hottentot has not yet blossomed into a mansion, the spear of the New Zealander has not yet been entirely changed for a pruning hook. There are many places where all the joys of life and the social comforts and enjoyments of our being, are as yet totally unknown. Now, the gospel has blessings in both its hands. Wherever it goes it has the blessings heaven, rich and golden--it has the blessing of the earth, fair and silvery. They are both precious things, and while we believe the gospel is ordained most of all to bless man for the hereafter, yet the secularist himself, if he were wise, must take some interest in the progress of the gospel, for it is a blessing to men even ill this life.

The great civilizer is the cross. Nothing else can make the barbarian into a civilized man, but the cross and the vision of Christ hanging on

it. Blessed are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace, for where they bring the glad tidings of peace with God, they bring also good news of goodwill towards men,--even goodwill towards men as creatures here, as well as good news to them as creatures that are to exist for ever. My dear brethren and sisters, if you would bless the world, in the largest possible sense, temporarily, spiritually, and eternally; if you would bless the bodies and the souls of men, if you would bless men in their children, in their houses, if you would bless them in their meats and drinks and in all the necessities of life, the one simple means of doing all this, is just the proclamation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that fully preached and received, has been proved in instances which I need not now stop to recall to your memories--instances abundant and recent, to be after all, the power of God, not only to salvation but to civilization too.

There is yet one more point which I must mention here in which the gospel is the best help to man. We must remember to-day, that there are districts of the earth where the ground is yet red with blood. There are sad portions of our globe that as yet must have the name of Aceldama, the field of gore, there are spots where the horse-hoof is splashed with blood; where the very carcasses of men are the food of ravens and of jackalls, the mounds of Balaclava are as yet scarcely green, and the spots where rest the relics of our own murdered sisters and brothers are not covered with the memorial stone. War has ravaged whole districts; even in these late times the dogs of war are not yet muzzled. Oh! what shall we do to put an end to war? Mars, where is the chain that shall bind thee like Prometheus, to the rock? How shall we imprison thee for ever, thou cruel Moloch; how shall we for ever chain thee? Behold here is the great chain, that which one day is to bind the great serpent; it has the blood-red links of love. The gospel of Jesus

Christ the crucified one, shall yet hush the clarion of war, and break the battle-bow in sunder.

Happy are we, thrice happy, that we have a gospel which shall make men

"Hang the useless helmet high,
And study war no more."

Let us spread it, then, to earth's utmost bounds; for, to repeat the text I quoted just now, it hath blessings in both its hands, wherever it goes temporarily as well as eternally, it blesses the human race. And when it shall have spread to its utmost limits, when all the habitable earth shall be covered with it then the mist that swathes our planet shall be rolled away, and bright, like a new-born morning star, this earth shall shine out with her sister stars in all her glory, and the angels shall once more sing, and God himself shall repeat his verdict--"all things are very good."

But still, beloved, the greatest help that the gospel brings is help to the soul. Ah, Christian men, ye know what this means: your brothers and sisters are this day wandering blindfold, they know not whither. Ye know, for the Bible tells you that they are wending their weary way down to the gulf of black despair! Oh does not your heart desire that the blind eye should be opened, that the misguided should be directed on the path to heaven: would not your pity desire to snatch the fire brand from the flame? Do you not anxiously seek to know how you can lead the vicious to virtue, and the virtuous to the righteousness that is in Jesus Christ? Have you no desire to see God's elect ingathered, to see them washed, and sanctified, and perfected? Remember this is to be, and since it is to be it is certain that ye must send the gospel far and wide, for by no other means can God's elect be gathered home. How can they believe without a preacher? How can they preach except they be sent? The gospel must go throughout all lands, that the elect

may be gathered home, and the Messiah's kingdom come. Oh! ye who love the souls of men, it is to you an awful thought that hell's caverns are filling; it is a dreary thing to you to see the broad road so crowded with its many travelers? You are longing and wishing that the narrow way might have more pilgrims, I beseech you, then, look to it, that by every mean. and by all means ye aid the preaching of the gospel of Jesus; for it is the help for which the earth calls, and the help which you must render to it. Come over and help us by preaching Christ's holy gospel. Thus have I done with the first head, may the Lord help us in the second.

II. The second point is, that although not in visions of the night, yet EVERY DAY AND EVERY HOUR, THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH ARE SAYING, "COME OVER AND HELP US." Do you not know, that the loudest eloquence is silence? To move the heart of the right-minded, ye need not the declamation of the orator. The sight of silent, dumb misery is the highest eloquence to a tender heart. It is true, I must confess it the nations of the earth do not vocally ask for your help; nay, worse than that, if you send them the help of the gospel they will many of them reject it. Your missionaries have been slain,--the altars of false gods have been stained with their blood; but still I solemnly repeat it the nations of the earth are silently crying, "Come over and help us." If I say; a person in the street sick, faint, and dying, although he spoke not to me, though he asked me not to befriend him, I should think the weakness of his silence more potent than all the power of words. Ay, and if I saw him like a maniac, rejecting my help and pushing me from him, if I was convinced that he was really a maniac, for that very reason that he needed my help, I would thrust my alms upon him, I would willingly give him my help and assistance, and so must you do. The nations of the earth are dead in sin; how can they cry to you? But it

is yours to see their misery; and let the poor, poor dumb wounds of this bleeding earth speak to you. It is true, earth is a maniac, and it puts away the only cure. But what care we for that? It is ours to thrust our kindness upon unwilling men, because we believe that their unwillingness arises from the madness of their disease. Let us take the poor man that has fallen among thieves. Let us pour in the oil and the wine, and if he doth not receive it gratefully, because he is faint, if he putteth his hand upon the wound, and rends away the liniment, and unbinds the plaster, nevertheless. let us bind him up again, and set him upon our own beast, and carry him to the inn. Let us pay for the lodging even though as yet he cannot speak to thank us; and the day shall come, when the wound is healed, and the burning fever is removed, when his brain is cool, and his reason restored, that he shall fall at our feet and kiss the hand that once he spurned. Unborn generations shall bless the men that sent the gospel, which at first their fathers did reject.

And now, brethren and sisters, let me plead the cause of the dumb. No man of Macedonia is here to-day to say "Come over and help us," but let me be the heathen's spokesman, and very earnestly ask you to come and help him. Methinks, I will stand here as a heathen this morning, and I say to you as if I had not heard the gospel. "Ye Christians of Britain! ye highly favored ones, who know the name of Jesus and prove the power of the Spirit, preach the gospel to us, for we are men like yourselves. What though our skin be of a color less fair than your own? Yet he fashioneth our hearts alike. Oh tell us not, because we feed on the locust, and eat the serpent, that therefore we are not of your kith and kind! Not that which goeth into a man defileth a man.' It is true, our kings and princes are only fit to rank with your beggars; but oh! God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the

earth; and from our huts and cabins we come forth to-day, and we say to you, We are men--we are your brothers--younger brothers, it is true--we have not had a double portion of the inheritance, brothers, too, whose fathers spent their part in riotous living, but why should the children's teeth be set on edge because the fathers have eaten sour grapes? Why must the son of man for ever bear the curse of Canaan? O preach the gospel to us! We are men, mother Eve is our mother, as well as yours; Adam, too, is the father from whose loins we sprang; and because we are men, the common sympathy of humanity bids you listen to us, when we say, Come over and help us.' Besides, we have another argument. We are told that unto you is the Word of this salvation sent,' not for yourselves, but for us, brothers, who have not heard the gospel and who know it not. And you have the treasure in your own land; and we believe you have the treasure given to you, that you may lavish handfuls of it out to us. We know that old Judea had the covenant and the oracles, and the gospel to keep for coming generations; and we believe that you men of Britain have the gospel, not for yourselves, but for us. We have heard what your Master said, Ye are the lights of the world;' not lights of Britain, not lights for yourselves, the lights of the world. Oh! bear your burning torches into the glades of our dark forests. come and shed your light through the dark mists of our idolatrous temples; let the bats of our superstition, and the owls of our ignorance, fly away before the sunlight of your gospel. It is not for yourselves you have received it, but for us. Oh! give it to us. Preach the gospel to us, for it is designed for us. But we have another argument, brethren; look at our miseries!"

As the spokesman for my poor brethren to-day, I stand before you, and I remind you of the tortures to which the poor Hindoo devotee puts himself; I remind you of the cruelties enacted in the Chinese

empire--the horrors of a government that is based upon idolatry. I tell you of the distress, the destitution, the poverty, the nakedness, the misery, of the Bechuanas and the Bushmen, and I speak for these, and I say, "Christians, you have the means of alleviating their woes by sending them the gospel; will you not do it?" Look at the dwellers in the land of the jungle and the lion. There they are; the serpent has grasped them in his folds, and like the boa-constrictor of their own forests, he is crushing their nations, until the ribs of the strong man snap, and the hearts of the women melt like wax. And you have the sword in your hands that can cut the serpent's head! Your Master bruised that head beneath his heel, and you must do the same. Oh! come, come, ye missionaries of the cross, ye ministers of Jesus, come and deliver us from this deadly hydra! Save us from our fearful doom! Our miseries invoke your aid. It is true, we cannot speak to you in gentle language, but there was a time when poets walked amongst us, and some of the light that shone in Paradise, yet gilded our darkness. and we treasured up a few of those faint rays, and we are hoping that the sun of righteousness will yet dawn upon us. Oh! come, roll away those mists; come, chase our night. and let us see that sacred, high, eternal noon, which is the daughter of the gospel following the Sun of Righteousness. And now, Christian men, let me speak to you as one of yourselves. Brethren, you and I are soldiers, soldiers of the cross, and at this hour worlds are rushing to the shock. The fight is thickening, and we are warriors! Shame upon the craven who stays from the battle. The trump is sounding to-day. Mohammed has waked from his sleep; the Moslem, with bloody hands, has sought to slay our race; the Hindoo, too, the meek-eyed Hindoo, his eyes have glared like the eyes of his tiger, and his lips have smacked with gore. The battle is raging. Not there alone. Popery hath aroused itself, with mighty effort it is

endeavoring to win back this gem of the sea, this first isle of the ocean. Infidelity, too, is on the stir; her myrmidons are flying here and there. Everything is awake, except the church of God. Oh! rouse ye, men and brethren; rouse, now that the fight is at its fullest fury. Now is the time for our most desperate velour, our most earnest zeal. Recollect, every time you bow your knees, and say, "Our Father," you tell a lie at the end of that prayer, if you are not seeking to make his kingdom come, and his will be done in earth, as it is heaven. You are praying for what you do not try to get; you are insulting God by saying, "Thy kingdom come," with as foul a mockery, as if I should say, "Be warmed and be filled," to some poor dying beggar, and then refused to give to his needs, that he might remove his distresses.

Recollect, too, that you cannot be Christians at all, not in the right sense of the word, unless you everyone of you would compass sea and land to make one proselyte. You must have in you the spirit of propagathm, desirous to will others to Christ, or else the genuine blood of Christianity is not in your veins. Of all things in the world Christianity is the most prolific, if it be true. Mohammedism of old had mighty power to spread itself, but not such power as Christianity had. The religion of Jesus began like a mustard seed, with those few men in an upper-room; but ere a half century had rolled away, the gospel was preached to every nation under heaven, and if we had Christianity in our hearts of the right sort--hot, burning stuff, not the lukewarm shams of this degenerate age, our religion ere another half a century will have won the day. If the Spirit of God should give us true diligence, in the course of another half century there would not be one district that would not have been trodden by the foot of the minister, nor one town or city which would not have been evangelized. I know I am not speaking without book now I am absolutely certain that

what I am saying is a sober matter of fact. If you will just calculate the proportion between the four hundred, and the progress made in one half a century, and then begin with the three or four millions--I should hope there are as many as that--of true Christians in the world, I say, it is a little thing to believe that if they were true to their profession, they might, under Divine blessing, carry the gospel into every known part of the habitable world before half a century has rolled away. However, we need not be afraid we shall do it. There is no fear that we shall run into any fanaticism. That is the last sin this age will commit. We shall go on, and be as orthodox and cold as we always were. No enthusiasm will ever fall upon us. We shall not see any very great and strange developments of an enormous fanaticism at the present day. Do not be alarmed, brothers and sisters. All I preach that looks like fanaticism will not hurt this age. Ye may do what ye will; preach ye never so wisely, ye will never make this deaf adder hear. The church of this day is a great deal too deaf to do anything extravagant. We do a little, and think it a wonderful deal. We each give fourpence to send Testaments to China; we will talk of it for the next fifty years! We sent out one or two missionaries to India (and are they not one or two, compared with their needs?) it is a great thing. It is a fine thing for the whole Baptist denomination to raise twenty thousand pounds a year, when there are some men in the denomination who make as much money as that in the time. It is a marvellous thing that out of the whole lot of us we should not be able to get more than that. But you know I am an imprudent young man, of course,--I always shall be I dare say--to dare to hint that some people have a great deal too much money to go to heaven with. Of course it will be very wicked if I dare to say this morning, that to die rich is a very frightful thing; that there are some people who have got too much riches to allow us to have

any sure and certain hope that they have the love of God at all; for if they had more of the love of God, they would not grip their money so tightly. They would say, "While men are damning, what is my money? While men are dying, what is my gold? There it goes! As much as I need, I have, God allows it me; as much as I shall require in my old age, as much as my family can demand of me, that will I have, but as for more, a blast and a curse would be on it if I had it. My gold and my silver would be cankered, for I should be guilty of the blood of men's souls, and then condemnation would be at my door, because I had the money wherewithal to send the minister to preach to them, and I would not give it."

Now, I say again, there is no fear of any one becoming improvidently liberal. You need not be frightened that anyone here will give a thousand pounds this morning. We provide ample accommodation for those who feel inclined to do so. If anyone should be overtaken with such an enormous fit of generosity, we will register and remember it. But I fear there are no people like Barnabas now. Barnabas brought all he had, and put it into the treasury. "My dear friend, do not do that, do not be so rash." Ah! he will not do that; there is no necessity for you to advise him. But I do say again, if Christianity were truly in our hearts; if we were what we professed to be; the men of generosity whom we meet with now and hold up as very paragons and patterns would cease to be wonders, for they would be as plentiful as leaves upon the trees. We demand of no man that he should beggar himself; but we do demand of every man who makes a profession that he is a Christian, that he should give his fair proportion, and not be content with giving as much to the cause of God as his own servant. We must have it that the man who is rich must give richly. We know the widow's mite is precious, but the widow's mite has been an enormously great loss to us. O, that widow's

mite has lost Jesus Christ many a thousand pounds. It is a very good thing in itself; but people with thousands a-year talk of giving a widow's mite. What a wicked application of what never can apply to them. No; in our proportion we must serve our God.

III. Now, I come in conclusion to ask you very pointedly and plainly, WHAT DO YOU MEAN TO DO IN ANSWER TO THE HEATHEN'S CRY, "COME OVER AND HELP US?" Have I in all this congregation one man who loves sound doctrine, who has ability to preach, and who has a mind to go and preach the gospel in other lands? Because if I have, and if I have ten others who have a mind to give him ten pounds a year, I have an opening for sending him out at once. In Port Natal there are twenty Baptists, and those twenty Baptists are desirous of having a minister who should not only preach to them, but to the wild tribes around. They will raise him one hundred pounds, if we can manage to get the rest and send them out a missionary. Who can tell; he might be another Livingstone, perhaps a Moffat? Oh, that I had the honor of sending such an one from such a congregation as this! Have we no young men here this morning, who are ready to volunteer to go and preach the gospel in heathen lands? I confess, when I think of myself, I know I cannot go away. My calling is here. And yet I sometimes think what a lazy, feather-bed life it is for one to lead, to be preaching here when there are all these continents without the gospel. Some people think it wonderfully hard to preach two or three sermons a week. but I think preaching thirteen or fourteen is a fearfully little thing. And I think sometimes, "Oh, if I were somewhere rise, where there are some toils, some hardships to undergo! There is nothing to be done here. We cannot suffer, we cannot work, we cannot will crowns of martyrdom, we cannot will great battles here, as we could wish." Yes, young man, I say again, if you are ambitious--if you are ambitious to serve Christ, the

height of your ambition should lead you to say, "I desire to preach the gospel among the heathen." I hope there may be come here--some one at least--whose heart God hath touched. What! can it be possible that I should this morning address some eight thousand people, and yet out of the whole eight thousand there is not one who can say, "Here am I, send me?" Is it not strange? Very probably there is not. But yet I would fain hope that somewhere there is one, who will write on the tablet of his heart, "I will go home to pray, I will go home to study, and if God has given me power to preach, if there be any door open in his providence, here am I; I will be a preacher of the gospel in foreign lands."

And now, what are you resolved to do who cannot preach? Why, there are some of you, if you were to get up and preach, you had a great deal better sit down. It would not do for you to go and preach in foreign lands, because nobody would listen to you. I have often marvelled that some people should think themselves called to preach when they have no ability. As I tell them, "f God calls anybody to fly, he will give them wings, and if he calls them to preach, he will give them ability to preach." but if a man has not the ability to preach, I am sure he has not the call. Well, what will you do Says one, "I will pray earnestly in support of missions; I will cry to God, that great results may follow." Do so; and you shall have our best thanks for your prayers. But in doing that, you have not done very much. for recollect, that is what the Roman priest did for the beggar. The priest said he would not give him a sovereign, he would not give him a half-crown, nor would he give him a penny. "Holy father," said the beggar, "will you give me your prayers?" "Yes," said the priest, "kneel down." "No, not so," said the beggar; "for if your prayers had been worth a penny, you would not have given them to me." And when you say you will pray, but will not

help the cause with something more substantial; though we love your prayers, we night say, "You would not give them if they were worth a penny." If you have nought else to give to Christ, ye need not be ashamed of saying, "Jesus, I give thee my prayers;" but if you are blessed in your substance, you will be lying before him, if you ask him to bless his cause, and do not give of your means in its support.

Now, let each, as he is able, help this great cause; and above all let us all in our spheres be preachers of the gospel,

"Seeking to tell to others round,
What a dear Saviour we have found."

Let me say, before the collection is made, just this word. Alas! there are some of you here, that are as much heathen as if you were in Africa. To you I proclaim the gospel, and I have done--"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, find thou shalt be saved."

Chapter 25

The Desolations of the Lord, the Consolation of His Saints

A Sermon

(No. 190)

Delivered on Wednesday Morning, April 28, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

On behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society.

"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire."--Psalm 46:8-9.

IT SEEMS THAT EVERYTHING Christlike must have a history like that of Christ. His beginnings were small--the manger and the stable. So with the beginnings of that society which we love, and which we believe to be the very incarnation of the Spirit of Christ. Its beginnings also were small; but its latter end shall doubtless greatly increase--for, hath not the end of Christ become exceedingly glorious? He hath ascended up on high; he sitteth at the right hand of God, our Father; and doubtless this agency which God now employeth for the conversion of the world, shall have its ascension, and God shall greatly magnify it.

But as Christ was called to suffer, so must everything Christlike suffer with him. The Christian who is the most like his Master will understand the most of the meaning of that term, "fellowship with him in his sufferings;" and inasmuch as the Missionary Society is like Christ, and hath Christ's heart, and Christ's aim, it also must suffer like Jesus. This year we have been made to sip of that cup. The blood of our martyrs has been shed; our confessors have witnessed to the

faith of the Lord Jesus; at the hands of bloodthirsty and cruel men they have met their fate, and again the seed of the church has been sown in the blood of the martyred saint.

I felt that in addressing you this day, it would be far from me to offer you any advice or counsel, when I am but as the youngest among you all, but that I might be permitted, as sometimes the child doth comfort its parents, to utter some few words of consolation which might cheer you in the present distress, and nerve your arm for future combat with the great enemy of souls. And upon what subject could I address you, which could be more full of consolation than the present? "Come, behold the works of the Lord." Turn ye from man's bloodshed, and behold your God at work; and from the desolations of rebellion and carnage, and anarchy, turn your eyes here to the desolations which the Lord hath made in the earth. You see how, though the battle-bow still doth twang with the arrow, and though the spear is still imbrued in the heart's blood of men, yet he breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder, and burns the chariot in the fire.

We shall regard this text this morning, first, as a declaration of what has happened, and secondly, as a promise of what shall be achieved.

I. First of all, we shall look upon it AS A DECLARATION OF WHAT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth."

1. And now let us commence the discussion of this part of our subject, by inviting you to the sad spectacle of the desolations which God in his providence has in different ages brought upon divers nations. As it is said of man, that he is full of trouble, so it is with nations; they also are full of sorrows, and some of them exceeding bitter. Wars have devastated countries; plagues have thinned our populations; all kinds of evil have swept athwart the most potent empires, and many of them

have been compelled, at last, to yield to the destroying angel, and they slumber with the mighty dead. Doubtless there hath a wail gone up from the face of the earth, when the invasions of barbarians have put an end to the promise of civilization--when cities, renowned for the culture of the arts and sciences, have suddenly become sacked and burned--when nations that had made great advances in knowledge have been carried away captive, and the sun has been made to go back many a degree on the dial of the earth's history.

But I beg you now turn your eyes, and read the page of history, and mark the various catastrophes which have happened to this world; and I appeal to you, as persons who have understanding, and who can trace the Lord's hand in these matters--have not all these things worked together for good? and hitherto, have not the revolutions, the destructions of empires, and the falls of dynasties, been eminent helps to the progress of the gospel? Far be it from us to lay the blood of men at God's door. Let us not for one moment be guilty of any thought that the sin and the iniquity which have brought war into the world is of God; but, at the same time, as firm believers in the doctrine of predestination, and as firmly holding the great truth of a divine providence, we must hold that God is the author of the darkness as well as of the light--that he creates the providential evil as well as the good--that while he sendeth the shower from on high, he also is the father of the devastating storm. Oh! I say, then, come and see the Lord's hand in "Aceldama, the field of blood." Come ye, and behold the Lord's hand in every shake of the pillars of the constitutions of the monarchies of earth. See the Lord's hand in the crumbling of every tower and the tumbling down of every pinnacle which had aspired to heaven. For he hath done it--he hath done it! God is present everywhere.

And now, I again say, can you not see in all these things, a gracious

as well as a terrible God? Can you not feel that everything that has yet happened to the world, has really been for its good? Wars, contusions, and tumults, are but the rough physic wherewith God will purge the diseased body of this earth from its innumerable ills. They are but a terrible tornado with which God shall sweep away the pestilence and fever that lurk in the moral atmosphere; they are but the great hammers with which he breaks in pieces the gates of brass, to make a way for his people; they are but the threshing wains, with which he doth thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff, that Israel may rejoice in the Lord, and that the sons of Jacob may triumph in their God. As it hath been in the beginning, so it shall be even unto the end. The noise and the tumult of war in India shall produce good; the blood of our sisters shall be avenged, not by the sword, but by the gospel. On India's blood-red gods, the arm of the Lord shall yet be felt; the might of him that sits upon the throne shall be acknowledged by the very men, who, first in the fray, have blasphemed the God of Israel. Let us not fear, let us not tremble; the end of all things cometh at last, and that end shall certainly be the desired one, and all the wrath of man shall not frustrate the designs of God. The past troubles assure us for the present, and console us for the future. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolation. he hath made in the earth."

2. But now, turning from this somewhat dreary subject, I must invite you next to look at some desolations which will ever be fair in the eye of the follower of Jesus--the desolations of false worship. What a pleasant theme! O that we had but power truly to enlarge upon it! Will you turn your minds back to the origin of idolatry, and tell me, if you can, what were the names of the first gods whom men profanely worshipped? Are they known? Are not their names blotted out from

history? Or, if any of them be mentioned, are they not a by-word, a hissing, and a reproach? What shall we say of idolatries which are of later date--those which have been noted in Holy Scripture, and therefore handed down to infamy? Who is he that now bows before the god of Egypt? Hath the sacred Ibis now a worshipper? Do any prostrate themselves before the Nile, and drink her sweet waters, and think her a deity? Hath not that idolatry passed away? and are not the temple and the obelisk still standing--"the desolations which the Lord hath made in the earth?" Talk we of the gods of Philistia? Do we mention Baal and Dagon? Where are they? We hear their names; they are but the records of the past; but who is he that doth them homage? Who doth now kiss his hands to the queen of heaven? Who boweth himself in the grove of Ashtaroth, or who worshippeth the hosts of heaven, and the chariots of the sun? They have gone! they have gone! Jehovah still standeth, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." One generation of idols hath passed away, and another cometh, and the desolations stand--memorials of the might of God.

Turn ye now your eyes to Assyria, that mighty empire. Did she not sit alone? She said she should see no sorrow. Remember Babylon, too, who boasted with her. But where are they, and where are now their gods? With ropes about their necks they have been dragged in triumph by our discoverers; and now in the halls of our land, they stand as memorials of the ignorance of a race that is long since extinct. And then, turn ye to the fairer idolatries of Greece and Rome. Fine poetic conceptions were their gods! theirs was a grand idolatry, one that never shall be forgotten. Despite all its vice and lust, there was such a high mixture of the purest poetry in it, that the mind of man, though it will ever recollect it with sorrow, will still think of it with respect. But where are their gods? Where are the names of their gods? Are not the

stars the last memorials of Jupiter, Saturn, and Venus? As if God would make his universe the monument of his destroyed enemy! Where else are their names to be found? Where shall we find a worshipper who adores their false deity? They are past, they are gone! To the moles and to the bats are their images cast, while many an unroofed temple, many a dilapidated shrine, stand as memorials of that which was, but is not--and is passed away for ever.

I suppose there is scarce a kingdom of the world where you do not see God's handiwork in crushing his enemies. It is to the shame of the idolater that he worships a god that his fathers knew not. Although there be some hoary systems of iniquity, in most cases the system is still new--new compared with the giant mountains, the first-born of nature--new compared with these old idolatries that have long since died away in the clouds of forgetfulness. It seems to me to be a very pleasing theme for us to speak of these desolations that God has made, For mark this--again we say it--as it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be. The false gods shall yet yield their sway; the temples shall yet be unroofed; their houses shall be burned with fire, and their names shall be left for a reproach. their dignity shall not be honored, neither shall homage be given unto their name O thou that fearest for the ark of the Lord, thou that tremblest at the firmness with which falsehood keeps its throne, look thou on these desolations and be of good cheer; God hath done mighty things, and he will do them yet again. One can never pass, even in our own country, a ruined abbey, or a destroyed priory, or an old broken down cathedral, without a sweet satisfaction. They are fair ruins, all the fairer because they are ruined, because their inhabitants are forgotten, because the monk no longer prowls our streets, because the nun, though she is here and there to be found, yet is no more honored, because the apostate church

to which they belong has ceased to have power among us, as once it had. We will, therefore, seek to honor God, and in all our journeyings we will think of this text--"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth."

3. And now, in the next place, let me ask you to remember what desolations God has made with false philosophies. As for stones and timbers, they are things that must decay in the common course of nature, and one might be apt to think that some of the desolate temples we behold were rather the trophies of the tooth of time, than of the hand of God, but thought is a lasting thing: a bold philosophy that shapes into words the wandering thoughts which have taken possession of the hearts of men is an enduring thing; and how have some philosophers believed that they were writing books which would be read for ages! They believed that their philosophy most certainly was eternal, and that to the last day their disciples would be had in reverence. Let any classical student remember how many systems of philosophy have passed away before the progress of the kingdom of Christ. The mighty Stagyrite, once the great master of all minds, who even held in sway many a Christian spirit, at last lost his empire before a purer truth.

But I forbear to mention these things; I would rather allude to the passing away of false systems of philosophy in modern times;for there are some of our fathers here, whose hairs have but just turned grey, who can remember the rise and fall of some seven or eight theories of infidelity. You can look back, and you can remember when it was a cursing obscenity with Tom Paine, having just also been the leering, scowling thing that Voltaire made it. You remember how it was the soaring, airy, speculating, scheming thing of Robert Owen; and then you recollect how it became the base, grovelling thing called Secularism. Men have trembled at that, and have thought it will last. I believe I

shall live to see the last Secularist buried, and that at the funeral there will be attending the leader of some new system of infidelity, who, despite his hatred to God, will have to say over the tomb, out of very spite against the one who precedes him, "Here lies a fool, yclept a Secularist." You need not be afraid of these things; they live each a very little while. A near moon brings a new phase of the system. The thing that they have fashioned with the utmost diligence, and which they deliver with the most earnest declamation, which they think they have proved with the sureness of logic, which they have built, as they think, upon a rock, against which the gates of heaven shall not prevail, how soon it is crumbled to dust, and not a vestige of it is left--scarce a remembrance of it--but all is past away and gone. And even so shall it be. As it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be. "Every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." The words of the wise are like the leaves of the tree of life, and they fade not; but the words of the wicked are like the autumn leaves, all withered, soon to become skeletons, and be blown away by the blast, to be heard of no more.

Planted by the rivers of water, the tree of the church still groweth, like a young cedar, fresh and green. But these things are like the heath in the desert: they see not when good cometh; from earth itself they fail to draw their nourishment, and heaven denies to the cursed thing its genial shower, and therefore soon it dies, and without a memorial it passeth away. Be of good cheer, beloved! It matters not where the enemy attack our intrenchments, they have been, and they shall be routed. We tell the enemies of Christ to look to the thousand defeats that they have suffered beforehand; we warn them of their folly in attacking us again. Woe unto you! woe unto you! Though ye quit yourselves like men, ye Philistines, ye must, ye shall be servants unto

Israel. Woe unto you, for the voice of a king is in our midst! Your fathers felt our might. Remember who it was that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon. Your sires have trembled before us; our fathers put ten thousand of your sires to flight, and we will do the same with you; and when we have done it we will say of you, "Aha! aha! aha!" and will make you a byword with our children, and a proverb with our menials for ever.

4. But my text has a special reference to war--the desolation of war. Have you not noticed how magnificently peace winneth its reprisals at the hand of war? Look through this country. Methinks if the angel of peace should go with us, as we journey through it, and stop at the various ancient towns where there are dismantled castles, and high mounds from which every vestige of a building has long been swept, the angel would look us in the face, and say, "I have done all this: warscattered my peaceful subjects, burned down my cottages, ravaged my temples, and laid my mansions with the dust. But I have attacked war in his own strongholds and I have routed him. Walk through his halls. Can you hear now the tramp of the warrior? Where now the sound of the clarion and the drum?" The sheep is feeding from the cannon's mouth, and the bird builds his nest where once the warrior did hang his helmet. As rare curiosities we dig up the swords and spears of our forefathers, and little do we reck that in this we are doing tribute to peace. For peace is the conqueror. It hath been a long duel, and much blood hath been shed, but peace hath been the victor. War, after all, has but spasmodic triumphs; and again it sinks--it dies, but peace ever reigneth. If she be driven from one part of the earth, yet she dwelleth in another; and while war, with busy hand, is piling up here a wall, and there a rampart, and there a tower, peace with her gentle finger, is covering over the castle with the mees and the ivy, and eating the

stone from the top, and letting it lie level with the earth.

I think this is a fine thought for the lover of peace; and who among us is not? Who among us ought not to be? Is not the gospel all peace? And do we not believe, that when the gospel is fully preached, and has its day, wars must cease, to the end of the earth! I therefore say, beloved brothers and sisters, may we not console ourselves under all the recent outbreaks of a most bloodthirsty and cruel massacre, in the fact, that God hath made desolations, even in war. He hath made desolations in the earth, and, as it hath been, so shall it be even unto the end. There is not now a rampart which shall not be sealed by peace. O ye hoary bastions, ye shall yet be destroyed, not by the cannon ball, but by something mightier still. Charged with love, this day we shoot against you the great guns of the gospel of Christ, and we believe that they shall move and shake you to your deep foundations, and ye shall crumble; or if ye stand, ye shall be uninhabited, except by the owl and the bittern. I have a fond belief that the day is coming, when Nelson, on the top of his monument, shall be upset, and Mr. Whitfield set there, or the apostle Paul. I believe that Napier, who stands in the square there, will lose his station. We shall say about these men, "They were very respectable men in the days of our forefathers, who did not know better than to kill one another; but we do not care for them now!" Up goes John Wesley where stood Napier! Away goes some one else, who was an earnest preacher of the gospel, to occupy the place high over the gate where another warrior rides upon his horse. All these things, the trickery of an ignorant age, the gewgaws of a people who loved bloodshed despite their profession of religion, must yet be broken up for old iron and old brass; every statue that stands in London shall yet be sold, and the price thereof cast at the apostles' feet, that they may make distribution as every man hath need. Wars must

cease, and every place where war reigneth and hath now its glory, must yet pass away, and fade and wither. We give all honor to these men now, for these are the days of our ignorance, and God in some degree winketh at us; but when the gospel spreads, we shall then find that when every heart is full of it, it will be impossible for us to tolerate the very name of war; for when God has broken the bow and burned the chariot, we shall break the image and dash the sculpture into a thousand atoms, We shall think, when the trade is done, the men that did it may well be forgotten.

II. I think there is enough to cheer our hearts, and nerve us all for the great battle of Christ. The desolations of the past should lead us to hope that there shall be the like, and greater, in the future. And now I am to look upon my text, and very briefly, AS A PROPHECY WHICH IS TO BE FULFILLED.

I should only needlessly occupy your time, if I were to go over all my heads again, because really every person will be quite as competent as I am to discern how what hath been shall be in a yet higher sense. But we must observe once more, in noticing this as a prophecy, the figure of our text. It was usual, after a great battle, and especially if peace was then firmly established, for the conquerors to gather up the arms of the vanquished into one great heap, and then setting fire to it all, as Israel did to the spoils of Jericho, everything was consumed. One of these days, when Christ shall come in his glory, or when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ--not to say anything which would look like proclaiming the second coming here to-day, although I most firmly believe it, and am sorry that we should ever have allowed, in any of our missionary meetings, any discussion upon a point which involves the faith of a great proportion of us, who hold this to be as dear and precious a

doctrine as any other in the word of God, and we therefore think it unfair that we should at any time have anything said against this; when we meet together in the common bond of union for the spread of the gospel of Christ, we think it a sore thing that we should be attacked then; however, leaving all that, whether it be by a spiritual or a by a personal coming--we believe that one of these days, we shall be roused from our beds by one who shall say to us, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth;" and when we arrive at the spot appointed, it may be, as the old Ephesians brought out all their books and burned them in the street, we shall see our soldiers marching rank and file, and lay down their arms, and all that they have of murderous implements, piling them into one heap; and happy is that mother's child who shall be there to see it! But see it some one shall, when it shall be truly said, as the fire is kindled over all these things,."He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."

Happy the day, when every war-horse shall be houghed, when every spear shall become a pruning-hook, and every sword shall be made to till the soil which once it stained with blood. It is of that my text prophecies, and my text naturally brings me to that, as the great climax of the gospel. This will be the last triumph of Christ, before death itself shall be dead, death's great jackal, war, must die also, and then shall there be peace on earth, and the angel shall say, "I have gone up and down through the earth, and the earth sitteth still and is at rest; I heard no tumult of war, nor noise of battle." This is what we hope for. Let us fight on, with diligence and earnestness.

And now, having thus enlarged upon my text, you will permit me to offer a few remarks on a more practical subject.

The question naturally arises, "Why has not this promise been more

abundantly fulfilled in our own times" Many say, "This is divine sovereignty." Well, we believe divine sovereignty with all our hearts; it is a doctrine which we delight to dwell upon, and ever to acknowledge; but we cannot make divine sovereignty the great sepulcher for our sins. We cannot have it that everything is to be laid at the door of divine sovereignty. We believe there is a sovereignty that ever overrules the sins of the church, as well as of the world. We hold that in the highest and purest sense, but we do think it is a very gross mistake for us always to be saving, if we are defeated, "It is divine sovereignty." Israel of old did not say so. They looked for the accursed thing that was in the camp. They did not say, "Divine sovereignty," when they were beaten by Benjamin; but they enquired of the Lord. They were not content to say it was sovereignty. It was sovereignty, no doubt. but they desired to find another reason which, when discovered, might help them to remove the difficulty, and enable them to conquer.

And now, beloved, there are many reasons, I think, why we do not prosper as we could desire in the missionary field; and permit me very briefly to hint at one or two. I shall mean no offense to any.

One reason is, because we have not a thorough and entire unanimity with regard to the matter. Now, I know something of the Baptist denomination. I have wandered through every county of England, pretty well, and been to a great number of the churches, and I grieve to see that there are many of our churches still standing totally aloof from the missionary field. If they stood aloof from our particular society, I might not so much regret, if they chose to have one of their own; but they have not one of their own either. There is the great thing for which I would blame them. That they should have some objection to unite with those whom they think to be different from them in doctrinal

opinions, would not only be excusable, but possibly there might be occasions when it would be praiseworthy; but that any of us, who hold strongly the doctrines of the grace of God, and who, perhaps, give greater prominence than others to the truth as it was taught by Calvin, and, as we believe, taught by Christ, should therefore have no missionary society, is a great and crying sin; and I really think that a defection of a large part of our body, however it may be caused, may be one reason why we have not had such an abundant blessing from God. For, look ye here! Ye say ye can do without them. Very well: so said the people to Joshua, when he led his troops to attack Ai. They said, "Let not all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labor thither; for they are but few." They thought it would be unnecessary, and Joshua left behind him a large part, and only took with him his strong, able-bodied men. But, together with "the accursed thing" that Achan had concealed, I believe that the want of all the army of Israel was a part-cause of the defeat at Ai. So it is with us. Ah! if there be a means whereby we can get every brother who calls himself a Baptist to unite himself with this society, if there be any method of love, if there be any way of making concessions, if there be any mode or any means whereby we all could be bound together in the holy brotherhood as a denomination, I think we are each of us bound to make it. I am sure, as far as I am concerned, I may say that there is not to be found upon the surface of the world one more strongly attached to the old faith, as I believe it to be--the old, strong, doctrinal faith--coupled with the earnest preaching of the gospel to every creature; yet I find myself not out of place in preaching for a Baptist Mission, nor out of place in helping it, and throwing my whole heart into it. It seems to me, it was founded by ourselves: the very men who held these truths

were the first leaders in it; and it seems to me the most strange and marvellous thing, that any brother should, from his love to sound doctrine, stand aloof from missions. I am sure it is a stab against our prosperity as churches at home, if we do not come forward to help the missions at large.

I am just saying this, because it may reach to the ears of many of the brethren who are possibly not present to-day. I trust they will think the matter over. We do not ask them to come with us--we will be very glad if they will--but do let them at the very least have a society of their own. Let them be doing something, and do not let it be said that there is a Baptist existing who does not love to send the gospel to the utmost ends of the earth. That maniac nonsense about God doing his own work, and our sitting still and doing nothing, ought to have been buried long ago. I know not how to characterise it: it has done us immense damage. We know that God has accomplished his own work; but he always has worked and always will work with means. The men who do not approve of working by means, and stand by and say, "I do not sympathise with it," I do not wonder that God does not work with them: they do not deserve to be worked with, if they think so. Let us cast away that, and let us say, "If we can agree with these brethren who associate in missions we will do so; if we cannot agree with those who associate in one society, we will do it somehow else; but do it we will, for it is our anxious wish that the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." But again, it is not all that, my brethren. It is a want of real love to missions in all our churches: and if this should fall scatheless and if any should say, "It is not so of the church of which I am a member," let it be so; I do not mean, when I speak generally, to include each individual. It is, I believe, one reason of our want of success, or of that measure of want of

success that we have, that there is not a true love of missions in the churches that really help them. Many love missions; they love the cause of Christ; but they do not love Zion better than their own households. but, as far as I can judge, there are many whose attention to the mission field is confined to that one day in the year when the sermon is preached. Some of them confine that day very closely too; for the very smallest threepenny piece that can be discovered is appropriated to the collection on that occasion. They love the mission, yes, they do, but their love is that old sort, of which it is said, "She never told her love." They never tell it by any contribution, but they keep it very still in their hearts. We cannot think but that they do desire that the gospel should fly abroad, for they sing it with lusty lungs and with voice vociferous; but when there is aught to be dune, they pinch and screw--the purse-string is made half the ordinary circumference, and it cannot be undrawn. There is little to be given for Christ. Christ must take the dregs, the sweepings of their wealth. Ah! if our churches loved missions, if we had more of the true Spirit in our midst, we should find scores of our young men rising up to go out and preach the gospel to the heathen; and then the church, taking an interest in the young men who sprang from its own bowels, would think it its duty to maintain its missionary, and send him forth preaching the gospel to every creature.

I remember Edward Irving once preached a sermon to a vast congregation, upon missions; I think he preached for four hours; and the object of the sermon was to prove that we were all wrong--that we ought to send out our missionaries without purse or scrip, giving them nothing! Edward never volunteered to go himself! If he had done so at the end of the sermon, we might have endorsed his philosophy. But he stayed at home, and did not go. Now, we are no believers in that. We think that

if a man cannot have help, it is his business to go without it. If a man loves the ministry, if he can only preach Christ's gospel in poverty, God bless him in his poverty; if he has to be a tent maker, like Paul, and to work for his own living, and to go forth without purse or script.But as a church we cannot have that. "No, no;" we say, "brother, if you are going to a foreign land, and you give your life and health, and if you renounce the comforts of your family, we cannot let you go without anything. The least we can do is to provide for your needs." And one says, "There! though you go without purse or scrip, you cannot get across the sea except you have a ship, I will pay your passage-money." Another says, "You cannot preach to these people without learning the language; and while you are learning the language you must eat and drink. It is quite impossible that you can live by faith, unless you have something that you can nourish your body with: there is the fund to support you, that you may give all your time to the preaching of the word." Ah! if we did but love Christ better, my brothers' and sisters, if we lived nearer to the cross, if we knew more of the value of his blood, if we wept like him over Jerusalem, if we felt more what it was for souls to perish, and what it was for men to be saved--if we did but rejoice with Christ in the prospect of his seeing the travail of his soul, and being abundantly satisfied--if we did but delight more in the divine decree, that the kingdoms of this world shall be given to Christ, I am sure we should all of us find more ways and more means for the sending forth the gospel of Christ.

But to conclude. Perhaps, I may say, and some of you may with tears confess it is true, it is a want of a revived godliness in our church at home which prevents our hoping for any great success abroad. Ah! brethren, we must till our own vineyards better, or else God will not make us successful in driving the plough across the broad acres of the

continents. We want to have our brethren more earnest in prayer. Look at our prayer-meetings--a miserable handful of people, compared with the congregation. We want to have them more earnest in labor. Look at many of our agencies, dying for want of effective laborers, when they are to be found, but they are not willing to come forth. Where is the zeal of olden times? We are not among those that say, "The former times were better than now." In some respects they were, in others not so good; but if they were better, it is not ours to bemoan, but ours to labor to make these better still. We want--gathering up all things into one--we want the outpouring of the divine Spirit in our churches at home. Just as the anointing oil was first poured on Aaron's head, and then went to the skirts of the garment, so must the Holy Spirit be poured on England, and then shall it go to the utmost borders of the habitable earth. We want to have Penticosts at home, and then, Hedes and Parthians and Elamites shall hear the word. "Begin at Jerusalem," is Christ's ordinance, and it is Christ's method. We must begin there; and as we begin there, in circles wider and wider and wider, yet the gospel shall spread, till, "like a sea of glory, it spreads from pole to pole."

Now, dear brethren and sisters, in repairing to our homes this morning, let us carry away at least one thought. Let us believe firmly that God's purpose shall be accomplished; let us hope joyously that we may be the instruments of its accomplishment; and then let us labor prayerfully, that our wishes may be consummated. What is there that you can do to-day for Christ? Oh! if you love Christ, do not let this day pass till you have done something for him. Speak for him; give to him; pray for him. But let each day be spent as a mission day, and be you each day a missionary for Christ. Begin at home. Enlarge your charity; but begin first at home. Let your own houses be cared for, and then

your own synagogues; and then, after that, you may send your missionaries to every part of the earth. I beg for a good collection to-day. It is the first time we have met together in this place, and there is a large number of us; if we do not give a right good collection to-day, we shall not save our own credit. That is a poor way of putting it. It will be a disgrace to us if we do not give well to-day; but besides that, if we save our own credit, we shall not approve our love to Jesus. Give as God hath given to you.

Chapter 26

Christ Glorified as the Builder of His Church

A Sermon

(No. 191)

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 singeth 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 floweth 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, gratefully thanking 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 for ever." And the earth singeth the same: "Great art thou in thy works, O Lord! and unto thee 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 doth 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. To-day, in this house, thousands of voices shout his name, and when the sun of to-day shall set, it shall rise upon another land, where Christian hearts awakened, shall begin to praise as we have just concluded; and when to-morrow 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--"Greet God, thou art 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 hosannahs and hallelujahs?--"Unto him that liveth and sitteth 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. No, 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 hath 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 first-born, 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 he is everywhere; in the highest heavens and in the deepest hell God is to found, but especially did he dwell in his temple, so that when his people prayed, they were bidden 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 dwelleth on every hill-top, 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 was everywhere to be discovered; but if you would see hint 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, 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 o'er. Hence his church is said to be his temple Oh, Christian people, you know this, for God dwelleth in you, and walketh 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 doth 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 wide 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 well, 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 therein. 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, whilst the feeblest 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 loveth the ordinance in its outward sign, and reverenceth 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 hath no faith; he dishonors God, he dishonors the ordinance in venturing to touch it, when he is not one of the church, and therefore hath 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 besides pretendeth to worship God, worshippeth him not aright. His offering is like that of Cain; God hath no respect to his sacrifice, for without faith it is impossible to please God. We care not who it is that doth the act; unless he believeth, he cannot will 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. Now, 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 exceeding 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 for ever, 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 ground-work--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 door-post, 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 firing 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 hath 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 pre-arranged in that eternal covenant of grace which was the great plan that Christ, the Almighty Architect, did draw 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, you 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 hath been digged, 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 builded,

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 Hirum, 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, occured 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 moulds 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 hath 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 hath 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 for ever. No Hiram is needed. The axe is in his hand, the plane is in his hand too. He understandeth well that business. Was he not a carpenter on earth? And spiritually,

he shall be the same to his church for ever 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 whence we were digged, and the rock whence 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 fashioneth our hearts aright, and prepareth 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 rough-casts 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 for ever, but to abide as eternal pillars in the temple of our Lord Now, you know the Tyrians 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 thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." But when he begins to reap, 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 to-day. 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 doth 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 halt 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 ye 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 twinklings 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 liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, 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 some one 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, ye children of God, will ye praise any but your Master? Calvinists, today you love John Calvin; will you praise him there? Lutheran, to-day thou dost love the memory of that stern reformer; wilt thou sing the song of Luther in heaven? Follower of Wesley, thou hast a reverence for that evangelist; wilt thou 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 and unjarring unison "unto him that loved us, that washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever 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. To-day, you praise him, but not as you can wish; in heaven you shall praise him to the summit of your desire. To-day 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 effete? 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 ever more adore the matchless splendor of his love, the marvels of his might. Suppose some one entering were to say to the redeemed, "Suspend your songs for a moment! Ye 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 some one 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 movings of its world but for us to stop our songs--never, never!"--and it shall be said,

"Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

He shall have all the glory, and he shall have it for ever; his name shall endure for ever; his name shall continue as long as the sun; men shall be blessed in him, and all generations shall call him blessed; therefore shall they praise him for ever and ever.

IV. Now, in conclusion, let us just make A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF OUR TEXT. Brothers and sisters, are we to-day 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 thee, O God, for thou hast made the gold more than gold, and the cedar more than cedar, inasmuch as thou hast consecrated us to be the temple of shine 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 for ever, dark dank stones, where the mobs, and the greed, and the slimy thing for ever might have lived; disgraced, abandoned, cast away in blackness of darkness for ever--when you think of this, and then remember that you are stones in Jehovah's temple,--living stones,--oh, ye must say that ye will praise him, for man is more than man, now that God dwelleth in him. Daughters of Jerusalem, rejoice! you are more than women now. Sons of Israel, rejoice! for your manhood is exalted, he hath made you temples of the Holy Ghost--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 offerers 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 to-day to be left out of the muster-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 dread 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 thy 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 thou for them shalt call?"

Sinner conceive it! The list is read, and thy 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 o'erleaps its boundary, and is about to encircle thee in its flame; now despise religion! Ah! no. I see thee. Now thy stiff knees are bending, now thy bold forehead for the first time is covered with the hot sweat of trembling, now thine eyes that once were full of scorn are full of tears, thou dost lock on him whom thou didst despise, and thou art weeping for thy sin. sinner, it will be too late then. there is no cutting of the stone after it gets to Jerusalem. Where thou

fallest there thou liest. Where judgment ends thee, there eternity shall leave thee. 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 for ever; once damned, damned to all eternity. Wilt thou choose this and despise Christ? or wilt thou 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 ye this day whom ye will serve. If sin be 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 amongst the many who shall be glorified with Christ, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; believe now, to-day "If ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Men, brethren, and fathers, believe and live; cast yourself at Jesus' feet, put your trust in him,

"Renounce thy 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.

Chapter 27

The Sunday-School Teacher--A Steward

A Sermon

(No. 192)

Delivered on Tuesday Evening, May 4, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Bloomsbury Chapel,

On behalf of the Sunday School Union

"Give an account of thy stewardship."--Luke 16:2.

WE HAVE HEARD many times in our lives, that we are all stewards to Almighty God. We hold it as a solemn truth of our religion, that the rich man is responsible for the use which he makes of his wealth; that the talented man must give an account to God of the interest which he getteth upon his talents; that every one of us, in proportion to our time and opportunities, must give an account for himself before Almighty God. But, my dear brothers and sisters, our responsibility is even deeper and greater than that of other men. We have the ordinary responsibility which falls upon all professors of religion, to give an account of all we have to God; but besides this, you and I have the extraordinary responsibilities of our official standing--you, as teachers for Christ in your classes; and others of us as preachers for him before the great congregation. The first responsibility is too heavy for any man to fulfill. Apart from divine grace, it is not possible that any man should so use all that God has given him as to be accepted at last with a "Well done thou good and faithful servant;" yet even if that were possible, it would still remain an utter impossibility for us fully to sustain the fearful weight of responsibility which rests upon us as teachers of the Word of God to

our fellow immortals. Upon our necks there are two yokes; Sovereign grace can make them light and easy, but apart from that they will gall our shoulders; for they are, of themselves, too heavy for us to bear. Common responsibility is as Solomon's whip; but extraordinary responsibility derived from official standing when not regarded, will be as the scorpion of Rehoboam, its little finger shall be thicker than its father's loins. Woe unto the watchman who warns them not; woe unto the minister who fails to teach the truth; woe unto the Sabbathschool teacher who is unfaithful to his trust. Now, let us try to stir one another up, upon this seriously important matter. You will pray for me while I preach, that I may utter some things that may do good to all now present, and I will labor that God may, in answer to your prayers, give me words and thoughts which shall be blessed to you.

Now, first, let me show the meaning of our being stewards then let us consider what kind of account we shall have to give; and lastly, let us notice the days of reckoning when we OUGHT to cast up our account, and the days of reckoning when we MUST give in our account.

I. First, then, THE STEWARD--WHAT IS HE?

In the first place, the steward is a servant. He is one of the greatest of servants; but he is only a servant. Perhaps he is the bailiff of a farm, and looks, to all intents and purposes, like a country farmer: he rides over his master's estate, and has many men under him; still he is only a servant, he is under authority, he is only a steward. Perhaps he is steward in the house of some gentleman, who employs him to see after the whole of his establishment, in order that he may be free from cares. In that capacity he is himself a master, but still he is a servant; for he has one over him. Let him be as proud as he pleases, he has little to be proud of, for the only rank he holds in life, is the rank of a servant, Now, the minister, and the Sunday-school teacher

specially stand in the rank of servants. Why, we are none of us our own masters; we are not independent gentlemen. who may do as we please, our classes are not our own farms, which we may till in our own manner, and neglect if we please, out of which we may produce any harvest, or none at all, at our own discretion. No, we are nothing better than stewards, and we are to labor for our Master in heaven. What a strange thing it is to see a minister or a teacher giving himself fine airs, as if he were everybody in the world and might do as he pleased. Is it not an anomaly? How is he to talk about the sacrifices that he makes, when he is spending only his master's property? How is he to boast about the time which he expends, when his time is not his own? It is all his Master's. He is a servant, and therefore, do he what he may, lie only discharges the duty for which he is well rewarded. He has no reason to be proud, or to lord it over others, for whatever his power among them may be, he is himself neither more nor less than a servant. Let each of us try to recollect that henceforth "I am only a servant." If a superintendent puts a teacher to a class which she does not like, she will recollect that she is a servant. She does not allow her servants at home to stand up and say, they are not going to do scullerywork but will only wait at table; they are servants, and must do as they are bidden; and if we felt that we were servants, we should not object to do what we are told for Christ's sake: though we would not do it at the dictation of men yet for Christ's sake we do it as unto the Lord. We do not suppose that our servants will come to us at night, and expect us to say to them, "You have done your work very well to-day," we do not imagine that they will look for constant commendation. They are servants, and when they get their wages, that is their encomium on their work. They may judge they are worth their money, or else we should not keep them. When you do your work for Jesus, recollect you

are only a servant. Do not expect always to have that encouragement, which some people are constantly crying after. If you get encouragement from your pastor from other teachers, from your friends, be thankful; but if you do not get it, go on with your work notwithstanding. You are a servant, and when you receive your reward, that is of grace, and not of debt, then you will have the highest encomium that can be passed upon you, the plaudit of your Lord, and eternal glow with him whose you are, and whom you desire to serve.

But still while the steward is a servant, he is an honorable one. It does not do for the other servants in the house to tell him that he is a servant. He will not endure that: he knows it, and feels it he desires to act and work as such, but at the same time, he is an honored servant. Now, those who serve Christ in the office of teaching, are honorable men and women. I remember to have heard a very unseemly discussion between two persons, as to whether the minister was not superior to the Sabbath-school teacher. It reminded me of that talk of the disciples, as to who among them was the greatest. Why, we are all of us "the least," if we feel aright, and though we must each of us exalt our office as God hath given it to us, yet, I see not anywhere in the Bible, anything that should lead me to believe that the office of the preacher is more honorable than that of the teacher. It seems to me, that every Sunday-school teacher has a right to put "Reverend" before his name as much as I have, or if not, if he discharges his trust he certainly is a "Right Honourable." He teaches his congregation and preaches to his class. I may preach to more, and he to less, but still he is doing the same work, though in a smaller sphere. I am sure I can sympathies with Mr. Carey, when he said of his son Felix, who left the missionary work to become an ambassador, "Felix has drivelled into an ambassador;" meaning to say, that he was once a great person as

a missionary, but that he had afterwards accepted a comparatively insignificant office. So I think we may say of the Sabbath-school teacher, if he gives up his work because he cannot attend to it, on account of his enlarged business, he drivels into a rich merchant. If he forsakes his teaching because he finds there is so much else to do, he drivels into something less than he was before; with one exception, if he is obliged to give up to attend to his own family, and makes that family his Sabbath-school class, there is no drivelling there; he stands in the same position as he did before. I say they who teach, they who seek to pluck souls as brands from the burning, are to be considered as honored persons, second far to him from whom they received their commission; but still in some sweet sense lifted up to become fellows with him, for he calls them his brethren and his friends. "The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Only one more thought here. The steward is also a servant who has very great responsibility attached to his position. A sense of responsibility seems to a right man always a weighty thing. To do a thing where there is no responsibility involved at all, is a very slight matter, and hence we find in ordinary affairs that the labor which involves no trust is but poorly paid. But where there is a large amount of trust reposed the labor is paid in proportion. Now the work of the Sabbath-school teacher is one of the most responsible in the world. It has sometimes staggered me to think how greatly God trusts you and me. You remember the story of the prodigal. It finds a counterpart in each of us, who after long wandering in sin have come home to Jesus. I sometimes think that a prudent father, when the prodigal was restored to his house, could receive him to his heart,

would press him to his bosom, and give him a share of all his wealth, but would be very slow to trust him in any matter of responsibility. The next market-day the old gentlemen would say, "Now John I love you with all my heart, but you know you ran away once, and spent your living riotously; I must send your elder brother to market; I cannot trust you with my purse: I love you; I have totally forgiven you, at the same time I cannot yet rely upon you." Why does not God say so to us? Instead of that, when he takes poor prodigals to his heart, he trusts us with his most precious jewels, he trusts us with immortal souls. He permits us to be the means of seeking his lost sheep, and then allows us to feed the lambs after they are gathered. He puts the prodigal into the most important station, and hath confidence in him. Then my brethren and sisters, seeing he hath been gracious enough to repose confidence in such unworthy persons, shall we deceive him? Oh no; let us earnestly labor as stewards that every part of the estate committed to us shall be found in good order when our Master comes; that every jot and tittle of our account shall be found correct when he sums it up in the great day of the audit before his throne. Our office is a very very solemn one. Some think little of it. Some take it upon themselves very lightly. Giddy youths are enticed into the school and not rendered more sober by their connection with it. Let such depart from us. We want none but those who are sober, none but those who solemnly weigh what they are doing, and who enter upon the work as a matter involving life or death, not as a trivial affair which concerns the interests of time, but an awfully solemn thing which even an angel would be incapable of performing, unless he had the abundant assistance of God the Holy Spirit. I have thus endeavored very simply to set forth the idea couched in the word "stewardship." We are servants highly honored, very responsible, and much trusted.

II. And now, THE ACCOUNT--"Give an account of thy stewardship." Let us briefly think of this giving an account of our stewardship.

Let us first notice that when we shall come to give an account of our stewardship before God, that account must be given in personally, by every one of us. While we are here, we talk in the mass; but when we come before God, we shall have to speak as individuals. You hear persons boasting about "our Sabbathschool." Many persons are wicked enough to call the Sabbath-school "their school," when they never see it by the year together. They say, "I hope our school is flourishing," when they never subscribe a halfpenny, when they never give the teachers a word of encouragement, or even a smile, and do not know how many children the school contains. Yet they call it theirs. Thieves that they are, taking to themselves that which does not belong to them! Well, but we, in our measure, make the same mistake. As a ministry, we often talk of the doings of the "body," and what wonders have been done by the "denomination" Now, let us recollect, when we come before God, there will be no judging us in denominations, no dealing with us in schools and in churches, but the account must be given for each one by himself: So, then, thou that hast the infant class, thou wilt have to give thine own account. It was but the other day thou wast finding fault with the conduct of the senior class, and thou west told then to look at home. Conscience told thee so. But at last, when thou shalt have to stand before God, thou wilt have no account to give of the senior class, but of that infant class committed to thee. And you, my sister, you have been seven or eight years a teacher--you must give an account for yourself, not for that other teacher of another class, of whom you have often boasted, because she has been the means of bringing six seven children to Christ lately. Remember, her six won't be put with your none at all, in order to make the total at the year's end

look respectable; but there will stand your great blank at the end of your labors, and there will remain the dark mark for your negligence, for your unpunctuality, your carelessness in your class, without the relief of the bright side of the diligent teacher's success. You must be judged each of you for yourself, not in parties, but one by one. This makes it terrible work, for a man to be looked at all alone. I have known people who could not bear to stand up in a pulpit; the very fact of so many eyes looking upon them seemed so horrible, but how will it be when we must stand up and hear our hearts read by the all-searching eye of God, and when the whole of our career in the offices which we now hold will be published before the sun, and that, I repeat it, without the salvo of the success of others, without any addition to our labors derived from the diligence of other teachers? Come, Mr. Steward, what is your account? Not that one, sir, not that one; your account. "Lord, I have brought in the account of the Sunday-school books." "No, not that, the account of your own class?" "Well, my Master, I have brought in the account of the class for the last twentyfive years, showing how many were converted." "No, not that; the account of your own class while you were its teacher." "Well, I have brought in the account of the class during the time I was teacher with So-and-so." "No, not that; the account of the class while you were the teacher of it alone, the account of how you taught what you taught, how you prayed, how earnestly you labored, how diligently you studied, and what you sought to do for Christ." Not the addenda of the other teacher who helped you in another part of the duty, but your own personal account alone must be brought in before God. "Give an account of thy stewardship." Putting it in this light, what account will some of you give in at the last and great day? Just let me stop a minute to charge your memories. What kind of account will it be? I trust a very

large number here can humbly in their hearts say "I have done but little, but I did that sincerely and prayerfully; may God accept it through Jesus Christ!" But I fear there are some others, who, if they are true to their consciences, will say, "I have done but little; I did that little carelessly. I did it without prayer; I did it without the help of the Holy Spirit." Then, my brother and sister, I hope you will add after that, "Oh, my God, forgive me, and help me from this good hour to be diligent in this divine business, fervent in my spirit, serving the Lord." And may God bless you in that prayer! Make no resolve, but offer a prayer which is better far; and may you be heard in heaven, the dwellingplace of God.

And note again, that while this account must be personal it must be exact. You will not, when you present your account before God, present the gross total, but every separate item. When thou givest in thine account of thy stewardship, it will be thus. Thou hadst so many children. What didst thou say to this child, and to this, and to this, and to the other? How often didst thou pray for that child with his bitter temper; for that child with his unbending obstinacy, for that child with its quickness, and its sweet affection; for that child, that sulky one; for that child, the headstrong, vicious one, that had learned all the evils of the street, and seemed to taint others? What didst thou do for each one of these? How didst thou labor for the conversion of every one? And to make the account still more particular it will run thus--What didst thou do for each child on each Sabbath? Thou heardest one child utter an ill word: didst thou reprove it? Thou sawest another child oppress a little one: didst thou deliver the less out of his hand and reprove him and teach both children to love each other? Didst thou notice the follies of each and strive to understand the temperament of each, so that thou shouldest fit thy discourse or

thy prayer to each? Didst thou travail in birth for the conversion of each one? Didst thou agonise in prayer with God, and then didst thou agonise in exhortation with them, beseeching them to be reconciled to Christ? I believe the account will be far more minute than this, when God shall come to try our hearts and reins as well as our works and ways. My poor way of putting it does but becloud the truth which I seek to bring forth, but nevertheless so shall it be; a special and exact account shall be given. And then there shall be an account given, for every opportunity; not only for every child, but for every opportunity of doing good to the child. Did you avail yourself of that afternoon, when the child was in a peculiarly solemn frame because his little brother lay at home dead? Did you seek to send the arrows home when providence had made a wound in his little heart because he had lost his dear mother? Did you seek to turn every event which occurred in the school to account, whether it was joyous or the reverse? God gave you the opportunity, and he will at last ask you what you did with it. We shall many of us make but a sorry account, for we have neglected much that we ought to have done; and the general confession must be ours as teachers, "We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done." And then remember, again, the account will be exact as to everything that we did. We shall not only be examined as to how we addressed the school; we may have had peculiar gifts for that, and we may have done well; it will be, "How did you address your own class?" and not that alone, but "How did you study the lessons?" If thou hadst no time it will not be required of thee to do what thou couldst not do, but if thou hadst much leisure how didst thou spend it? Was it for thy children, for thy Master's good, that thou mightest find polished shafts to shoot forth from thy bow, that God might bless thee, by

giving thee strength to send them home into the heart? And then, what didst thou do in thy closet? Wast thou cold and careless there? Were thy children forgotten, or didst thou bring them on thy heart, and in thine arms, and with tears and cries commend them to Christ? Ah, Sunday-school teachers, your closet shall be turned into the open air one day, and the contents of your secret chambers be published before the sun. Oh, ye whose cobwebbed closets witness against you; oh, ye against whom the beam out of the wall explaineth because your voice has not been heard there, against whom the very floor might bear witness, because it hath never felt the weight of your knees, how will you stand this searching test? How will you endure this day of burning, when God shall try you for everything you did, and everything you did not do which you ought to have done, in connection with the work of teaching your children? The account must be exact and precise, as well as personal. I shall not stop to enlarge upon that; your own conscience and judgment can enlarge upon it at home.

Now, remember, once again, that the account must be complete. You will not be allowed to leave out something, you will not be allowed to add anything. Perhaps some of you would like to begin with to-morrow, or next Sabbathday, and strike out the past. No, Sunday-school teacher, when God says, "Give an account of thy stewardship," you will have to begin with the day when you first were a teacher. Ah, my God, how many there are who profess to preach the Word, who might well beg that thou wouldest let many a year of their ministry be buried in forgetfulness!

Ah, might not some of us fall upon our knees and say "Lord, let me give account of my diligent years, not of my idle years?" But we must begin with our ordination, we must end with our death, and you must begin with the first hour when you sat down in your class, and you must end when life ends, and not till then. Does not this put a very solemn

aspect upon your account, some of you? You are always saying, "I will be better to morrow." Will that blot out yesterday? "I must be more diligent in future." Will that redeem the lost opportunities which have departed in the years gone by No; if you have loitered long, and lingered much, you will find the hardest running of to-day will not make up for the loitering of yesterday. There have been some men who, after spending many years in sin, have been doubly diligent for Christ afterwards, but they have always felt that they have only done the day's work in the day, and they mourned over those years which the locusts had eaten, as gone beyond recall. Oh! catch the moments as they fly, Sabbath-school teachers; use the days as they come. Do not be talking about making up for the badness of the first part of the account by the brilliant character of the conclusion; you cannot do it, you must give an account for each day separately, for each year by itself; and do what you may to retrieve your losses, the losses still stand upon the book, and the Master will say, at last, "How came these here?" And, though they are all covered up in Sovereign grace, if thou believest in Christ Jesus, yet thou wouldest not wish to have any the more stains for that. Because Christ hath washed thee, thou dost not desire to make thyself filthy; because he hath atoned thou dost not desire to commit sin. No, live, my brothers and sisters, as Sundayschool teachers should live. Live as if your own salvation depended upon the strictness of your fulfilling your duty; and yet recollect your salvation does not depend upon that, but on your personal interest in the everlasting covenant, and in the all-prevailing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Israel's strength and Redeemer.

III. And now, though there are many other things I might say, I fear lest I might weary you, therefore, let me notice some occasions when it

will be WELL for you all to give an account of your stewardship; and then notice when you MUST give an account of it.

You know there is a proverb, that "short reckonings make long friends," and a very true proverb it is. A man will always be at friendship with his conscience as long as he makes short reckonings with it. It was a good rule of the old Puritans, that of making frank and full confession of sin every night; not to leave a week's sin to be confessed on Saturday night, or Sabbath morning, but to recall the failures, imperfections, and mistakes of the day, in order that we might learn from one day of failure how to achieve the victory on the morrow, and that washing ourselves daily from our sins we might preserve the purity and whiteness of our garments. Brothers and sisters, do the same; make short reckonings. And it will be well for you every Sabbath evening, or at any other time, if so it pleaseth you, to make a reckoning of what you do on the Sabbath. I do not say this in order that you may be encouraged in any self-righteous congratulation that you have done well; because, if you make your reckoning correct, you will never have much cause to congratulate yourself, but always cause to mourn that you did your duty so ill compared with what you ought to have done. When the Sabbath is over and you have been twice to the house of God to teach your class, just sit down and try to recollect what were the points in which you failed. Perhaps you exhibited a hasty temper; you spoke to a boy too sharply when he was a little rebellious. Perhaps you were too complacent; you saw sin committed, and ought to have reproved it, and you did not do so. If you find out your own failing, that is half the way to a cure. Next Sabbath you can try and set it right.

Then, there are times which Providence puts in your way, which will be excellent seasons for reckoning. For instance, every time a boy or girl leaves the school, there is an opportunity afforded you of thinking to

yourselves, "Well, how did I deal with Betsy? How did I treat John? Did I give William such teaching as will help him in his future life, to maintain integrity in the midst of temptation, and preserve righteousness when he shall be subjected to imminent perils? How did I teach the girl? Did I so teach her that she will know her duty when she goes into the world? Did I strive with all my might to lead her to the foot of the cross?" There are many solemn questions which you may put concerning the child. And when you meet with any of them grown up in after years, you will find that a very proper season for giving an account of your stewardship to your conscience, by seeing whether you really did with that person, when a child, as you could have desired. Then, there is a peculiar time for casting up accounts when a child dies. Ah! what a host of thoughts cluster around the dying-bed of a child whom we have taught. Next to the father and the mother, I should think the Sabbath-school teacher will take the most interest in the dying one. You will recollect, "There lies withering the flower which my hand hath watered; there is an immortal soul about to pass the portals of eternity, whom I have taught. O God, have I taught this dying child the truth, or have I deceived him! Have I dealt faithfully with him? Have I told him of his ruin? Have I set before him how he was fallen in Adam and depraved in himself? Have I told him about the great redemption of Christ? Have I shown him the necessity of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit? or have I amused him with tales about the historical parts of the Bible and pieces of morality, and kept back the weightier matters of the law? Can I put my hand into his dying hand, and silently lifting my heart to heaven, can I say, "O God thou knowest I am clear of his blood?" Ah! that is a thing that stings the minister often--when he recollects that any of his congregation are dying. When I stand sometimes by the dying-bed of any of the ungodly in

my congregation, it brings many a tearful thought to me. Have I been as earnest as I ought to have been? Did I cry to this man, "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, stay not in all the plain, flee to the mountains! Did I pray for him, weep over him, tell him of his sin, preach Christ simply, plainly, boldly, to him? Was there not an occasion when I used lightness when I ought to have been solemn? Might there not have been a season when I uttered something by mistake, which may have been a pillow for the armhole of his conscience on which he might rest? Have not I helped to smooth his path to hell, instead of putting blocks in his way, and chains across his path that he might be turned out of it and led to seek the Saviour?" Ah! while we know that salvation is all of grace let none of us imagine we are free from the blood of souls, unless we warn them with diligence, unless we preach with faithfulness; for this same Bible which tells me that Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, tells me that if I warn them not, their blood, if they perish, shall be required at my hand.

But now, teacher, let me tell you an occasion when you must give in your account. You may put off all these seasons if you like; you may live as carelessly as you please, but if you have a particle of heart in you, you will have to give an account when you are sick, and cannot go to your class. If your conscience is worth having--which some people's consciences are not, for they are dead and seared--if your conscience is an awakened one, when you are put out of your work, you will begin to think how you did it. You should read the letters of that holy man Rutherford. If ever there was a man who preached the gospel sweetly and with divine unction, I should think it must have been he; and yet when he was shut up in Aberdeen, and could not get out to his much-loved flock, he begun to say, "Ah, if the Lord will let me go out

to preach again, I will never be such a dull drone as I was wont to be. I will preach with tears in mine eyes, so that the people may be comforted, and the sinners converted." Perhaps when you are lying ill in your bed-room, little Jane comes to see you, and says, "I hope you will soon get well, teacher;" or William, or Thomas calls and enquires about you every Sunday afternoon, and asks the servant to give his love to you, and hopes that teacher will soon come back again. Then is the time when I know you will be sure to cast up your account. You will say, "Ah, when I get back to my class, I won't teach them as I used to do. I will study my lesson more, I will pray more. I won't be so hot or so fast with them as I was wont to be. I will bear with their ill manners. Ah, if my Master will give me, like Hezekiah, another fifteen years of labor, and will give me more grace, I will strive to be better." You will be sure to cast up your accounts when you get sick. But if you do not do it then, I will tell you when you must; that is when you come to die. What a dreadful thing it must be to be an unfaithful preacher on a dying-bed. (Oh that I may be saved from that!) To be upon one's bed when life is over; to have had great opportunities, mighty congregations, and to have been so diligent about something else as to have neglected to preach the full and free gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! methinks as I lie in my bed a-dying, I should see spectres and grim things in the room. One would come and stare upon me and say, "Ah! you are dying. Remember how many times I sat in the front of the gallery, and listened to you, but you never once told me to escape from the wrath to come; you were talking to me about something I did not understand; but the simple matter of the gospel you never preached to me, and I died in doubt and trembling. And now you are coming to me to the hell which I have inherited because you were unfaithful." And when in our grey and dying age we see the generations

which have grown up around our pulpits, we shall think of them all. We shall think of the time when as striplings we first began to preach; we shall recollect the youths that then crowded, then the men, and then the grey heads that passed away. And methinks as they come on in grim procession, they will everyone leave a fresh curse upon our conscience because we were unfaithful. The death-bed of a man who has murdered his fellows, of some grim tyrant who has let the bloodhounds of war loose upon mankind, must be an awful thing. When the soldier, and the soldier's widow, and the murdered man of peace rise up before him; when the smoke of devastated countries seems to blow into his eyes and make them sore and red; when the blood of men hangs on his conscience like a great red pall; when bloody murder, the grim chamberlain, draws red curtains round his bed, and when he begins to approach the last end where the murderer must inherit his dreary doom, it must be a fearful time indeed. But, methinks to have murdered souls must be more awful still--to have distributed poison to children instead of bread, to have given them stones when they asked us for right food, to have taught them error when we ought to have taught them the truth as it is in Jesus, or to have spoken to them with cold listlessness when earnestness was needed. Oh, how your children seem to curse you, when you lie there and have been unfaithful to your charge. Yes, you will have to cast up your account then; and let me tell you, though your hope must all be fixed on Jesus, and that must be the consolation of your life and death, yet it will be very sweetest; remember when you come to die that you have been successful in winning souls to Christ. Ah! that will bring a little life into the cheek of the consumptive teacher, who sickens young when you remind her that there was a little girl who, a year before she was taken ill, kissed her hand, and said, "Good bye, teacher, we shall meet in heaven. Do not you recollect,

teacher, telling me the story of Jesus on the cross, and taking me home one Sunday afternoon, and putting your arms around my neck, and kneeling down and praying that God would bless me? Oh my teacher, that brought me to Jesus." Yes, teacher, when you are lying on your bed, pale and consumptive, you will recollect that there is one up there beside your Saviour who will receive you into eternal habitations--that young spirit who has gone before you, who by your means was emancipated from the wickedness and bondage of a sinful world. Happy is the teacher who has the hope of meeting a whole band of such in heaven. Such a thought often cheers me. Let the world say what it will, I know when I die there is many a spirit that will think of me in after years as the man who preached the gospel to him; many a drunkard brought to Jesus, and many a harlot reclaimed. And to the teacher it must be the same to think that when he claps his wings and mounts from this lower valley of earth to heaven, he will see a bright spirit coming down to meet him, and he will hear the Spirit saying--

"Sister spirit, come away,"

And when he opens his eyes, he will see that the song came from the lips of one to whom he had been blessed as the means of conversion. Happy you who shall be welcomed at the gates of Paradise by your spiritual sons and daughters, and who shall have beside your Master's welcome, the welcome of those whom he hath given you to be jewels in your crown of glory for ever and ever.

Now to conclude. We must all give an account to God in the day of judgment. That is the thing which makes death so terrible. Oh, Death, if thou wert all, what art thou but a pinch, and all is over! But after Death the judgment. This is the sting of the dragon to the ungodly. The last great day is come. The books are opened--men, women, and children are assembled. Many have come, and some on the right, and some on the

left, have already heard the sentence. It is now your turn. Teacher! what account will you render? In the first place, are you in Christ yourself? or have you taught to others what you did not know yourself? Have I any such here? Doubtless, I have. for alas! there are many such in our schools. Oh, my friend, what wilt thou say when the Master, opening the book, shall ask thee, "What hadst thou to do, to declare my statutes?" Will you look at him and say, "Lord I taught in thy schools, and thou hast eaten and drunk in our streets." If you should say so, he will say, "Verily, I never knew you, depart from me ye cursed." Then, what have you to say with regard to your schools--for although our state at last will really be settled according to our interest in Christ, you will be judged by your works, as evidences. The Scripture always says that we are to be judged according to our works. Well, then, the book is opened. You hear your own name read, and you hear that one brief sentence--"Inasmuch as thou hast been faithful over a few things I will make thee a ruler over many things--enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" Oh heaven of heavens! and is this the reward of the little trouble of teaching a few children? Oh, Master, thou givest ingots of gold for our grains of dust--our fragments of service thou rewardest with crowns and kingdoms! But he turns to others, and to you he says, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me. Depart from me into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Which of these two shall be said to me? Which of these two shall be said to you? "Oh! as in God's sight I charge you by him who is the Judge of quick and dead, by the swiftness of his chariot-wheels which now are bringing him here, by the solemnity of his awful tribunal, by that sentence which shall never be reversed, judge yourselves, for then ye shall not be judged. Give an account of your stewardship to your conscience, and to your

God. Confess your sins, seek his help, and begin from this hour, by his Holy Spirit, to undertake his work afresh; so shall ye stand before his face, clothed in the righteousness of your Redeemer and washed in his blood. Though not boasting in your works you shall be able to stand accepted in him, and your works shall follow when you rise from your labors, and you shall be among the blessed that die in the Lord.

Chapter 28

The World Turned Upside Down

A Sermon

(No. 193)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 9, 1858, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."--Acts 17:6.

THIS IS JUST an old version of an oft-repeated story. When disturbances arise in a state, and rebellions and mutinies cause blood to be shed, it is still the custom to cry, "The Christians have done this." In the days of Jesus we know that it was laid to the charge of our blessed and divine Master, that he was a stirrer of sedition, whereas he himself had refused to be a king, when his followers would have taken him by force to make him one, for he said, "My kingdom is not of this world;" yet was he crucified under the two false charges of sedition and blasphemy. The same thing occurred with the Apostles. Wherever they went to preach the gospel, the Jews who opposed them sought to stir up the refuse of the city to put an end to their ministry; and then, when a great tumult had been made by the Jews themselves, who had taken unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring him out to the people, then the Jews laid the tumult and the uproar at the door of the Apostles, saying, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." This plan was followed all through the Roman empire, until Christianity became the state religion. There was never a calamity befel Rome, never a war

arose, never a famine or a plague, but the vulgar multitude cried, "The Christians to the lions! The Christians have done this." Nero himself imputed the burning of Rome, of which he himself doubtless was the incendiary, to the Christians. The believers in Jesus were slandered as if they were the common sewer, into which all the filth of sin was to be poured; whereas, they were like Solomon's great brazen sea, which was full of the purest water, wherein even priests themselves might wash their robes. And you will remark that to this day the world still lays its ills at the door of the Christians. Was it not the foolish cry a few months ago, and are there not some weak-minded individuals who still believe it, that the great massacre and mutiny in India was caused by the missionaries. Forsooth; the men who turned the world upside down had gone there also; and because men broke through all the restraints of nature and of law, and committed deeds for which fiends might blush, this must be laid at the door of Christ's holy gospel, and the men of peace must bear on their shoulders the blame of war! Ah! we need not refute this: the calumny is too idle to need a refutation. Can it be true, that he whose gospel is love should be the fomenter of disturbance? Can it be fair for a moment to lay mutiny and rebellion at the door of the gospel, the very motto of which is, "Peace on earth, good will towards men?" Did not our Master say, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's?" Did he not himself pay tribute though he sent to the fish of the sea, to get the shekel? And have not his followers at all times been a peaceful generation?--save only and except where the liberty of their conscience was touched, and then they were not the men to bow their knees to tyrants and kings, but with brave old Oliver they did bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron, as they will do again, if their liberty ever should be infringed, so that they should not have

power to worship God as they ought.

We believe that what these Jews said of the Apostles, was just a downright wilful lie. They knew better. The Apostles were not the disturbers of states. It is true, they preached that which would disturb the sinful constitution of a kingdom and which would disturb the evil practices of false priests, but they never meant to set men in an uproar. They did come to set men at arms with sin; they did draw the sword against iniquity; but against men as men, against kings as kings, they had no battle; it is with iniquity and sin, and wrong everywhere, that they proclaimed an everlasting warfare. But still, brethren, there is many a true word spoken in jest, we say, and surely there is many a true word spoken in malice. They said the Apostles turned the world upside down. They meant by that, that they were disturbers of the peace. But they said a great true thing; for Christ's gospel does turn the world upside down. It was the wrong way upwards before, and now that the gospel is preached, and when it shall prevail, it will just set the world right by turning it upside down.

And now I shall try to show how, in the world at large, Christ's gospel turns the world upside down. and then I shall endeavor, as well as God shall help me, to show how the little world that is within every man is turned upside down, when he becomes a believer in the gospel of Christ.

I. First, then, the gospel of Christ turns the world upside down, WITH REGARD TO THE POSITION OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN.

In the esteem of men, the kingdom of heaven is something like this. High there on the summit, there sits the most grand rabbi, the right venerable, estimable and excellent doctor of divinity, the great philosopher, the highly learned, the deeply instructed, the immensely intellectual man. He sits on the apex: he is the highest, because he is the wisest. And just below him there is a class of men who are deeply

studied--not quite so skilled as the former, but still exceeding wise,--who look down at those who stand at the basement of the pyramid, and who say to them, "Ah, they are the ignoble multitude, they know nothing at all." A little lower down, we come to the sober, respectable, thinking men, not those who set up for teachers, but those who seldom will be taught, because they already in their own opinion know all that is to be learned. Then after them there come a still larger number of very estimable folks, who are exceeding wise in worldly wisdom, although not quite so exalted as the philosopher and the rabbi. Lower still come those who have just a respectable amount of wisdom and knowledge, and then at the very basement there come the fool, and the little child, and the babe. When we look at these we say, "This is the wisdom of this world. Behold how great a difference there is between the babe at the bottom, and the learned doctor on the summit! How wide the distinction between the ignorant simpleton who forms the hard, rocky, stubborn basement, and the wise man of polished marble, who there stands resplendent at the apex of the pyramid." Now, just see how Christ turns the world upside down. There it stands. He just reverses it. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty men are chosen; but God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom." It is just turning the whole social fabric upside down; and the wise man finds now that he has to go upstairs towards his simplicity. He has been all his life trying as far as he could, to get away from the simplicity of the credulous child, he has been thinking, and judging, and weighing, and bringing his logic to cut up every truth he heard, and now he has to begin, and go up again: he has to become a little child, and turn back to his former simplicity. This is the world

turned upside down, with a vengeance; and therefore the wise seldom love it.

If you wish to see the world turned upside down to perfection, just turn to the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: here you have a whole summary of the world reversed. Jesus Christ turned the world upside down the first sermon he preached. Look at the third verse. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now, we like a man who has an ambitious spirit--a man who, as we say, knows how to push his way in the world--who looks up--is not contented with the position that he occupies, but is always for climbing higher and higher. And we have a very fair opinion too of a man, who has a very fair opinion of himself--a man who is not going to bow and cringe. He will have his rights, that he will, he will not give way to anybody. He believes himself to be somewhat, and he will stand on his own belief, and will prove it to the world yet. He is not one of your poor, mean-spirited fellows, who are content with poverty, and sit still. He will not be contented. Now such a man as this the world admires. But Christ just turns that upside down, and says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven." The men who have no strength of their own, but look for all to Christ--the men who have no spirit to run with a wicked world, but who would rather suffer an injury than resent one--the men who are lowly and of a humble carriage, who seek not to lift their heads above their fellows; who if they be great have greatness thrust upon them, but never seek it--who are content along the cool, sequestered vale of life, to keep the even tenour of their way--who seem to have always ringing in their ears, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not"--"the poor in spirit," happy in their poverty, who are content with the Lord's providence, and think themselves far more rich than they deserve to be.

Now, these men Christ says, are blessed. The world says, they are soft, they are fools; but Christ puts those on the top whom the world puts at the bottom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for their's is the kingdom of heaven."

Then there is another lot of people in the world; they are always mourning. They do not let you see it often, for their Master has told them when they fast, to anoint their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, but still secretly before God they have to groan; they hang their harps upon the willows; they mourn for their own sin, and then they mourn for the sin of the times. The world says of these, "They are a moping, melancholy set; I would not care to belong to their number;" and the gay reveller comes in, and he almost spits upon them in his scorn. For what are they? They love the darkness. They are the willows of the stream, but this man, like the proud poplar, lifts his head, and is swayed to and fro in the wind of his joy, boasting of his greatness, and his freedom. Hear how the gay youth talks to his mourning friend, who is under conviction of sin. "Ah! yours is a morbid disposition; I pity you; you ought to be under the hand of a physician. You go mourning through this world. What a miserable thing, to be plunging through waves of tribulation! What a dismal case is yours! I would not stand in your shoes and be in your position for all the world." No, but Christ turns the world upside down; and so those people whom you think to be mournful and sorrowful, are the very ones who are to rejoice. For read the fourth verse, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." Yes, worldling, your joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. It blazeth a little, and maketh a great noise: it is soon done with. But "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." You cannot see the light now, because it is sown. It lies under the clods of poverty, and

shame, and persecution, mayhap. But when the great harvest day shall come, the blades of light, upstarting at the second coming, shall bring forth "the full corn in the ear" of bliss and glory everlasting. O ye mourning souls, be glad; for whereas the world puts you beneath it, Christ puts you above the world's head. When he turns the world upside down, he says you shall be comforted.

Then there is another race of people, called "the meek." You may have met with them now and then. Let me describe the opposite. I know a man who never feels happy unless he has a law-suit; he would never pay a bill unless be had a writ about it. He is fond of law. The idea of pulling another up before the court is a great delicacy to him. A slight affront he would not easily forget. He has a very large amount of meek dignity; and if he be never so slightly touched, if a harsh word be spoken against him, or one slander uttered he is down upon his enemy at once; for he is a man of a hard temper, and he casts the debtor into prison, and verily I say unto thee, if thou gettest in there by his writ, thou shalt never come out until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. Now the meek are of a very different disposition. You may revile them, but they will not revile again; you may injure them, but they know that their Master has said, "I say unto thee, resist not evil." They do not put themselves into airs and passions on a slight affront, for they know that all men are imperfect, and therefore they think that perhaps their brother made a mistake, and did not wish to hurt their feelings, and therefore they say, "Well, if he did not wish to do it, then I will not be hurt by it, I dare say he meant well, and therefore I will take the will for the deed, and though he spoke harshly, yet he will be sorry for it to morrow; I will not mention it to him,--I will put up with whatever he chooses to say." There is a slander uttered against him: he says, "Well, let it alone;

it will die of itself; where no wood is, the fire goeth out." Another speaketh exceeding ill against him in his hearing; but he justs holds his tongue; he is dumb and openeth not his mouth. He is not like the sons of Zeruiah, who said to David, "Let us go and take off that dead dog's head, because he cursed the king" He says, "No, if the Lord hath bidden him curse; let him curse." "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." He is quite content to bear and forbear, and put up with a thousand injuries, rather than inflict one; meekly and quietly he goes his way through the world, and people say, "Ah! such a man as that will never get on; he will always be taken in. Why, he will be lending money, and will never get it back again; he will be giving his substance to the poor, and he will never receive it. How stupid he is! He allows people to infringe on his rights; he has no strength of mind; he does not know how to stand up for himself, fool that he is." Ay, but Christ turns it upside down, and he says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Is not that provoking to you graspers, you high spirited people, you lawyers, you that are always trying to bring your neighbor into trouble touching your rights? you do it in order that you may inherit the earth: see how Christ spites you, and treads your wisdom under feet. He says, "The meek shall inherit the earth." After all, very often, the best way to get our rights is to let them alone. I am quite certain that the safest way to defend your character is never to say a word about it. If every person in this place chooses to slander me and utter the most furious libels that he pleases, he may rest quite assured he will never have a law-suit from me. I am not quite fool enough for that. I have always noticed that when a man defends himself in a court of law against any slander, he just does his enemy's business with his own hand. Our enemies cannot hurt us, unless we hurt ourselves. No man's character was ever really

injured except by himself. Be you among the meek, and you shall inherit the earth. Bear all things, hope all things, believe all things, and it shall be the best, even on this earth, in the end.

Do you see that very respectable gentleman yonder, who has never omitted to attend his church or his chapel twice every Sunday ever since he became a man. He reads his Bible too, and he has family prayers. It is true that there are certain stories flying about, that he is rather hard upon his laborers, and exacting at times in his payments, but does justice to all men, although no further will he go. This man is on very good terms with himself; when he gets up in the morning he always shakes hands with himself, and compliments himself on being a very excellent person. He generally lives in a front street, in his opinion, and the first number in the street, too. If you speak to him about his state before God, he says, that if he does not go to heaven nobody will; for he pays twenty shillings in the pound to everybody; he is strictly upright, and there is no one who can find any fault with his character. Isn't he a good man? Don't you envy him?--a man who has so excellent an opinion of himself that he thinks himself perfect; or if he is not quite perfect, yet he is so good that he believes that with a little help, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Well, now, do you see standing at the back of the church there, a poor woman with tears running down her eyes? Come forward, ma'am; let us hear your history. She is afraid to come forward; she dares not speak in the presence of respectable persons; but we gather thus much from her: She has lately found out that she is full of sin, and she desires to know what she must do to be saved. Ask her. She tells you she has no merits of her own. Her song is, "I the chief of sinners am. Oh! that mercy would save me!" She never compliments herself upon her good works, for she says she has none; all her righteousnesses are as

filthy rags; she puts her mouth in the very dust when she prays, and she dares not lift so much as her eyes towards heaven. You pity that poor woman. You would not like to be in her case. The other man whom I have just mentioned, stands at the very top of the ladder, does he not? But this poor woman stands at the bottom. Now just see the gospel process--the world turned upside down. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled;" while the man who is content with himself has this for his portion--"As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you, because you seek not the righteousness which is of faith, but you seek it as it were by the works of the law. So here you see again is the world turned upside down in the first sermon Christ ever preached.

Now turn to the next beatitude--in the seventh verse--"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Of this I have already spoken. The merciful are not much respected in this world--at least if they are imprudently merciful, the man who forgives too much, or who is too generous, is not considered to be wise. But Christ declares that he who has been merciful--merciful to supply the wants of the poor, merciful to forgive his enemies and to pass by offenses, shall obtain mercy. Here, again, is the world turned upside down.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The world says, "Blessed is the man who indulges in a gay life." If you ask the common run of mankind who is the happy man, they will tell you, "The happy man is he who has abundance of money, and spends it freely, and is freed from restraint--who leads a merry dance of life, who drinks deep of the cup of intoxication--who revels riotously--who, like the wild horse of the prairie, is not bitted by order, or restrained by reason, but who dashes across the broad plains of sin, unharnessed,

unguided, unrestrained." This is the man whom the world calls happy: the proud man, the mighty man, the Nimrod; the man who can do just as he wishes, and who spurns to keep the narrow way of holiness. Now, the Scripture says, Not so; "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"Blest is the man who shuns the place
Where sinners love to meet;
Who fears to tread their wicked ways,
And hates the scoffer's seat,"--

the man who cannot touch one thing because that would be lascivious, nor another because that would spoil his communion with his Master; a man who cannot frequent this place of amusement, because he could not pray there, and cannot go to another, because he could not hope to have his Master's sanction upon an hour so spent. That man, pure in heart, is said to be a Puritanical moralist, a strict Sabbatarian, a man who has not any mind of his own; but Jesus Christ puts all straight, for he says, these are the blessed men these are the happy ones. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

And now look at the ninth verse. What a turning of the world upside down that is! You walk through London, and who are the men that we put upon our columns and pillars, and upon our park gates, and so on? Read the ninth verse, and see how that turns the world upside down. There upon the very top of the world, high, high up, can be seen the armless sleeve of a Nelson: there he stands, high exalted above his fellows; and there, in another place, with a long file up his back, stands a duke; and in another place, riding upon a war horse, is a mighty man of war. These are the world's blest heroes. Go into the capital of what empire you choose to select, and you shall see that the blessed men, who are put upon pedestals, and who have statues erected to their

memory, who are put into our St. Paul's Cathedral, and our Westminster Abbey, are not exactly the men mentioned in the ninth verse. Let us read it. "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God." Ah! but you do not often bless the peace-makers, do you? The man who comes between two beligerents, and bears the stroke himself--the man who will lie down on the earth, and plead with others that they would cease from warfare--these are the blessed. How rarely are they set on high. They are generally set aside, as people who cannot be blessed, even though it seem that they try to make others so. Here is the world turned upside down. The warrior with his garment stained in blood, is put into the ignoble earth, to die and rot; but the peace-maker is lifted up, and God's crown of blessing is put round about his head, and men one day shall see it, and struck with admiration they shall lament their own fully, that they exalted the blood-red sword of the warrior, but that they did rend the modest mantle of the noon who did make peace among mankind.

And to conclude our Saviour's sermon, notice once more, that we find in this world a race of persons who have always been hated--a class of men who have been hunted like the wild goat; persecuted, afflicted, and tormented. As an old divine says, "The Christian has been looked upon as if he had a wolfs head, for as the wolf was hunted for his head everywhere, so has the Christian been hunted to the uttermost ends of the earth." And in reading history we are apt to say, "These persecuted persons occupy the lowest room of blessedness; these who have been sawn asunder, who have been burned, who have seen their houses destroyed, and have been driven as houseless exiles into every part of the earth--these men who have wandered about in sheep's skins, and goat's skins,--these are the very least of mankind." Not so. The gospel reverses all this, and it says, "Blessed are they who are persecuted

for righteousness' sake, for their's is the kingdom of heaven." I repeat it: The whole of these beatitudes are just in conflict with the world's opinion. and we may quote the words of the Jew, and say, "Jesus Christ was the man who turned the world upside down.' "

And now I find I must be very brief for I have taken so much time in endeavoring to show how Christ's gospel turned the world upside down, in the position of its characters, that I shall have no space left for anything else. But will you have patience with me, and I will briefly pass through the other points?

I have next to remark, that the Christian religion turns the world upside down in its maxims. I will just quote a few texts which show this very clearly. "It was said by them of old time, eye for eye and tooth for tooth; but I say unto you, resist not evil" It has generally been held by each of us, that we are not to allow anyone to infringe upon our rights; but the Saviour says, "Whosoever would sue thee at the law and take thy cloak, let him take thy coat also." "If any man smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also." If these precepts were kept, would it not turn the world upside down? "It has been said by them of old time, love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy;" but Jesus Christ said, "Let love be unto all men." He commands us to love our enemies, and to pray for them who despitefully use us. He says, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him, and if he thirst give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." This would indeed be turning the world upside down; for what would become of our war ships and our warriors, if at the port-holes where now we put our cannons, we should have sent out to some burning city of our enemies--for instance, to burning Sebastapol,--if we had sent to the houseless inhabitants, who had been driven from their homes, barrels of beef, and bundles of bread and clothes, to supply their wants. That

would have been a reversal of all human policy, but yet it would have been just the carrying out of Christ's law, after all. So shall it be in the days that are to come, our enemies shall be loved, and our foemen shall be fed. We are told too, in these times, that it is good to a man to heap unto himself abundant wealth, and make himself rich, but Jesus Christ turned the world upside down, for he said, there was a certain rich man who was clothed in scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day, and so on, and his fields brought forth abundantly; and he said, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater;" but the Lord says, "Thou fool!" That is reversing everything in this world. You would have made an Alderman of him, or a Lord Mayor; and fathers would have patted their boys on the head, and said, "That is all through his frugality and taking care; see how he has got on in the world; when he had got a good crop, he did not give it away to the poor, as that extravagant man does who has kept on working all his life, and never be able to retire from business; he saved it all up;--be as good a boy as So-and-so, and get on too." But Christ said "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." A turning of everything upside down. And others of us will have it, that we ought to be very careful every day, and always looking forward to the future, and always fretting about what is to be. Here is a turning of the world upside down, when Jesus Christ says, "Remember the ravens; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them, are ye not better than they?" I do believe that at this day the maxims of business are clean opposed to the maxims of Christ. But I shall be answered by this, "Business is business." Yes, I know business is business, but business has no business to be such business as it is. Oh! that it might be altered, till every man could make his business his religion, and make a religion of his business

I have not detained you long upon that point; and therefore I am free to mention a third. How Christ has turned the world upside down, as to our religious notions. Why, the mass of mankind believe, that if any man wills to be saved, that is all which is necessary. Many of our preachers do in effect preach this worldly maxim. They tell men that they must make themselves willing. Now, just hear how the gospel upsets that. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The world will have an universal religion too; but how Christ overturns that. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world." He hath ordained us from among men. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." "The Lord knoweth them that are his." How that runs counter to all the world's opinion of religion! The world's religion is this--"Do, and thou shalt live." Christ's religion is--"Believe and live." We will have it, that if a man be righteous, sober upright, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but Christ says--This thou oughtest to have done; but still, not this can ever cleanse thee. "As many as are under the works of the law are under the curse." "By the works or the law shall no flesh living be justified." " Believe and live," is just the upsetting of every human notion. Cast thyself on Christ: trust in him. Have good works afterwards; but first of all trust in him that died upon the tree. This is the overturning of every opinion of man. And hence mortals will always fight against it, so long as the human heart is what it is. Oh! that we knew the gospel! Oh! that we felt the gospel! For it would be the upsetting of all self-righteousness, and the casting down of every high look, and of every proud thing.

II. And now, beloved, spare me a little time, while I try to show THAT WHICH IS TRUE IN THE WORLD, IS TRUE IN THE HEART. Instead, however, of enlarging at full length upon the different topics, I shall make my

last point the subject of examination.

Man is a little world, and what God does in the outer world, he does in the inner. If any of you would be saved your hearts must be turned upside down. I will now appeal to you, and ask you whether you have ever felt this--whether you know the meaning of it?

In the first place, your judgment must be turned upside down. Cannot many of you say, that which you now believe to be the truth of God is very far opposed to your former carnal notions? Why, if anyone had told you, that you should be a believer in the distinguishing doctrines of free and sovereign grace, you would have laughed him in the face. "What! I believe the doctrine of election? What! I ever hold the doctrine of particular redemption, or final perseverance? Pshaw! nonsense! It cannot be!" But now you do hold it, and the thing which you thought unreasonable and unjust, now seems to you to be for God's glory, and for man's eternal benefit. You can kiss the doctrine which once you despised, and you meekly receive it as sweeter than the droppings of honey from the honeycomb, though once you thought it to be as the very poison of asps, and gall, and wormwood. Yes, when grace enters the heart, there is a turning upside down of all our opinions; and the great truth of Jesus sits reigning on our soul.

Is there not, again, a total change of all your hopes? Why, your hopes used to be all for this world. If you could but get rich, if you could but be great and honored, you would be happy! You looked forward to it. All you were expecting was a paradise this side the flood. And now where are your hopes?--not on earth; for where your treasure is, there must your heart be also. You are looking for a city that hands have not piled; your desires are heavenly, whereas they were gross and carnal once. Can ye say that? Oh! all ye members of this congregation, can ye say that your hopes and your desires are changed? Are ye looking

upward, instead of downward? Are you looking to serve God on earth, and to enjoy him for ever? Or are you still content with thinking "What ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed?"

Again, it is a complete upsetting of all your pleasures. You loved the tavern once, you hate it now. You hated God's house once; it is now your much-loved habitation. The song, the Sunday newspaper, the lewd novel--all these were sweet to your taste; but you have burned the books that once enchanted you, and now the dusty Bible from the back of the shelf is taken down, and there it lies wide open upon the family table, and it is read both morn and night, much loved, much prized and delighted in. The Sabbath was once the dullest day of the week to you. you either loitered outside the door in your shirt-sleeves, if you were poor, or if you were rich you spent the day in your drawing-room, and had company in the evening: now, instead thereof, your company you find in the church of the living God, and you make the Lord's house the drawing-room where you entertain your friends. Your feast is no longer a banquet of wine, but a banquet of communion with Christ. There are some of you who once loved nothing better than the theater, the low concert room, or the casino: over such places you now see a great black mark of the curse, and you never go there. You seek now the prayer meeting, the church meeting, the gathering of the righteous, the habitation of the Lord God of hosts.

It is marvellous how great a change the gospel makes in a man's house too. Why, it turns his house upside down. Look over the mantle-piece--There is a vile daub of a picture there, or a wretched print, and the subject is worse than the style of the thing. But when the man follows Jesus he takes that down, and he gets a print of John Bunyan in his prison, or his wife standing before the magistrate, or a

print of the apostle Paul preaching at Athens, or some good old subject representing something Biblical. There is a pack of cards and a cribbage board in the cupboard; he turns them out, and instead he puts there perhaps the monthly magazine, or mayhaps few works of old divines, just here and there one of the publications of the Religious Tract Society, or a volume of a Commentary. Every thing is upside down there. The children say, "Father is so altered." They never knew such a thing. He used to come home sometimes drunk of a night, and the children used to run up stairs and be in bed before he came in; and now little John and little Sarah sit at the window and watch till he comes home; and they go toddling down the street to meet him, and he takes one in his arms, and the other by the hand, and brings them home with him. He used to teach them to sing "Begone dull care" or something worse, now he tells them of "Gentle Jesus meek and mild" or puts into their mouth some sweet song of old. A jolly set of companions he used to have come to see him, and a roaring party there used to be of them, on a Sunday afternoon; but that is all done with. The mother smiles upon her husband: she is a happy woman now; she knows that he will no longer disgrace himself by plunging into the vilest of society, and being seduced into the worst of sins. Now, if you could take a man's heart out, and put a new heart right into him, it would not be half so good, if it were another natural heart, as the change that God works, when he takes out the heart of stone, and puts in a heart of flesh--

"A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
Our dear Redeemer's throne
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone."

I put, then, the question to you again: Have you been turned upside down? How about your companions? You loved those the best who could

swear the loudest, talk the fastest, and tell the greatest falsehoods: now you love those who can pray the most earnestly, and tell you the most of Jesus. Everything is changed with you. If you were to meet your old self going down the street, you would not know him, except by hearsay; you are no relation to him at all. Sometimes the old gentleman comes to your house, and he begins to tempt you to go back; but you turn him out of doors as soon as you can, and say, "Begone! I never got on so long as I knew you; I had a ragged coat to my back then, and I was always giving the publican all my money; I never went to God's house, but cursed my Maker, and added sin to sin, and tied a mill-stone round my neck. So away from me, I will have nothing to do with you; I have been buried with Christ, and I have risen with him. I am a new man in Christ Jesus, old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new."

I have some here, however, who belong to a different class of society, who could not indulge in any of these things; but ah! ladies and gentlemen, if you are ever converted, you must have as great a sweeping out as the poorest man that ever lived. There must be as true a turning upside down in the salvation of an earl, or a duke, or a lord, as in the salvation of a pauper or a peasant. There is as much sin in the higher ranks as in the lower, and sometimes more, because they have more light, more knowledge, more influence, and when they sin, they not only damn themselves, but others too. O you that are rich, have you had a change too? Have the frivolities of this world become sickening things to you? Do you turn away with loathing from the common cant and conventionalism of high life? Have you forsaken it? and can you now say, "Although I am in the world, yet am I not of it; its pomps and vanities I do eschew; its pride and its glory I trample under feet; these are nothing to me; I would follow my Master bearing his cross,

through evil report and through good report?" If such be not the case, if you are not changed, remember, there are no exceptions; one truth is true for all--"Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of heaven." And that amounts in substance to my test: except ye be thoroughly renewed, turned upside down, ye cannot be saved. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for he that believeth shall be sanctified and renewed--shall he saved at last--but he that believeth not must be cast away in the great day of God's account.

The Lord bless you; for Jesus' sake!

Chapter 29

Human Responsibility

A Sermon

(No. 194)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 16, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."--John 15:22.

THE PECULIAR SIN of the Jews, the sin which aggravated above everything their former iniquities, was their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He had been very plainly described in the books of the prophets, and they who waited for him, such as Simeon and Anna, no sooner beheld him even in his infant state, than they rejoiced to see him, and understood that God had sent forth his salvation. But because Jesus Christ did not answer the expectation of that evil generation because he did not come arrayed in pomp and clothed with power, because he had not the outward garnishing of a prince and the honors of a king, they shut their eyes against him, he was "a root out of a dry ground," he was "despised and they esteemed him not." Nor did their sin stop there. Not content with denying his Messiahship, they were exceeding hot against him in their anger; they hunted him all his life, seeking his blood; nor were they content till their fiendish malice had been fully glutted by sitting down at the foot of the cross, and watching the dying throes and the expiring agonies of their crucified Messiah. Though over the cross itself the words were written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," yet they knew not their king, God's everlasting Son; and knowing him not, they crucified him, "for had they

known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Now, the sin of the Jews is every day repeated by the Gentiles; that which they did once, many have done every day. Are there not many of you now present this day, listening to my voice, who forget the Messiah? You do not trouble yourself to deny him; you would not degrade yourselves, in what is called a Christian country, by standing up to blaspheme his name. Perhaps you hold the right doctrine concerning him, and believe him to be the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary; but still you neglect his claims, and give him no honor, and do not accept him as worthy of your trust. He is not your Redeemer; you are not looking for his second advent, nor are you expecting to be saved through his blood; nay, even worse; ye are this day crucifying him; for know ye not, that as many as put away from them the gospel of Christ, do crucify the Lord afresh and open wide his wounds? As often as ye hear the Word preached and reject it, as often as ye are warned, and stifle the voice of your conscience, as often as ye are made to tremble, and yet say, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee," so often do you in effect grasp the hammer and the nail, and once more pierce the hand, and make the blood issue from the side. And their are other ways by which you wound him through his members. As often as ye despise his ministers, or cast stumbling blocks in the way of his servants, or impede his gospel by your evil example, or by your hard words seek to pervert the seeker from the way of truth, so often do you commit that great iniquity which brought the curse upon the Jew, and which hath doomed him to wander through the earth, until the day of the second advent when he shall come who shall even by the Jew be acknowledged the King of the Jews, for whom both Jew and Gentile are now looking with anxious expectation, even Messiah, the Prince who came once to suffer, but who comes again

to reign.

And now I shall endeavor this morning to show the parallel between your case and that of the Jew; not doing so in set phrase, but yet incidentally, as God shall help me; appealing to your conscience, and making you feel that in rejecting Christ, you commit the same sin and incur the same doom. We shall note, first of all, the excellence of the ministry, since Christ comes in it, and speaks to men: "If I had not spoken to them." We shall notice, secondly, the aggravation of sin caused by the rejection of Christ's message: "If I had not spoken to them they had not had sin." Thirdly, the death of all excuses, caused by the preaching of the Word: "Now they have no cloke for their sin." And then, in the last place, we shall briefly, but very solemnly announce the fearfully aggravated doom of those who thus reject the Saviour, and increase their guilt by despising him.

I. In the first place, then, this morning it is ours to say, and to say truly too, that in THE PREACHING OF THIS GOSPEL, THERE IS TO MAN'S CONSCIENCE THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE SPEAKING OF THE SAVIOUR THROUGH US. When Israel of old despised Moses and murmured against him, Moses meekly said, "Ye have not murmured against us, but ye have murmured against the Lord God of Israel." And truly the minister may, with Scripture warrant, say the same: he that despiseth us, despiseth not us, but him that sent us. he who rejecteth the message rejecteth not what we say, but rejecteth the message of the everlasting God. The minister is but a man; he has no priestly power, but he is a man called out of the rest of mankind, and endowed with the Holy Spirit, to speak to his fellow-men; and when he preacheth the truth as with power sent down from heaven, God owns him by calling him his ambassador. and puts him in the high and responsible position of a watchman on the walls of Zion, and he bids all men take heed that a

faithful message, faithfully delivered, when despised and trampled on, amounts to rebellion against God, and to sin and iniquity against the Most High. As for what I may say, as a man, it is but little that I should say it, but if I speak as the Lord's ambassador, take heed that ye slight not the message. It is the Word of God sent down from heaven which we preach with the power of the Holy Spirit, earnestly beseeching you to believe it, and remember, it is at the peril of your own souls that you put it from you, for it is not we that speak, but the Spirit of the Lord our God who speaketh in us. With what a solemnity does this invest the gospel ministry! O ye sons of men, the ministry is not the speaking of men, but the speaking of God through men. As many as are the real called and sent servants of God, are not the authors of their message; but they first hear it from the Master, and they speak it to the people, and they see ever before their eyes these solemn words--"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee," and they hear behind them this awful threatening--"If thou warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at thine hand." Oh! that ye might see written in letters of fire before you this day the words of the prophet--"O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord;" for as far as our ministry is true and untainted by error, it is God's Word, and it hath the same right and claim to your belief as if God himself should speak it from the top of Sinai, instead of speaking it through the humble ministry of the Word of God.

And now let us pause over this doctrine, and let us ask ourselves this solemn question. Have we not all of us grossly sinned against God, in the neglect that we have often put upon the means of grace? How often have you stayed away from the house of God, when God himself was speaking there? What would have been the doom of Israel if, when

summoned on that sacred day to hear the Word of God from the top of the mountain, they had perversely rambled into the wilderness, rather than attend to hear it? And yet so have you done. You have sought your own pleasure, and listened to the syren song of temptation; but ye have shut your ear against the voice of the Most High; and when he has himself been speaking in his own house, ye have turned aside unto crooked ways, and have not regarded the voice of the Lord your God. And when ye have come up to the house of God, how often has there been the careless eye, the inattentive ear! Ye have heard as though ye heard not. Your ear has been penetrated, but the hidden man of the heart has been deaf, and you have been like the deaf adder; charm we never so wisely, you would not listen nor regard us. God himself has spoken, too, at times in your conscience, so that you have heard it. You have stood in the aisle, and your knees have knocked together, you have sat in your pew, and while some mighty Boanerges has thundered out the word, you have heard it said, as with an angel's voice, "Prepare to meet thy God--consider thy way--set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live." And yet you have gone out of God's house, and have forgotten what manner of men you were. You have quenched the Spirit, you have done despite to the Spirit of grace; you have put far from you the struggles of your conscience; you have throttled those infant prayers that were beginning to cry in your heart; you have drowned those new-born desires that were just springing up; you have put away from you everything that was good and sacred; you have turned again to your own ways, and have once more wandered on the mountains of sin, and in the valley of iniquity. Ah! my friends, just think, then, for a moment, that in all this you have despised God. I am certain, if the Holy Spirit would but apply this one solemn truth to your consciences this morning, this Hall of Music would be turned into a

house of mourning, and this place would become a Bochim, a place of weeping and lamentation. Oh to have despised God, to have trampled under foot the Son of Man, to have passed by his cross, to have rejected the wooings of his love and the warnings of his grace! How solemn! Did you ever think of this before? You have thought it was but despising man, will ye now think of it as despising Christ? For Christ has spoken to you. Ah! God is my witness, that oftentimes Christ hath wept with these eyes, and spoken to you with these lips. I have sought nothing but the winning of your souls. Sometimes with rough words have I endeavored to drive you to the cross, and at other times with weeping accents have I sought to weep you to my Redeemer; and sure I am, I did not speak myself then, but Jesus spoke through me, and inasmuch as ye did hear and weep, and then went away and did forget, remember that Christ spoke to you. Twas he who said, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" twas he who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden;" twas he who warned you, that if you neglected this great salvation you must perish; and in having put away the warning and rejected the invitation, you have not despised us, but you have despised our Master; and woe unto you, except ye repent, for tis a fearful thing to have despised the voice of him that speaketh from heaven.

II. And now we must notice the second point, namely, that THE REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL, AGGRAVATES MEN'S SIN. Now, do not let me be misunderstood. I have heard of persons who, having gone to the house of God, have been filled with a sense of sin, and at last they have been driven almost to despair, for Satan has tempted them to forsake the house of God; for says he, "The more you go, the more you increase your condemnation." Now I believe that this is an error; we do not increase our condemnation by going to the house of God; we are far more likely

to increase it by stopping away; for in stopping away from the house of God there is a double rejection of Christ; you reject him even with the outward mind, as well as with the inward spirit; you neglect even the lying at the pool of Bethesda, you are worse than the man who lay at the pool, but could not get in. You will not lie there, and therefore, neglecting the hearing of the Word of God, you do indeed incur a fearful doom; but if you go up to the house of God, sincerely seeking a blessing, if you do not get comfort--if you do not find grace in the means, still, if you go there devoutly seeking it, your condemnation is not increased thereby. Your sin is not aggravated merely by the hearing of the gospel, but by the wilful and wicked rejection of it when it is heard. The man who listens to the sound of the gospel, and after having heard it, turns upon his heel with a laugh, or who, after hearing time after time, and being visibly affected, allows the cares and the pleasures of this wicked life, to come in and choke the seed--such a man does in a fearful measure increase his guilt.

And now we will just notice why, in a two-fold measure, he does this. Because, in the first place he gets a new sin altogether, that he never had before and beside that, he aggravates all his other sins. Bring me here a Hottentot, or a man from Kamschatka, a wild savage who has never listened to the Word. That man may have every sin in the catalogue of guilt except one; but that one I am sure he has not. He has not the sin of rejecting the gospel when it is preached to him. But you, when you hear the gospel, have an opportunity for committing a fresh sin; and if you have rejected it, you have added a fresh iniquity to all those others that hang about your neck. I have often been rebuked by certain men who have erred from the truth, for preaching the doctrine that it is a sin in men, if they reject the gospel of Christ. I care for every opprobrious title: I am certain that I have the warrant of God's Word

in so preaching, and I do not believe that any man can be faithful to men's souls and clear of their blood, unless he bears his frequent and Solemn testimony upon this vital subject. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you." "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward. how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I have been quoting, you see, some

scripture passages, and if they do not mean that unbelief is a sin, and the sin, which, above all others, damns men's souls, they do not mean anything at all, but they are just a dead letter in the Word of God. Now, adultery and murder and theft, and lying--all these are damning, and deadly sins; but repentance can cleanse all these, through the blood of Christ. But to reject Christ, destroys a man hopelessly. The murderer, the thief, the drunkard, may yet enter the kingdom of heaven, if, repenting of his sins, he will lay hold on the cross of Christ, but with these sins, a man is inevitably lost, if he believeth not on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, my hearers, will you consider for one moment what an awful sin this is, which you add to all your other sins. Everything lies in the bowels of this sin--the rejecting of Christ. There is murder in this; for if the man on the scaffold rejects a pardon, does he not murder himself? There is pride in this; for you reject Christ, because your proud hearts have turned you aside. There is rebellion in this; for we rebel against God when we reject Christ. There is high treason in this; for you reject a king; you put far from you, him, who is crowned king of the earth, and you incur therefore the weightiest of all guilt. Oh! to think that the Lord Jesus should come from heaven--to think for a moment that he should hang upon the tree--that there he should die in agonies extreme, and that from that cross he should this day look down upon you, and should say, "Come unto me, ye weary and ye heavy laden;" that you should still turn away from him,--it is the unkindest stab of all. What more brutish, what more devilish, than to turn away from him who gave his life for you? Oh that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!

But again, we do not only add a new sin to the catalogs of guilt but we aggravate all the rest. You cannot sin so cheap as other people, you,

who have had the gospel. When the unenlightened and ignorant sin, their conscience does not prick them; and there is not that guilt in the sin of the ignorant, that there is in the sin of the enlightened. Did you steal before? that was bad enough; but hear the gospel and continue a thief, and you are a thief indeed. Did you lie before you heard the gospel? The liar shall have his portion in the lake; but he after hearing it: and it seems as if the fire of Tophet should be fanned up to a seven-fold fury. He who sins ignorantly, hath some little excuse; but he who sins against light and knowledge, sins presumptuously; and under the law there was no atonement for this, for presumptuous sins were out of the pole of legal atonement, although blessed be God, Christ hath atoned for even these, and he that believeth shall be saved, despite even his guilt. Oh! I beseech you, recollect that the sin of unbelief blackens every other sin. It is like Jeroboam. It is said of him, he sinned and made Israel to sin. So unbelief sins itself and leads to every other sin. Unbelief is the file by which you sharpen the axe; and the coulter, and the sword, which you use in rebellion against the Most High. Your sins become more exceeding sinful, the more you disbelieve in Christ, the more you know of him, and the longer you reject him. This is God's truth; but a truth that is to be spoken with reluctance, and with many groanings in our spirits. Oh to have such a message to deliver to you, to you I say, for if there be a people under heaven to whom my text applies, it is you. If there is one race of men in the world, who have more to account for than others, it is yourselves. There are doubtless others, who are on an equality with you, who sit under a faithful and earnest ministry; but as God shall judge betwixt you and me at the great day, to the utmost of my power I have been faithful to your souls. I have never in this pulpit sought by hard words, by technical language, to magnify my own wisdom. I have

spoken to you plainly; and not a word, to the best of my knowledge, has escaped these lips, which every one of you could not understand. You have had a simple gospel. I have not stood here and preached coldly to you. I could say as I came up yon stairs, "The burden of the Lord was upon me;" for my heart has come here heavy, and my soul has been hot within me, and when I have preached feebly, my words may have been uncouth, and the language far from proper, but heart never has been wanting. This whole soul has spoken to you; and if I could have ransacked heaven and earth to find language that might have won you to the Saviour, I would have done so. I have not shunned to reprove you, I have never minced matters. I have spoken to this age of its iniquities, and to you of your sins I have not softened down the Bible to suit the carnal tastes of men. I have said damn, where God said damn--I have not sweetened it into "condemn." I have not minced matters, nor endeavored to veil or conceal the truth, but as to every man's conscience in the sight of God, have I endeavored to commend the gospel, earnestly and with power, and with a plain, outspoken, earnest, and honest ministry.

I have not kept back the glorious doctrines of grace, although by preaching them the enemies of the cross have called me an Antinomian; nor have I been afraid to preach man's solemn responsibility, although another tribe have slandered me as an Arminian. And in saying this, I say it not in a way of glorying, but I say it for your rebuke, if you have rejected the gospel, for you shall have sinned far above that of any other men; in casting away Christ, a double measure of the fury of the wrath of God shall fall on you. Sin, then, is aggravated by the rejection of Christ.

III. And now, in the third place, THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TAKES AWAY ALL EXCUSE FROM THOSE WHO HEAR IT AND REJECT IT. "Now have they no cloke for their sin." A cloak is a very poor covering for sin,

when there is an all-seeing eye to look through it. In the great day of the tempest of God's wrath a cloak will be a very poor shelter; but still man is always fond of a cloak. In the day of cold and rain we see men gathering their cloaks about them, and if they have no shelter and no refuge, still they feel a little comforted by their garment. And so it is with you; you will gather together, if you can, an excuse for your sin, and when conscience pricks you, you seek to heal the wound with an excuse. And even in the day of judgment although a cloak will be a sorry covering, yet it will be better than nothing at all. "But now ye have no cloke for your sin." The traveler is left in the rain without his covering, exposed to the tempest without that garment which once did shelter him. "Now ye have no cloke for your sin,"--discovered, detected, and unmasked, ye are left inexcusible, without a cloak for your iniquity. And now let me just notice how the preaching of the gospel, when it is faithfully performed, takes away all cloaks for sin. In the first place, one man might get up and say, "I did not know I was doing wrong when I committed such and such an iniquity." Now, that you cannot say. God has by his law told you solemnly what is wrong. There stand the ten commandments; and there stands the comment of our Master where he has enlarged upon the commandment, and told us that the old law "thou shalt not commit adultery," forbad also all sins of the lascivious look and the evil eye. If the Sepoy commits iniquity, there is a cloak for it. I doubt not that his conscience tells him that he does wrong, but his sacred books teach that he is doing right, and therefore he has that cloak. If the Mahommedan commits lust, I doubt not his conscience doth prick him, but his sacred books give him liberty. But you profess to believe your Bibles, and have them in your houses, and have the preachers of them in all your streets; and therefore when you sin, you sin with the proclamation of the law upon

the very wall, before your eyes--you do wilfully violate a well-known law which has come from heaven, and come to you.

Again, you might say, "When I sinned, I did not know how great would be the punishment." Of this also, by the gospel, you are left without excuse; for did not Jesus Christ tell you, and does he not tell you every day, that those who will not have him shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Hath he not said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal?" Does he not himself declare that the wicked shall be burned up with unquenchable fire? Has he not told you of a place where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched? And the ministers of the gospel have not shunned to tell you this too. You have sinned, though you knew you would be lost by it. You have taken the poisonous draught, not thinking that it was harmless you knew that every drop in the cup was scalding with damnation, and yet you have taken the cup and drained it to its dregs. You have destroyed your own souls with your eyes open; you have gone like a fool to the stocks, like an ox to the slaughter, and like a lamb you have licked the knife of the butcher. In this, then, you are left without excuse.

But some of you may say, "Ah, I heard the gospel, it is true, and I knew that I was doing wrong, but I did not know what I must do to be saved." Is there one among you who can urge such an excuse as this? Methinks you will not have the impudence to do so. "Believe and live," is preached every day in your hearing. Many of you these ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years have been hearing the gospel, and you dare not say, "I did not know what the gospel was." From your earliest childhood many of you have listened to it. The name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. You drank in a holy gospel with your mother's milk and yet despite all that, you have never sought Christ.

"Knowledge is power," men say. Alas! Knowledge, when not used, is wrath, WRATH, WRATH to the uttermost, against the man who knows, and yet doth that which he knoweth to be wrong.

Methinks I can hear another say, "Well, I heard the gospel preached, but I never had a good example set me." Some of you may say that, and it would be partially true; but there are others of you, concerning whom I may say that this would be a lying excuse. Ah! man; you have been very fond of speaking of the inconsistencies of Christians. You have said, "They do not live as they ought;" and alas, there is too much truth in what you have said. But there was one Christian whom you knew, and whose character you were compelled to admire; do not you remember her? It was the mother who brought you forth. That has always been the one difficulty with you up to this day. You could have rejected the gospel very easily, but your mother's example stood before you, and you could not overcome that. Do you not remember amongst the first early darklings of your recollection, how you opened your little eyes in the morning and you saw a mother's loving face looking down upon you, and you caught her with a tear in her eye, and you heard her say, "God bless the child, may he call the Redeemer blessed!" You remember how your father did often chide you; she did seldom chide, but she often spoke in tones of love. Recollect that little upper room where she took you aside, and putting her arms round your neck, dedicated you to God, and prayed that the Lord would save you in your childhood. Remember the letter she gave you, and your book in which she wrote your name when you left the parental roof to go abroad, and the sorrow with which she wrote to you when she heard you had begun to plunge in gaiety and mix with the ungodly: recollect that sorrowful look with which she did wring your hand the last time you left her. Remember how she said to you, "You will bring my hairs with sorrow to

the grave, if you walk in the ways of iniquity." Well, you knew that what she said was not cant; there was reality in that. You could laugh at the minister, you could say it was his business, but at her you could not scoff; she was a Christian, there was no mistake about it. How often did she put up with your angry temper, and bear with your rough manners, for she was a sweet spirit, almost too good for earth--and you recollect that. You were not there when she was dying, you could not arrive in time; but she said to her friend as she was dying, "There is only one thing that I want, then I could die happy--oh, that I could see my children walking in the truth." Now, I apprehend such an example leaves you without a cloak for your wickedness, and if you commit iniquity after that, how fearful! must be the weight of your woe.

But others of you can say that you had no such mother; your first school was the street, and the first example you ever had was that of a swearing father. Recollect, my friend, there is one perfect example--Christ, and that you have read of, though you have not seen him. Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, was a perfect man; in him was there no sin, neither was there guile in his mouth. And if you have never seen anything like Christian worth any where else, yet you can see it in Christ; and in venturing such an excuse as this, remember you have ventured upon a lie, for the example of Christ, the works of Christ, as well as the words of Christ, leave you without excuse for your sin.

Ah, and I think I hear one more excuse offered, and that is this: "Well, I certainly had many advantages, but they were never sent home to my conscience so that I felt them." Now, there are very few of you here who can say that. Some of you will say, "Yes, I heard the minister, but he never made an impression upon me." Ah, young men and

young women, and all of you this morning, I must be a witness against you in the day of judgment that this is untrue. For, but now, your consciences were touched; did I not see some soft tears of repentance--I trust they were such--flowing but just now. No, you have not always been unmoved by the gospel you have grown old now, and it takes a deal to stir you, but it was not always so There was a time in your youth, when you were very susceptible of impressing. Remember, the sins of your youth will cause your bones to rot, if you have still persevered in rejecting the gospel. Your old heart has grown hard, still you are with out excuse; you did feel once, ay, and even now you cannot help feeling. I know there are some of you that can scarcely keep your seats at the thought of your iniquities; and you have almost vowed, some of you, that this day you will seek God, and the first thing you will do, will be to climb to your chamber, and shut the door, and seek the Lord. Ah, but I remember a story of one, who remarked to a minister, what a wonderful thing it was to see so many people weeping. "Nay," said he, "I will tell you something more wonderful still, that so many will forget all they wept about when they get outside the door." And you will do this. Still, when you have done it, you will recollect that you have not been without the strivings of God's Spirit. You will remember that God has, this morning, as it were, put a hurdle across your road, digged a ditch in your way, and put up a hand-post, and said, "Take warning! beware, beware, beware! you are rushing madly into the ways of iniquity!" And I have come before you this morning, and in God s name I have said, " Stop, stop, stop, thus saith the Lord, consider your ways, why will ye die? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die O house of Israel?" And, now, if ye will put this from you, it must be even so; if you will put out these sparks, if ye will quench this first burning torch, it must be so! On your own head be your blood; at your

own door lay your iniquities.

IV. But now I have one thing more to do. And it is awful work; for I have as it were to PUT ON THE BLACK CAP AND PRONOUNCE THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION. For those who live and die rejecting Christ there is a most fearful doom. They shall perish with an utter destruction. There are degrees of punishment; but the highest degree is given to the man who rejects Christ. You have noticed that passage, I dare say, that the liar and the whoremonger, and drunkards shall have their portion--whom do you suppose with?--with unbelievers; as if hell was made first of all for unbelievers--as if the pit was digged not for whoremongers, and swearers, and drunkards, but for men who despise Christ, because that is the A 1 sin, the cardinal vice, and men are condemned for that. Other iniquities come following after them, but this one goes before them to judgment. Imagine for a moment that time has passed, and that the day of judgment is come. We are all gathered together, both quick and dead. The trumpet-blast waxes exceeding loud and long. We are all attentive, expecting something marvellous. The exchange stands still in its business; the shop is deserted by the tradesman; the crowded streets are filled. All men stand still; they feel that the last great business-day is come, and that now they must settle their accounts for ever. A solemn stillness fills the air: no sound is heard. All, all is noiseless. Presently a great white cloud with solemn state sails through the sky, and then--hark! the twofold clamor of the startled earth. On that cloud there sits one like unto the Son of Man. Every eye looks, and at last there is heard a unanimous shout--"It is he! It is he!" and after that you hear on the one hand, shouts of "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Welcome, Welcome, Welcome Son of God." But mixed with that there is a deep bass, composed of the weeping and the wailing of the men who have persecuted him, and who have rejected him.

Listen! I think I can dissect the sonnet, I think I can hear the words as they come separately, each one of them, tolling like a death knell What say they? They say, "Rocks hide us, mountains fall upon us, hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne." And shall you be among the number of those who say to the rocks "Hide us?"

My impenitent hearer, I suppose for a moment that you have gone out of this world, and that you have died impenitent, and that you are among those who are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth. Oh! what will then be your terror! Blanched cheeks, and knocking knees are nothing, compared to thy horror of heart, when thou shalt be drunken, but not with wine and when thou shalt reel to and fro, with the intoxication of amazement, and shall fall down, and roll in the dust for horror and dismay. For there he comes, and there he is, with fierce, fire-darting eye; and now the time is come for the great division. The voice is heard, "Gather my people from the four winds of heaven, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." They are gathered at the right hand, and there they are. And now saith he, "Gather up the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn." And you are gathered, and on the left hand there you are, gathered into the bundle. All that is wanted is the lighting of the pile. Where shall be the torch that shall kindle them? The tares are to be burned: where is the flame? The flame comes out of his mouth, and it is composed of words like these--"Depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire, in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Do you linger? "Depart!" Do you seek a blessing? "Ye are cursed." I curse you with a curse. Do ye seek to escape? It is everlasting fire. Do ye stop and plead? No, "I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and ye regarded me not, therefore I will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear cometh. "Depart, again, I say; depart for ever!" And you are gone. And

what is your reflection? Why, it is this: "Oh! would to God that I never had been born! Oh! that I had never heard the gospel preached, that I might never have had the sin of rejecting it!" This will be the gnawing of the worm in your conscience--"I knew better but I did not do better."--As I sowed the wind, it is right I should reap the whirlwind; I was checked, but I would not be stopped; I was wooed, but I would not be invited. Now I see that I have murdered myself Oh! thought above all thoughts most deadly. I am lost, lost, lost! And this is the horror of horrors: I have caused myself to be lost; I have put from me the gospel of Christ; I have destroyed myself.

Shall this be so with thee, my hearer? Shall this be so with thee? I pray it may not! O may the Holy Spirit now constrain thee to come to Jesus, for I know that thou art too vile to yield, unless he compels thee. But I hope for thee. Methinks I hear thee say, "What must I do to be saved?" Let me tell you the way of salvation, and then farewell. If thou wouldest be saved, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for the Scripture says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned!" There he hangs, dying on his cross! look to him and live.

"Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

Be you wicked, filthy, depraved degraded, you are still invited to Christ. The devil's castaways Christ takes in--the offscouring, the dross, the scum, the draff, the sewerage of this world, is now invited to Christ. Come to him now, and obtain mercy. But if ye harden your hearts,

"The Lord in anger dress'd

Shall lift his hand and swear,

'You that despis'd my promis'd rest,

Shall have no portion there.'"

Chapter 30

Looking Unto Jesus

A Sermon

(No. 195)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 23, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed."--Psalm 34:5.

FROM THE CONNECTION we are to understand the pronoun "him" as referring to the word "Lord" in the preceding verse. "They looked unto the Lord Jehovah, and were lightened." But no man ever yet looked to Jehovah God, as he is in himself, and found any comfort in him, for "our God is a consuming fire." An absolute God, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, can afford no comfort whatever to a troubled heart. We may look to him, and we shall be blinded, for the light of Godhead is insufferable, and as mortal eye cannot fix its gaze upon the sun, no human intellect could ever look unto God, and find light, for the brightness of God would strike the eye of the mind with eternal blindness. The only way in which are can see God is through the Mediator Jesus Christ.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find,--"

God shrouded and veiled in the manhood,--there we can with steady gaze behold him, for so he cometh down to us, and our poor finite intelligence can understand and lay hold upon him. I shall therefore use my text this morning, and I think very legitimately, in reference to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ--"They looked unto him, and were lightened;" for when we look at God, as revealed in Jesus Christ our

Lord, and behold the Godhead as it is apparent in the Incarnate Man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified by Pontius Pilate, we do see that which enlightens the mind, and casts rays of comfort into our awakened heart.

And now this morning, I shall first invite you, in order to illustrate my text, to look to Jesus Christ in his life on earth, and I hope there are some of you who will be lightened by that. We shall then look to him on his cross. Afterwards we shall look to him in his resurrection. We shall look to him in his intercession; and lastly, we shall look to him in his second coming; and it may be, as with faithful eye we look upon him, the verse shall be fulfilled in our experience, which is the best proof of a truth, when we prove it to be true in our own hearts, We shall "look unto him" and we shall "be lightened."

I. First, then, we shall LOOK TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN HIS LIFE. And here the troubled saint will find the most to enlighten him. In the example, in the patience, in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, there are stars of glory to cheer the midnight darkness of the sky of your tribulation. Come hither, ye children of God and whatever now are your distresses, whether they be temporal or spiritual, you shall, in the life of Jesus Christ and his sufferings, find sufficient to cheer and comfort you, if the Holy Spirit shall now open your eyes to look unto him. Perhaps I have among my congregation, indeed I am sure I have, some who are plunged in the depths of poverty. You are the children of toil; with much sweat of your brow you eat your bread; the heavy yoke of oppression galls your neck; perhaps at this time you are suffering the very extremity of hunger; you are pinched with famine, and though in the house of God, your body complains, for you feel that you are brought very low. Look unto Him, thou poor distressed brother in Jesus; look unto Him, and be lightened.

"Why dost thou complain of want or distress,

Temptation or pain?--he told thee no less;

The heirs of salvation, we know from his word,

Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

See him there! Forty days he fasts and he hungers. See him again, he treads the weary way, and at last all athirst he sits upon the curb of the well of Sychar and he the Lord of glory, he who holds the clouds in the hollow of his hand, said to a woman, "Give me to drink." And shall the servant be above his master, and the disciple above his Lord? If he suffered hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, O heir of poverty, be of good cheer; in all these thou hast fellowship with Jesus; therefore be comforted, and look unto him and be lightened.

Perhaps your trouble is of another caste. You have come here to-day smarting from the forked tongue of that adder--slander. Your character, though pure and spotless before God, seems to be lost before man; for that foul slanderous thing hath sought to take away that which is dearer to you than life itself, your character, your good fame; and you are this day filled with bitterness and made drunken with wormwood, because you have been accused of crimes which your soul loathes. Come, thou child of mourning, this indeed is a heavy blow; poverty is like Solomon's whip, but slander is like the scorpion of Rehoboam, to fall into the depths of poverty is to have it on thy little finger, but to be slandered is to have it on thy loins. But in all this thou mayest have comfort from Christ. Come and look unto him and be lightened. The King of kings was called a Samaritan; they said of him that he had a devil and was mad; and yet infinite wisdom dwelt in him, though he was charged with madness. And was he not ever pure and holy? And did they not call him a drunken man and a wine-bibber? He was his father's glorious Son and yet they said he did cast out devils through Beelzebub

the prince of the devils. Come! poor slandered one; wipe that tear away! "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call they of his household?" If they had honored him, then might you have expected that they would honor you, but inasmuch as they mocked him and took away his glory and his character blush not to bear the reproach and the shame, for he is with you, carrying his cross before you, and that cross was heavier than yours. Look, then, unto him and be lightened.

But I hear another say, "Ah! but my trouble is worse than either of those. I am not to-day smarting from slander, nor am I burdened with penury; but, sir, the hand of God lies heavy upon me, he hath brought my sins to my remembrance; he hath taken away the bright shining of his countenance; once I did believe in him, and could read my title clear to mansions in the skies,' but to-day I am brought very low; he hath lifted me up and cast me down; like a wrestler, he has elevated me that he might dash me to the ground with the greater force, my bones are sore vexed, and my spirit within me is melted with anguish." Come, my tried brother, "look unto him and be lightened." No longer groan over thine own miseries, but come thou with me and look unto him, if thou canst. Seest thou the garden of Olives? It is a cold night, and the ground is crisp beneath thy feet for the frost is hard; and there in the gloom of the olive garden, kneels thy Lord. Listen to him. Canst thou understand the music of his groans, the meaning of his sighs? Sure, thy griefs are not so heavy as his were, when drops of blood were forced through his skin, and a bloody sweat did stain the ground! Say, are thy wrestlings greater than his? If; then, he had to combat with the powers of darkness, expect to do so also; and look thou to him in the last solemn hour of his extremity, and hear him say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And when thou hast heard that, murmur

not, as though some strange thing had happened to thee as if thou hast to join in his "lama subbacthani," and hast to sweat some few drops of his bloody sweat. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

But, possibly I may have here some one who is much persecuted by man. "Ah!" saith one, "I cannot practice my religion with comfort. My friends have turned against me; I am mocked, and jeered, and reviled, for Christ's sake." Come, Christian, be not afraid of all this, but, "look unto him, and be lightened." Remember how they persecuted him. Oh! think thou of the shame and spitting, the plucking off the hair, the reviling of the soldiers; think thou of that fearful march through the streets, when every man did hoot him, and when even they that were crucified with him did revile him. Hast thou been worse treated than he? Methinks this is enough to make you gird your armor on once more. Why need you blush to be as much dishonored as your Master? It was this thought that cheered the martyrs of old. They that fought the bloody fight, knew they should win the blood-red crown--that ruby crown of martyrdom; therefore they did endure, as seeing him who is invisible; for this ever cheered and comforted them. They remembered him who had "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that they might not be weary or faint in their minds." They "resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" for they knew their Master had done the same, and his example did comfort them. I am persuaded beloved brothers and sisters, that if we looked more to Christ, our troubles would not become anything like so black. In the darkest night, looking to Christ will clear the ebony sky; when the darkness seems thick, like that of Egypt, darkness that might be felt, like solid pillars of ebony, even then, like a bright lightning flash, as bright but not as transient, will a look to Jesus prove. One glimpse at him, may well suffice for all our toils, while on the road. Cheered by his voice, nerved by his

strength, we are prepared to do and suffer, even as he did, to the death, if he will be with us, even unto the end. This, then, is our first point. We trust that those of you, who are weary Christians, will not forget to "look unto him, and be lightened."

II. And now I have to invite you to a more dreary sight; but, strange it is just as the sight becomes more black, so to us, does it grow more bright. The more deeply the Saviour dived into the depths of misery, the brighter were the pearls which he brought up--the greater his griefs, the greater our joys, and the deeper his dishonor, the brighter our glories. Come, then--and this time I shall ask poor, doubting, trembling sinners and saints, to come with me,--come ye now to Calvary's cross. There, on the summit of that little hill, outside the gates of Jerusalem, where common criminals were ordinarily put to death--the Tyburn of Jerusalem, the Old Bailey of that city, where criminals were executed--there stand three crosses; the center one is reserved for one who is reputed to be the greatest of criminals. See there! They have nailed him to the cross. It is the Lord of life and glory, before whose feet angels delight to pour full vials of glory They have nailed him to the cross: he hangs there in mid-heaven, dying, bleeding; he is thirsty, and he cries. They bring him vinegar and thrust it into his mouth. He is in suffering, and he needs sympathy, but they mock at him, and they say, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." They misquote his words, they challenge him now to destroy the temple, and build it in three days; while the very thing was being fulfilled, they taunt him with his powerlessness to accomplish it. How see him, ere the veil is drawn over agonies too black for eye to behold. See him now! Was ever face marred like that face? Was ever heart so big with agony? And did eyes ever seem so pregnant with the fire of suffering, as those great wells of fiery agony? Come and behold

him, come and look to him now. The sun is eclipsed, refusing to behold him! earth quakes; the dead rise; the horrors of his sufferings have startled earth itself,

"He dies! the friend of sinners dies;"

And we invite you to look to this scene that you may be lightened. What are your doubts this morning? Whatever they be, they can find a kind and fond solution here, by looking at Christ on the cross. You have come here, perhaps, doubting God's mercy; look to Christ upon the cross, and can you doubt it then? If God were not full of mercy, and plenteous in his compassion, would he have given his Son to bleed and die? Think you, that a Father would rend his darling from his heart and nail him to a tree, that he might suffer an ignominious death for our sakes, and yet be hard, merciless, and without pity? God forbid the impious thought! There must be mercy in the heart of God, or else there had never been a cross on Calvary.

But do you doubt God's power to save! Are you saying in yourself this morning, "How can he forgive so great a sinner as I am?" Oh! look there, sinner, look there, to the great atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid. Dost thou think that that blood has not an efficacy to pardon and to justify. True, without that cross it had been an unanswerable question,--"How can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly?" But see there the bleeding substitute! and know that God has accepted his sufferings as an equivalent for the woes of all believers; and then thy spirit dare to think, if it can, that there is not sufficient in the blood of Christ, to enable God to vindicate his justice, and yet to have mercy upon sinners.

But I know you say, "My doubt is not of his general mercy, nor of his power to forgive, but of his willingness to forgive me." Now I beseech you, by him that liveth and was dead, do not this morning look into

your own heart in order to find an answer to that difficulty; do not now sit down and look at your sins; they have brought you into the danger--they cannot bring you out of it. The best answer you will ever get, is at the foot of the cross. Sit down, when you get home this morning, for half-an-hour, in quiet contemplation, sit at the foot of the cross, and contemplate the dying Saviour, and I will defy you then to say, "I doubt his love to me." Looking at Christ begets faith. You cannot believe on Christ except as you see him, and if you look to him you will learn that he is able to save; you will learn his loving-kindness; and you cannot doubt him after having once beheld him. Dr. Watts says,

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love him too;"

and I am sure it is quite true if I read it another way--

"His worth, if all the nations knew
Sure the whole world would trust him too."

Oh, that you would look to him now, and your doubts would soon be removed; for there is nothing that so speedily kills all doubt and fear, as a look into the loving eye of the bleeding, dying Lord. "Ah," says one, "but my doubts are concerning my own salvation in this respect; I cannot be so holy as I want to be." "I have tried very much," says one, "to get rid of all my sins, and I cannot; I have labored to live without wicked thoughts, and without unholy acts, and I still find that my heart is deceitful above all things;' and I wander from God. Surely I cannot be saved, while I am like this?" Stay! Look to him, and be lightened. What business have you to be looking to yourself? The first business of a sinner is not with himself, but with Christ. Your business is to come to Christ, sick, weary, and soul-diseased, and ask Christ to cure you. You are not to be your own

physician, and then go to Christ, but just as you are; the only salvation for you is to trust implicitly, simply, nakedly, on Christ. As I sometimes put it--make Christ the only pillar of your hope, and never seek to buttress or prop him up. "He is able, he is willing." All he asks of you is just to trust him. As for your good works, they shall come afterwards. They are after-fruits of the Spirit: but your first business is not to do, but to believe. Look to Jesus, and put your only trust in him. "Oh," another cries, "Sir, I am afraid I do not feel my need of a Saviour as I ought." Looking to yourselves again! all looking to yourselves you see! This is all wrong. Our doubts and fears all arise from this cause--we will turn our eyes the wrong way just look to the cross again, just as the poor thief did when he was dying; he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Do the same. You may tell him if you please, that you do not feel your need of him as you ought; you may put this among your other sins, that you fear you have not a right sense of your great and enormous guilt. You may add to all your confessions, this cry "Lord help me to confess my sins better; help me to feel them more penitently." But recollect, it is not your repentance that saves you; it is just the blood of Christ, streaming from his hands, and feet, and side. Oh! I beseech you by him whose servant I am, this morning turn your eyes to the cross of Christ. There he hangs this day; he is lifted up in your midst. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of Man lifted up to-day in your eyes, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life.

And you children of God, I turn to you, for you have your doubts too. Would you get rid of them? Would you rejoice in the Lord with faith unmoved and confidence unshaken? Then look to Jesus; look again to him and you shall be lightened. I know not how it is with you my beloved

friends, but I very often find myself in a doubting frame of mind; and it seems to be a question whether I have any love to Christ or not. And despite the fact that some laugh at the hymn, It is a hymn that I am forced to sing:--

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought!
Do I love the Lord or not
Am I his, or am I not?"

And really I am convinced that every Christian has his doubts at times, and that the people who do not doubt are just the people that ought to doubt; for he who never doubts about his state perhaps may do so when it is too late. I knew a man who said he never had a doubt for thirty years. I told him that I knew a person who never had a doubt about him for thirty years. "How is that?" said he "that is strange." He thought it a compliment. I said, "I knew a man who never had a doubt about you for thirty years. He knew you were always the most confounded hypocrite he ever met; he had no doubt about you." But this man had no doubt about himself: he was a chosen child of God, a great favourite of the Most High; he loved the doctrine of Election, wrote it on his very brow; and yet he was the hardest driver and the most cruel oppressor to the poor I ever met with, and when brought to poverty himself, he might very frequently be seen rolling through the streets. And this man had not a doubt for thirty years; and yet the best people are always doubting. Some of those who are just living outside the gates of heaven, are afraid of being cast into hell after all; while those people who are on the high road to the pit are not the least afraid. However, if you would get rid of your doubts once more, turn to Christ. You know what Dr. Carey had put on his tomb-stone--just these words, for they were his comfort;--

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,

Into Christ's arms I fall;

He is my strength and righteousness,

My Jesus and my all."

Remember what that eminent Scotch divine said, when he was dying. Some one said to him, "What, are you dying now?" Said he, "I am just gathering all my good works up together, and I am throwing them all overboard; and I am lashing myself to the plank of free grace, and I hope to swim to glory on it." So do you do; every day keep your eye only on Christ; and so long as your eye is single, your whole body must and shall be full of light. But if you once look cross-eyed, first to yourself and then to Christ, your whole body shall be full of darkness. Remember, then, Christian, to hie away to the cross. When that great black dog of hell is after you, away to the cross! Go where the sheep goes when he is molested by the dog; go to the shepherd. The dog is afraid of the shepherd's crook; you need not be afraid of it, it is one of the things that shall comfort you. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Away to the cross, my brothers! away to the cross, if thou wouldest get rid of thy doubts. Certain I am, that if we lived more with Jesus, were more like Jesus, and trusted more to Jesus, doubts and fears would be very scarce and rare things, and we should have as little to complain of them as the first emigrants in Australia had to complain of thistles; for they found none there, and none would have been there if they had not been carried there. If we live simply by faith on the cross of Christ, we live in a land where there are no thistles, but if we will live on self, we shall have plenty of thistles and thorns, and briers, and nettles growing there. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

III. And now I invite you to a glorious scene--CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

Come you here, and look at him, as the old serpent bruises his heel!

"He dies! the friend of sinners dies,
And Salem's daughters weep around."

He was wrapped in his grave-clothes and put into his grave, and there he slept three days and nights. And on the first day of the week, he, who could not be holden by the bands of death, and whose flesh did not see corruption, neither did his soul abide in Hades--he arose from the dead. In vain the bands that swaddled him; he unfolded them by himself, and by his ownliving power wrapped them in perfect order, and laid them in their place. In vain the stone and the seal; the angel appeared and rolled away the stone, and forth the Saviour came. In vain the guards and watchmen; for in terror they fled far away, and he rose the conqueror over death--the firstfruits of them that slept. By his own power and might, he came again to life. I see among my congregation, not a few wearing the black weeds of sorrow. You have lost, some of you, the dearest of your earthly relatives There are others here, who, I doubt not, are under the constant fear of death. You are all your lifetime subject to bondage, because you are thinking upon the groans, and dying strife, which fall upon men, when they near the river Jordan. Come, come, I beseech you, ye weeping and timid spirits, behold Jesus Christ risen! For remember, this is a great truth--"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." And the verse of our song just embodies it:--

"What though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must."

There widow; weep no longer for your husband, if he died in Jesus. See the Master; he is risen from the dead; no spectre is he. In the

presence of his disciples he eats a piece of broiled fish and part of an honeycomb. No spirit is he; for he saith, "Handle me and see; a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." That was a real resurrection. And learn then, beloved, when you weep, to restrain your sorrows; for thy loved ones shall live again. Not only shall their spirits live, but their bodies too.

"Corruption, earth, and worms,
Do but refine this flesh;
At the archangel's sounding trump,
We put it on afresh."

Oh! think not that the worm has eaten up your children, your friends, your husband, your father, your aged parents--true, the worms seem to have devoured them. Oh! what is the worm after all, but the filter through which our poor filthy flesh must go? For in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, we shall be raised incorruptible, and the living shall be changed, you shall see the eye that just now has been closed, and you shall look on it again, you shall again grasp the hand that just now fell motionless at the side. You shall kiss the lips that just now were clay-cold, and white, and you shall hear again the voice that is silent in the tomb. They shall live again. And you that fear death--why fear to die? Jesus died before you, and he passed through the iron gates, and as he passed through them before you, he will come and meet you. Jesus who lives can

"Make the dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

Why should you weep? for Jesus rose from the dead; so shall you. Be of good cheer and confidence. You are not lost when you are put into the tomb; you are but seed sown to ripen against the eternal harvest. Your spirit mounts to God; your body slumbers for awhile to be quickened

into eternal life. It cannot be quickened except it die; but when it dies it shall receive a new life; it shall not be destroyed. "they looked to him, and were lightened." Oh! this is a precious thing to look to--a risen Saviour. I know of nothing that can lift our spirits higher than a true view of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have not lost any friends then; they have gone before. We shall not die ourselves; we shall seem to die, but are shall begin to live; for it is written

"He lives to die; he dies to live;
He lives to die no more."

May that be the lot of each one of us!

IV. And with the greatest possible brevity, I invite you to LOOK AT JESUS CHRIST ASCENDING INTO HEAVEN. After forty days, he takes his disciples to the hill, and while he discourses with them, on a sudden he mounts upward; and he is separated from them, and a cloud receives him into glory. Perhaps I may be allowed a little poetical license if I try to picture that which occurred after he ascended into the clouds. The angels came from heaven--

"They brought his chariot from on high,
To bear him to his throne
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done."

I doubt not, that with matchless triumph he ascended the hill of light and went to the celestial city, and when he neared the portals of that great metropolis of the universe, the angels shouted, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors," and the bright spirits from burning battlements, cried out, "Who is this King of Glory--who?" And the answer came, "the Lord mighty in battle, and the Lord of Hosts; he is the King of Glory." And then both they upon

the walls, and they who walk with the chariot join the song once more, and with one mighty sea of music, beating its melodious waves against the gates of heaven and forcing them open, the strain is heard, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in"--and in he went. And at his feet the angelic hosts all cast their crowns, and forth came the blood-washed and met him, not casting roses at his feet, as are do at the feet of conquerors in our streets, but casting immortal flowers, imperishable wreaths of honor that never can decay; while again, again, again, the heavens did ring with this melody, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father--unto him be glory forever and ever. And all the saints and all the angels said, "Amen." Now look here ye Christians, here is your comfort; Jesus Christ won wrestling with spiritual enemies, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers; you are at war today, and mayhap the enemy has thrust sore at you, and you have been ready to fall; it is a marvel to you, that you have not turned your back in the day of battle, for you have often feared lest you should be made to fly like a coward from the field. But tremble not, your Master was more than conqueror, and so shall you be. The day is coming when with splendor less than his, but yet the same in its measure, you too shall pass the gates of bliss; when you are dying, angels shall meet you in the mid-stream, and when your blood is cooling with the cold current, then shall your heart be warming with another stream, a stream of light and heat from the great fountain of all joy, and you shall stand on the other side of Jordan, and angels shall meet you clothed in their immaculate garments, they shall attend you up the hill of light, and they shall chant the praise of Jesus, and hail you as another trophy of his power. And when you enter the gates of heaven,

you shall be met with Christ your Master, who will say to you--"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord." Then will you feel that you are sharing in his victory, as once you shared in his struggles and his war. Fight on, Christian, your glorious Captain has won a great victory, and has secured for you in one and the same victory, a standard that never yet was stained with defeat, though often dipped in the blood of the slain.

V. And now once more "Look unto him, and be lightened." See there he sits is, heaven, he has led captivity captive, and now sits at the right hand of God, for ever making intercession for us. Can your faith picture him to-day? Like a great high priest of old, he stands with outstretched arms: there is majesty in his mien, for he is no mean cringing suppliant. He does not beat his breast, nor cast his eyes upon the ground, but with authority he pleads enthroned in glory now. There on his head is the bright shining mitre of his priesthood, and look you, on his breast are glittering the precious stones whereon the names of his elect are everlastingly engraved; hear him as he pleads, hear you not what it is?--is that your prayer that he is mentioning before the throne? The prayer that this morning you offered ere you came to the house of God, Christ is now offering before his Father's throne. The vow which just now you uttered when you said, "Have pity and have mercy,"--he is now uttering there. He is the Altar and the Priest, and with his own sacrifice he perfumes our prayers. And yet, mayhap, you have been at prayer many a day, and had no answer; poor weeping suppliant, thou hast sought the Lord and he hath not heard thee, or at least not answered thee to thy soul's delight; thou hast cried unto him, but the heavens have been as brass, and he hath shut out thy prayer, thou art full of darkness and heaviness on account of this," Look to him, and be lightened." If thou dost not succeed, he will; if

thy intercession be unnoticed, his cannot be passed away; if thy prayers can be like water spilt on a rock which cannot be gathered up, yet his prayers are not like that, he is God's Son, he pleads and must prevail; God cannot refuse his own Son what he now asks, he who once bought mercies with his blood. Oh! be of good cheer, continue still thy supplication. "Look unto him, and be lightened."

VI. In the last place, there are some of you here, weary with this world's din and clamor, and with this world's iniquity and vice. You have been striving all your life long, to put an end to the reign of sin, and it seems as if your efforts have been fruitless; the pillars of hell stand as fast as ever and the black palace of evil is not laid in ruins; you have brought against it all the battering-rams of prayer, and the might of God, you have thought,--and yet the world still sins, its rivers still roll with blood, its plains are still defiled with the lascivious dance, and its ear is still polluted with the filthy song and profane oath. God is not honored; man is still vile; and perhaps you are saying, "It is vain for us to fight on, we have undertaken a task which cannot be accomplished. the kingdoms of this world never can become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." But, Christian, "Look unto him, and be lightened." Lo! he cometh, he cometh, he cometh quickly; and what we cannot do in six thousand years, he can do in an instant. Lo! he comes, he comes to reign; we may try to build his throne, but we shall not accomplish it. But when he comes, he shall build his throne himself, on solid pillars of light and sit and judge in Jerusalem, amidst his saints, gloriously. Perhaps to-day, the hour we are assembled, Christ may come--"For of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels in heaven." Christ Jesus may, while I yet speak, appear in the clouds of glory. We have no reason to be guessing at the time of his appearing, he will come as a thief in the night; and

whether it shall be at cock-crowing, or broadday, or at midnight, we are not allowed to guess; it is left entirely in the dark, and vain are the prophecies of men, vain your "Apocalyptic Sketches," or ought of that. No man knoweth anything of it, except that it is certain he will come; but when he comes, no spirit in heaven or on earth should pretend to know. Oh! it is my joyous hope, that he may come whilst yet I live. Perhaps there may be some of us here who shall be alive, and remain at the coming of the Son of Man. Oh, glorious hope! we shall have to sleep, but we shall all be changed. He may come now, and we that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall be for ever with him. But if you die, Christian, this is your hope. "I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." And this is to be your duty, "Watch, therefore, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." Oh, will I not work on, for Christ is at the door! Oh! I will not give up toiling never so hard, for my Master cometh, and his reward is with him, and his work before him, giving unto every man according as his work shall be. Oh, I will not lie down in despair, for the trump is sounding now. Methinks I hear the trampling of the conquering legion, the last of God's mighty heroes are even now, perhaps, born into the world. The hour of this revival is the hour of the turning of the battle; thick has been the fight. and hot and furious the struggle, but the trump of the Conqueror is beginning to sound, the angel is lifting it now to his lips. The first blast has been heard across the sea, and we shall hear it yet again; or if we hear it not in these our days, yet still it is our hope. He comes, he comes, and every eye shall see him, and they that have crucified him shall weep and wail before him, but the righteous shall rejoice, and shall magnify him exceedingly. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

I remember I concluded preaching at Exeter Hall with these three words, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" and I think I will conclude my sermon of this morning with the same words, but not till I have spoken to one poor forlorn soul who is standing over there, wondering whether there is mercy for him. He says, "It is well enough, sir, to say, Look to Jesus,' but suppose you cannot look? If your eye is blind--what then?" Oh I my poor brother, turn your restless eyeballs to the cross, and that light which gives light to them that see, shall give eyesight to them that are blind. Oh! if thou canst not believe this morning, look and consider, and weigh the matter, and in weighing and reflecting thou shalt be helped to believe. He asks nothing of thee; he bids thee now believe that he died for thee. If to-day thou feelest thyself a lost, guilty sinner, all he asks is that thou wouldest believe on him; that is to say, trust him, confide in him. Is it not little he asks? And yet it is more than any of us are prepared to give, except the Spirit hath made us willing. Come, cast yourselves upon him; fall flat on his promise; sink or swim, confide in him, and you cannot guess the joy that you shall feel in that one instant that you believe on him. Were there not some of you impressed last Sabbath day, and you have been anxious all the week? Oh! I hope I have brought a good message to you this morning for your comfort. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," saith Christ, "for I am God, and beside me there is none else." Look ye now, and looking ye shall live. May every blessing rest upon you, and may each go away to think of that one person whom we love, even Jesus--Jesus--Jesus!

Chapter 31

A Present Religion

A Sermon

(No. 196)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 30, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God."--1 John 3:2.

I SHALL not pretend to preach from the whole of my text this morning, short though it be. The word "now" is to me the most prominent word in the text, and I shall make it so this morning. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

It is astonishing how distance blunts the keen edge of anything that is disagreeable. War is at all times a most fearful scourge. The thought of slain bodies and of murdered men must always harrow up the soul; but because we hear of these things in the distance, there are few Englishmen who can truly enter into their horrors. If we should hear the booming of cannon on the deep which girdles this island; if we should see at our doors the marks of carnage and bloodshed; then should we more thoroughly appreciate what war means. But distance takes away the horror, and we therefore speak of war with too much levity, and even read of it with an interest not sufficiently linked with pain. As it is with war, so it is with death. Death is a frightful thing; he who is the bravest must still fear before it, for at best it is a solemn thing to die. Man, therefore, adopts the expedient of putting off all thoughts of death: it may be very near to him, but he conceives it to be at a distance, and then the same effect is produced as when war is at a distance; its horror is forgotten, and we speak of it with less

solemnity. So likewise with true religion; men are constrained to believe that there is truth in religion. Though there are some fool-hardy enough to deny it, the most of us in this enlightened land are obliged to acknowledge that there is a power in Godliness. What, then, does the worldling do? He practices the same expedient. He puts religion far away; he knows that its disagreeableness will be diminished by his believing it to be distant. Hence there has sprung up in the minds of the unregenerate world a notion that religion is a thing to be accomplished just at the close of life, and the usual prayer of an ungodly man, when in the slightest degree pricked in his conscience, is, "Oh, that I may be saved at last!" He does not feel anxious to be saved now; religion is a thing for which he has no appetite, and therefore believing it essential to insure his eternal welfare, he adopts the alternative of saying, "I hope to have it at last."

The religion, then, of the present, is not the worldling's religion. He tolerates that which speaks of eternity; that which deals with dying beds; that which leads him to look back with a specious repentance upon a life spent in sin, but not that which will enable him to look forward to a life spent in holiness. Very differently, however, do we act with affairs of the present life, for things that are sweet to us, become the more sweet by their nearness. Was there ever a child who longed for his father's house who did not feel that the holidays grew more sweet in his estimation the shorter the time was that he had to tarry? What man is there who having once set his heart on riches, did not find his delight in the thought of being rich increase with the nearness of his approach to the desired object? And are we not all of us accustomed, when we think a good thing is at a distance, to try if we can shorten the time between us and it. We try anything and everything

to push on the lagging hours; we chide them, wish that Time had double wings, that he might swiftly fly and bring the expected season. When the Christian talks of heaven, you will always hear him try to shorten the distance between himself and the happy land; he says,--

"A few more rolling suns at most
Will land me on fair Canaan's coast."

There may be many years between him and paradise, but still he is prone to say,

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long."

Thus do we all delight to shorten the distance between us and the things for which we hope. Now let us just apply this rule to religion. They who love religion love a present thing. The Christian who really seeks salvation, will never be happy unless he can say, "Now am I a child of God." Because the worldling dislikes it, he puts it from him, because the Christian loves it, therefore its very fairest feature is its present existence, its present enjoyment in his heart. That word "now" which is the sinners warning, and his terror, is to the Christian, his greatest delight and joy. "There is therefore"--and then the sweetest bell of all rings--"there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" to the sinner that same idea is the blackest of all, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God."

This morning, in God's name, I shall endeavor to plead with men, and show them the importance of having a present religion. I am quite certain that this is a habit which is too much kept in the back-ground. I am sure from mixing with mankind, that the current belief is, that religion is a future thing, perhaps the wish is father to the thought. I am certain the ground of it is, men love not religion, and therefore they desire to thrust it far from them.

I shall commence by endeavoring to show that religion must be a thing of the present, because the present has such intimate connection with the future, and to proceed--We are told in Scripture that this life is a seed time, and the future is the harvest, "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." The Scripture often speaks to us in words like these, "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy." It is always supposed in Scripture, that this life is the time of generating, if I may use such an expression, the life that is to come, as the seed generates the plant, even so doth this present life generate the eternal future. We know, indeed, that heaven and hell are, after all, but the developments of our present character, for what is hell but this, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he that is unholy, let him be unholy still?" Do we not know that in the bowels of every sin, damnation slumbers? Is it not a fearful truth that the germ of everlasting torment sleeps in every vile wish, every unholy thought, every unclean act, so that hell is but a great breaking out of slumbering lava, which had been so quiet, that while the mountain was covered with fair verdure, even to its summit, death comes and bide that lava rise; and down the steeps of manhood's eternal existence, the fiery flame, and the hot scalding lava of eternal misery doth pour itself. Yet it was there before, for sin is hell, and to rebel against God is but the prelude of misery. So is it with heaven; I know that heaven is a reward, not of debt, but of grace; but still the Christian has that within him, which forestall for him a heaven. What did Christ say? "I give unto my sheep eternal life." He did not say, I will give, but, I give unto them. "As soon as they believe in me, I give them eternal life," and "he that believeth, hath eternal life, and shall never come unto damnation." The Christian hath within him the seed-beds

of a paradise, in due time the light that is sown for the righteous, and the gladness that is buried beneath the black earth for the upright in heart, shall spring up, and they shall reap the harvest. Is it not plain then that religion is a thing which we must have here? Is it not prominently revealed that religion is important for the present? for if this life be the seed time of the future, how can I expect to reap in another world other crops than I have been sowing here? how can I trust that I shall be saved, unless I am saved? how can I have hope that heaven shall be my eternal inheritance, unless the earnest be begun in my own soul on earth?

But again, this life is always said in Scripture to be a preparation for the life to come, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." "They that were ready went in with him to the supper, and the door was shut." There is in this world a getting ready for another world; to use a Biblical figure, we must here put on the wedding dress, which we are to wear for ever. This life is as the vestibule of the king's court, we must put our shoes from off our feet; we must wash our garments and make ourselves ready to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. Somehow, in Scripture, the thought comes out as plain as if written with a sunbeam, this world is the beginning of the end,--it is the preparing-place for the future. Supposing you have no religion now, how will you stand when now is turned into eternity? When days and years are gone, how will it fare with you, if all your days have been spent without God and without Christ? Do you hope to hurry on the white garment after death? Alas! you shall be girt with your shroud, but not be able to put on the wedding raiment. Do you trust that you shall wash you and make you clean in the river Jordan? Alas! ye shall breed corruption in your tomb, but ye shall not find holiness there. Do ye trust to be pardoned after you have departed?

"There are no acts of pardon pass'd
In the cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and fell despair,
Reign in eternal silence there."

Or, do ye think that when ye near the borders of the grave, then will be the time to prepare? Be not deceived. We read in Scripture one instance of a man saved at the eleventh hour. Remember, there is but one; and we have no reason to believe that there ever was, or ever will be another. There may have been persons saved on their dying beds, but we are not sure there ever were. Such things may have happened, but none of us can tell. Alas! facts are sadly against it; for we have been assured by those who have had the best means of judging--those who have long walked the hospital of humanity--that such as thought they were dying and made vows of repentance, have almost invariably turned back, like "the dog to his own vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Oh no; "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" for to-day is the preparing time for the dread to-morrow--to-day is the making ready for the eternal future.

Let me urge one other reflection here. How are we saved? All through Scripture we are told we are saved by faith, except in one passage, wherein it is said, we are saved by hope. Now note, how certain it is that religion must be a present thing if we are saved by faith, because faith and hope cannot live in another world. "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" Hope cannot exist in that world of realities where shadows are unknown. How can faith be exercised when we see a thing? for what a man perceiveth by faith that he realises not by sense; and although we say "seeing is believing," it is quite certain that seeing and believing are at opposite poles. Believing is an assurance of that which we see not, and in confidence of faith waiting

until we do see it; but seeing is sensuous, and the very reverse of faith. Now if I am to be saved by faith, it is quite certain I must be saved in a state where faith can be exercised that is in this world; and if I am to be saved by hope, I cannot be saved by hope in that world where hope cannot exist; I must be saved here, for here is the only place where hope can breathe an air that lets it live. The air of heaven is too bright and pure, too heavenly, too warm. too sweet with angels' songs, for faith and hope to inhabit. They leave us on this side of the Jordan; if then we are saved by these I think it follows--and every one of you must perceive the inference--we must be saved now, because faith and hope are not things of the future. Oh how pleasant, if after these remarks we can say, "Yes, it is so; it is even so, and we rejoice therein, for now are we the sons of God.'"

In the second place, as I have briefly shown the connection between the present and the future, let me use another illustration to show the importance of a present salvation. Salvation is a thing which brings present blessings. When you read Scripture, and alas there are few who care to read it as they ought in these times, they read anything rather than their Bibles--when you read Scripture, you will be struck with the fact that every blessing is spoken of in the present tense. You remember how the apostle in one of his epistles says, "Unto them which are saved, Christ power of God and the wisdom of God." He does not say to them who shall be saved, but to them which are saved. We know too that justification is a present blessing--"there is therefore now no condemnation." Adoption is a present blessing, for it says, "Now are we the sons of God," and we know also that sanctification is a present blessing, for the apostle addresses himself to "the saints who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called." All the blessings of the new covenant are spoken of in the present tense, because with the exception

of eternal glory in heaven, they are all to be enjoyed here. I know this, that I shall be one day, if I am a believer in Christ, more sanctified than I am to-day--if not in the sense of consecration, yet still in the sense of purification--but at the same time I know this of a surety, that when I stand at God's right hand, midst the lamps of eternal brightness, and when these fingers move with vigor across the golden strings, and when this voice is filled with the immortal songs, I shall not be one whit more a child of God than I am now. And when the white robe is upon me, and the crown upon my head, I shall not be more justified than I am at the present moment, for it is the doctrine of Holy Scripture, that

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

But the assurance of our possession in these things is a present blessing also. I will illustrate what I mean by a circumstance which happened to myself. A lady called upon me in some distress of mind, and this was her difficulty:--She had, she trusted, been converted to God, enjoyed great peace of mind, and for a little season was very full of joy; because she believed that she had been forgiven, and was accepted in the beloved. Naturally enough, seeking her religious instructor, she went to the clergyman of the parish, who, unfortunately for her was a blind guide, for when she began to tell him concerning her joy, he checked her, by saying, "My good woman, this is all presumption." "Nay, sir," said she "I trust not; my hope is fixed on nothing else than Jesus; I repose alone in him." "That is right enough," said he, "but you have no authority to say you know you are saved; you have no authority to believe that you are already pardoned." And he told her

that he did not believe it possible for any Christian to be assured of this except a very few eminent saints, they might hope, that was all; they might trust but they could never be sure. Ah! methinks he had gone but a very little way on the road to the kingdom of heaven. He must have been but a very small infant in Christ, if in Christ at all, to have told her so. For those of us who have for a few years put on the Lord Jesus, know of a surety that there is such a thing as infallible assurance, we know that although there is such a thing as presumption, there is a distinction which every Christian can easily mark between the one and the other. Presumption says, "I am a child of God, and I may live as like. I know I am saved, I need not therefore seek to have present communion with Christ." But Assurance says, "I know whom I have believed; I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." And then she meekly bows her head, and says, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe, keep me and I shall be kept; draw me and I will run after thee." Oh! my dear hearers, never believe that falsehood of the day--that a man cannot know himself to be a child of God. For if you tell us that, we can refute you with a thousand testimonies. We have seen the poor, the humble, and the illiterate, confident of their interest in Christ. It is true, we have seen them doubt; we have heard their wailings when they could not see Christ with their heart. Yea we have known the time when the greatest of God's people have had to tremble, and say--

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought--
'Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?'"

But still, God's people may be assured; they may know, by the witness of the Spirit within, that they are born of God; for doth not an

apostle say, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren?" "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are born of God." I would that we had more Christians who lived in the enjoyment of full assurance. How precious it is when the milk of faith settles down, and the thick cream of full assurance can be skimmed from the surface as marrow and fatness to the children of God. Religion, then, is a thing of present assurance. A man may know in this life, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he is accepted in Christ Jesus.

Yet I am inclined to think, that the worldly man most of all objects to present religion, because he does not like its duties. Most men would be very religious if religion did not entail obligations. Many a free liver would be a very pious man, if he were not curtailed of a few of his bottles of wine. Many a loose character would have no objection to go up to the temple and pray, and subscribe his name to the God of Jacob, if the gospel did not forbid all uncleanness, and everything that is lascivious. Many a tradesman would put on the Lord Jesus Christ, if there were no necessity to put off the old man, if he could keep his sins and have Christ too--oh, how willing would he be. Indeed, there are a great many who are so fond of it, that they have tried it. We know people who are like the Roman Emperor, who believed that Jesus Christ was God, but thought that all the other strange gods were likewise to be worshipped; so these people think religion a very good thing, but think sin a very good thing too, so they set up the two together, and their whole life is like Janus, two-faced. They look most comely Christians in the synagogue, but they look most unmistakable hypocrites if you see them in the market. Men will not direct a single eye to religion because it curtails license and entails duties. And this, I think, proves that religion is a present thing, because the

duties of religion cannot be practiced in another world, they must be practiced here.

Now, what are the duties of religion? In the first place, here are its active duties, which a man should do between man and man, to walk soberly and righteously, and uprightly in the midst of an evil generation. Lightly as some people speak about morality, or against morality, there is no true religion where there is no morality. Do not tell me about your orthodoxy, do not come and tell me about your private prayers and secret piety, if your life be bad, you are bad altogether. A good tree cannot bring forth anything but good fruit, and a corrupt tree will bring forth corrupt fruit. There is no questioning that; what your life is, that you are--for as out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, so out of the abundance of the heart the man lives. It is an in vain for you to deprecate so strong a sentiment as this, and to say, "The best of saints are fallible." I know they are; I know that even the best of men will sin, but they will not sin willingly; if they sin publicly, it will be but an exception, their lives, under the power of Divine grace, will be holy, and pure, and upright. I believe the devil likes Antinomianism, and he says to the Romanist, "Preach on, you Priest; I do not mind what you preach, for you will enter my dominions. You tell people that they may live in sin, and then procure absolution for a shilling! Fine doctrine that!" And he pats the priest on the back, and gives him all the Assistance he can. Then comes there an Antinomian minister into the pulpit. The devil says, "Ah, though he rails against the Pope of Rome, I like them both, the one as much as the other." Then how he preaches! he begins preaching justification by faith alone, and he carries his argument a step too far, for he begins railing at good works, calls them legalists, who think it their duty to lead a holy life, and hints with

a smirk and a smile, that the excellent conduct of a man is of little importance, so long as he believes the truth and goes to his chapel. "Ah," says the devil, "preach away; I love the two things, Antinomianism and Popery, for they are two of the finest quacks for canting souls." Again, I say, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsover a man soweth that shall he also reap." By our works we are not to be justified, but still by our works we shall be judged, and by our works we shall be condemned. So saith the Scriptures, and this we must receive. Religion, therefore, must be a present thing; we need not talk of walking righteously, and soberly, in the world to come--

"There all is pure, and all is clear,
There all is joy and love."

There will be no duty to discharge between the tradesman and the customer, between the debtor and the creditor, between the father and the child, between the husband and the wife, in heaven, for all relationships shall have passed away. Religion must be intended for this life; the duties of it cannot be practiced, unless they are practiced here.

But besides these, there are other duties devolving upon the Christian. Though it is every man's duty to be honest and sober, the Christian has another code of law. It is the Christian's duty to love his enemies, to be at peace with all men, to forgive as he hopes to be forgiven; and it is his duty not to resist evil, when smitten on the one cheek to turn the other also; it is his duty to give to him that asketh of him and from him that would borrow of him not to turn away--he is to be a liberal soul devising liberal things. It is the Christian's duty to visit his Master's children when they are sick, so that it may be said to him at last, "I was sick, and naked, and in prison, and ye visited me, and ministered to my necessities." Now, if religion be not a thing

for this world, I ask you how is it possible to perform its duties at all? There are no poor in heaven whom we can comfort and visit, there are no enemies in heaven whom we can graciously forgive; and there are no injuries inflicted, or wrongs endured, which we can bear with patience. Religion must have been intended in the very first place for this world, it must have been meant that now we should be the sons of God. For again I repeat it, that the major part of the duties of religion cannot be practiced in heaven, and therefore religion must be a present thing.

But, coming near to our conclusion, I believe there are many more persons who do not like religion for to-day, but who want to have it at the last, for this reason: they think religion is not a happy thing; they believe it makes men miserable. They have met with persons with long faces, they have seen some who were born in stormy weather, and who seem to have lived all their lives long with a hurricane inside their hearts, never having one flash of sunlight, nor one pleasant rainbow across their brow. Many young people imbibe this idea. They think that surely religion must be a thing that will make men go moping and melancholy all through this world. In fact, they enter the chapel sometimes, and they hear the saints singing--and what a sweet hymn it is--a sorry sweetness in truth!--

"Lord, what a wretched land is this;"

and they go out and say, "No doubt it is, we will have nothing to do with it." Looking upon religion as medicine which is extremely nauseous,--if they must drink it, they will put it off to the last; they will gulp it down with a "Lord, have mercy on me!" and ere its bitterness is fairly in their mouth, they expect to begin to enjoy its sweetness in heaven. What a mistake! Religion has its present enjoyments. I do solemnly affirm to-day, in the face of this

congregation, and before Almighty God, if I were certain that I were to die like a dog and when I was buried there would be an end of me, had I my choice of the happiest life a man could lead, I would say, "Let me be a Christian," for if, as some say, it be a delusion, it is one of the most magnificent delusions that ever we. devised. If any man could prove the religion of Christ to be a delusion, the next thing he should do would be to hang himself, because there is nothing worth living for. He might well sit down and weep to think he had made a ruin of so goodly a structure, and dissolved such a pleasant dream.

Ah! beloved, there are present enjoyments in religion. Speak, ye that know them, for ye can tell; yet ye cannot recount them all. Oh! would ye give up your religion for all the joys that earth calls good or great? Say, if your immortal life could be extinguished, would you give it up, even for all the kingdoms of this world? Oh: ye sons of poverty, has not this been a candle to you in the darkness? Has not this lightened you through the dark shades of your tribulation? Oh! ye horny handed sons of toil, has not this been your rest, your sweet reposer; Have not the testimonies of God been your song in the house of your pilgrimage? Oh! ye daughters of sorrow, ye who spend the most of your time upon your beds--and your couch to you is a rack of pain--has not religion been to you a sweet quietus? When your bones were sore vexed, could ye not even then praise him on your beds? Speak from your couches to-day, ye consumptives, blanched though your cheeks; speak this day from your beds of agony, ye that are troubled with inumerable diseases, and are drawing near your last home? Is not religion worth having in the sick chamber, on the bed of pain and anguish? "Ah!" they heartily say," we can praise him on our beds; we can sing his high praises in the fires." And ye men of business, speak for yourselves! You have hard struggles to pass through life. Sometimes you have been driven to a

great extremity, and whether you would succeed or not seemed to hang upon a thread. Has not your religion been a joy to you in your difficulties? Has it not calmed your minds? When you have been fretted and troubled about worldly things, have you not found it a pleasant thing to enter your closet, and shut-to the door, and tell your Father in secret all your cares? And O ye that are rich, cannot you bear the same testimony, if you have loved the Master? What had all your riches been to you without a Saviour? Can you not say, that your religion did gild your gold, and make your silver shine more brightly? for all things that you have are sweetened by this thought, that you have all these and Christ too! Was there ever a child of God who could deny this? We have heard of many infidels who grieved over their infidelity when they came to die. Did you ever hear of a Christian acting the counterpart? Did you ever hear of any one on his death-bed looking back on a life of holiness with sorrow? We have seen the rake, with a wasted constitution shrivel into a corpse through his iniquities, and we have heard him bemoan the day in which he went astray. We have seen the poor debauched child of sin rotting with disease, and listened to her shriek, and heard her miserably curse herself that she ever turned aside, to what was called the path of gaiety, but what was really the path to hell. We have seen the miser too, who has gripped his bags of gold, and on his dying bed we have found him curse himself, that when he came to die, his gold, though laid upon his heart, could not still its achings and give him joy. Never, never did we know a Christian who repented of his Christianity. We have seen Christians so sick, that we wondered that they lived--so poor, that we pondered at their misery; we have seen them so full of doubts, that we pitied their unbelief; but we never heard them say, even then, "I regret that I gave myself to Christ." No; with the dying clasp, when heart and flesh were failing,

we have seen them hug this treasure to their breast and press it to their heart, still feeling that this was their life, their joy, their all. Oh! if ye would be happy, if ye would be saved, if ye would strew your path with sunshine, and dig out the nettles and blunt the thorns, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Seek not happiness first; seek Christ first, and happiness shall come after. Seek ye first the Lord, and then he will provide for you everything that is profitable for you in this life and he will crown it with everything that is glorious in the life to come. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

Before closing this discourse, I fear that there are a great many of you who will say, "Well, I care nothing at all about religion. it is of no avail to me;" No, my friends, and it is very probable that you will not care about it, until it shall be too late to care. Mayhap you will go on putting off these thoughts, until the day shall come, when they will come so thick upon you, that you will not be able to procrastinate any longer, and then will you in right earnest set about seeking Christ; but at that hour he will say to you, "Inasmuch as Moab hath wearied himself upon the high places, and he betaketh himself to my sanctuary, I will not hear him, saith the Lord." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate" now, "for many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able." Let us fear, lest, having the gospel preached in our ears, we should neglect and put it off until the last hour has struck, and we find ourselves without hope, when there is no time to seek a Saviour.

I know where this morning's sermon will be found profitable. It will be in the case of those who are seeking Christ. Old Flockhart, who used to preach till within the last few months in the streets of Edinburgh, a much despised, but a very godly man, used to say, "When I begin my sermon, I begin by preaching the law, and then I bring the gospel

afterwards; for," he said, "it is like a woman who is sewing--she cannot sew with thread alone; she first sticks a sharp needle through, and then draws the thread afterwards. so," he says, "does the Lord with us; he sends the sharp needle of conviction, the needle of the law, into our hearts. and pricks us in the heart, and he draws through the long silken thread of consolation afterwards." Oh! I would that some of you were pricked in the heart to-day. Remember, there are thunders in this book; though they are sleeping now, they will wake by-and-bye. There are in this Bible curses too horrible for heart to know their full extent of meaning; they are slumbering now, but they shall waken and when they leap from between the folded leaves, and the seven seals are broken, where will you flee, and where shall you hide yourselves, in that last great day of anger? If, then, ye are pricked to the heart, I preach to you the gospel now. "Today, if ye will hear his voice. harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." This day look to him that hung upon the cross. This day believe and live.

And now to illustrate the manner in which rebellious sinners are reconciled to God, I will relate to you an interesting anecdote from the life of a soldier. It may picture to your minds the majesty of God in strewing grace, and the humbling experience of the sinner in receiving it, and help us to answer that solemn question--"What must I do to be saved?" My author says, that himself and his comrades of a certain regiment serving in India, had been without pay for about six months, and there has strong suspicion throughout the ranks that their commanding officer had embezzled the money: he was a great gambler, and they thought it most likely that he had gambled away their pay. They were determined to seek redress; so all the private soldiers (with the exception of non-commissioned officers,) agreed that on a particular morning, when on parade, they should not obey the word of command. The

day arrived, and they carried their design into execution. The regiment was assembled; the men in companies, headed by their respective officers, proceeded to the parade ground, and formed into open column. The commanding officer took his station in front and gave the word of command. Not one, however, of the privates obeyed. This being the conduct of the regiment, the commanding officer, with great self-possession, ordered every tenth man to be confined in the guard-house. It was done without a show of resistance. After which, all the privates fixed bayonets, shouldered arms, and marched off--the band playing and the drums beating alternately--all the way to the residence of the general, about a mile distant. There they halted, and formed in line fronting the house, in a most orderly manner. One man from each of the ten companies then stepped forward, and they proceeded to lodge a written complaint against the colonel. Having thus fulfilled their purpose, they marched back, and dismissed; but the next thing was to release the prisoners, and this they did without any violence being offered by the guard. Whatever extenuations we may conceive for such conduct, according to military law it was a heinous crime. The soldier's duty is to obey; he must not think for himself, but he must be as a tool in the hands of his superior officers, to do as he is told, and not to complain. Shortly after this, to the surprise of these soldiers, the general was seen approaching with a large army of Sepoys, infantry and cavalry, with field pieces in front. The regiment went out and respectfully saluted him, forming in line. But this was not what the general came for. They saw the storm brewing and prepared to fight. After the two lines had been formed, facing each other, the General moved out on horseback. and said, "Twenty-second, take the command from me." They obeyed. He then said, "Order arms." Next--"Handle arms;"--and last, which was most disgraceful to them--"Ground army" Having thus

disarmed, he ordered his black cavalry to charge upon them, and drive them from their arms. One more order he gave to those disaffected men, that they should strip off their accoutrements and lay them on the ground, and be off to their cantonments. When he had thus disarmed and dishonored the men, he forgave them.

And now will not this incident fitly represent the manner of God with sinners, when according to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, he brings terms of peace and reconciliation to us who are in revolt against him? He says, "Ground arms, give up your sins, take off your self-righteousness." He disarms us, dishonors us, and strips on all our comely array, and then says, "Now I will forgive you." If there be any one here who has thrown down his weapons of rebellion, and whose fine ornaments of beauty are stained with shame, let him believe that God will now forgive him; he forgives those who cannot forgive themselves. The great Captain of our salvation will pardon those whom he has humbled. He will have you submit to his will, and though that will may at first seem imperious to drive you from your quarters, and visit you with punishment, you shall presently find that his sovereign will is gracious, and he delighteth in mercy. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," for thus saith the Word, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Chapter 32

The Spies

A Sermon

(No. 197)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 6, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature."--Numbers 13:32.

"And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land."--Numbers 14:6-7.

THE UNBELIEF OF THE CHILDREN of Israel, prompted them to send spies into Canaan. God had told them that it was a good land, and he had promised to drive out their enemies, they ought therefore to have marched forward with all confidence to possess the promised heritage. Instead of this, they send twelve princes to spy out the land, and "alas, for human nature," ten of these were faithless, and only two true to the Lord. Read over the narrative, and mark the ill effect of the lying message, and the holy boldness of the true spies.

Now I must take up my parable. The land of Canaan is a picture of religion; I do not think it was ever intended to be a picture of heaven, for there are no Canaanites in heaven, certainly in heaven

there are no sons of Anak, no giants to be driven out, no walled cities, and no kings with chariots of iron. Canaan is, however, a very excellent picture of religion. The children of Israel must stand this morning as the representatives of the great mass of mankind. The great mass of mankind never try for themselves what religion is; they neither search our sacred books, nor taste and try our religion. But this is what they do; they consider those who make a profession of religion as spies who have entered the land, and they look upon our character and our conduct as the message which we bring back to them. The ungodly man does not read his Bible in order to discover whether the religion of Christ is holy and beautiful, no, he reads the living Bible--Christ's church--and if the church is inconsistent he condemns the Bible, though the Bible is never to be accountable for the sins of those who profess to believe it. Ungodly men of course do not come and by repentance and faith make a trial of the love of Christ; they do not enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus, or else they would soon discover that it is a good land that floweth with milk and honey; but instead thereof they stand still, and they say, "Let be, let us see what these Christians make of it. Do they find it to be a happy thing? Does it succor them in their hour of trouble? Does it comfort them in the midst of their trials?" And if they find that our report is a gloomy or an unholy one, they turn aside, and they say, "It is not a good land; we will not enter into it, for its difficulties are great, but its enjoyments are few."

Beloved brethren and friends, to put the parable as simply as I can, I am about to make out every Christian man and woman here to be a spy who has entered into the good land of religion, and who by his conduct and conversation brings either an evil or a good report of this good land, and either moves the world to murmur at and to despise religion, or

else inspires it with a holy dread of goodness, and something of a longing after a portion therein.

But I shall begin with a word of caution. In the first place I shall notice that the men of the world are not to be excused for their folly in trusting to mere report from other persons. Then secondly, I shall endeavor to describe the evil reporters, the evil spies, which are in the camp; then we will mention some good spies, who bring a good report of the land; and, in conclusion, bring a few weighty reasons to bear upon Christian men, why they should act like Caleb and Joshua, and bring up a good report of the land.

I. In the first place, then, THE UNGODLY WORLD ARE NOT TO BE EXCUSED for that, which must nevertheless be admitted to be a very natural matter, namely, that INSTEAD OF INVESTIGATING RELIGION FOR THEMSELVES, THEY USUALLY TRUST TO THE REPRESENTATION OF OTHERS.

The worldly man looks at a Christian to see whether his religion be joyful. "By this," says he, "shall I know whether there is that in religion which will make a man glad. If I see the professor of it with a joyous countenance, then I will believe it to be a good thing." But hark, sir! hast thou any right to put it to that test? Is not God to be counted true, even before we have proved him? And hath he not declared himself, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile?" Doth not the Scripture itself declare that godliness is profitable, not only for this life, but for that which is to come--that it hath the blessing of two worlds, the blessing of this world below the sky and of that upper world above the stars? Would you not know from Scripture if you were to take the Bible and read it, that everywhere the Christian is commanded to rejoice, because it is comely for him? "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." "Rejoice evermore."

"Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice." Remember you have no right to put the joyfulness of religion to any test short of your own experience, for you are bound to believe God on his naked word. It is not for you to stand still till you can see it to be true.

It is your duty to believe your Maker when he declares that the ways of religion are pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

Again, you say you will test the holiness of Christ's religion by the holiness of Christ's people. You have no right, I reply, to put the question to any such test as that. The proper test that you ought to use is to try it yourselves--to "taste and see that the Lord is good." By tasting and seeing you will prove his goodness, and by the same process you must prove the holiness of his gospel. Your business is to seek Christ crucified for yourselves, not to take the representation of another man concerning the power of grace to subdue corruption and to sanctify the heart. Your business is yourselves to enter into its valleys end pluck its grapes; yourselves to climb its hills and see its inhabitants. Inasmuch as God has given you a Bible, he intended you to read it, and not to be content with reading men. There is his Holy Spirit; you are not to be content with feelings that rise through the conversation of others, your only power to know true religion is, by having that Spirit operating upon your own heart, that you may yourself know what is the power of religion. You have no right to judge religion from anything extra or external from itself. And if you despise it before you have tried it yourself, you must stand confessed in this world as a fool, and in the next world as a criminal. And yet this is so with most men. If you hear a man rail at the Bible, you can usually conclude that he never reads it. And you may be quite certain if you hear a man speak against religion, that he never knew what religion was. True religion, when once it takes possession of the heart, never

allows a man to quarrel with it. That man will call Christ his best friend who knows Christ at all. We have found many who have despised the enjoyments of this world, but we never found one who turned from religion with disgust or with satiety, after having once enjoyed it.

No, remember my hearers, if you take your religion from other people, and are led by the example of professors to discard religion, you are nevertheless guilty of your own blood. For God has not left you to the uncertain chart of men's characters; he has given you his own Word; a more sure word and testimony, whereunto you do well if ye take heed.

It will be in vain for you to say at the day of judgment, "Such and such a man was inconsistent, therefore I despised religion." Your excuse will then be discovered to be idle, for you shall have to Confess, that in other respects, you did not take another man's opinion. In business, in the cares of this life, you were independent enough; in your political opinions you did not pin your faith to any man's coat; and, therefore, it shall be said of you at last, you had enough independence of mind to steer your own course even against the example of others, in business, in politics, and such like things; you certainly had enough of mental vigor, if you had chosen to have done so, to have stood out against the inconsistency of professors, anal to have searched for yourselves. If all Christ's church were inconsistent, so long as there is a Bible upon earth, you could have no excuse in the day of judgment; for Christ was not inconsistent, and you are not asked to follow Christ's followers--you are asked to follow Christ himself.

Until then you can find a flaw in his character, a mistake in his conduct, you have no right to fling the inconsistency of his followers in the teeth of Christ, nor to turn from him because his disciples forsake him and flee. To their own Master they stand or fall; they must bear their own burden, and you must bear yours too. "Every man shall

bear his own burden," saith Scripture, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for the things which we have done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil" You will not be accountable for another man's sins, but for your own; and if another man by his sin has brought reproach upon Christ, still it shall be no excuse for you if you do not follow him wholly, in the midst of an evil generation.

II. With that, by way of caveat and guard, I shall now bring forth THE BAD SPIES. I wish that the men mentioned in the text, had been the only spies who have brought an evil report: it would have been a great mercy if the plague that killed them, had killed all the rest of the same sort; but alas! the breed, I am afraid, will never be extinct, and as long as the world endureth, there will be some professors who bring up an evil report of the land.

But now let me bring forth the evil spies. Remember, these spies are to be judged, not by what they say, but by what they do; for to a worldling, words are nothing--acts are everything. The reports that we bring of our religion are not the reports of the pulpit, not the reports that we utter with our lips, but the report of our daily life, speaking in our own houses, and the every day business of life.

Well, first, I produce a man who brings up an evil report of the land, and you will see at once that he does so, for he is of a dull and heavy spirit. If he preaches, he takes this text--"Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom." Somehow or other, he never mentions God's people, without calling them God's tried children. As for joy in the Lord, he looks upon it with suspicion. "Lord, what a wretched land is this!" is the very height of poetry to him. He could sing that always. He is always in the valley, where the mists are hovering: he never climbs the mountain's brow, to stand above the tempests of this life.

He was gloomy before be made a profession of religion--since then he has become more gloomy still. See him at home. Ask the children what they think of their father's religion. they think they could wish their father was anything except religious. "Father will not let us laugh," they say; "he pulls the blinds down on the Sunday; he tries to make us as dark and miserable as he can on the Sabbath day;" he thinks it his duty as a strict Sabbatarian, to make the Sabbath the greatest day of bondage out of the whole seven. Ask his wife what she thinks of religion: she says, "I do not know much about it myself, but I wish my husband were be little more cheerful." "Nay, but is it his religion that makes him miserable?" "I do not know what it is," she says, "but I know when he is most miserable, he is generally most religious." Hear him pray: when he is on his knees he gives a long list of his trials and troubles; but he never says at the end, "More are they that are for us than all they that are against us." He usually dwells upon the valley of Baca, and about crying so much that he makes it a well. He never goes on to say, "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeared before God." No, it is just the black part of the story. If you want to see this brother in perfection, you must see him when he is talking to a young convert. The young man is full of joy and gladness, for he has found the Saviour, and, like a young fledgling that has just taken wing, he delights to fly about in the sunshine, and chirp merrily in the joy of his faith. "Ah!" says the old Christian, "the black ox has not trodden on your toes yet; you will have more troubles than you dream of." Old Mr.Timorous was a friend of mine: did you ever hear what he said to Christian, when he met him on his journey? I will tell you the same. "The lions; the lions! the lions!" he cries; however says "The lions are chained." "The giants! the giants! the giants!" he exclaims. He never saith, "He carrieth the

lambs in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." He takes always the dreary side of the question, bringing up an ill report of the land. And, do you know, some of these people are so proud of their in report, that they form themselves into a little knot, and they cannot hear any preacher except his face he of an extreme length, and except he has studied the dictionary to find all the most lugubrious terms, and except he appear unto men to fast, just like the Pharisees of old. Now, I do not hesitate to say that these men are evil spies. Far be it from us to mask the great fact that religion does entail tribulation, and that a Christian, like everybody else, must expect in this world to have trouble, for man is born to it as the sparks fly upward; but it is as false as God is true, that religion makes men miserable. So sure as God is good, his religion is good. and as God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, religion is an atmosphere in which those tender mercies play, and the sea in which his lovingkindness swims. Oh, come, ye dreary professors, take away those storm-clouds, and wreathe a few rainbows on your brow. Come, now, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast; take those harps from the willows; down with them, and now try if your unaccustomed fingers cannot make them alive with melody. And if you will not do it, and cannot do it, permit me to bear my testimony. I can say, concerning Christ's religion, if I had to die like a dog, and had no hope whatever of immortality, if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart; let me be a follower of Jesus and walk in his footsteps, for never was there a truer word spoken than that of Solomon, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is a land that floweth with milk and honey; there are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry; there are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been

sweetened with more luscious wine; there are joys to be had here so fair that even cates ambrosial and the nectared wine of Paradise can scarce excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord.

Perhaps, however, this poor man that I have just sent off is to be pitied. Not so the next one, for he is a rascal indeed. See him! he comes forward as Mr. Meekface, making a great profession of religion. How he mouths the hymns! When he stands up to pray, with what a spiritual kind of voice he prays. Nothing carnal about his voice! He is among the Christian people a great leader. He can preach sermons by the yard. He can dissect doctrines by the hour. There is not a metaphysical point in all our theology that he does not understand,

"He can a hair divide,
Betwixt the west and north-west side."

His understanding is, in his own opinion, infinite; and he makes very boastful pretensions to piety. Everybody says when they see him in his good frames in chapel or elsewhere, "What a dear good man he is!" You follow him to business. He will not swear, but he will lie. He won't out-and-out rob, but he will cheat. He will not curse a man to his face, but he will do worse--he will speak ill of him behind his back. You watch him! He, if he could find a drunkard in the street, would upbraid him, and talk to him so proudly against the sin of intoxication, but he himself very seldom knows his own way upstairs to bed; only that is in a quiet way, therefore nobody sees it, and he is thought to be a very reputable member of society. Don't you know any such people? I hope you do not; but I have met with them. There is a great stock of them still living; men that make grand professions, and their lives are as much opposed to their professions, as hell is opposed to heaven. Now what does the world say of religion when they

see these people? They say at once, "Well, if this be religion, we had better have none of it." Says the business man, "I could not do what So-and-so does, it is true, I could not sing out of his hymn book, but I could not keep his cash book." We have known many men say; "I could not make so long a prayer as So-and-so, and could not make out my invoices in the dishonest way he does." We have met with worldly men who are far more honest as tradesman and professional men than persons who make a profession of religion. And we have known on the other hand, men who have made the greatest profession, indulging in all kinds of evil. Horrible shall he that man's fate, who thus ruins other men's souls by bringing up a bad report of the land. But, oh! I beseech you, my hearers, if any of you have seen such professors, let the righteous stand out to-day, like Joshua and Caleb of old; let the Church stand before you and rend its garments, while it entreats you not to believe the lying and slanderous reports of such men. For, indeed, religion is holy; as Christ is holy, even so do his people desire to be holy. And the grace of God which bringeth salvation is pure and peaceful; it produces in men things that are holy and of good report, things that magnify God, and that make human nature appear glorious. But scarcely do I need to tell you that, in your own circle while you have met with hypocrites, you have met with men whom you could not doubt. Yes, you have sometimes seen even in your evil company, a man who was like an angel; you have felt as Satan did when Abdiel, the faithful among the faithless, stood forth, and would not turn a rebel to his God.

"Abashed the devil stood, and felt how awful goodness was"

I beseech you therefore, do not believe the ill report of the hypocrite, and the unholy man.

But there is a third class of professors who bring up a bad report of the land. And this I am afraid will affect us all in some measure we

must all plead guilty to it. The Christian man, although he endeavors uniformly to walk according to the law of Christ, finds still another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and consequently there are times when his witness is not consistent. Sometimes this witness is, "The Gospel is holy" for he is holy himself. But, alas with the very best of men, there are times when our witness contradicts our faith. When you see an angry Christian--and such a thing may be seen--and when you meet with a Christian who is proud, and such a thing has been known, when you catch a Christian overtaken in a fault, as you may sometimes do, then his testimony is not consistent. He contradicts then what he has at other times declared by his acts. And here, I say again, I fear that all of us must plead guilty. We have sometimes by our actions put in words which seem to conflict with the general testimony of our lives. Oh! brothers and sisters, do not believe all that you see in us, and if sometimes you see a Christian man betrayed into a hasty or a wrong expression, do not set it down to our religion, set it down to our poor fallen humanity. If sometimes you should catch us overtaken by a fault, and we trust it shall be rarely enough you so see us, abuse us, but do not abuse our Master: say what you will concerning us, but do not, we beseech you, impute it to our religion, for saints are sinners still, and the most holy men have still to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." But we do beseech you, when the madness of sin deludes us, do not believe the maunderings of our madness, but have regard to the general testimony of our lives, and that, we trust, you will find to be consistent with the gospel of Christ. I could bear to be abused, but I should not like to have the Master abused. I would rather have it believed that I was not a Christian at all, than allow any one to say that any faults I have were caused by my religion. No,

Christ is holy; the gospel is pure and spotless. If at any time we seem to contradict that witness, do not believe us, I beseech you, but look into the matter for yourselves, for indeed it is a good land, a land which floweth with milk and honey.

III. Thus I have brought forth the evil spies who bring up a bad report. and now, thank God we have some GOOD SPIES too. But we will let them speak. Come Joshua and Caleb, we want your testimony; though you are dead and gone, you have left children behind you; and they, still grieved as you were at the evil report, rend their clothes, but they boldly stand to it that the land they have passed through is an exceeding good land.

One of the best spies I have ever met with is an aged Christian. I remember to have heard him stand up and tell what he thought of religion. He was a blind old man, who for twenty years had not seen the light of the sun. His grey locks hung from his brow, and floated over his shoulders. He stood up at the table of the Lord, and thus addressed us:-"Brethren and sisters, I shall soon be taken from you; in a few more months I shall gather up my feet upon my bed, and sleep with my fathers. I have not the tongue of the learned nor the mind of the eloquent but I desire before I go, to bear one public testimony to my God. Fifty and six years have I served him, and I have never found him once unfaithful. I can say Surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of my life, and not one good thing hath failed of all the Lord God has promised.' " And there stood that old man, tottering into his tomb, deprived of the light of heaven naturally, and yet having the light of heaven in a better sense shining into his soul; and though he could not look upon us, yet did he turn himself, and seemed to say, "Young people, trust God in early life, for I have not to regret that I sought him too soon. I have only to mourn that so many of my years ran

to waste." There is nothing that more tends to strengthen the faith of the young believer than to hear the veteran Christian, covered with scars from the battle testifying that the service of his Master is a happy service, and that if he could have served any other master he would not have done so, for his service was pleasant and his wages everlasting joy.

Take the testimony of the sufferer. "Behold that fragile form of delicate transparent beauty, whose light-blue eye and hectic cheek are lit by the bale-fires of decline, all droopingly she lieth, as a dew-laden lily, her flaxen tresses, rashly luxuriant, dank with unhealthy moisture." I have seen her when her eyes were sunk, when she could scarce be lifted out of the bed, when the frame was wearied of life; and I have seen her quite complacent, as she took her Bible from beneath her pillow and read, "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies." I have sat down and spoken to her, and have said to her, "Well, you have been in this sad place these many months. Do you find religion cheers you now?" "Oh, Sir," she has said, "what could I do without it? I cannot leave this bed; but it has been to me a couch of joy, where Christ has spread a banquet. He has made my bed in all my sickness. he has put his left hand under my head, and his right hand has embraced me; he has given me joy in my sorrows, and has prepared me to face death with a calm and unflinching countenance." Such a case bears witness to the Master. Like that of the gray-headed saint, it is an excellent report of this good land.

But we need not look to sick beds and to grey heads for the only witness. We know a Christian merchant; he is immersed in the cares of this life, and yet he always finds time to prepare for a world that is

to come. He has as much business as any man in the city, and yet family prayer is never neglected. And perhaps you find him serving the office of civic magistrate--as was the case in one instance--and yet even on the day of banquet, he rises from his chair, in order that family worship may still be kept up in his house. He is known in business as one who is willing to help little tradesmen. He likes good securities, as other people do; but he will sometimes run a risk to help a rising man. When you go to him, you find him a sharp man of business, he is not to be taken in; but at the same time you will find him a man that will not take you in. You may trust him. Whatever the transaction may be, you have no need to look over the invoice if he has had anything to do with it. There will be no mistake there; or if there be a mistake, it will be palpably a mistake, and immediately confessed with the greatest possible sorrow, for he is upright in his dealings. There has come sometimes in his case an unhappy crisis, and when houses were tumbling, and bankrupts were as common as leaves upon the trees he was not disturbed and distracted like other men, for his confidence was in his God, and his trust in the God of Jacob. He had some anxiety, but he had more faith. and when his prosperity returned to him, he dedicated part of his substance unto the Lord, not in a noisy way, so that it might appear in a report that So-and-so gave a hundred a year to a society, but he gave five hundred and nobody knew of it. Men said of him in the Exchange and in the Market, "If there is a Christian, it is that man." When they saw him, they said, "There is something in religion. We have watched him; we have never found him trip or turn aside. We have always found him the same upright character, fearing his God, and fearing no man." Such a man brings up a good report of the land. I may talk here Sunday after Sunday, and every day in the week elsewhere, but I cannot preach in so forcible a way as you can, who by

your actions are preaching to the world. Ah! and I cannot preach so well as those who are servants, who by their holy action in the midst of trial and difficulty have an opportunity to show what grace can do in the heart. Those are good spies who bring up a good report of the land.

And, my sisters, let me say a word to you. It is possible for you, too, to bring up a good report; not by neglecting your households in order to attend to visiting societies. Let visiting societies be attended to. God be thanked for them, for they are among the best institutions of our times. But I have known some people who would have been a great deal better employed in scrubbing their dressers, and seeing their servants wash up the tea things, than going out visiting the sick from house to house; for their house has run to riot, and their families have been quite out of order, because the wife, like a foolish woman, was plucking everything down at home, while trying to do good abroad. We have known many true sisters of mercy, who are really blessed among women, and God shall bless them abundantly. We have known others who very seldom go out visiting the sick, but they are at home ordering their household. We have known an ungodly husband converted by a godly wife. I remember to have heard an instance of a man who had a wife of so excellent a disposition, that though he was a worldly, gay man, he used to boast in his gay company that he had got the best wife on earth. Said he, "You cannot put her into a passion. I go home late at night, in all sorts of trim, but she always receives me meekly, and I feel ashamed of myself every time I see her, for her holiness rebukes me. You may put her to any test you like, you will find her the best of women." "Well," said they, "let us all go to supper with you to-night." They did. In they rushed. She did not hint there was nothing in the house, though there was very little; but she and her maid set to with

all their might, although it was past twelve o'clock, and very soon had supper, and she waited on them with all the grace of a duchess, seeming as glad to see them as if they were her friends, and had come at the most opportune time. And they began to tell how it was they had come, and asked her how it was she could bear it so patiently. She said, "God has given me a husband. I was not converted before I was married, but ever since I was converted, my first endeavor has been to bring my husband to know Jesus. and I am sure," said she, "he will never be brought to do so except by kindness." Her husband, through these words, after the company had gone, confessed how wrong he had acted to her; his heart was touched; next Sabbath he went to the house of God with her, and they became a happy couple, rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts. She was a good spy, and brought a good report of the land. I doubt not there are many women whose names will never be heard of on earth who will receive the Master's commendation at last, "She hath done what she could;" and when you have done what you can for Christ, by holy, patient, quiet meekness, you are good spies; you have brought a good report of the land.

And you servants, you can do the same. A religious servant girl ought to be the best servant anywhere. A religious shoeblack ought to black shoes better than anybody else. If there be a religious man who is set to clean knives, he ought to take care that he does not take the edge off. You know the negroes' piety in America is such, that a religious negro is worth many dollars more than another and always sells well; so that the masters like them to get religious because they are the men that do not rebel, but submit meekly and patiently, and the men who, finding themselves slaves, much as they may hate their position, yet regard one to be their master who is higher than all, and "not with eye service as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart," they endeavor

to serve God.

IV. And now I want to press with all my might upon every professing Christian here, THE GREAT NECESSITY OF BRINGING OUT A UNIFORMLY GOOD TESTIMONY CONCERNING RELIGION. Brethren, I feel persuaded if Christ were here to-day, there are some of us who love him so well that we would turn our own cheek to the smiter, rather than he should be smitten. One of Napoleon's officers loved him so well that when a cannon ball was likely to smite the emperor, he threw himself in the way, in order that he might die as a sacrifice for his master. Oh Christian, you would do the same, I think. If Christ were here you would run between him and insult, yea, between him and death. Well, then, I am sure you would not wantonly expose Christ; but remember, every unguarded word you use, every inconsistent act puts a slur on Christ. The world, you know, does not find fault with you--they lay it all to your Master. If you make a slip to-morrow they will not say, "That is John Smith's human nature;" they will say, "That is John Smith's religion." They know better, but they will be sure to say it; they will be sure they put all the mischief at the door of Christ. Now, if you could bear the blame yourself you might bear it manfully; but do not allow Christ to bear the blame--do not suffer his escutcheon to be tarnished--do not permit his banner to be trampled in the dust.

Then there is another consideration. You must remember, if you do wrong the world will be quite sure to notice you. The world carries two bags: in the bag at the back they put all the Christian's virtues--in the bag in front they put all our mistakes and sins. They never think of looking at the virtues of holy men; all the courage of martyrs and all the fidelity of confessors, and all the holiness of saints, is nothing to them; but our iniquities are ever before them. Please to recollect, that wherever you are as a Christian, the eyes of the world are upon

you; the Argus eyes of an evil generation follow you everywhere. If a church is blind the world is not. It is a common proverb, "As sound asleep as a church," and a very true one, for most churches are sound asleep; but it would be a great falsehood if anyone were to say, "As sound asleep as the world," for the world is never asleep. Sleeping is left to the church. And remember, too, that the world always wears magnifying glasses to look at Christians' faults. If a man trips who makes no profession, oh! it is nothing--you never hear of it; let a minister do it, let a Christian professor do it, and then comes out the magnifying glass. It is nothing in anybody else, but it is a great sin in us. There are two codes of morality in the world, and it is very right there should be. If we make profession to be God's children, and to have God's grace in our hearts, it is no more wrong in the world to expect more of us than of others than it is for a gardener to expect his plants to grow more quickly on a hot-bed and under a glass-shade than he would out of doors in the cold frost. If we have more privileges, and more culture, and make more profession, we ought to live up to them, and the world is quite right in expecting us to do so. There is another consideration I must offer you before I have done. Recollect if you do not bring a good testimony for your religion, an evil testimony will defeat a great deal of good. All the saints in a church but one may be faithful to Christ, and the world will not honor the church for it; but let one professor in that church turn aside to sin, and you will hear of it for many a day. It is even so in nature. Take the days in the year. The sun rises and shines upon us, and we do not note it; all things continue as they were: the stars smile sweetly by night, and the day and night roll on in quiet: but there comes one day, a day of thunder and lightning, a day of earthquake and storm, and it is put on the rolls of our history that such-and-such a remarkable

day occurred at such-and-such a time. Why not note the good day? But so it is. The world will only note the evil. You may cross through a country, and you will notice a hundred fair rivers, like silver streams threaded with emeralds running through the pastures, who hears the sound of their waters, as they flow gently to the sea? But there is one precipitous rock, and a waterfall dashes there; you may hear that half a mile off. We never hear anything about the river St. Lawrence, in all its lengths and breadths, it is only the falls of Niagara that we hear of. And so the Christian may flow on in a steady course of life, unseen, unheard; but you are sure to hear of him, if he makes a fall. Be watchful, therefore; your Master cometh. Be watchful: the enemy is at hand even now. O may the Holy Spirit sanctify you wholly, that you may abound in every good work, to the glory of God!

As for you who fear not God, remember, if Christians do sin, that shall not be an excuse for you. Suppose a man you are dealing with says to you, "I cheated you, but I did not make any profession of being honest." You would tell him he was a confirmed rogue. Or if a man were taken before a magistrate, and were to say, "You need not put me in a prison, I never made a profession of being anything but a thief. I never said I would not break into people's chambers and get at their plate baskets!" The magistrate would say, "You speak honestly, but you are by your own confession a great rogue, and I will transport you for life, and you shall never have a ticket of leave." It will be of no use for you at the last day, to say that you never made a profession of wanting to go to heaven or to escape hell, of leaving sin and trusting in Christ. If you never made a profession of serving God, you may rest assured he will have short work with you. You have made no profession. O there is no judgment required. Depart! Thou didst make no profession of loving me, and now thou shalt have no posesssion of my glory.

Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire. May the Lord deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake.

Chapter 33

The Heavenly Race

A Sermon

(No. 198)

Delivered on Friday Afternoon, June 11, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

on the Grand Stand, Epsom Race-Course.

"So run, that ye may obtain."--1 Corinthians 9:24.

WE ARE CONTINUALLY insisting upon it from day to day, that salvation is not of works, but of grace. We lay this down as one of the very first doctrines of the gospel. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." But we find that it is equally necessary to preach the absolute necessity of a religious life for the attainment of heaven at last. Although we are sure that men are not saved for the sake of their works, yet are we equally sure that no man will be saved without them; and that he who leads an unholy life, who neglects the great salvation, can never inherit that crown of life which fadeth not away. In one sense, true religion is wholly the work of God; yet there are high and important senses in which we must ourselves "strive to enter in at the strait gate." We must run a race; we must wrestle even to agony; we must fight a battle, before we can inherit the crown of life. We have in our text the course of religion set down as a race; and inasmuch as there be many who enter upon a profession of religion with very false motives, the apostle warns us that although all run in a race, yet all do not obtain the prize: they run all, but only one is rewarded: and he gives us, therefore, the practical exhortation to run that we may obtain; for unless we are the winners we had better not

have been runners at all; for he that is not a winner is a loser; he who makes a profession of religion, and does not at last obtain the crown of life, is a loser by his profession; for his profession was hypocrisy or else formality, and he had better not have made a profession, than fall therein.

And now, in entering upon the text, I shall have to notice what it is we are to run for: "So run that ye may obtain;" secondly, the mode of running, to which we must attend--"So run that ye may obtain;" and then I shall give a few practical exhortations to stir those onward in the heavenly race who are flagging and negligent, in order that they may at last "obtain."

I. In the first place, then, WHAT IS IT THAT WE OUGHT TO SEEK TO OBTAIN?

Some people think they must be religious, in order to be respectable. There are a vast number of people in the world who go to church and to chapel, because everybody else does so. It is disreputable to waste your Sundays, not to be found going up to the house of God, therefore they take a pew and attend the services, and they think they have done their duty: they have obtained all that they sought for, when they can hear their neighbors saying, "Such-and-such a man is a very respectable person; he is always very regular at his Church; he is a very reputable person, and exceedingly praiseworthy." Verily, if this be what you seek after in your religion, you shall get it; for the Pharisees who sought the praise of men "had their reward." But when you have gotten it, what a poor reward it is! Is it worth the drudgery? I do not believe that the drudgery to which people submit in order to be called respectable, is at an compensated by what they gain. I am sure, for my own part, I would not care a solitary rap what I was called, or what I was thought; nor would I perform anything that was irksome to myself for the sake of

pleasing any man that ever walked beneath the stars, however great or mighty he may be. It is the sign of a fawning, cringing spirit, when people are always seeking to do that which renders them respectable. The esteem of men is not worth the looking after, and sad it is, that this should be the only prize which some men put before them, in the poor religion which they undertake.

There are people who go a little farther: they are not content with being considered respectable, but they want something more; they desire to be considered pre-eminently saints. These persons come to our places of worship, and after a little time they venture to come forward and ask whether they may unite with our churches. We examine them, and so hidden is their hypocrisy that we cannot discover its rottenness: we receive them into our churches; they sit at the Lord's Supper; they come to our church-meetings: mayhap, they are even voted into the deacon's office; sometimes they attain to the pulpit, though God has never called them, and preach what they have never felt in their hearts. Men may do all this merely to enjoy the praise of men; and they will even undergo some persecution for the sake of it; because to be thought a saint, to be reckoned by religious people to be everything that is right and proper, to have a name among the living in Zion, is to some persons a thing exceedingly coveted. They would not like to be set down among the "chief of sinners," but if they may have their names written among the chief of saints they will consider themselves exceedingly exalted. I am afraid we have a considerable admixture of persons of this sort in our churches who only come for the mere sake of keeping up their religious pretensions and obtaining a religious status in the midst of the church of God. "Verily, I say unto you they have their reward," and they shall never have any but what they obtain here. They get their reward for a little time. for a short time they are

looked up to. but perhaps even in this life they make a trip, and down they go; the church discovers them, and they are sent out like the ass stripped of the lion's skin to browse once more among their native nettles, no longer to be glorious in the midst of the church of the living God. Or mayhap, they may wear the cloak until the last day of their lives, and then death comes, and strips them of all their tinsel and gewgaw; And they who acted upon the stage of religion as kings and princes, are sent behind the stage to be unrobed and to find themselves beggars to their shame, and naked to their eternal disgrace. It is not this which you and I would seek after in religion. Dearly beloved, if we do run the race, we would run for a higher and more glorious prize than any of these things.

Another set of people take up with religious life for what they can get by it. I have known tradespeople attend church for the mere sake of getting the custom of those who went there. I have heard of such things as people knowing which side their bread was buttered, and going to that particular denomination, where they thought they could get the most by it. Loaves and fishes drew some of Christ's followers, and they are very attracting baits, even to this day. Men find there is something to be gotten by religion. Among the poor it is, perhaps, some little charity to be obtained, and among those that are in business, it is the custom which they think to get. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward;" for the church is ever foolish and unsuspicious. We do not like to suspect our fellow creatures of following us from sordid motives. The church does not like to think that a man would be base enough to pretend to religion for the mere sake of what he can get, and, therefore, we let these people easily slip through, and they have their reward. But ah! at what a price they buy it! They have deceived the Lord's servants for gold, and they have entered into his church as

base hypocrites for the sake of a piece of bread; and they shall be thrust out at last with the anger of God behind them, like Adam driven out of Eden, with the flaming Cherubim with a sword turning every way to keep the tree of life; and they shall for ever look back upon this as the most fearful crime they have committed--that they pretended to be God's people when they were not, and entered into the midst of the fold when they were but wolves in sheeps' clothing.

There is yet another class, and when I have referred to them I will mention no more. These are the people who take up with religion for the sake of quieting their conscience, and it is astonishing how little of religion will sometimes do that. Some people tell us that if in the time of storm men would pour bottles of oil upon the waves, there would be a great calm at once. I have never tried it, and it is most probable I never shall, for my organ of credulity is not large enough to accept so extensive a statement. But there are some people who think that they can calm the storm of a troubled conscience by pouring a little of the oil of a profession about religion upon it; and it is amazing how wonderful an effect this really has. I have known a man who was drunk many times in a week, and who got his money dishonestly, and yet he always had an easy conscience by going to his church or chapel regularly on the Sunday. We have heard of a man who could "devour widows' houses"--a lawyer who could swallow up everything that came in his way, and yet he would never go to bed without saying his prayers; and that stilled his conscience. We have heard of other persons, especially among the Romanists,. who would not object to thieving, but who would regard eating anything but fish on a Friday as a most fearful sin, supposing that by making a fast on the Friday, all the iniquities of all the days in the week would be put away. They want the outward forms of religion to keep the conscience quiet; for Conscience is one

of the worst lodgers to have in your house when he gets quarrelsome: there is no abiding with him; he is an ill bed-fellow; ill at lying down, and equally troublesome at rising up. A guilty conscience is one of the curses of the world: it puts out the sun, and takes away the brightness from the moonbeam. A guilty conscience casts a noxious exhalation through the air, removes the beauty from the landscape, the glory from the flowing river, the majesty from the rolling floods. There is nothing beautiful to the man that has a guilty conscience. He needs no accusing; everything accuses him. Hence people take up with religion just to quiet them. They take the sacrament sometimes; they go to a place of worship; they sing a hymn now and then, they give a guinea to a charity; they intend to leave a portion in their will to build alms-houses, and in this way conscience is lulled asleep, and they rock him to and fro with religious observances, till there he sleeps while they sing over him the lullaby of hypocrisy, and he wakes not until he shall wake with that rich man who was here clothed in purple, but in the next world did lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments, without a drop of water to cool his burning tongue.

What, then, is it, for which we ought to run in this race? Why heaven, eternal life, justification by faith, the pardon of sin, acceptance in the Beloved, and glory everlasting. If you run for anything else than salvation, should you will, what you have won is not worth the running for. Oh! I beseech every one of you, make sure work for eternity, never be contented with anything less than a living faith in a living Saviour; rest not until you are certain that the Holy Spirit is at work in your souls. Do not think that the outside of religion can be of use to you; it is just the inward part of religion that God loveth. Seek to have a repentance that needeth not to be repented of--a faith which looks alone to Christ, and which will stand by you when you come into

the swellings of Jordan, Seek to have a love which is not like a transient flame, burning for a moment and then extinguished; but a flame which shall increase and increase, and still increase, till your heart shall be swallowed up therein, and Jesus Christ's one name shall be the sole object of your affection. We must, in running the heavenly race, set nothing less before us than that which Christ did set before him. He set the joy of salvation before himself, and then he did run, despising the cross and enduring the shame. So let us do; and may God give us good success, that by his good Spirit we may attain unto eternal life, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord!

II. Thus have I noticed what it is we are to run for. And now the Apostle says, "So run that ye may obtain." I shall notice some people who never will obtain, and tell you the reason why, and in so doing, I shall be illustrating THE RULES OF THE RACE.

There are some people who certainly never will obtain the prize, because they are not even entered. Their names are not down for the race, and therefore it is quite clear that they will not run, or if they do run, they will run without having any warrant whatever for expecting to receive the prize. There are some such here this afternoon: who will tell you themselves, "We make no profession, sir--none whatever." It is quite as well, perhaps, that you do not; because if you did, you would be hypocrites, and it is better to make no profession at all than to be hypocrites. Still, recollect, your names are not down for the race, and therefore you cannot win. If a man tells you in business that he makes no profession of being honest, you know that he is a confirmed rogue. If a man makes no profession of being religious, you know what he is--he is irreligious--he has no fear of God before his eyes, he has no love to Christ, he has no hope of heaven. He confesses it himself. Strange that men should be so ready to

confess this. You don't find persons in the street willing to acknowledge that they are confirmed drunkards. Generally a man will repudiate it with scorn. You never find a man saying to you, "I don't profess to be a chaste living man." You don't hear another say, "I don't profess to be anything but a covetous wretch." No; people are not so fast about telling their faults: and yet you hear people confess the greatest fault to which man can be addicted: they say, "I make no profession"--which means just this--that they do not give God his due. God has made them, and yet they won't serve him; Christ hath come into the world to save sinners, and yet they will not regard him; the gospel is preached; and yet they will not hear it, they have the Bible in their houses, and yet they will not attend to its admonitions: they make no profession of doing so. It will be short work with them at the last great day. There will be no need for the books to be opened, no need for a long deliberation in the verdict. They do not profess to be pardoned; their guilt is written upon their own foreheads, their brazen shamelessness shall be seen by the whole world, as a sentence of destruction written upon their very brows. You cannot expect to win heaven unless your names are entered for the race. If there be no attempts whatever made, even at so much as a profession of religion, then of course you may just sit down and say, "Heaven is not for me; I have no part nor lot in the inheritance of Israel, I cannot say that my Redeemer liveth; and I may rest quite assured that Tophet is prepared of old for me. I must feel its pains and know its miseries; for there are but two places to dwell in hereafter, and if I am not found on the right hand of the Judge, there is but one alternative--namely, to be cast away for ever into the blackness of darkness."

Then there is another class whose names are down, but they never started right. A bad start is a sad thing. If in the ancient races of

Greece or Rome a man who was about to run for the race had loitered, or if he had started before the time it would not matter how fast he ran, if he did not start in order. The flag must drop before the horse starts; otherwise, even if it reach the winning post first, it shall have no reward. There is something to be noted, then, in the starting of the race. I have known men run the race of religion with all their might, and yet they have lost it because they did not start right. You say, "Well, how is that?" Why, there are some people who on a sudden leap into religion. They get it quickly, and they keep it for a time. and at last they lose it because they did not get their religion the right way. They have heard that before a man can be saved, it is necessary that, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he should feel the weight of sin, that he should make a confession of it, that he should renounce all hope in his own works, and should look to Jesus Christ alone. They look upon all these things as unpleasant preliminaries and therefore, before they have attended to repentance, before the Holy Spirit has wrought a good work in them before they have been brought to give up everything and trust to Christ, they make a profession of religion. This is just setting up in business without a stock in trade, and there must be a failure. If a man has no capital to begin with, he may make a fine show for a little time, but it shall be as the crackling of thorns under a pot, a great deal of noise and much light for a little time, but it shall die out in darkness. How many there are who never think it necessary that there should be heart work within! Let us remember, however, that there never was a true new birth without much spiritual suffering, that there never was a man who had a changed heart without his first having a miserable heart. We must pass through that black tunnel of conviction before we can come out upon the high embankment of holy joy; we must first go through the Slough of Despond

before we can run along the walls of Salvation. There must be ploughing before there is sowing; there must be many a frost, and many a sharp shower before there is any reaping. But we often act like little children who pluck flowers from the shrubs and plant them in their gardens without roots; then they say how fair and how pretty their little garden is; but wait a little while, and their flowers are withered, because they have no roots. This is an the effect of not having a right start, not having the "root of the matter." What is the good of outward religion, the flower and the leaf of it, unless we have the "root of the matter" in us--unless we have been digged into by that sharp iron spade of conviction, and have been ploughed with the plough of the Spirit, and then have been sown with the sacred seed of the gospel, in the hope of bringing forth an abundant harvest? There must be a good start; look well to that, for there is no hope of running unless the start be right.

Again, there are some runners in the heavenly race who cannot win because they carry too much weight. A light weight, of course, has the advantage. There are come people who have an immensely heavy weight to carry. "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven!" What is the reason? Because he carries so much weight; he has so much of the cares and pleasures of this world; he has such a burden that he is not likely to win, unless God should please to give him a mighty mass of strength to enable him to bear it. We find many men willing to be saved, as they say; they receive the word with great joy, but by-and-bye thorns spring up and choke the word. They have so much business to do; they say they must live; they forget they must die. They have such a deal to attend to, they cannot think of living near to Christ. They find they have little time for devotions; morning prayer must be cut short, because their business begins early; they can have

no prayer at night, because business keeps them so late. How can they be expected to think of the things of God? They have so much to do to answer this question--"What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" It is true they read in the Bible that their Father who is in heaven will take care of them in these things if they will trust him. But they say, "Not so." Those are enthusiasts according to their notions who rely upon providence. They say, the best providence in all the world is hard work; and they say rightly, but they forget that into the bargain of their hard work "it is in vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness; for except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." You see two men running a race. One of them, as he starts, lays aside every weight, he takes off his garment and away he runs. There goes the other poor fellow, he has a whole load of gold and silver upon his back. Then around his loins he has many distrustful doubts about what shall become of him in the future, what will be his prospects when he grows old, and a hundred other things. He does not know how to roll his burden upon the Lord. See how he flags, poor fellow, and how the other distances him, leaves him far behind, has gained the corner, and is coming to the winning post. It is well for us if we can cast everything away except that one thing needful, and say, "This is my business, to serve God on earth, knowing that I shall enjoy him in heaven." For when we leave our business to God, we leave it in better hands than if we took care of it ourselves. They who carve for themselves generally cut their fingers; but they who leave God to carve for them, shall never have an empty plate. He who will walk after the cloud shall go aright, but he who will run before it shall soon find that he has gone a fool's errand. "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord.is." "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that

wait upon the Lord shall not want any good thing." Our Saviour said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them, are ye not much better than they?" "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." "His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Carry the weight of this world's cares about you. and it will be as much as you can do to carry them and to stand upright under them, but as to running a race with such burdens, it is just impossible.

There is also another thing that will prevent man's running the race. We have known people who stopped on their way to kick their fellows. Such things sometimes occur in a race. The horse, instead of speeding onwards to the mark, is of an angry disposition, and sets about kicking those that are running beside him--there is not much probability of his coming in first. "Now they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize." There is one however who never gets it, and that is the man who always attends to his fellow-creatures instead of himself. It is a mysterious thing that I never yet saw a man with a hoe on his shoulder, going to hoe his neighbour's garden, it is a rarity to see a farmer sending his team of horses to plough his neighbour's land; but it is a most singular thing that every day in the week I meet with persons who are attending to other people's character. If they go to the house of God and hear a trite thing said, they say at once "How suitable that was for Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Brown?" The thought never enters their head, how suitable it was to themselves. They lend their

ears to everybody else, but they do not hear for themselves. When they get out of chapel, perhaps as they walk home, their first thought is, "Well, how can I find fault with my neighbors?" They think that putting other people down is going up themselves (there never was a greater mistake); that by picking holes in their neighbour's coat they mend their own They have so few virtues of their own that they do not like anybody else to have any therefore they do the best they can to despoil everything good in their neighbor; and it there be a little fault, they will look at it through a magnifying glass, but they will turn the glass the other way when they look at their own sins. Their own faults become exceedingly small while those of others become magnificently great. Now this is a fault not only among professing religious men, but among those who are not religious. We are all so prone to find fault with other people instead of attending to our own home affairs. We attend to the vineyards of others, but our own vineyard we have not kept. Ask a worldly man why he is not religious, and he tells you "Because so-and-so makes a profession of religion and is not consistent." Pray is that any business of yours? To your own Master you must stand or fall, and so must he; God is their judge, and not you. Suppose there are a great many inconsistent Christians--and we are compelled to acknowledge that there are--so much the more reason why you should be a good one. Suppose there are a great many who deceive others; so much the more reason you should set the world an example of what a genuine Christian is. "Ah! but," you say, "I am afraid there are very few." Then why don't you make one? But after all, is that your business? Must not every man bear his own burden? You will not be judged for other men's sins, you will not be saved by their faith, you will not be condemned for their unbelief. Every man must stand in his own proper flesh and blood at the bar of God, to account for the works

done in his own body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. It will be of little avail for you to say at the day of judgment, "O Lord, I wee looking at my neighbors; O Lord, I was finding fault with the people in the village; I was correcting their follies." But thus saith the Lord: "Did I ever commission thee to be a judge or a divider over them? Why, if thou hadst so much time to spare, and so much critical judgment, didst thou not exercise it upon thyself? Why didst thou not examine thyself, so that thou mightest have been found ready and acceptable in the day of God?" These persons are not very likely to win the race, because they turn to kicking others.

Again, there is another class of persons who will not win the race--namely, those who, although they seem to start very fair, very soon loiter. They dart ahead at the first starting, and distance all the others. There they fly away as if they had wings to their heels; but a little further on in the race, it is with difficulty that with whip and spur they are to be kept going at all, and they almost come to a stand still. Alas! this race of persons are to be discovered in all our churches. We get young people who come forward and make a profession of religion, and we talk with them, and we think it is all well with them, and for a little while they do run well; there is nothing wanting in them; we could hold them up as patterns for the imitation of others. Wait a couple of years. they drop off just by little and little. First, perhaps, there is the attendance on a week-day service neglected; then it is altogether discontinued; then one service on Sabbath; then perhaps family prayer, then private prayer--one thing after another is given up, until at last the whole edifice which stood upright and looked so fair, having been built upon the sand, gives way before the shock of time, and down it falls, and great is the ruin thereof. Recollect, it is not starting that wins the

race; it is running all the way. He that would be saved, must hold on to the end: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." Stop and loiter in the race before you have come to the end thereof, and you have made one of the greatest mistakes that could possibly occur. On, on, on! while you live; still onward, onward, onward! for until you come to the grave, you have not come to your resting place until you arrive at the tomb, you have not come to the spot where you may cry "Halt!" Ever onward if ye would win. If you are content to lose, if you would lose your own soul, you may say, "Stop," if you please; but if you would be saved evermore, be on, on, till you have gained the prize.

But there is another class of persons, who are worse than these. They start well too, and they run very fast at first, but at last they leap over the posts and rails, they go quite out of the course altogether, and you do not know where they are gone. Every now and then, we get such people as this. They go out from us, because they are not of us, for had they been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. I might point out in my congregation on the Sabbath-day, a man whom I saw start myself. I saw him running so well I almost envied him the joy he seemed always able to preserve, the faith which ever seemed to be so buoyant and full of jubilee. Alas! just when we thought he was speeding onwards to the prize, some temptation crossed his path, and he turned aside. Away he is scrambling far over the heath, out of the path of right, and men say, "Aha! aha! so would we have it; so would we have it." And they laugh and make merriment over him, because, having once named the name of Jesus Christ, he hath afterwards gone back again, and his last end is worse than the first. Those whom God starts never do this, for they are preserved in Christ Jesus. Those who have been "entered" in the great roll of the Covenant before all eternity shall

persevere, by the aid of the good Spirit. He that began the good work in them, shall carry it on even unto the end. But, alas! there are many who run on their own account and in their own strength; and they are like the snail, which as it creeps, leaves its life as a trail upon its own path. They melt away; their nature decayeth; they perish, and where are they? Not in the church, but lost to all hope. They are like the dog that returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. "The last end of that man shall be worse than the first."

I do not think I shall now mention any other class of persons. I have brought before you the rules of the race, if you would will; if you would "so run that you may obtain," you must first of all take care to start well; you must keep to the course; you must keep strait on; you must not stop on the road, or turn aside from it, but, urged on by Divine grace, you must ever fly onwards, "like an arrow from the bow, shot by an archer strong." And never rest until the march is ended, and you are made pillars in the house of your God, to go out no more for ever.

III. But now I am about to give you some few reasons to URGE YOU ONWARD IN THE HEAVENLY RACE--those of you who are already running.

One of my reasons shall be this--"We are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses." When zealous racers on yonder heath are flying across the plain, seeking to obtain the reward, the whole heath is covered with multitudes of persons, who are eagerly gazing upon them, and no doubt the noise of those who cheer them onward, and the thousand eyes of those who look upon them, have a tendency to make them stretch every nerve, and press with vigor on. It was so in the games to which the apostle alludes. There the people sat on raised platforms, while the racers ran before them, and they cried to them, and the friends of

the racers urged them forward, and the kindly voice would ever be heard bidding them go on. Now, Christian brethren, how many witnesses are looking down upon you. Down! do I say? It is even so. From the battlements of heaven the angels look down upon you, and they seem to cry to-day to you with sweet, silvery voice, "Ye shall reap if ye faint not; ye shall be rewarded if ye continue stedfast in the work and faith of Christ." And the saints look down upon you--Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; martyrs and confessors, and your own pious relatives who have ascended to heaven, look down upon you, and if I might so speak, methinks sometimes you might hear the clapping of their hands when you have resisted temptation and overcome the enemy; and you might see their suspense when you are lagging in the course, and you might hear their friendly word of caution as they bid you gird up the loins of your mind, and lay aside every weight, and still speed forward, never resting to take your breath, never staying for a moment's ease till you have attained the flowery beds of heaven. where you may rest forever. And recollect, these are not the only eyes that are looking upon you. The whole world looks upon a Christian: he is the observed of all observers. In a Christian every fault is seen. A worldly man may commit a thousand faults, and nobody notices him; but let a Christian do so, and he will very soon have his faults published to the wide world. Everywhere men are looking at Christians. and it is quite right that they should do so. I remember a young man, a member of a Christian church, who went to a public-house hall of the lowest character; and he was no sooner mounting up the stairs, than one of them said, "Ah! here comes the Methodist; we will give it to him." As soon as they had him in the room, they first of all lead him up and down to let everybody see the Methodist who had come among them, and then they kicked him down stairs. I sent them my respectful compliments for doing so, for it

served him right; and I took care that he was kicked down stairs in another sense afterwards, and kicked out of the church. The world would not have him and the church would not have him. The world then looks upon you, it never misses an opportunity of throwing your religion in your teeth. If you don't give sixteen ounces to the pound of morality, if you don't come up to the mark in everything, you will hear of it again. Don't think the world is ever asleep. We say, "as sound asleep as a church," and that is a very good proverb; but we cannot say, "as sound asleep as the world" for it never sleeps; it always has its eyes open, it is always watching us in all we do. The eyes of the world are upon you. "We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses;" "let us run with patience the race that is set before us." And there are darker and yet more malignant eyes that scowl upon us. There are spirits that people this air, who are under the prince of the power of the air, who watch every day for our halting.

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth,
Both when we wake and when we sleep."

And alas! those spiritual creatures are not all good. There be those that are not yet chained and reserved in darkness, but who are permitted by God to wander through this world like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour, ever ready to tempt us. And there is one at the head of them called Satan, the enemy, and you know his employment. He has access to the throne of God, and he makes most horrid use of it, for he accuses us day and night before the throne. The accuser of the brethren is not yet cast down--that is to be in the great day of the triumph of the Son of Man; but as Jesus stands our Advocate before the throne, so does old Satan first watch us and tempt us, and then stands as our accuser before the bar of God. O my dear brothers and sisters, if you have entered into this race, and have

commenced it, let these many eyes urge you forward.

"A cloud of witnesses around
Hold thee in full survey;
Forget the steps already trod,
And onward urge thy way."

And now a more urgent consideration still. Recollect, your race is win or lose--death or life, hell or heaven, eternal misery or everlasting joy. What a stake that is for which you run. If I may so put it, you are running for your life; and if that does not make a man run nothing will. Put a man there on yonder hill, and put another after him with a drawn sword seeking his life, If there is any run in him you will soon see him run; there will be no need for us to shout out to him, "Run, man, run" for he is quite certain that his life is at hazard, and he speeds with all his might--speeds till the veins stand like whipcords on his brow, and a hot sweat runs from every pore of his body--and still flees onward. Now, he looks behind, and sees the avenger of blood speeding after him; he does not stop; he spurns the ground, and on he flees till he reaches the city of refuge, where he is safe. Ah! if we had eyes to see, and if we knew who it is that is pursuing us every afar of our lives, how we should run! for lo! O man, hell is behind thee, sin pursues thee, evil seeks to overtake thee; the City of Refuge has its gates wide open; I beseech thee, rest not till thou canst say with confidence, "I have entered into this rest, and now I am secure, I know that my Redeemer liveth." And rest not even then, for this is not the place for rest; rest not until thy six days work is done; and thy heavenly Sabbath is begun. Let this life be thy six days of ever-toiling faith. Obey thy Master's commandment; "labour therefore to enter into this rest," seeing that there are many who shall not enter in, because through their want of faith they shall not be able. If that

urge not a man to speed forward, what can?

But let me picture yet one more thing; and may that help you onward! Christian, run onward, for remember who it is that stands at the winning post. You are to run onward, always looking unto Jesus, then Jesus must be at the end. We are always to be looking forward, and never backward; therefore Jesus must be there. Are you loitering? See him with his open wounds. Are you about to leave the course? See him with his bleeding hands; will not that constrain you to devote yourself to him? Will not that impel you to speed your course, and never loiter until you have obtained the crown? Your dying Master cries to you to-day, and he says. "By my agony and bloody sweat; by my cross and passion, onward! By my life, which I gave for you; by the death which I endured for your sake, onward!" And see! He holds out his hand, laden with a crown sparkling with many a star, and he says, "By this crown, onward!" I beseech you, onward, my beloved; press forward, for "I know that there is laid up for me a crown of life which fadeth not away, and not for me only, but for all them that love his appearing."

I have thus addressed myself to all sorts of characters. Will you this afternoon take that home to yourself which is the most applicable to your case. Those of you who make no profession of religion, are living without God and without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel,--let me affectionately remind you that the day is coming when you will want religion. It is very well now to be sailing over the smooth waters of life, but the rough billows of Jordan will make you want a Saviour. It is hard work to die without a hope; to take that last leap in the dark is a frightful thing indeed. I have seen the old man die when he has declared he would not die. He has stood upon the brink of death, and he has said, "All dark, dark, dark! O God, I cannot die." And his agony has been fearful when the strong hand of the

destroyer has seemed to push him over the precipice. He lingered shivering on the brink, and feared to launch away." And frightful was the moment when the foot slipped and the solid earth was left, and the soul was sinking into the depths of eternal wrath. You will want a Saviour then, when your pulse is faint and few; you will need an angel then to stand at your bedside: and when the spirit is departing, you will need a sacred convoy to pilot you through the dark clouds of death and guide you through the iron gate, and lead you to the blessed mansion in the land of the hereafter. Oh, "seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." O Lord, turn us and we shall be turned. Draw us and we will run after thee; and thine shall be the glory; for the crown of our race shall be cast at thy feet, and thou shalt have the glory forever and ever.

Chapter 34

A Free Salvation

A Sermon

(No. 199)

Delivered on Friday Afternoon, June 11, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

on the Grand Stand, Epsom Race-Course.

"Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."--Isaiah 55:1.

YOU see, I have something to sell this evening, I have to invite you to come and buy that which, in the gospel will this night be proclaimed. Now, it is usual when persons have anything to sell, to exhibit the article, to describe its character, and speak of its excellencies, for until persons are made aware of the nature of that which you exhibit, it is not likely that they will be prepared to buy it. That shall be my first business this evening Then the man who has aught to sell, in the next place, endeavors to bring those who hear him up to the price at which he desires to sell. My business tonight is to bring you down to the price--"Come buy wine and milk without money and without price." I shall then conclude by addressing a few sentences of earnest persuasion to those who despise that glorious salvation which it is our privilege to preach, and turn away from those generous stipulations--"without money and without price."

I. In the first place, then, I have to preach, to-night, WINE AND MILK--"Come buy wine and milk." There we have a description of the gospel--wine that maketh glad the heart of man; milk, the one thing and the only thing in the world which contains all the essentials of life. The strongest man might live on milk, for in it. there is everything

which is needed for the human frame--for bone, for sinew, for nerve, for muscle, for flesh--all is there. There you have a double description. The gospel is like wine which makes us glad. Let a man truly know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he will be a happy man, and the deeper he drinks into the spirit of Christ, the more happy will he become. That religion which teaches misery to be a duty. is false upon the very face of it, for God, when he made the world, studied the happiness of his creatures. You cannot help thinking, as you see everything around you, that God has sedulously, with the most strict attention, sought ways of pleasing man. He has not just given us our absolute necessities, he has given us more, not simply the useful, but even the ornamental The flowers in the hedgerow, the stars in the sky, the beauties of nature, the hill and the valley--all these things were intended not merely because we needed them, but because God would show us how he loved us, and how anxious he was that we should be happy. Now, it is not likely that the God who made a happy world would send a miserable salvation. He who is a happy Creator will be a happy Redeemer, and those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, can bear witness that the ways of religion "are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." And if this life were all, if death were the burial of all our life, and if the shroud were the winding-sheet of eternity, still to be a Christian would be a bright and happy thing for it lights up this valley of tears, and fills the wells in the valley of Baca to the brim with streams of love and joy. The gospel then, is like wine. It is like milk, too, for there is everything in the gospel that you want. Do you want something to bear you up in trouble? It is in the gospel--"a very present help in time of trouble." Do you need something to nerve you for duty? There is grace all-sufficient for everything that God calls you to undergo or to accomplish. Do you need something

to light up the eye of your hope? Oh! there are joy-flashes in the gospel that may make your eye flash back again the immortal fires of bliss. Do you want something to make you stand steadfast in the midst of temptation? In the gospel there is that that can make you immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. There is no passion, no affection, no thought, no wish, no power which the gospel has not filled to the very brim. The gospel was evidently meant for manhood; it is adapted to it in its every part. There is knowledge for the head; there is love for the heart; there is guidance for the foot. There is milk and wine, in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I think there is another meaning in the two words "milk and wine." Wine, you know, is a rich thing, something that requires much time to manufacture. There has to be vintage and fermentation and preservation before wine can come to its full flavour. Now, the gospel is like that, it is an extraordinary thing for feast days; it gives a man power to use a vintage of thought, a fermentation of action, and a preservation of experience, till a man's piety comes forth like the sparkling wine that makes the heart leap with gladness. There is that, I say, in religion, that makes it an extraordinary thing, a thing for rare occasions, to be brought out when princes sit at the table. But milk is an ordinary thing; you get it every day, anywhere. If you just run out into the farm yard there it is; there is no preparation required. it is ready to the hand. it is an ordinary thing. So is it with the gospel: it is a thing for every day. I love the gospel on Sunday, but, blessed be God, it is a Monday gospel too. The gospel is a thing for the chapel, and it is a thing for the church, there it is like wine. But it is a thing for the farm yard, it is a thing which you may observe behind the plough, and hum behind the counter. The religion of Christ is a thing that will go with you into your shop, on to the Exchange,

into the market, everywhere. It is like milk--an everyday dish--a thing which we may always have, and upon which we may always feast. Oh! thank heaven, there is wine for that high day when we shall see the Saviour face to face; there is wine for that dread day when we shall ford the stream of Jordan--wine that shall remove our fears and bid us sing in the midst of the dark billows of Death: but thanks be unto him, there is milk too--milk for everyday occurrences, for every-day actions, milk for us to drink as long as we live, and milk to cherish us till the last great day shall come.

Now, I think I have explained the figure in my text; but still some will say, "What is the gospel?" Well, the gospel, as I take it, can be looked at in various ways, but I will put it to night as this--the gospel is the preaching of a full, free, present, everlasting pardon to sinners through Jesus Christ's atoning blood. If I understand the gospel at all, it has in it a great deal more than this; but still this is the substance of it. I have to preach to night the great fact that while all have sinned, Christ hath died, and to all penitents who now confess their sins and put their trust in Christ, there is a full, free pardon--free in this respect, that you have nothing to do in order to get it. The meanest sin-stricken sinner has simply to pour out his plaintive griefs before God; that is all he asks. There is no fitness needed;--

"All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you;
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

There is no need to pass through years of penance, of hard labor, and of trial; the gospel is as free as the air you breathe. You do not pay for breathing; you do not pay for seeing the sunlight, nor for the

water that flows in the river as you stoop to drink it in your thirst. So the gospel is free; nothing is to be done in order to get it. No merits need be brought in order to obtain it. There is free pardon for the chief of sinners through Jesus Christ's blood. But I said it was a full pardon, and so it is. When Christ does anything he never does it by halves. He is willing this night to blot out every sin and cleanse every iniquity of every soul present who is now prepared by God's grace to seek his mercy. If now, sinner, God hath put it in thine heart to seek him, the pardon which he is prepared to give thee, is a full one; not a pardon for a part of your sins, but for all at once:--

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,
And, oh! my soul with wonder view,
For sins to come here's pardon too."

Here is pardon for your drunkenness, pardon for your oaths, pardon for your lust, pardon for your rebellion against heaven; for the sins of your youth and the sins of your old age, for the sins of the sanctuary and the sins of the brothel, or the tavern. Here is pardon for all sin, for "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." But again, the pardon we have to preach is a present pardon. If you feel your need of a Saviour, if now you are enabled to believe in Christ, you shall be pardoned now. Those who have ordinary hopes say they hope to be pardoned when they come to die. But, beloved, that is not the religion we preach. If you will now make confession of sin, now seek the Lord, you shall be pardoned now. It is possible for a man to have come in here with all his sins hanging about his neck like a millstone, enough to sink him lower than the lowest hell, and yet to go out of this door with every sin blotted out. If now he is enabled to believe on him, he may this night receive perfect pardon from the hand of God.

The pardon of a sinner is not a thing done when he is dying, it is done when he is living--done now. And there be some here I trust, and they not a few, who can rejoice to night in the fact that they are pardoned. Oh! Is it not a magnificent thing for a man to be able to tread God's earth with this for a song in his mouth, "I am forgiven, I am forgiven; I am pardoned?" I think it is one of the sweetest songs in all the world--scarcely less sweet than that of the cherubim before the throne--

"Oh. how sweet to view the flowing
Of his soul redeeming blood!
With divine assurance knowing,
He has made my peace with God."

Oh! what would you give for such a salvation as this, ye mourning souls? It is preached to you without money and without price, and I am bidden to cry "Ho! ho! Every one that thirsteth; if you feel your need of Christ, if you are now ready to confess your sins, come and take it freely without money and without price." But the best remains for the last. The pardon which is proclaimed to-night, is not only a free, and full, and present, but it is a pardon that will last for ever. If the Queen pardons any one--grants a free pardon--it is impossible that man should be punished for the same offense. Very often, however, the Queen grants a reprieve that is not a full pardon. There are cases in which persons are so far pardoned, that they are not executed for the crime, but confined during Her Majesty's pleasure. Now, our Lord never does that; he makes a clean sweep of it: there is not one sin that he allows to remain. When he does wash a soul, he washes it whiter than the driven snow. God doth things perfectly. But the best of it is, that what he does once is done for ever. This is the very glory of the gospel. If you get pardon to-night, you are saved now, but you never

shall be condemned. If a man believeth in Christ with all his heart, his salvation is secure beyond hazard; and I always look upon this as the very jewel of the crown of salvation, that it be irreversible. If I commit my soul into the hands of God,

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep.
All that his heavenly father gave
His hands securely keep.
Not death or hell shall e'er divide
His fav'rites from his breast;
In the dear bosom of their God
They must for ever rest."

God does not make you his child to-day, and turn you out to-morrow; he does not forgive you to-day, and then punish you the next day. As true as God is God, if thou gettest thy pardon to-night Christian, the earth may melt away just as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost for ever; the great universe may pass away and be like the hoar-frost before the morning sun; but thou never canst be condemned. As long as God is God, he who has got his pardon signed and sealed, is beyond the reach of harm. I would not preach any other--I dare not. It would not be worth your receiving, it would not be worth my taking the trouble to preach; but this is worth any man's having indeed, for it is a sure investment. He Who puts himself into the hands of Christ has a sure keeper, come what may--and there may come strong temptations and strong affections, and there may come strong pains and hard duties, but he that hath helped us bears us through, and makes us more than conquerors too. Oh! to be pardoned once, with the certain assurance that we shall be pardoned for ever, beyond the hazard of being cast away!

And now again, I will just preach this salvation, for this is the wine and milk which is proclaimed without money and without price. Beloved, all this is to be gained by faith in Christ--whosoever believeth in him who died upon the tree, and groaned away his life for us--shall never come into condemnation: he is passed from death unto life, and the love of God abideth in him.

II. And now, having thus exhibited the article, my next business is to BRING THE BIDDERS UP TO THE AUCTION BOX AND SELL IT. My difficulty is to bring you down to my price, as old Rowland said. He was preaching in a fair, and he heard a man selling his goods. "Ah!" said he, "as for those people over there, their difficulty is to bring people up to their price; whereas, my difficulty is to bring you down to my price."

Now, here is a gospel fully preached, without money and without price. Here comes some one up to the sacred desk, transformed for the moment into an auction box, and he cries, "I want to buy." What will you give for it? He holds out his hands, and he has such a handful; he has to lift up his very lap with more, for he can hardly hold all his good works. He has Ave-Marias and Paternosters without number, and all kinds of crossings with holy water, and bendings of the knee, and prostrations before the altar, and reverence of the host, and attending at the mass, and so on. In French, they call the mass the messe, and a mess it is and no mistake, but there are a great many people who trust in it; and when they come before God, they bring all these things as the ground of their reliance.

And so, Sir Romanist, you are coming to get salvation are you? and you have brought all this with you. Friend, I am sorry for thee, but thou must go away from the box with all thy performances, for it is "without money and without price," and until thou art prepared to come empty handed thou canst never have it. If thou hast anything of thine own

thou canst not receive it. "But," says he, "I am no heretic. Am I not true to the Pope? Do I not make confession and get absolution, and pay my shilling?" Do you my friend? Then because you pay your shilling for it, it is good for nothing, for that which is good for something you can have "without money and without price." The light we pay for is a sickly thing, but that which we get from heaven for nothing, is the rich healthy light which makes the heart glad. So the pardon that comes from Christ is "without money and without price."

Then another comes up and says "I am glad you have served the Romanist like that. I hate the Church of Rome, I am a true Protestant, and desire to be saved." What have you brought, sir? "Oh, I have brought no Ave-Marias, no Paternosters; I abhor the names; I do not like those Latin names, not I. But I say the collect every Sunday; I am very attentive to my prayers I go to church almost as soon as the doors are open," or (if he is a Dissenter) "I go to chapel three times on the Sabbath. and I attend the prayer-meetings and beside that, I pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound. I had rather pay twenty-one shillings than nineteen. I would not like to hurt anybody. I do not tread upon a worm if I can help it, I am always liberal, and assist the poor when I can. I may make a little slip just now and then. I may turn aside a little; still, if I am not saved I do not know who will be. I am as good as my neighbors, and I think, sir, I certainly ought to be saved, for I have very few sins, and what few there are do not hurt other people; they hurt me more than any one else. Besides, they are mere trifles; only one or two days in the year I break loose, and a man must have a little amusement after all. I assure you I am one of the best, most honest, and sober, and religious people going." Well, my friend, I am sorry to hear you quarrelling with the Romanist, for I do not like to see twin brothers disagree. You are both of the same kith

and kin, believe me, for the essence of Popery is salvation by works and ceremonies. You do not practice his works and ceremonies, but then you hope to be saved by your own, and you are just as bad as he. I will send you away; there is no salvation for you, for it is "without money and without price;" and as long as you bring these fine good works of yours you cannot have it. Mark, I do not find any fault with them, they are good enough in their place, but they won't do here to-night, and they won't do at the judgment bar of God. Practise those things as much as you like, they are good in their place. but still, in the matter of salvation you must leave them out, and come for it as poor guilty sinners and take it "without money and without price." Says one, "Do you find fault with good works?" Not at all. Suppose I see a man building a house, and he were fool enough to lay the foundation with chimney-pots. If I should say, "My dear man, I do not like these chimney-pots to be put into the foundation," you would not say I found fault with the chimney-pots, but that I found fault with the man for putting them in the wrong place. Let him put good solid masonry at the bottom, and then when the house is built he may put on as many chimney-pots as he likes. So with good works and ceremonies they will not do for a foundation. The foundation must be built of more solid stuff. Our hope must be built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness, and when we have built a foundation with that, we may have as many good works as we like--the more the better. But for a foundation, good works are fickle and feeble things, and he that useth them will see his house totter to the ground.

But see another man. He is a long way off, and he says, "Sir, I am afraid to come; I could not come and make a bid for the salvation. Sir, I've got no larnin', I'm no scholard I can't read a book, I wish I could. My children go to Sunday-school; I wish there was such a thing

in my time, I can't read, and its no use my hoping to go to heaven. I goes to church sometimes, but oh dear! it's no good; the man uses such long words I can't understand'em, and I goes to chapel sometimes, but I can't make it out. I knows a little of the hymns my child says, about 'Gentle Jesus meek and mild,'--and

'Oh! that will be joyful, when we meet to part no more.'

I wish they would preach like that, and then, maybe, I could make it out. But I'm no sholard, sir, and I don't think I can be saved." O my dear friend, you need not stand over there at the back. Come along with you. It wants no scholarship to go to heaven. The more you know the better it will be for you on earth no doubt, but it will be of no particular use to you in heaven. If you can "read your title clear to mansions in the skies," if you know enough to know yourself a lost sinner, and Christ a great Saviour, that is all you want to know to get to heaven. There is many a man in heaven that never read a letter on earth--many a man that could not, if his life depended on it, have signed his name, but was obliged to write a cross as "Tom Stiles's mark" and there he is among the brightest. Peter himself has not a brighter place than manly poor ignorant souls who looked to Jesus Christ, and were enlightened. I will tell you something to comfort you. Don't you know that Christ said, the poor had the gospel preached to them and besides that, he said, "Except a man be converted, and become as a little child, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." What does that mean, but that we must believe the gospel like little children? A little child has not much learning: he just believes what he is told, and that is what you are to do. You are to believe what God tells you. He says, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. That is no hard thing, is it? You can believe that; and if you can, it you are destitute of all human knowledge, you shall without

doubt, know hereafter what you know not now.

Now, I see a man come up to the stall, and he says, "Well, I will have salvation sir, I have made in my will provisions for the building of a church or two, and a few almshouses, I always devote a part of my substance to the cause of God; I always relieve the poor, and such-like; I have a pretty good share of money, and I take care not to hoard it up; I am generous and liberal, I try to set up poor trades-people, and so forth. Won't that carry me to heaven?" Well, I like you very much, and I wish there were more of your sort. There is nothing like generosity and liberality certainly, where it is exhibited towards the sick and the poor, the destitute and the ignorant, and in the cause of God; but if you bring these things as your hope of heaven, my dear friend, I must undeceive you. You cannot buy heaven with gold. Why, they pave the streets up there with it. Are we not told in the book of Revelation, that the streets of the city were all of pure gold like unto transparent glass. Why, if you had twenty thousand pounds you could not buy a flag-stone with it. Baron Rothschild could not buy a foot of heaven if he spent all his money for it. It is too precious a place to be bought with gold and silver. If all the wealth of the Indies could be shot out in order to buy one glimpse of heaven, it would be useless. There is no man that could get so much as a distant peep within its pearly gates for all the gold that heart could conceive or covetousness desire. It is given away for nothing. Christ will never sell it--never--because there is nothing that can be brought at all equal to its value. What Christ bought with blood you cannot buy with gold. He redeemed us not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his precious blood; and there is no other price that can ever be allowed. Ah! my rich friend, you are just on a level with your poorest laborer. You may wear broadcloth, and he fustian, yet he has as

good an opportunity of being saved as you. Ah! my lady, satin has no preference in heaven above calico or cotton.

"None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude." Wealth makes distinction on earth, but no distinction at the cross of Christ. You must all come alike to the footstool of Jesus, or else not come at all. I knew a minister who told me he was once sent for to the dying bed of a Roman who was very well to do in the world, and she said, "Mr. Baxter, do you think when I get to heaven Betsy my servant will be there?" "Well," he said, "I don't know much about you, but Betsy will be there; for if I know any one who is a pious girl, it is she." "Well," said the lady, "don't you think there will be a little distinction? for I never could find it in my heart to sit down with a girl of that sort, she has no taste, no education, and I could not endure it. I think there ought to be a little difference." "Ah! you need not trouble yourself, madam," said he, "there will be a great distinction between you and Betsy, if you die in the temper in which you now are; but the distinction will be on the wrong side; for you will see her in Abraham's bosom, but you yourself will be cast out. As long as you have such pride in your heart, you can never enter into the kingdom of heaven." He spoke to her very plainly, and she was mightily offended. But I believe she preferred to be found out of heaven to submitting to sit with her servant Betsy. Let us respect rank and title here, if you please: but when we preach the gospel we know no such thing. If I preached to a congregation of kings, I would preach just the same gospel that I would preach to a congregation of clodhoppers. The king on his throne, and the queen in her palace, have no gospel different from you and me. However humble and obscure we may be there stands the gate of heaven wide open; there is the king's royal highway for us. The highway is as much for the poor man as for the rich man; so

is the kingdom of heaven--"without money and without price."

Now I hear my friend the Calvinist over there say, "Well, I like that, but still I think I can come, and though I can say with you,--

'nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.'

Yet I can say this--I have had a deep experience, sir, I have been led to see the plague of my own heart, and I have felt a great deal. When I come to Christ I rely a great deal upon my feelings. I do not think you are right in calling all kinds of sinners to come to Christ, but you are right in calling me, for I am one of the right sort. I am one of the publican sort; I am pharisaical enough to think that; I think that I most certainly have a special commission to come, for I have such an experience that if I were to write my biography, you would say, This is a good experience; this man has a right to come to Christ.' " Well, friend, I am sorry to upset you, but I shall be compelled to do so. If you bring your experience to Christ when you come to him, you are as bad as the Romanist who brings his masses and Ave-Marias. I like your experience very well, if it be the work of God's grace in your heart, but if you bring it when you come to Christ, you put that before Christ, and it is an Anti-Christ. Away with it! away with it! When we have been preaching to poor sinners and tried to describe their state by nature and their feelings, I have been afraid after all, that we were fostering a spirit of self righteousness, and teaching our hearers to think that they must get certain feelings, before they can come to Christ. Let me just, if I can, preach the gospel in the broadest way possible, and that is the most truthful way. Christ wants your feelings no more than he does your money, and that is, not at all. If you want good experience you must come to Christ:--

"All the fitness he requireth, is to feel your need of him."

Yes, but stop--

"This he gives you, tis his Spirit's rising beam."

You are to come to Christ to get everything. You are not to say, "Well, I will believe first, and then come." No; go to Christ for faith. You must look to the cross even to get a sense of sin. We do not feel our sins so much before we see the cross, but we feel them most afterwards. We look to Christ first; then repentance flows from both our streaming eyes. Remember, if you go anywhere else to find a Saviour, you are on the wrong track. If you try to bring anything to Christ, to use a homely proverb, it is like bringing coals to Newcastle. He has plenty--he does not want any of yours, and what is more, as soon as he sees anything in your hands he will turn you straight away. He will have nothing to do with you until you can say--

"Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

I have heard of a negro who was convinced of sin, and at the same time his master was under conviction. The negro found peace with God, but the master was a long time seeking without any hope; and at last he said, "I cannot make out how it is that you found comfort so soon, and I cannot get it at all." So the negro after asking his master to excuse his speaking plainly, said, "Massa, I tink it is just dis. When Jesus say, Come along,' he say, I give you a righteousness dat cover you from head to foot.' I, poor negro, looks down at myself, covered all over wid filthy rags, and I say, Lord, clothe me, I am naked,'--and off go my rags. Now, massa, you not so bad as dat. When he say, Come along,' to you, you look at your coat, and you say, Well, it wants a little mending, but I fink it will wear a little longer. Dere is a great hole here, but a little darning and stitching will do it up again.' So, massa, you keep your old coat; you keep on darning and stitching, and you never get comfort. But if you would take it off, you would get comfort at once." That is just it, we will be trying to get something

before we come to Christ.

Now I dare say in this congregation I have a hundred different phases of this singular fatuity of man--the desire to bring something to Christ. "Oh," says one "I would come to Christ, but I have been too great a sinner." Self again, sir; your being a great sinner has nothing to do with that. Christ is a great Saviour; and however great your sin, his mercy is greater than that. He invites you simply as a sinner. Be you big or little, he bids you come to him and take his salvation "without money and without price." Another says, "Ah! but I do not feel it enough." Self again. He does not ask you about your feelings he simply says, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." "But, sir, I cannot pray." Self again. You are not to be saved by your prayers; you are to he saved by Christ, and your business is simply to look to Christ. he will help you to pray afterwards. You must begin at the right end by clinging only to his cross and trusting there. "But," says another "if I felt as So-and-so did." Self again. What business have you to talk so? Christ is where you are to look, not to self. "Yes," you say, "I think he would receive anybody but me." Please, who gave you any leave to think at all in the matter? Does he not say, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out?" Why, you are thinking your soul into eternal ruin. Give up thinking, and believe. Are your thoughts as God's thoughts? Remember, his thoughts are as much higher than yours as heaven is higher than earth "But," says one, "I have sought him and I have not found him." Dear friend, can you truly say that you have come to Christ with nothing in your hand, and have looked alone to him, and yet he has cast you away? Do you dare to say that? No, if God's Word be true, and you are true, you cannot say that. Ah! I remember how that struck my heart when I heard my mother say it once. I had been some years seeking Christ, and I never could believe he would

save me. She said she had heard many people swear and blaspheme God, but one thing she had never heard--she had never heard a man say he had sought Christ, and Christ had rejected him. "And," said she, "I do not believe that God would permit any man to live to say that." Well, I thought I could say it; I thought I had sought him, and he had cast me away, and I determined I would say it, even if it destroyed my soul: I would speak what I thought was the truth. But, I said to myself, "I will try once more" and I went to the Master, with nothing of my own, casting myself simply on his mercy; and I believed that he died for me:--and I have never said that, and blessed be his holy name, I know I never shall. Nor will you. Oh, do try him.

"Make but a trial of his love;
Experience will decide
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in his love confide."

If you will come down to this price, and take Christ for nothing, just as he is, "without money and without price," you shall not find him a hard Master.

III. Now, I have to use a FEW ARGUMENTS with you, and may God apply them to your hearts! I would first speak to some of you who never think about these things at all. You have come here to hear the Word today, because it is preached in a strange place; otherwise you might not have been in the house of God at all. Very seldom you vex yourselves with religious questions; you do not ask yourselves many questions about it, because you feel it would be an awkward thing for you if you were to think much of religion, you feel there would be a necessity for a change of life in you, for thoughts about religion and your present habits would not suit well together. My dear friends, bear with me a moment if I press you very much home. Did you ever hear of the ostrich?

When the hunter pursues it, the poor silly bird flies away as fast as it can, and when it sees that there is no way of escape, what do you suppose it does? It buries its head in the sand, and then thinks it is safe, because it shuts its eyes and cannot see. Is not that just what you are doing? Conscience won't let you rest, and what you are trying to do is to bury it. You bury your head in the sand; you do not like to think. Ah! if we could bring men to think, what a wonderful thing we should have done! That is one of the things, sinner, that, without Christ, you dare not do. Do you think? We have heard of men afraid to be alone half an hour because of thoughts too terrible for them. I challenge any of you without God, to spend one hour on that heath, or in this balcony, or in your own house at home, and just chew these thoughts, masticate them--"I am an enemy to God, my sins are not forgiven; if I die to-night, I am damned to all eternity; I have never sought Christ, and never found him to be mine." I defy you to keep at that an hour. You dare not, you would be afraid of your shadow. The only way sinners can be happy is by thoughtlessness. They say, "Cover it up; bury my dead out of my sight." They put such thoughts away. Now is this wise? Is there anything in religion? If not, it will be consistent in you to deny it; but if this Bible is true, if you have a soul that is to live for ever, is it rational, is it sensible, is it prudent, to be neglecting your eternal soul? If you suffered your bodies to starve, you would not want much argument, would you, to induce you to eat? But here is your soul perishing, and yet no mortal tongue can persuade you to attend to that. Ah! is it not strange that men are going to live for ever in eternity, and yet they have never provided for it. I have heard of a certain king who had a fool in his court, who made a great many merry jests, and the king gave him a stick, and said, "Keep that till you find a bigger fool than yourself."

At last the king came to die, and when he lay a-dying, the jester came to him and said, "Master, what is the matter?" "I am going to died said the king." "Going to die--where's that?" "I am going to die, man, don't laugh at me now." "How long are you going to be there?" "Well, where I am going I shall live for ever." "Have you got a house there?" "No." "Have you made any preparation for the journey?" "No." "Have you got any provision whatever, as you are going to live there such a long time?" "No." "There, take the stick; fool as I am, I have made preparation. I am not such a fool as to have to live in a place where I have not got a house." Christ has prepared for his people a mansion in heaven. There was much wisdom in the jester's language. Let me speak to you, even though it be in his language, but very seriously. If men are to live for ever in heaven, is it not a strange, wild, frantic freak of intolerant madness, that they never think of the world to come. To-day they think, but for ever--they put that away. Time, and its poor baubles and its toys do fill the heart; but eternity--that hill without a summit, that sea without a shore, that river without an end, over which they are to sail for ever--they never think of that. Will you pause a moment and recollect that you have to sail for ever, and you must sail o'er the burning waves of hell, or else o'er sparkling streams of glory. Which shall it be with you? You will have to consider this soon. Before many days, and months, and years are gone, God will say to you "Prepare to meet thy God," and it may be that the summons shall come to you Then you are in the death struggle when the stream of Jordan is chilling your blood, and your heart is sunken within you by reason of fear. And what will you do then? What wilt thou do in the swellings of sin in the day when thou art spoiled? What shalt thou do when God shall bring thee into judgment?

And I have now the pleasing task of closing by addressing men of

another character: Ah! friend; you are not careless. You have many thoughts, and they pain you; but, although you would be glad to get rid of them, you would be afraid to do so. You can say, "Oh! I do feel it were well for me if I could rejoice in Christ--I do feel I should be happy if I could be converted." Friend, I am glad to hear thee say so. Where God has put the work of an impressed heart, I do not think he will leave it till he has finished. Now, I want to speak to you very seriously to-night, but for a minute. You do feel your need of a Saviour. Remember, Christ died for you. Believe that--will you? There he hangs upon his cross, dying; look into his face, it is full of love, it is melting with forgiveness; his lips are moving, and he says, "Father forgive them." Will you look to him? Can you hear him say it, and yet turn away? All he asks you is simply to look, and that look will save you. You do feel your need of a Saviour; you know you are a sinner. Why tarry? Do not say you are unworthy. Remember, he died for the unworthy. Do not say he will not save you. Remember, he died for the devil's castaways; the very dram and scum of the world Christ has redeemed. Look at him. Can you look at him and not believe him? Can you see the blood streaming from his shoulders, and trickling from his hands and side, and not believe him? Oh! by him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, I entreat you to believe on the Lord Jesus; for thus is it written, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus, and is baptized, shall be saved."

Once when Rowland Hill was preaching, Lady Ann Erskine happened to be driving by: she was in the outer ring of the circle, and she asked the coachman, what all the people were there for. He replied, "They are going to hear Rowland Hill." Well, she had heard a great deal about this strange man, accounted to be the very wildest of preachers, and so she drew near. No sooner did Rowland Hill see her, than he said, "Come,

I am going to have an auction, I am going to sell Lady Ann Erskine." (She of course stopped, and she wondered how she was going to be disposed of.) "Who will buy her?" Up comes the world. "What will you give for her?" "I will give her all the pomps and vanities of this present life; she shall be a happy woman here she shall be very rich, she shall have many admirers, she shall go through this world with many joys." "You shall not have her; her soul is an everlasting thing; it is a poor price you are offering, you are only giving a little and what shall it profit her if she gain the whole world and lose her own soul? Here comes another purchaser--here is the devil. "What will you give for her." "Well" says he, "I will let her enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, she shall indulge in everything her heart shall set itself unto; she shall have everything to delight the eye and the ear; she shall indulge in every sin and vice that can possibly give a transcient pleasure." Ah! Satan, what will you do for her for ever? You shall not have her, for I know what you are; you would give a paltry price for her, and then destroy her soul to all eternity. But, here comes another--I know him--it is the Lord Jesus. "What will you give for her?" Says he, "It is not what I will give, it is what I have given; I have given my life, my blood for her; I have bought her with a price, and I will give her heaven for ever and ever; I will give her grace in her heart now and glory throughout eternity."

"O Lord, Jesus Christ," said Rowland Hill, "thou shalt have her. Lady Ann Erskine, do you demur to the bargain?" She was fairly caught; there was no answer that could be given. "It is done," he said, "it is done; you are the Saviour's; I have betrothed you unto him; never break that contract." And she never did. From that time forth, from being a gay and volatile woman she became one of the most serious persons, one of the greatest supporters of the truth of the gospel in those times, and

died in a glorious and certain hope of entering the kingdom of heaven. I would be well pleased if I might make a match of some of you this night; if you would now say, "Lord, I will have thee," Christ is ready. If he has made you ready he is never behind hand himself. Whosoever is willing to have Christ, Christ is willing to have him. What sayest thou? wilt thou go with this man? If thou sayest "Ay," God bless thee! Christ saith "Ay" too, and thou art saved, saved now, saved for ever!

Chapter 35

The Wicked Man's Life, Funeral, and Epitaph

A Sermon

(No. 200)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 13, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity."--Ecclesiastes 8:10.

IT IS QUITE CERTAIN that there are immense benefits attending our present mode of burial in extra mural cemeteries. It was high time that the dead should be removed from the midst of the living--that we should not worship in the midst of corpses, and sit in the Lord's house on the Sabbath, breathing the noxious effluvia of decaying bodies. But when we have said this, we must remember that there are some advantages which we have lost by the removal of the dead, and more especially by the wholesale mode of burial which now seems very likely to become general. We are not so often met by the array of dead. In the midst of our crowded cities we sometimes see the sable hearse bearing the relics of men to their last homes, but the funeral ceremonies are now mostly confined to those sweet sleeping places beyond our walks, where rest the bodies of those who are very dear to us. Now, I believe the sight of a funeral is a very healthful thing for the soul. Whatever harm may come to the body by walking through the vault and the catacomb, the soul can there find much food for contemplation, and much excitement for thought. In the great villages, where some of us were wont to dwell, we remember how when the funeral came now and then, the tolling

of the bell preached to all the villagers a better sermon than they had heard in the church for many a day, and we recollect, how as children, we used to cluster around the grave, and look at that which was not so frequent an occurrence in the midst of a rare and spare population; and we remember the solemn thoughts which used to arise even in our young hearts when we heard the words uttered, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The solemn falling of the few grains of ashes upon the coffin-lid was the sowing of good seed in our hearts. And afterwards, when we have in our childish play climbed over those nettle-bound graves, and seated ourselves upon those mossgrown tombstones, we have had many a lesson preached to us by the dull cold tongue of death, more eloquent than aught we have heard from the lip of living man and more likely to abide with us in after years, but now we see little of death. We have fulfilled Abraham's wish beyond what he desired--we "bury the dead out of our sight;" it is rarely that we see them, and a stranger passing through our streets might say, "Do these live always? for I see no funerals amongst the millions of this city, I see no signs of death."

We shall this morning want you, first of all, to walk with a living man; it is said of him that he did "come and go from the place of the holy:" next, I shall want you to attend his funeral, and then, in conclusion I shall ask you to assist in writing his epitaph--"and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this also is vanity."

I. In the first place, HERE IS SOME GOOD COMPANY FOR YOU; some with whom you may walk to the house of God, for it is said of them, that they did come and go from the place of the holy. By this, I think we may understand the place where the righteous meet to worship God. God's house may be called "the place of the holy." Still, if we confine

ourselves strictly to the Hebrew, and to the connection, it appears that by the "place of the holy" is intended the judgment-seat the place where the magistrate dispenses justice; and alas! there be some wicked who and go even to the place of judgment, to judge their fellow sinners. And we may with equal propriety consider it in a third sense to represent the pulpit which should be "the place of the holy but we have seen the wicked come and go even from the pulpit, though God had never commanded them to declare his, statutes.

In the first place we will take this as representing the house of God. What a sight it is to see the great crowds coming up to the sanctuary of the Lord. I am sure, as we saw the multitudes coming up to the house of God, there must have been a peculiar thrill of joy pass through our hearts. It reminds us of the ancient gathering in Zion's temple when thither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to worship at the sanctuary of God. Oh! it is a noble sight when with joy and gladness we see the young and the old, the gray-headed and the children, all of them pressing forward in one eager throng to worship the Lord of Hosts, and listen to the voice of his sacred oracle. But your pleasure must have a great deal of alloy if you stop for a moment and dissect the congregation. Pull the goodly mass in sunder: in a heap it sparkles like gold;, pull aside the threads, and alas! you will see that there are some not made of the precious metal, for "we have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy." Gathered in this throng this morning we have here men who almost profane the spot in which they are found. Last night's revel has left its impress upon their countenances. We have others who will, ere this day is closed, be cursing God in the house of Satan. There be many to be found here who have during this week been spending their time in lying, cheating, and swindling in the midst of their business. I doubt not there are some here who have taken

every advantage that was possible of their fellow men, and if they have not come within the clutches of the law it certainly has not been their fault. We have too, I doubt not, in such a multitude--yea, I may speak with confidence--we have men here who have, during the past week, and at other times defiled themselves with sins that we will not mention, for it were a shame for us to speak of the things which are done of them in secret. Little do we know when we look here from this pulpit--it looks like one great field of flowers, fair to look upon--how many a root of deadly henbane and noxious nightshade groweth here, and though you all look fair and goodly, yet "I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy."

Shall we just take the wicked man's arm and walk with him to the house of God? When he begins to go, if he be one who has neglected going in his childhood, which perhaps is not extremely likely, when he begins to go even in his childhood, or whenever you choose to mention, you will notice that he is not often affected by the sound of the ministry. He goes up to the chapel with flippancy and mirth. He goeth to it as he would to a theater or any other place of amusement, as a means of passing away his Sabbath and killing time. Merrily he trippeth in there, but I have seen the wicked man when he went away look far differently from what he did when he entered. His plumes had been trailed in the dust. As he walks home there is no more flippancy and lightness, for he says, "Surely the Lord God has been in that place and I have been compelled to tremble. I went to scoff but I am obliged, in coming away, to confess that there is a power in religion, and the services of God s house are not all dulness after all." Perhaps you have hoped good of this man. But, alas! he forgot it all, and cast away all his impressions. And he came again the next Sunday, and that time he felt again. Again the arrow of the Lord seemed to stick fast in his

heart. But, alas! it was like the rushing of water. There was a mark for a moment, but his heart was soon healed, he felt not the blow; and as for persuading him to salvation, he we, like the deaf adder, "charm we never so wisely," he would not regard us so as to turn from his ways. And I have seen him come and go till years have rolled over his head, and he has still filled his seat, and the minister is still preaching, but in his case preaching in vain. Still are the tears of mercy flowing for him; still are the thunders of justice launched against him; but he abideth just as he was. In him there is no change except this, that now he groweth hard and callous. You do not now hear him say that he trembles under the Word--not he. He is like a horse that hath been in the battle, he feareth not the noise of the drum nor the rolling of the smoke, and careth not for the din of the cannon. He cometh up, he heareth a faithfill warning, and he saith, "What of it? this is for the wicked." He heareth an affectionate invitation, and he saith, "Go thy way, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." And so he comes and goes up to the house of God and back again. Like the door upon its hinges he turns into the sanctuary to-day, and out of it to-morrow. "He comes and goes from the place of the holy." It may be, however, he goes even further. Almost persuaded to be a Christian by some sermon from a Paul, he trembles at his feet. He thinks he really repents; he unites himself with the Christian church: he makes a profession of religion; but, alas! his heart has never been changed. The sow is washed, but it is the sow still. The dog has been driven from its vomit, but its doggish nature is there the same. The Ethiopian is clothed in a white garment, but he hath not changed his skin. The leopard hath been covered all over, but he hath not washed his spots away. He is the same as ever he was. He goes to the baptismal pool a black sinner, and he comes out of it the same. He

goes to the table of the Lord a deceiver; he eats the bread and drinks the wine, and he returns the same. Sacrament after Sacrament passes away. The Holy Eucharist is broken in his presence, he receives it, but he comes and he goes, for he receives it not in the love of it. He is a stranger to vital godliness, and as a wicked man "he comes and he goes from the place of the holy."

But is it not a marvellous thing that men should be able to do this? I have sometimes heard a preacher so earnestly put the matter of salvation before men, that I have said, "Surely they must see this." I have heard him plead as though he pleaded for his own life, and I have said, "Surely they must feel this." And I have turned round, and I have seen the handkerchief used to brush away the tear, and I have said, "Good must follow this." You have brought your own friends under the sound of the Word, and you have prayed the whole sermon through that the arrow may reach the white and penetrate the center of the mark, and you said to yourself, "What an appropriate discourse." Still you kept on praying, and you were pleased to see that there was some emotion. You said "Oh, it will touch his heart at last." But is it not strange that, though wooed by love divine, man will not melt; though thundered at by Sinai's own terrific thunderbolts they will not tremble; yea, though Christ himself incarnate in the flesh should preach again, yet would they not regard him, and mayhap would treat him to-day as their parent did but yesterday, when they dragged him out of the city and would have cast him headlong from the summit of the mount on which the city was builded. I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy till his conscience was seared, as with a hot iron. I have seen him come and go from the place of the holy till he had become harder than the nether millstone, till he was past feeling, given up "to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness."

But now we are going to change our journey. Instead of going to the house of God we will go another way. I have seen the wicked go to the place of the holy, that is to the judgment bench. We have had glaring instances even in the criminal calendar of men who have been seen sitting on a judgment bench one day, and in a short time they have been standing at the dock themselves. I have wondered what must be the peculiar feelings of a man who officiates as a judge, knowing that he who judges has been a law-breaker himself. A wicked man, a greedy, lustful, drunken man--you know such are to be discovered among petty magistrates. We have known these sit and condemn the drunkard, when, had the world known how they went to bed the night before, they would have said of them, "thou that judgest another doest the same things thyself." There have been instances known of men who have condemned a poor wretch for shooting a rabbit or stealing a few pheasants' eggs, or some enormous crime like that, and they themselves have been robbing the coffers of the bank, embezzling funds to an immense extent, and cheating everybody. How singular they must feel. One would think it must be a very strange emotion that passes over a man when he executes the law upon one which he knows ought to be executed upon himself. And yet, I have seen the wicked come and go from the holy place, until he came to think that his sins were no sins, that the poor must be severely upbraided for their iniquities, that what he called the lower classes must be kept in check, not thinking that there are none so low as those who condemn others whilst they do the same things themselves speaking about checks and barriers, when neither check nor barrier were of any use to himself, talking of curbing others and of judging righteous judgment, when had righteous judgment been carried out to the letter, he would himself have been the prisoner, and not have been honored with a commission from government. Ah! is it not a sight that

we may well look at, when we see justice perverted and the law turned upside down by men who "come and go from the place of the holy." But the third case is worse still. "I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy"--that is, the pulpit. If there be a place under high heaven more holy than another, it is the pulpit whence the gospel is preached. This is the Thermophylae of Christendom; here must the great battle be fought between Christ's church and the invading hosts of a wicked world. This is the last vestige of anything sacred that is left to us. We have no altars now; Christ is our altar: but we have a pulpit still left, a place which, when a man entereth, he might well put off his shoes from his feet, for the place whereon he standeth is holy. Consecrated by a Saviour's presence, established by the clearness and the force of an apostle's eloquence, maintained and upheld by the faithfulness and fervor of a succession of Evangelists who, like stars, have marked the era in which they lived, and stamped it with their names, the pulpit is handed down to those of us who occupy it now with a prestige of everything that is great and holy. Yet I have seen the wicked come and go from it. Alas! if there be a sinner that is hardened, it is the man that sins and occupies his pulpit. We have heard of such a man living in the commission of the foulest sins, and at length has been discovered; and yet such is the filthiness of mankind, that when he began to preach to the people again, they clustered round the beast for the mere sake of hearing what he would say to them. We have known cases, too, where men, when convicted to their own forehead, have unblushingly persevered in proclaiming a gospel which their lives denied. And perhaps these are the hardest of all sinners to deal with!. But if the garment be once defiled, away with all thoughts of the pulpit then. He must be clean who ministers at the altar. Every saint must be holy, but he, holiest of all, who seeks

to serve his God. Yet, we must mourn to say it, the church of God every now and then has had a sun that was black instead of white, and a moon that was as a clot of blood, instead of being full of fairness and beauty. Happy the church when God gives her holy ministers; but unhappy the church where wicked men preside. I know ministers to this day, however, who know more about fishing rods than they do about chapters in the Bible; more about fox-hounds than about hunting after men's souls; who understand a great deal more of the spring and the net than they do of the net for catching souls, or earnest exhortations for men to flee from the wrath to come. We know such even now: still uproarious at a farmer's dinner, still the very loudest to give the toast and clash the glass, still mightiest among the mighty found, of the gay, the wild, and the dissolute. Pity on the church that still allows it! Happy the day when all such persons shall be purged from the pulpit; then shall it stand forth "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." "I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy."

II. And now WE ARE GOING TO HIS FUNERAL. I shall want you to attend it. You need not be particular about having on a hat band, or being arrayed in garments of mourning It does not signify for the wretch we are going to bury. There is no need for any very great outward signs of mourning, for he will be forgotten even in the city where he hath done this: therefore we need not particularly mourn for him. Let us first go to the funeral and look at the outward ceremonial. We will suppose one or two cases.

There is a man who has come and gone from the place of the holy. He has made a very blazing profession. He has been a county magistrate. Now, do you see what a stir is made about his poor bones? There is the hearse covered with plumes, and there follows a long string of

carriages. The country people stare to see such a long train of carriages coming to follow one poor worm to its resting-place. What pomp! what grandeur! See how the place of worship is hung with black. There seems to be intense mourning made over this man. Will you just think of it for a minute, and who are they mourning for? A hypocrite! Whom is all this pomp for? For one who was a wicked man, a man who made a pretension of religion, a man who judged others, and who ought to have been condemned himself. All this pomp for putrid clay; and what is it more or better than that? When such a man dies, ought he not to be buried with the burial of an ass? Let him be drawn and dragged from the gates of the city. What has he to do with pomp? At the head of the mournful cavalcade is Beelzebub, leading the procession, and, looking back with twinkling eye, and leer of malicious joy, says, "Here is fine pomp to conduct a soul to hell with!" Ah! plumes and hearse for the man who is being conducted to his last abode in Tophet! A string of carriages to do honor to the man whom God hath cursed in life and cursed in death, for the hope of the hypocrite is evermore an accursed one. And a bell is ringing, and the clergyman is reading the funeral service, and is burying the man "in sure and certain hope." Oh! what a laugh rings up from somewhere a little lower down than the grave! "In sure and certain hope," says Satan, "ha! ha! your sure and certain hope is folly indeed. Trust to a bubble, and hope to fly to the stars; trust to the wild winds, that they shall conduct you safely to heaven, but trust to such a hope as that, and thou art a madman indeed." Oh! if we judged rightly, when a hypocrite died, we should do him no honor. If men could but see a little deeper than the skin, and read the thoughts of the heart, they would not patronize this great, black lie, and lead a long string of carriages through the streets; they would say, "No, the man was good for nothing, he was the outward skin without the life,

he professed to be what he was not, he lived the scornful life of a deceiver; let him have the burial of Jeconiah; let him not have a funeral at all; let him be cast away as loathsome carrion, for that is all he is." Ah! when a godly man dies, ye may make lamentation over him, ye may well carry him with solemn pomp unto his grave, for there is an odour in his bones, there is a sweet savor about him that even God delighteth in, for "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." But the gilded hypocrite, the varnished deceiver, the well accoutred wolf in sheeps' clothing--away with pomp for him! Why should men bewail him? They do not do it, why should they pretend to do so, then, and give the outward semblance of a grief, where they feel none?

But possibly I may have seen the wicked man buried in a more quiet way. He is taken quietly to his tomb with as little pomp as possible, and he is with all decency and solemnity interred in the grave. And now listen to the minister. If he is a man of God, when he buries such a man as he ought to be buried, you do not hear a solitary word about the character of the deceased; you hear nothing at all about any hopes of everlasting life. He is put into his grave. The minister well remembers how he did "come and go from the place of the holy," he recollects full well how he used to sit in the gallery and listen to his discourse. And there is one who weeps; and the minister stands there and weeps too, to think how all his labor has been lost, and one of his hearers has been destroyed, and that without hope. But note how cautiously he speaks, even to the wife. He would give her all the hope he could, poor widow as she is, and he speaks very gentle. She says, "I hope my husband is in heaven." He holds his tongue; he is very silent; if he is of a sympathetic nature he will be quiet. And when he speaks about the deceased in his next Sunday's sermon, if he mentions him at all he

refers to him as a doubtful case, he uses him rather as a beacon than as an example, and bids other men beware how they presume to waste their opportunities, and let the golden hours of their Sabbath-day roll by disregarded. "I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy." As for the pompous funeral, that was ludicrous. A man might almost laugh to see the folly of honoring the man who deserved to be dishonored, but as for the still and silent and truthful funeral, how sad it is! But brethren, after all, we ought to judge ourselves very much in the light of our funerals. That is the way we judge other things. Look at your fields to-morrow. There is the flaunting poppy, and there by the hedge-rows are many flowers that lift their heads to the sun. Judging them by their leaf you might prefer them to the sober coloured wheat. But wait until the funeral. Then the poppy shall be gathered and the weeds shall be bound up in a bundle to be burned--gathered into a heap in the field to be consumed, to be made into manure for the soil. But see the funeral of the wheat. What a magnificent funeral has the wheat-sheaf "Harvest home" is shouted as it is carried to the garner, for it is a precious thing. Even so let each of us so live, as considering that we must die. Oh! I would desire to live that when I leave this mortal state, men may say, "There is one gone who sought to make the world better. However rough his efforts might have been, he was an honest man; he sought to serve God, and there lies he that feared not the face of man." I would have every Christian seek to win such a funeral as this--a funeral like Stephen's: "And devout men carried him to his sepulcher, and made great lamentation over him." I remember the funeral of one pastor--I attended it. Many ministers of the gospel walked behind the coffin to attend their brother, and pay honor to him. And then came a ton of the church, every one of whom wept as if they had lost a father. And I remember the

solemn sermon that was preached in the chapel all hung with black, when all of us wept because a great man had fallen that day in Israel. We felt that a prince had been taken from us and we all said, like Elijah's servant, "My father, my father, the horses of Israel and the chariots thereof." But I have seen the wicked buried that have come and gone from the place of the holy, and I saw nothing of this sort. I saw a flickering kind of sorrow, like the dying of a wick that is almost consumed. I saw that those who paid a decent respect to the corpse did it for the widow's sake, and for the sake of them that were left behind; but if they could have dealt with the corpse as their nature seemed to dictate, they ought to have dealt with the man when living, they would have said, "Let him be buried at the dead of night; let him have some unhallowed corner in the churchyard where the nettle long has grown; let the frog croak o'er his tomb; let the owl make her resting-place o'er his sepulcher, and let her hoot all night long, for hooted he well deserves to be; let no laurel and no cypress grow upon his grave, and let no rose twine itself as a sweet bower around the place where he sleeps; let no cowslip and no lily of the valley deck the grass that covereth him; there let him lie; let not the green sward grow, but let the place be accursed where sleeps the hypocrite, for he deserves it, and even so let it be." "I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy."

But there is a sad thing yet to come. We must look a little deeper than the mere ceremonial of the burial and we shall see that there is a great deal more in some people's coffins besides their corpses. When old Robert Flockart was buried a few weeks ago in Edinburgh, he was buried as I think a Christian minister should be, for his old Bible and hymn book were placed upon the top of the coffin. Had he been a soldier, I suppose he would have had his sword put there; but he had

been a Christian soldier, and so they buried with him his Bible and hymn book as his trophies. It was well that such a trophy should be on that coffin; but there is a great deal, as I have said, inside some people's coffins. If we had eyes to see invisible things, and we could break the lid of the hypocrite's coffin, we should see a great deal there. There lie all his hopes. The wicked man may come and go from the place of the holy, but he has no hope of being saved. He thought, because he had attended the place of the holy regularly, therefore he was safe for another world. There lie his hopes, and they are to be buried with him. Of all the frightful things that a man can look upon, the face of a dead hope is the most horrible. A dead child is a pang indeed to a mother's heart; a dead wife or a dead husband, to the heart of the bereaved must be sorrowful indeed; but a coffin full of dead hopes--did you ever see such a load of misery carried to the grave as that? Wrapt in the same shroud, there lie all his dead pretensions. When he was here he made a pretension of being respectable; there lies his respect, he shall be a hissing and a reproach for ever. He made a pretension of being sanctified, but the mask is off now, and he stands in all his native blackness. He made pretensions about being God's elect, but his election is discovered now to be a rejection. He thought himself to be clothed in the Saviour's righteousness, but he finds that he justified himself: Christ had never given him his imputed righteousness. And so he sleeps. The tongue that prattled once so pleasantly concerning godliness is now silent. That hypocritical eye that once flashed with the pretended fire of joy--it is all now dark, dark. That brain that thought of inventions to deceive--the worm shall feed on it. And that heart of his that once throbbed beneath ribs that were scarcely thick enough to hide the transparency of his hypocrisy shall now be devoured by demons. There are dead pretensions inside that

rotting skeleton, and dead hopes too. But there is one thing that sleeps with him in his coffin that he had set his heart upon. He had set his heart upon being known after he was gone. He thought surely after he had departed this life, he would be handed down to posterity and be remembered. Now read the text--"And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done." There is his hope of fame. Every man likes to live a little longer than his life--Englishmen especially--for there is scarcely to be found a rock in all England up which even a goat might scarcely climb where there may not be discovered the initials of the names of men, who never had any other mode of attaining to fame, and therefore thought they would inscribe their names there. Go where you will, you find men attempting to be known; and this is the reason why many people write in newspapers, else they never would be known. A hundred little inventions we all of us have for keeping our names going after we are dead. But with the wicked man it is all in vain; he shall be forgotten. He has done nothing to make anybody remember him. Ask the poor; "Do you remember So-and-so?" "Hard master, sir, very. He always cut us down to the last sixpence; and we do not wish to recollect him." Their children won't hear his name; they will forget him entirely. Ask the church, "Do you remember So-and-so? he was a member." "Well," says one, "I remember him certainly, his name was on the books, but we never had his heart. He used to come and go, but I never could talk with him. There was nothing spiritual in him. There was a great deal of sounding bell-metal and brass, but no gold. I never could discover that he had the "root of the matter in him." No one thinks of him, and he will soon be forgotten. The chapel grows old, there comes up another congregation, and somehow or other they talk about the odd deacons that used to be there, who were good and holy men and about the old lady, that used to be so eminently useful in visiting

the sick, about the young man who rose out of that church, who was so useful in the cause of God; but you never hear mention made of his name; he is quite forgotten. When he died his name was struck out of the books, he was reported as being dead, and all remembrance of him died with him. I have often noticed how soon wicked things die when the man dies who originated them. Look at Voltaire's philosophy; with all the noise it made in his time--where is it now? There is just a little of it lingering, but it seems to have gone. And there was Tom Paine, who did his best to write his name in letters of damnation, and one would think he might have been remembered. But who cares for him now? Except amongst a few, here and there, his name has passed away. And all the names of error, and heresy, and schism, where do they go? You hear about St. Austin to this day, but you never hear about the heretics he attacked. Everybody knows about Athanasius, and how he stood up for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ; but we have almost forgotten the life of Arius, and scarcely ever think of those men who aided and abetted him in his folly. Bad men die out quickly, for the world feels it is a good thing to be rid of them; they are not worth remembering. But the death of a good man, the man who was sincerely a Christian--how different is that! And when you see the body of a saint, if he has served God with all his might, how sweet it is to look upon him--ah, and to look upon his coffin too, or upon his tomb in after years! Go into Bunhill-fields, and stand by the memorial of John Bunyan, and you will say, "Ah! there lies the head that contained the brain which thought out that wondrous dream of the Pilgrim's Progress from the City of Destruction to the Better land. There lies the finger that wrote those wondrous lines which depict the story of him who came at last to the land Beulah, and waded through the flood, and entered into the celestial city. And there are the eyelids which he once spoke of, when

he said, "If I lie in prison until the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never make a promise to withhold from preaching." And there is that bold eye that penetrated the judge, when he said, "If you will let me out of prison to-day, I will preach again to-morrow, by the help of God." And there lies that loving hand that was ever ready to receive into communion all them that loved the Lord Jesus Christ: I love the hand that wrote the book, "Water Baptism no Bar to Christian Communion." I love him for that sake alone, and if he had written nothing else but that, I would say, "John Bunyan, be honored for ever." And there lies the foot that carried him up Snow Hill to go and make peace between a father and a son, in that cold day, which cost him his life. Peace to his ashes Wait, O John Bunyan, till thy Master sends his angel to blow the trumpet and methinks, when the archangel sounds it, he will almost think of thee, and this shall be a part of his joy, that honest John Bunyan, the greatest of all Englishmen, shall rise from his tomb at the blowing of that great trump. You cannot say so of the wicked. What is a wicked man's body but a rotten piece of noisomeness? Put it away, and thank God there are worms to eat such a thing up, and thank him still more, that there is a worm called Time, to eat up the evil influence and the accursed memory, which such a man leaves behind him. All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done."

III. We are to WRITE HIS EPITAPH, and his epitaph is contained in these short words: "this also is vanity" And now in a few words I will endeavor to show that it is vanity for a man to come and go from the house of God, and yet have no true religion. If I made up my mind to hate God, to sin against him, and to be lost at last, I would do it thoroughly, out and out. If I had determined to be damned, and had calculated the chances, and made up my mind that it would be better to

be cast away for ever, I know there is one thing I would not do, I would not go to the house of God. Why, if I made up my mind to be lost, what is the good of going there to be teared about it? Because, if the man is faithful, he will prick my conscience and wake me up. If I am determined and have made up my mind to be lost, let me go to hell as easily as I can, what need is there that my conscience should be pricked, and this great stone laid in my way to keep me from going there? Besides, I hold that, for a man who has no love for the house of God, regularly to attend because he thinks it is respectable, is just one of the most pitiful kinds of drudgery that can be met with. If I did not love the house of God, I would not go there. If it were not a delight to me to be found in the sanctuary of God, singing of his praise, and hearing of his word, I would stop away. To be seen going to chapel twice on the Sabbath, sitting as God's people sit, rising when they rise, and singing about what you do not feel; hearing that which pricks your conscience, and listening to the reading of promises that do not belong to you; hearing about heaven, that is not yours, being frightened with hell, which is to be yours for ever--why, the man is just a born fool that goes to the house of God, except he has got an interest in it. We may commend him for going; it is a respectable thing, perhaps, and right that it should be so but I submit it is an intolerable drudgery to go always to the house of God, if you have made up your mind to be lost. Now, on this man's tomb must be written at last--"there was a men who would not serve God, but who had not courage enough to stand out against God. There is a man so silly that he pretended to be religious, and so wicked that he was a hypocrite to his pretensions." Why, although you must deplore a wicked man's wickedness as a fearful crime, yet there is some kind of respect to be paid to the man who is downright honest in it; but not an atom of respect to the

man who wants to be a cant and a hypocrite. He wishes, if he can, just to save his neck at last; just as he thinks, to do enough to let him get off free when he comes to lay a-dying; enough to keep his conscience quiet, enough to look respectable; enough as he thinks, when he dies to give him a little chance of entering heaven, though it be, as it were, neck or nothing. Ah, poor thing! Well may we write over him, "This also is vanity!" But, sir, you will be more laughed at for your pretensions than if you had made none. Having professed to be religious, and having pretended to carry it out, you shall have more scorn than if you had came out in your right colors, and have said, "Who is the Lord, that I should fear him? Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" And now, are there any here who are so wicked as to choose eternal wrath? Have I any here so besotted as to choose destruction? Yes, yes, many; for if to-day, my hearer, thou art choosing sin; if thou art choosing self-righteousness, if thou art choosing pride, or lust, or the pleasures of this world, remember, thou art choosing damnation, for the two things cannot but go together. Sin is the guilt, and hell is the bread beneath it. If you choose sin, you have virtually chosen perdition. Think of this, I beseech you.

"O Lord! do thou the sinner turn!
Now rouse him from his senseless state;
O let him not thy counsel spurn,
Nor rue his fatal choice too late."

May the Lord lead you to Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life! And when ye are buried, may ye be buried with the righteous, and may your last end be like his!

Chapter 36

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

A Sermon

(No. 201)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 20, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word"--Acts 10:44.

THE BIBLE IS A BOOK of the Revelation of God. The God after whom the heathen blindly searched, and for whom reason gropes in darkness, is here plainly revealed to us in the pages of divine authorship, so that he who is willing to understand as much of Godhead as man can know, may here learn it if he be not willingly ignorant and wilfully obstinate.

The doctrine of the Trinity is specially taught in Holy Scripture. The word certainly does not occur, but the three divine persons of the One God are frequently and constantly mentioned, and Holy Scripture is exceedingly careful that we should all receive and believe that great truth of the Christian religion, that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God: though they be each of them very God of very God, yet three in one and one in three is the Jehovah whom we worship. You will notice in the works of Creation how carefully the Scriptures assure us that all the three divine persons took their share. "In the beginning Jehovah created the heavens and the earth;" and in another place we are told that God said "Let us make man"--not one person, but all three taking counsel with each other with regard to the making of mankind. We know that the Father hath laid the foundations and fixed those solid beams

of light on which the blue arches of the sky are sustained; but we know with equal certainty that Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos, was with the Father in the beginning, and "without him was not anything made that was made:" moreover we have equal certainty that the Holy Spirit had a hand in Creation, for we are told that "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the earth; and the spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters;" and brooding with his dove-like wing, he brought out of the egg of chaos this mighty thing, the fair round world. We have the like proof of the three persons in the Godhead in the matter of Salvation. We know that God the, Father gave his Son; we have abundant proof that God the Father chose his people from before the foundations of the world, that he did invent the plan of salvation, and hath always given his free, willing, and joyous consent to the salvation of his people. With regard to the share that the Son had in salvation, that is apparent enough to all. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he was incarnate in a mortal body; he was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven; he sitteth at the right hand of God, where also he maketh intercession for us. As to the Holy Spirit, we have equally sure proof that the Spirit of God worketh in conversion; for everywhere we are said to be begotten of the Holy Spirit; continually it is declared, that unless a man be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God; while all the virtues and the graces of Christianity are described as being the fruits of the Spirit, because the Holy Spirit doth from first to last work in us and carry out that which Jesus Christ hath beforehand worked for us in his great redemption, which also God the Father hath designed for us in his great predestinating scheme of salvation.

Now, it is to the work of the Holy Spirit that I shall this morning specially direct your attention; and I may as well mention the reason why I do so. It is this. We have received continually fresh confirmations of the good news from a far country, which has already made glad the hearts of many of God's people. In the United States of America there is certainly a great awakening. No sane man living there could think of denying it. There may be something of spurious excitement mixed up with it, but that good, lasting good, has been accomplished, no rational man can deny. Two hundred and fifty thousand persons--that is a quarter of a million--profess to have been regenerated since December last, have made a profession of their faith, and have united themselves with different sections of God's church. The work still progresses, if anything, at a more rapid rate than before, and that which makes me believe the work to be genuine is just this--that the enemies of Christ's holy gospel are exceedingly wroth at it. When the devil roars at anything, you may rest assured there is some good in it. The devil is not like some dogs we know of; he never barks unless there is something to bark at. When Satan howls we may rest assured he is afraid his kingdom is in danger. Now this great work in America has been manifestly caused by the outpouring of the Spirit, for no one minister has been a leader in it. All the ministers of the gospel have co-operated in it, but none of them have stood in the van. God himself has been the leader of his own hosts. It began with a desire for prayer. God's people began to pray; the prayer-meetings were better attended than before. it was then proposed to hold meetings at times that had never been set apart for prayer; these also were well attended; and now, in the city of Philadelphia, at the hour of noon, every day in the week, three thousand persons can always be seen assembled together for prayer in one place. Men of business, in the

midst of their toil and labor, find an opportunity of running in there and offering a word of prayer, and then return to their occupations. And so, throughout all the States, prayer-meetings, larger or smaller in number, have been convened. And there has been real prayer. Sinners beyond all count, have risen up in the prayer-meeting, and have requested the people of God to pray for them; thus making public to the world that they had a desire after Christ; they have been prayed for, and the church has seen that God verily doth hear and answer prayer. I find that the Unitarian ministers for a little while took no notice of it. Theodore Parker snarls and raves tremendously at it, but he is evidently in a maze; he does not understand the mystery, and acts with regard to it as swine are said to do with pearls. While the church was found asleep, and doing very little, the Socinian could afford to stand in his pulpit and sneer at anything like evangelical religion, but now that there has been an awakening, he looks like a man that has just awakened out of sleep. He sees something; he does not know what it is. The power of religion is just that which will always puzzle the Unitarian, for he knows but little about that. At the form of religion he is not much amazed, for he can to an extent endorse that himself, but the supernaturalism of the gospel--the mystery--the miracle--the power--the demonstration of the Spirit that comes with the preaching, is what such men cannot comprehend, and they gaze and wonder, and then become filled with wrath, but still they have to confess there is something there they cannot understand, a mental phenomenon that is far beyond their philosophy--a thing which they cannot reach by all their science nor understand by all their reason.

Now, if we have the like effect produced in this land, the one thing we must seek is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and I thought, perhaps, this morning in preaching upon the work of the Holy Spirit, that text

might be fulfilled--"Him that honoureth me I will honor." My sincere desire is to honor the Holy Spirit this morning, and if he will be pleased to honor his church in return, unto him shall be the glory for ever.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." In the first place, I shall endeavor to describe the method of the Spirit's operation, secondly, the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence, if we could see men converted, and then, in the third place, I shall suggest the ways and means by which under divine grace we may obtain a like falling down of the Spirit upon our churches.

1. In the first place, then, I will endeavor to explain THE METHOD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S OPERATIONS. But let me guard myself against being misunderstood. We can explain what the Spirit does, but how he does it, no man must pretend to know. The work of the Holy Spirit is the peculiar mystery of the Christian religion. Almost any other thing is plain, but this must remain an inscrutable secret into which it were wrong for us to attempt to pry. Who knoweth where the winds are begotten? Who knoweth, therefore, how the Spirit worketh, for he is like the wind? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In Holy Scripture certain great secrets of nature are mentioned as being parallel with the secret working of the Spirit. The procreation of children is instanced as a parallel wonder, for we know not the mystery thereof; how much less, therefore, shall we expect to know that more secret and hidden mystery of the new birth and new creation of man in Christ Jesus. But let no man be staggered at this, for they are mysteries in nature: the wisest man will tell you there are depths in nature into

which he cannot dive, and heights into which he cannot soar. He who pretends to have unravelled the knot of creation hath made a mistake, he may have cut the knot by his rough ignorance, and by his foolish conjectures, but the knot itself must remain beyond the power of man's unravelling, until God himself shall explain the secret. There are marvellous things, that, as yet, men have sought to know in vain. They may, perhaps, discover many of them, but how the Spirit works, no man can know. But now I wish to explain what the Holy Spirit does, although we cannot tell how he does it. I take it that the Holy Spirit's work in conversion is two-fold. First it is an awakening of the powers that man already has, and secondly, it is an implantation of powers which he never had at all.

In the great work of the new birth, the Holy Spirit first of all awakens the mental powers; for be it remembered that, the Holy Spirit never gives any man new mental powers. Take for instance reason--the Holy Spirit does not give men reason, for they have reason prior to their conversion. What the Holy Spirit does is to teach our reason, right reason--to set our reason in the right track, so that he can use it for the high purpose of discerning between good and evil; between the precious and vile. The Holy Spirit does not give man a will, for man has a will before; but he makes the will that was in bondage to Satan free to the service of God. The Holy Spirit gives no man the power to think, or the organ of belief--for man has power to believe or think as far as the mental act is concerned; but he gives that belief which is already there a tendency to believe the right thing, and he gives to the power of thought the propensity to think in the right way so that instead of thinking irregularly, we begin to think as God would have us think, and our mind desireth to walk in the steps of God's revealed truth There may be here, this morning, a man of enlarged

understanding in things political--but his understanding is darkened with regard to spiritual things--he sees no beauty in the person of Christ--he sees nothing desirable in the way of holiness--he chooses the evil and forsakes the good. Now the Holy Spirit will not give him a new understanding, but he will cleanse his old understanding so that he will discern between things that differ, and shall discover that it is but a poor thing to enjoy "the pleasures of sin for a season," and let go an "eternal weight of glory." There shall be a man here too who is desperately set against religion, and willeth not to come to God, and do what we will, we are not able to persuade him to change his mind and turn to God. The Holy Spirit will not make a new will in that man, but he will turn his old will, and instead of willing to do evil he will make him will to do right--he will make him will to be saved by Christ--he will make him "willing in the day of his power." Remember, there is no power in man so fallen but that the Holy Spirit can raise it up. However debased a man may be, in one instant, by the miraculous power of the Spirit, all his faculties may be cleansed and purged. Ill-judging reason may be made to judge rightly; stout, obstinate wills may be made to run willingly in the ways of God's commandments; evil and depraved affections may in an instant be turned to Christ, and old desires that are tainted with vice, may be replaced by heavenly aspirations. The work of the Spirit on the mind is the re-modelling of it; the new forming of it. He doth not bring new material to the mind--it is in another part of the man that he puts up a new structure--but he puts the mind that had fallen out of order into its proper shape. He builds up pillars that had fallen down, and erects the palaces that had crumbled to the earth. This is the first work of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of man.

Besides this, the Holy Spirit gives to men powers which they never had

before. According to Scripture, I believe man is constituted in a three-fold manner. He has a body; by the Holy Spirit that body is made the temple of the Lord. He has a mind; by the Holy Spirit that mind is made like an altar in the temple. But man by nature is nothing higher than that; he is mere body and soul. When the Spirit comes, he breathes into him a third higher principle which we call the spirit. The apostle describes man as man, "body, soul and spirit." Now if you search all the mental writers through, you will find they all declare there are only two parts--body and mind; and they are quite right, for they deal with unregenerate man; but in regenerate man there is a third principle as much superior to mere mind as mind is superior to dead animal matter--that third principle is that with which a man prays; it is that with which he lovingly believes; or rather it is that which compels the mind to perform their acts. It is that which, operating upon the mind, makes the same use of the mind as the mind does of the body. When, after desiring to walk I make my legs move, it is my mind that compels them; and so my Spirit, when I desire to pray, compels my mind to think the thought of prayer and compels my soul also, if I desire to praise, to think the thought of praise, and lift itself upward towards God. As the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the Spirit is dead, and one work of the Spirit is to quicken the dead soul by breathing into it the firing Spirit; as it is written, "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, but the second Adam was made a quickening Spirit"--and, "as we have borne the image of the earthy, so must we bear the image of the heavenly;" that is, we must have in us, if we would be converted, the quickening Spirit, which is put into us by God the Holy Ghost. I say again, the spirit has powers which the mind never has. It has the power of communion with Christ, which to a degree is a mental act, but it can no more be performed by man without the Spirit,

than the act of walking could be performed by man, if he were destitute of a soul to suggest the idea of walking. The Spirit suggests the thoughts of communion which the mind obeys and carries out. Nay, there are times, I think, when the spirit leaves the mind altogether, times when we forget everything of earth and one almost ceases to think, to reason, to judge, to weigh, or to will. Our souls are like the chariots of Amminadib, drawn swiftly onwards without any powers of volition. We lean upon the breast of Jesus, and in rhapsody divine, and in ecstasy celestial, we enjoy the fruits of the land of the blessed, and pluck the clusters of Eschol before entering into the land of promise.

I think I have clearly put these two points before you. The work of the Spirit consists, first, in awakening powers already possessed by man, but which were asleep and out of order; and in the next place in putting into man powers which he had not before. And to make this simple to the humblest mind, let me suppose man to be something like a machine; all the wheels are out of order, the cogs do not strike upon each other, the wheels do not turn regularly, the rods will not act, the order is gone. Now, the first work of the Spirit is to put these wheels in the right place, to fit the wheels upon the axles, to put the right axle to the right wheel, then to put wheel to wheel, so that they may act upon each other. But that is not all his work. The next thing is to put fire and steam so that these things shall go to work. He does not put fresh wheels, he puts old wheels into order, and then he puts the motive power which is to move the whole. First he puts our mental powers into their proper order and condition, and then he puts a living quickening spirit, so that all these shall move according to the holy will and law of God.

But, mark you, this is not all the Holy Spirit does. For if he were to do this, and then leave us, none of us would get to heaven. If any of

you should be so near to heaven that you could hear the angels singing over the walls--if you could almost see within the pearly gates still, if the Holy Spirit did not help you the last step, you would never enter there. All the work is through his divine operation. Hence it is the Spirit who keeps the wheels in motion, and who tales away that defilement which, naturally engendered by our original sin, falls upon the machine and puts it out of order. He takes this away, and keeps the machine constantly going without injury, until at last he removes man from the place of defilement to the land of the blessed, a perfect creature, as perfect as he was when he came from the mould of his Maker.

And I must say, before I leave this point, that all the former part of what I have mentioned is done instantaneously. When a man is converted to God, it is done in a moment. Regeneration is an instantaneous work. Conversion to God, the fruit of regeneration, occupies all our life, but regeneration itself is effected in an instant. A man hates God; the Holy Spirit makes him love God. A man is opposed to Christ, he hates his gospel, does not understand it and will not receive it: the Holy Spirit comes, puts light into his darkened understanding, takes the chain from his bandaged will, gives liberty to his conscience, gives life to his dead soul, so that the voice of conscience is heard, and the man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. And all this is done, mark you, by the instantaneous supernatural influence of God the Holy Ghost working as he willeth among the sons of men.

II. Having thus dwelt upon the method of the Holy Spirit's work, I shall now turn to the second point, THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN ORDER TO CONVERSION. In our text we are told that "while Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Beloved, the Holy Ghost fell on Peter first, or else

it would not have fallen on his hearers. There is a necessity that the preacher himself, if we are to have souls saved, should be under the influence of the Spirit. I have constantly made it my prayer that I might be guided by the Spirit even in the smallest and least important parts of the service; for you cannot tell but that the salvation of a soul may depend upon the reading of a hymn, or upon the selection of a chapter. Two persons have joined our church and made a profession of being converted simply through my reading a hymn--

"Jesus, lover of my soul"

They did not remember anything else in the hymn, but those words made such a deep impression upon their mind, that they could not help repeating them for days afterwards, and then the thought arose, "Do I love Jesus?" And then they considered what strange ingratitude it was that he should be the lover of their souls, and yet they should not love him. Now I believe the Holy Spirit led me to read that hymn. And many persons have been converted by some striking saying of the preacher. But why was it the preacher uttered that saying? Simply because he was led thereunto by the Holy Spirit. Rest assured, beloved, that when any part of the sermon is blessed to your heart, the minister said it because he was ordered to say it by his Master. I might preach to-day a sermon which I preached on Friday, and which was useful then, and there might be no good whatever come from it now, because it might not be the sermon which the Holy Ghost would have delivered to-day. But if with sincerity of heart I have sought God's guidance in selecting the topic, and he rests upon me in the preaching of the Word, there is no fear but that it shall be found adapted to your immediate wants. The Holy Spirit must rest upon your preachers. Let them have all the learning of the wisest men, and all the eloquence of such men as Desmosthenes and Cicero, still the Word cannot be blessed to you,

unless first of all the Spirit of God hath guided the minister's mind in the selection of his subject, and in the discussion of it.

But if Peter himself were under the hand of the Spirit, that would fail unless the Spirit of God, then, did fall upon our hearers; and I shall endeavor now to show the absolute necessity of the Spirit's work in the conversion of men.

Let us remember what kind of thing the work is, and we shall see that other means are altogether out of the question. It is quite certain that men cannot be converted by physical means. The Church of Rome thought that she could convert men by means of armies; so she invaded countries, and threatened them with war and bloodshed unless they would repent and embrace her religion. However, it availed but little, and men were prepared to die rather than leave their faith; she therefore tried those beautiful things--stakes, racks, dungeons, axes, swords, fire; and by these things she hoped to convert men. You have heard of the man who tried to wind up his watch with a pick-axe. That man was extremely wise, compared with the man who thought to touch mind through matter. All the machines you like to invent cannot touch mind. Talk about tying angel's wings with green withes, or manacling the cherubim with iron chains, and then talk about meddling with the minds of men through physical means. Why, the things don't set; they cannot act. All the king's armies that ever were, and all the warriors clothed with mail, with all their ammunition, could never touch the mind of man. That is an impregnable castle which is not to be reached by physical agency.

Nor, again, can man be converted by moral argument. "Well," says one, "I think he may. Let a minister preach earnestly, and he may persuade men to be converted." Ah! beloved, it is for want of knowing better that you say so. Melancthon thought so, but you know what he said after

he tried it--"Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon." So will every preacher find it, if he thinks his arguments can ever convert man. Let me give you a parallel case. Where is the logic that can persuade an Ethiopian to change his skin? By what argument can you induce a leopard to renounce his spots? Even so may he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well. But if the Ethiopian's skin be changed it must be by a supernatural process. and if the leopard's spots be removed, he that made the leopard must do it. Even so is it with the heart of man. If sin were a thing ab extra and external, we could induce man to change it. For instance, you may induce a man to leave off drunkenness or swearing, because those things are not a part of his nature--he has added that vice to his original depravity. But the hidden evil at the heart is beyond all moralsuasion. I dare say a man might have enough argument to induce him to hang himself, but I am certain no argument will ever induce him to hang his sins, to hang his self-righteousness, and to come and humble himself at the foot of the cross; for the religion of Christ is so contrary to all the propensities of man, that it is like swimming against the stream to approach it, for the stream of man's will and man's desire is exactly the opposite of the religion of Jesus Christ. If you wanted a proof of that, at the lifting of my finger, there are thousands in this hall who would rise to prove it, for they would say, "I have found it so sir, in my experience; I hated religion as much as any men; I despised Christ, and his people, and I know not to this day how it is that I am what I am, unless it be the work of God." I have seen the tears run down a man's cheeks when he has come to me in order to be united to the church of Christ, and he has said, "Sir, I wonder how it is I am here to-day, if anyone had told me a year ago that I should think as I now think, and feel as I now feel, I should have called him a born fool for his

pains; I used to say I never would be one of those canting Methodists, I liked to spend my Sunday in pleasure, and I did not see why I was to be cooping myself up in the house of God listening to a man talk. I pray, sir? No, not I. I said the best providence in all the world was a good strong pair of hands, and to take care of what you got. If any man talked to me about religion, why I would slam the door in his face, and pretty soon put him out; but the things that I loved then, I now hate, and the things that then I hated, now I love, I cannot do or say enough to show how total is the change that has been wrought in me. It must have been the work of God; it could not have been wrought by me, I feel assured; it must be some one greater than myself, who could thus turn my heart." I think these two things are proofs that we want something more than nature, and since physical agency will not do, and mere moral suasion will never accomplish it, that there must be an absolute necessity for the Holy Spirit.

But again, if you will just think a minute what the work is, you will soon see that none but God can accomplish it. In the Holy Scripture, conversion is often spoken of as being a new creation. If you talk about creating yourselves, I should feel obliged if you would create a fly first. Create a gnat. create a grain of sand, and when you have created that, you may talk about creating a new heart. Both are alike, impossible, for creation is the work of God. But still, if you could create a grain of dust, or create even a world, it would not be half the miracle, for you must first find a thing which has created itself. Could that be? Suppose you had no existence, how could you create yourself? Nothing cannot produce anything. Now, how can man re-create himself. A man cannot create himself into a new condition, when he has no being in that condition, but is, as yet, a thing that is not.

Then, again, the work of creation is said to be like the resurrection.

"We are alive from the dead." Now, can the dead in the grave raise themselves. Let any minister who thinks he can convert souls, go and raise a corpse let him go and stand in one of the cemeteries, and bid the tombs open wide their mouths, and make room for those once buried there to awaken, and he will have to preach in vain. But if he could do it, that is not the miracle: it is for the dead to raise themselves, for an inaminate corpse to kindle in its own breast the spark of life anew. If the work be a resurrection, a creation, does it not strike you that it must be beyond the power of man? It must be wrought in him by no one less than God himself.

And there is yet one more consideration, and I shall have concluded this point. Beloved, even if man could save himself, I would have you recollect how averse he is to it? If we could make our hearers all willing, the battle would be accomplished. "Well," says one, "If I am willing to be saved, can I not be saved?" Assuredly you can, but the difficulty is, we cannot bring men to be willing. That shows, therefore, that there must be a constraint put upon their will. There must be an influence exerted upon them, which they have not in themselves, in order to make them willing in the day of God's power. And this is the glory of the Christian religion. The Christian religion has within its own bowels power to spread itself. We do not ask you to be willing first. We come and tell you the news, and we believe that the Spirit of God working with us, will make you willing. If the progress of the Christian religion depended upon the voluntary assent of mankind it would never go an inch further but because the Christian religion has within an omnipotent influence, constraining men to believe it, it is therefore that it is and must be triumphant, "till like a sea of glory it spreads from shore to shore."

III. Now I shall conclude by bringing one or two thoughts forward, with

regard to WHAT MUST BE DONE AT THIS TIME IN ORDER TO BRING DOWN THE HOLY SPIRIT. It is quite certain, beloved, if the Holy Spirit willed to do it, that every man, woman, and child in this place might be converted now. If God, the Sovereign Judge of all, would be pleased now to send out his Spirit, every inhabitant of this million-peopled city might be brought at once to turn unto the living God. Without instrumentality, without the preacher, without books, without anything, God has it in his power to convert men. We have known persons about their business, not thinking about religion at all, who have had a thought injected into their heart, and that thought has been the prolific mother of a thousand meditations. and through these meditations they have been brought to Christ. Without the aid of the minister, the Holy Spirit has thus worked, and to-day he is not restrained. There may be some men, great in infidelity, staunch in opposition to the cross of Christ, but, without asking their consent, the Holy Spirit can pull down the strong man, and make the mighty man bow himself. For when we talk of the Omnipotent God, there is nothing too great for him to do. But, beloved, God has been pleased to put great honor upon instrumentality; he could work without it if he pleased but he does not do so. However, this is the first thought I want to give you; if you would have the Holy Spirit exert himself in our midst, you must first of all look to him and not to instrumentality. When Jesus Christ preached, there were very few converted under him, and the reason was, because the Holy Spirit was not abundantly poured forth. He had the Holy Spirit without measure himself, but on others the Holy Spirit was not as yet poured out. Jesus Christ said, "Greater works than these shall ye do because I go to my Father, in order to send the Holy Spirit;" and recollect that those few who were converted under Christ's ministry, were not converted by him,

but by the Holy Spirit that rested upon him at that time. Jesus of Nazareth was anointed of the Holy Spirit. Now then, if Jesus Christ, the great founder of our religion, needed to be anointed of the Holy Spirit, how much more our ministers? And if God would always make the distinction even between his own Son as an instrument, and the Holy Spirit as the agent, how much more ought we to be careful to do that between poor puny men and the Holy Spirit? Never let us hear you say again, "So many persons were converted by So-and so." They were not. If converted they were not converted by man. Instrumentality is to be used, but the Spirit is to have the honor of it. Pay no more a superstitious reverence to man, think no more that God is tied to your plans, and to your agencies. Do not imagine that so many city missionaries, so much good will be done. Do not say, "So many preachers; so many sermons, so many souls saved." Do not say, "So many Bibles, so many tracts; so much good done." Not so, use these, but remember it is not in that proportion the blessing comes; it is, so much Holy Spirit, so many souls in-gathered.

And now another thought. If we would have the Spirit, beloved, we must each of us try to honor him. There are some chapels into which if you were to enter, you would never know there was a Holy Spirit. Mary Magdalen said of old, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," and the Christian might often say so, for there is nothing said about the Lord until they come to the end, and then there is just the benediction, or else you would not know that there were three persons in one God at all. Until our churches honor the Holy Spirit, we shall never see it abundantly manifested in our midst. Let the preacher always confess before he preaches that he relies upon the Holy Spirit. Let him burn his manuscript and depend upon the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit does not come to help him, let him

be still and let the people go home and pray that the Spirit will help him next Sunday.

And do you also, in the use of all your agencies, always honor the Spirit? We often begin our religious meetings without prayer; it is all wrong. We must honor the Spirit; unless we put him first, he will never make crowns for us to wear. He will get victories, but he will have the honor of them, and if we do not give to him the honor, he will never give to us the privilege and success. And best of all, if you would have the Holy Spirit, let us meet together earnestly to pray for him. Remember, the Holy Spirit will not come to us as a church, unless we seek him. "For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." We purpose during the coming week to hold meetings of special prayer, to supplicate for a revival of religion. On the Friday morning I opened the first prayer meeting at Trinity Chapel, Brixton; and, I think, at seven o'clock, we had as many as two hundred and fifty persons gathered together. It was a pleasant sight. During the hour, nine brethren prayed, one after the other; and I am sure there was the spirit of prayer there. Some persons present sent up their names, asking that we would offer special petitions for them; and I doubt not the prayers will be answered; At Park Street, on Monday morning, we shall have a prayer. meeting from eight to nine; then during the rest of the week there will be a prayer-meeting in the morning from seven to eight. On Monday evening we shall have the usual prayer-meeting at seven, when I hope there will be a large number attending. I find that my brother, Baptist Noel, has commenced morning and evening prayer-meetings, and they have done the same thing in Norwich and many provincial towns, where, without any pressure, the people are found willing to come. I certainly did not expect to see so many as two hundred and fifty persons at an early hour in the morning

meet together for prayer. I believe it was a good sign The Lord hath put prayer into their hearts and therefore they were willing to come, "Prove me now here, saith the Lord of host., and see if I do not pour you out a blessing so that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Let us meet and pray, and if God doth not hear us, it will be the first time he has broken his promise. Come, let us go up to the sanctuary; let us meet together in the house of the Lord, and offer solemn supplication; and I say again, if the Lord doth not make bare his arm in the sight of all the people, it will be the reverse of all his previous actions, it will be the contrary of all his promises, and contradictory to himself. We have only to try him, and the result is certain. In dependence on his Spirit, if we only meet for prayer, the Lord shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. O Lord, lift up thyself because of thine enemies; pluck thy right hand out of thy bosom, O Lord our God, for Christ's sake, Amen.

Chapter 37

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

A Sermon

(No. 202)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 27, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."--Acts 26:14.

HOW MARVELLOUS the condescension which induced the Saviour to take notice of such a wretch as Saul! Enthroned in the highest heavens, amidst the eternal melodies of the redeemed, and the seraphic sonnets of the cherubim and all the angelic hosts, it was strange that the Saviour should stoop himself from his dignity to speak to a persecutor. Engaged as he is both day and night in pleading the cause of his own church before his Father's throne, it is condescension indeed which could induce him, as it were, to suspend his intercessions, in order that he might speak personally to one who had sworn himself his enemy. And what grace was it that could lead the Saviour's heart to speak to such a man as Saul, who had breathed out threatenings against his church? Had he not haled men and women to prison; had he not compelled them in every synagogue to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ? and now Jesus himself must interpose to bring him to his senses! Ah, had it been a thunderbolt which quivered in its haste to reach the heart of man, we should not have marvelled, or had the lips of the Saviour been heaving with a curse we should not have been astonished. Had he not himself in his own lifetime cursed the persecutor? Did he not say,

whosoever shall offend one of the least of these my little ones, it here better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that be were cast in the sea? But now the man that is cursed by that language, is yet to be blessed by him whom he had persecuted; who though he had stained his hand in blood, and had now the commission in his hands to drag others to prison, though he had kept the clothes of those who had stoned Stephen, yet the Master, the King of heaven, must himself speak from the upper skies to bring him to feel the need of a Saviour, and to make him partaker of precious faith. I say this is marvellous condescension and matchless grace. But, beloved, when we come to recollect the Saviour's character it is but little wonderful that he should do this for he has done far more than this. Did he not in person leave the starry thrones of heaven, and come down to earth to suffer, and bleed and die? But when I think of Bethlehem's manger, of the cruel garden of Gethsemane, and the yet more shameful Calvary, I do not wonder that the Saviour should do any act of grace or condescension. That being done, what can be greater? If he hath stooped from heaven into hades, what greater stoop can he accomplish? If his own throne must be left empty, if his own crown must he relinquished, if his Godhead must be veiled in flesh, and the splendours of his deity clothed in the rags of manhood, what wonder, I say, that he should stoop to speak even to Saul of Tarsus, to bring his heart to himself? Beloved, some of us do not wonder either, for although we have not had greater grace than the apostle himself we have had no less. The Saviour did not speak out of heaven to us with a voice that others might hear, but he spoke with a voice that our conscience heard. We were not blood-thirsty, it may be, against his children, but we had sins both black and heinous; yet he stopped us. Not content with wooing us or with threatening us, not content with sending his ministers to us and

giving us his word to warn us of duty, be would come himself. And you and I, beloved, who have tasted of this grace, can say it was matchless love that saved Paul, but not love unexampled; for he hath saved us also, and made us partakers of the same grace.

I intend, this morning, to address myself more particularly to those who fear not the Lord Jesus Christ, but on the contrary, oppose him. I think I may be quite certain that I have none here who go the length of desiring to see the old persecution of the church revived. I do not think there is an Englishman, however much he may hate religion, who would wish to see the stake again in Smithfield, and the burning pile consuming the saints. There may be some who hate them as much, but still not in that fashion; the common sense of the age reviles against the gibbet, the sword, and the dungeon. The children of God, in this country at least, are quite safe from any political persecution of that kind, but it is highly probable that I have here this morning some who go to the full length of their tether, and who endeavor as much as lieth in them to provoke the Lord to anger by opposing his cause. You will perhaps recognize yourselves if I try to paint a picture. It is seldom that you ever go into the house of God, in fact you have a contempt for all the gatherings of the righteous; you have a notion that all saints are hypocrites, that all professors are cants, and you do not at times blush to say so. However, you have a wife, and that wife of yours has been impressed under the sound of the ministry; she loves to go to the house of God, and heaven and her heart alone know what grief and agony of mind you have caused her. How often have you taunted and jeered her on account of her profession! You cannot deny but that she is a better woman for it; you are obliged to confess that although she cannot go with you in all your sports and merriments, yet as far as she can go she is a loving and affectionate wife to you. If

any one should find fault with her, you would right manfully defend her character; but it is her religion that you hate; and it is but lately that you threatened to lock her up on Sunday. You say it is impossible for you to live in the house with her if she will go up to the house of God. Moreover there is a little child of yours, you had no objection to that child going to the Sunday-school, because she was out of your way on the Sunday when you were smoking your pipe in your shirt sleeves; you did not want to be bothered with your children, you said, and therefore you were glad to pack them off to the Sunday-school, but that child has had her heart touched; and you cannot help seeing that the religion of Christ is in her heart, therefore you do not like it, you love the child, but you would give anything if she were not what she is; you would give anything if you could crush the last spark of religion out of her. But perhaps I can put your case yet. You are a master; you occupy a respectable position, you have many men under you, you cannot bear a man to make a profession of religion. Other masters you know have said to their men, "Do as you like, so long as you are a good servant, I do not care about your religious views." But mayhap you are a little the reverse; although you would not turn a man away because of his religion you give him a jeer every now and then, and if you trip him up in a little fault, you say, "Ah! that is your religion, I suppose you learned that at chapel;" grieving the poor man's soul, while he endeavors as far as he can to discharge his duty to you. Or, you are a young man, employed in a warehouse or a shop, and there is one of your shopmates who has lately taken to religion, he is to be found on his knees in prayer--what fine fun you have made of him lately, haven't you? You and others have joined in like a pack of hounds after a poor hare and he being of rather a timid turn of mind, perhaps is silent before you, or if he speaks, the tear is in his eye,

because you have wounded his spirit. Now this is the selfsame spirit that kindled the firebrand of old; that stretched the saint upon the rack; that cut his body in pieces, and sent him to wander about in sheep skins and in goat skins. If I have not exactly hit your character yet, I may do it before I have done. I wish to address myself especially to those of you, who in word or deed or in any other manner, persecute the children of God; or if you do not like so hard a word as "persecute," laugh at them, opposing them, and endeavor to put an end to the good work in their hearts.

I shall in the name of Christ, first put the question to you, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" In the second place, I shall in Christ's name expostulate with you, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;" and then if God shall bless what is said to the touching of your heart, it may be that the Master shall give you a few words of comfort, as he did the apostle Paul, when he said, "Rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."

I. In the first place, then, we will consider THE QUESTION, WHICH JESUS CHRIST PUT OUT OF HEAVEN TO PAUL, has been put to you this morning. First, notice what a personal question it was, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" When I preach to you, I am obliged to address you all as an assembly; it is not possible for me, except on rare occasions, to single out an individual, and describe his character, although under the hand of the Spirit it is sometimes done; but in the main I am obliged to describe the character as a whole, and deal with it in the mass. But not so our Master; he did not say out of heaven. "Saul, why does the synagogue persecute me? Why do the Jews hate my religion?" No; it was put more pertinently than that--"Saul, Saul, why

persecutest thou me?" If it had been put in general terms, it would have glanced off from the heart of the apostle; it could have been like an arrow which had missed the mark, and barely grazed the skin of the man in whose heart it was intended to find a home; but when it came personally--"Why persecutest thou me?"--there was no getting off it. I pray the Lord to make the question personal to some of you. There be many of us here present who have had personal preaching to our souls. Do you not remember, dear brother in Christ, when you were first pricked in the heart, how personal the preacher was? I remember it well. It seemed to me that I was the only person in the whole place, as if a black wall were round about me, and I were shut in with the preacher, something like the prisoners at the Penitentiary, who each sit in their box and can see no one but the chaplain. I thought all he said was meant for me; I felt persuaded that some one knew my character, and had written to him and told him all, and that he had personally picked me out. Why, I thought he fixed his eyes on me; and I have reason to believe he did, but still he said he knew nothing about my case. Oh, that men would hear the word preached, and that God would so bless them in their hearing, that they might feel it to have a personal application to their own hearts.

But note again--the Apostle received some information as to the persecuted one. If you had asked Saul who it was he persecuted, he would have said, "Some poor fishermen, that had been setting up an impostor; I am determined to put them down. Why, who are they? They are the poorest of the world; the very scum and draff of society; if they were princes and kings we perhaps might let them have their opinion; but these poor miserable ignorant fellows, I do not see why they are to be allowed to carry out their infatuation, and I shall persecute them. Moreover, most of them are women I have been persecuting--poor ignorant

creatures. What right have they to set their judgment up above the priests? They have no right to have an opinion of their own, and therefore it is quite right for me to make them turn away from their foolish errors." But see in what a different light Jesus Christ puts it. He does not say, "Saul, Saul, why didst thou persecute Stephen?" or "Why art thou about to drag the people of Damascus to prisons?" No--"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Did you ever think of it in that light? You have got a poor man who works for you, who wears a fustian jacket. He is nobody. You may laugh at him. He will not tell anybody, or even if he does, you will not be called to book about it, because he is nobody. You dare not laugh so at a duke or an earl. You would mind your behavior if you were in such company as that; but because this is a poor man, you think you have a license given you to laugh at his religion. But remember, that beneath the fustian jacket there is Jesus Christ himself. Inasmuch as you have done this unto one of the least of his brethren, you have done it unto him. Has the thought ever struck you, that when you laughed you were laughing, not at him, but at his Master? Whether it struck you or not it is a great truth, that Jesus Christ takes all the injuries which are done to his people as if they had been done to him. You locked your wife out the other night, did you, because she would frequent the house of God? When she stood there shivering in the midnight air, or entreating you to let her in, if your eyes had been wide open, you would have seen the Lord of life and glory shivering there, and he might have said to you, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And then you would have seen it to have been a very much greater sin than you imagine it now to be. You laughed at a little child the other day, because the child sang its simple hymn, and evidently sang it from its heart. Did you know,--or if you did not know it then, know it now,--did you know that you were

laughing at Christ; that when you mocked her you were mocking her Master, and that Jesus Christ has set down that laugh in his great book, as an indignation done to his own real person. "Why persecutest thou me?" If ye could see Christ enthroned in heaven, reigning there in the splendours of his majesty, would ye laugh at him? If ye could see him sitting on his great throne coming to judge the world, would ye laugh at him? Oh! as all the rivers run into the sea, so all the streams of the churches suffering ran into Christ. If the clouds be full of rain they empty themselves upon the earth, and if the Christian's heart be full of woes it empties itself into the breast of Jesus. Jesus is the great reservoir of all his people's woes, and by laughing at his people you help to fill that reservoir to its brim. and one day will it burst in the fury of its might and the floods shall sweep you away, and the sand foundation upon which your house is builded shall give way, and then what shall ye do when ye shall stand before the face of him whose person ye have mocked and whose name ye have despised?

We will put the question in another way; it is a very reasonable one, and seems to demand an answer. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Saul," the Master might have said, "what have I done to hurt thee? When I was on earth did I say a word against thy character--did I damage thy reputation--did I injure thy person--did I ever grieve thee--did I ever say a hard word against thee? What hurt have I ever done thee? Why art thou so provoked against me? If I had been thy bitterest enemy, and had spit in thy face, thou couldest not have been more wroth with me than now. But why, man, wilt thou be angry against one who has never hurt thee--who has never done thee a displeasure? Oh! why persecutest thou me? Is there anything in my character that deserves it? Was I not pure, and holy, and separate from sinners? Did I

not go about doing good? I raised the dead, I healed the lepers. I fed the hungry. I clothed the naked; for which of these works dost thou hate me? Why persecutest thou me?" The question comes home to you in the same manner this morning. Ah! man, why dost thou persecute Christ? He puts it to thee. What hurt has he ever done thee? Has Christ ever despoiled you, robbed you, injured you in any way whatever? Has his gospel in any way whatever taken away the comforts of life from you, or done you any damage? You dare not say that. If it were the Mormonism of Joe Smith, I wonder not that you should persecute it, though, even then, you would have no right to do so, for that might take the wife of your bosom from you. If it were a filthy and lustful system that would undermine the foundations of society, you might think yourself right in persecuting it. But has Christ ever taught his disciples to rob you, to cheat you, to curse you? Does not his doctrine teach the very reverse, and are not his followers, when they are true to their Master and themselves, the very reverse of this? Why hate a man who has done you no injury? Why hate a religion that does not interfere with you? If you will not follow Christ yourself, how does it injure you to let others do so? You say it injures your family; prove it, sir. Has it injured your wife? Does she love you less than before? Is she less obedient? You dare not say that. Has it hurt your child? Is your child less reverent to his father because he fears God? Is he less fond of you because he loves his Redeemer best of all? In what respect has Christ ever hurt any of you? He has fed you with the bounties of his providence. The clothes you wear to-day are the gifts of his bounty. The breath in your nostrils he has preserved to you, and will you curse him for this? It was but the other day that an avenging angel seized the axe, and the Master said, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" And Jesus came and put his hand upon the auger's arm, and

said, "Stay, stay yet another year until I have digged about it and dunged it." Your life was spared by him, and you curse him for this; you blaspheme him because he has spared your life, and spend the breath which his own grace has given you, in cursing the God that allows you to breathe. You little know from how many dangers Christ in his providence protects you. You can little guess how numerous the mercies which, unseen by you, are poured into your lap every hour. And yet, for mercies innumerable, for grace that cannot be stopped by your iniquity, for love that cannot be overpowered by your injuries, do you curse the Saviour for all this? Base ingratitude! Truly, ye have hated him without a cause; ye have persecuted him, though he has loved you, and has done nought to injure you.

But let me picture the Master to you once more, and methinks you will never, never persecute him again, if you do but see him. Oh, if you could but see the Lord Jesus, you must love him; if you did but know his worth you could not hate him! He was more beautiful than all the sons of men. Persuasion sat upon his lips, as if all the bees of eloquence had brought their honey there, and made his mouth the hive. He spoke and so did he speak, that if a lion had heard him, it would have crouched and licked his feet. Oh, how roving was he in his tenderness! Remember that prayer of his when the iron was piercing his hand--"Father, forgive them." You never heard him, all his life long, once saying an angry word to those who persecuted him. He was reviled, but he reviled not again. Even when he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, he was dumb before his shearers, and he opened not his mouth. But though fairer than the sons of men, both in person and in character, yet he was the Man of Sorrows. Grief had ploughed his brow with her deepest furrows. His cheeks were sunken and hollow with agony. He had fasted many a day, and often had he thirsted. He toiled from

morning to night; then spent all night in prayer; then rose again to labour--and all this without reward--with no hope of getting anything from any man. He had no house, no home, no gold, no saver. Foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but he, the Son of Man, had not where to lay his head. He was the persecuted man, hunted by his enemies from place to place, with scarce a friend to help him. Oh, had ye seen him; had ye seen his loveliness and his misery united, had ye seen his kindness, and yet the cruelty of his enemies, your hearts must have melted--you would have said, "No, Jesus, I cannot persecute thee! No, I will stand between thee and the burning sunshine. If I cannot be thy disciple, yet at any rate I will not be thy opposer. If this cloak can shelter thee in thy midnight wrestlings, there it is; and if this waterpot can draw thee water from the well, I will let it down and thou shalt have enough; for if I love thee not, since thou art so poor, so sad and so good, I cannot hate thee. No, I will not persecute thee!" But though I feel certain, if you could see Christ, you must say this, yet have you really persecuted him in his disciples, in the members of his spiritual body, and I therefore put to you the question, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" God help you to answer that question, and the answer must be shame and confusion of face.

II. This shall bring me to the second point--EXPOSTULATION. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." There is a figure here; there is an allusion to the ox goad. When the ox was yoked for ploughing, if he did not move on in as sprightly a manner as was desired, the husbandman pricked him with a long rod that ended with an iron point. Very likely, as soon as the ox felt the goad, instead of going on, he struck out as hard as he could behind him. He kicked against the goad, sending the iron deep into his own flesh. Of course the husbandman who was guiding him kept his goad there still, and the more frequently the ox kicked,

the more he was hurt. But go he must. He was in the hand of man, who must and will rule the beast. It was just his own option to kick as long as he pleased, for he did no harm to his driver, but only to himself. You will see that there is a beauty in this figure, if I pull it to pieces, and ask you a question or two.

It is hard for you to kick against the goad; for, in the first place, you do not really accomplish your purpose. When the ox kicks against the goad it is to spite the husbandman for having goaded him onward; but instead of hurting the husbandman it hurts itself. And when you have persecuted Christ in order to stop the progress of his gospel, let me ask you, have you ever stopped it at all? No; and ten thousand like you would not be able to stop the mighty onward rush of the host of God's elect. If thou thickest, O man, that thou canst stop the progress of Christ's church, go thou and first bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and bid the universe stand still instead of circling round those fair stars! Go, stand by the winds, and bid them cease their wailing, or take thy station upon a hoary cliff, and bid the roaring sea roll back when its tide is marching on the beach; and when thou hast stopped the universe, when sun, moon, and stars have been obedient to thy mandate, when the sea hath heard thee and obeyed thee, then come forth and stop the omnipotent progress of the church of Christ. But thou canst not do it. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." But what said the Almighty? He did not even get up to combat with them. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." The church cares not for all the noise of the

world. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though waters thereof roar, and be troubled, and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Ah, in your hosts ye have not prevailed, and think ye, O puny man, that one by one, ye shall be able to conquer? Your wish may be strong enough, but your wish can never be accomplished. You may desire it anxiously, but you shall never attain thereto.

But put it as a personal matter, have you ever succeeded in stopping the work of grace in the heart of any one? You tried to laugh it out of your wife, but if she really was converted, you never would laugh it out of her. You may have tried to vex your little child; but if grace be in that child, I defy you and your master the devil to get it out.

Ay, young man, you may laugh at your shopmate, but he will beat you in the long run. He may sometimes be abashed, but you never will turn him. If he is a hypocrite you will, and perhaps there will be no great loss, but if he be a true soldier of Christ, he can bear a great deal more than the laugh of an emptyheaded being like yourself. You need not for a moment flatter yourself that he will be afraid of you. He will have to endure a greater baptism of suffering than that, and he will not be cowed by the first shower of your poor, pitiful, malicious folly. And as for you, sir merchant, you may persecute your man, but see if you will get him to yield. Why, I know a man whose master had tried very hard to make him go against his conscience; but he said, "No, sir." And the master thought, "Well, he is a very valuable servant; but I will beat him if I can." So he threatened that if he did not do as he wished he would turn him away. The man was dependent on his master. and he knew not what he should do for his daily bread. So he said to his master honestly at once, "Sir, I don't know of any other situation, I

should be very sorry to leave you, for I have been very comfortable. but if it comes to that, sir, I would sooner starve than submit my conscience to any one." The man left, and the master had to go after him to bring him back again. And so it will be in every case. If Christians are but faithful they must win the day. It is no use your kicking against them; you cannot hurt them. They must, they shall be conquerors through him that hath loved them.

But there is another way of putting it. When the ox kicked against the goad, he got no good by it. Kick as he might, he was never benefited by it. If the ox had stopped and nibbled a blade of grass or a piece of hay, why, then he would have been wise, perhaps, in standing still. but to stand still simply to be goaded and to kick, simply to have iron stuck into your flesh, is a rather foolish thing. Now, I ask you, what have you ever got by opposing Christ? Suppose you say you don't like religion, what have you ever got by hating it? I will tell you what you have got. You have got those red eyes sometimes on the Monday morning, after the drunkenness of the Sunday night. I will tell you what you have got, young man. You have got that shattered constitution, which, even if you had now turned it to the paths of virtue, must hang about you till you leave it in your grave. What have you got? Why, there are some of you who might have been respectable members of society, who have got that old broken hat, that old ragged coat, that drunken, slouched manner about you, and that character that you would like to let down and run away from, for it is no good to you. That is what you have got by opposing Christ. What have you got by opposing him? Why, a house without furniture--for through your drunkenness you have had to sell everything of value you had. You have got your children in rags. and your wife in misery, and your eldest daughter, perhaps, running into shame, and your son rising up to curse the Saviour, as you

yourself have done. What have you got by opposing Christ! What man in all the world ever got anything by it? There is a serious loss sustained, but as for gain, there is nothing of the sort.

But you say, though you have opposed Christ, still you are moral. Again I will put it to you--Have you ever got anything even then by opposing Christ? Has it made your family any the happier, do you think? Has it made you any the happier yourself? Do you feel after you have been laughing at your wife, or your child or your man, that you can sleep any the sounder? Do you feel that to be a thing which will quiet your conscience when you come to die? Remember, you must die; and do you think that when you are dying, it will afford you any consolation to think that you did your best to destroy the souls of other people? No. you must confess it is a poor game. You are getting no good by it, but you are doing yourself a positive injury. Ah, drunkard, go on with your drunkenness, remember that every drunken fit leaves a plague behind it--that you will have to feel one day. It is pleasant to sin to-day, but it will not be pleasant to reap the harvest of it tomorrow the seeds of sin are sweet when we sow them, but the fruit is frightfully bitter when we come to house it at last. The wine of sin tasteth sweet when it goeth down, but it is as gall and vinegar in the bowels. Take heed, ye that hate Christ and oppose his gospel for as certainly as the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and his religion is true, you are heaping on your head a load of injury, instead of deriving good. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

But kick as the ox might, it had to go forward at last. We have seen a horse stand still in the street, and the driver, who had not very much patience with him, has so belaboured him, that we wondered how the poor horse could stand still under such a torrent of blows; but we have

observed at last that the horse is obliged to go on, and we wondered what he got by standing still. It is just the same with you. If the Lord means to make a Christian out of you, you may kick against Christianity, but he will have you at last. If Jesus Christ intends your salvation you may curse him, but he will make you preach his gospel one day, if he likes to do so. Ah, if Christ had willed it, Voltaire who cursed him, might have made a second apostle Paul. He could not have resisted sovereign grace, if Christ had so determined. If anyone had told the apostle Paul when he was going to Damascus, that he would one day become a preacher of Christianity, he would no doubt, have laughed at it as ridiculous nonsense; but the Lord had the key of his will, and he wound it up as he pleased. And so it will be with you--if he has determined to have you as one of his followers--

"If, as the eternal mandate ran
Almighty grace arrest that man,"--

Almighty grace will arrest you; and the bloodiest of persecutors will be made the boldest of saints. Then why persecutest thou me? Perhaps you are despising the very Saviour you will one day love; trying to knock down the very thing that you will one day try to build up. Mayhap you are persecuting the men you will call your brothers and sisters. It is always well for a man not to go so far that he cannot go back respectably. Now do not go too far in opposing Christ. for one of these times it may be you will be very glad to come crouching at his feet. But there is this sad reflection, if Christ does not save you, still you must go on. You may kick against the pricks, but you cannot get away from his dominion; you may kick against Christ, but you cannot cast him from his throne, you cannot drag him out of heaven. You may kick against him, but you cannot prevent his condemning you at last. You may laugh at him, but you cannot laugh away the day of judgment.

You may scoff at religion; but all your scoffs cannot put it out. You may jeer at heaven; but all your jeers will not take one single note from the harps of the redeemed. No, the thing is just the same as if you did not kick; it makes no difference except to yourself: Oh how foolish must you be, to persevere in a rebellion which is harmful to none but your own soul, which is not injurious to him whom you hate, but which, if he pleases, he can stop, or if he doth not stop, he can and will revenge.

III. And now I close up by addressing myself to some here, whose hearts are already touched. Do you this morning feel your need of a Saviour? Are you conscious of your guilt in having opposed him, and has the Holy Spirit made you willing now to confess your sins? Are you saying! "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner?" Then I have GOOD NEWS for you. Paul, who persecuted Christ, was forgiven. He says he was the very chief of sinners, but he obtained mercy. So shall you. Nay, more, Paul not only obtained mercy, he obtained honor. He was made an honored minister to preach the gospel of Christ, and so may you. Yes if thou repentest, Christ may make use of you to bring others to him. It strikes me with wonder when I see how many of the very greatest of sinners have become the most useful of men. Do you see John Bunyan yonder? He is cursing God. He goes into the belfry and pulls the bell on Sunday, because he likes the bellringing, but when the church door is open, he is playing bowls upon the village green. There is the village tap, and there is no one that laughs so loud there as John Bunyan. There are some people going to the meeting house; there is no one curses them so much as John. He is a ringleader in all vice. If there is a hen roost to be robbed, Jack's your man. If there is any iniquity to be done, if there be any evil in the parish, you need not guess twice, John Bunyan is at the bottom of it. But who is it stands

there in the deck before the magistrate? Who is it I heard just now--"If you let me out of prison today, I will preach the gospel tomorrow, by the help of God?" Who was it that lay twelve years in prison, and when they said he might go out if he would promise not to preach, replied, "No, I will be here till the moss grows on mine eyelids, but I must and will preach God's gospel as soon as I have liberty?" Why, that is John Bunyan, the very man who cursed Christ the other day. A ringleader in vice has become the glorious dreamer, the very leader of God's hosts. See, what God did for him, and what God did for him he will do for you, if now you repent and seek the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

"He is able, he is willing, doubt no more."

Oh! I trust I have some here who have hated God, but who are nevertheless God's elect; some that have despised him, but who are bought with blood; some that have kicked against the pricks, but yet almighty grace will bring them onward. There are some here, I doubt not, who have cursed God to his face, who shall one day sing hallelujahs before his throne; some that have indulged in lusts all but bestial, who shall one day wear the white robe, and move their fingers along the golden harps of the glorified spirits in heaven. Happy is it to have such a gospel to preach to such sinners! To the persecutor, Christ is preached. Come to Jesus whom thou hast persecuted.

"Come, and welcome, sinner, come."

And now bear with me one moment if I address you yet again. The probability stares me in the face that I may have but very few more opportunities of addressing you upon subjects that concern your soul. My hearer, I shall arrogate nothing to myself, but this one thing--"I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God," and God is my witness with how many sighs, and tears, and prayers, I have labored for

your good. Out of this place I believe thousands have been called; among you whom I now see there is a large number of converted persons; according to your own testimony you have had a thorough change, and you are not now what you were. But I am conscious of this fact, that there are many of you who have attended here now almost these two years, who are just what you were when you first came. There are some of you whose hearts are not touched. You sometimes weep, but still your lives have never been changed; you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." Well, sirs, if I never address you again, there is one favor that I would crave of you. If you will not turn to God, if you are determined to be lost, if you will not hear my rebuke nor turn at my exhortation, I ask this one favor at least let me know, and let me have this confidence, that I am clear of your blood. I think you must confess this. I have not shunned to preach of hell with all its horrors, until I have been laughed at, as if I always preached upon it. I have not shunned to preach upon the most sweet and pleasing themes of the gospel, till I have feared lest I should make my preaching effeminate, instead of retaining the masculine vigor of a Boanerges. I have not shunned to preach the law; that great commandment has wrung in your ears, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." I have never feared the great, nor have I courted their smile; I have rebuked nobility as I would rebuke the peasantry, and to everyone of you I have dealt a portion of meat in due season. I know that this much can be said of me--"Here stands one that never feared the face of man yet;" and I hope never wilt. Amidst contumely, and rebuke, and reproach, I have sought to be faithful to you and to my God. If then, you will be damned, let me have this one thing as a consolation for your misery, when I shall think of so frightful a thought--that you are not damned for the want of calling after; you are

not lost for the want of weeping after, and not lost, let me add, for the want of praying after. In the name of him who shall judge the quick and dead according to my Gospel, and of him that shall come in the clouds of heaven, and by that fearful day when the pillars of this earth shall totter, and the heavens shall fall about your ears--by that day when "Depart, ye cursed," or "Come, ye blessed," must be the dread alternative, I charge you, lay these things to heart, and as I shall face my God to account for my honesty to you, and my faithfulness to him, so remember, you must stand before his bar, to give an account of how you heard, and how you acted after hearing; and woe unto you if, having been lifted up like Capernaum with privileges, you should be cast down like Sodom and Gomorrah, or lower still than they, because you repented not.

Oh! Master! turn sinners to thyself; for Jesus sake! Amen.

Chapter 38

The Sympathy of the Two Worlds

A Sermon

(No. 203)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 4, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"There is joy in the: presence of the angels of God over one sinner

that repenteth."--Luke15:10.

MAN'S HEART IS NEVER BIG ENOUGH to hold either its joys or its sorrows. You never heard of a man whose heart was exactly full of sorrow; for no sooner is it full, than it overflows. The first prompting of the soul is to tell its sorrow to another. The reason is, that our heart is not large enough to hold our grief; and we need to have another heart to receive a portion thereof It is even so with our joy. When the heart is full of joy, it always allows its joy to escape. It is like the fountain in the marketplace; whenever it is full it runs away in streams, and so soon as it ceases to overflow, you may be quite sure that it has ceased to be full. The only full heart is the overflowing heart. You know this, beloved, you have proved it to be true; for when your soul has been full of joy, you have first called together your own kindred and friends, and you have communicated to them the cause of your gladness; and when those vessels have been full even to the brim, you have been like the woman who borrowed empty vessels of her neighbors, for you have asked each of them to become partakers in your joy, and when the hearts of all your neighbors have been full, you have felt as if they were not large enough, and the whole world has been called upon to join in your praise. You bade the fathomless ocean drink

in your joy; you spoke to the trees and bade them clap their hands, while the mountains and hills were invoked by you to break forth into singing; the very stars of heaven seemed to look down upon you, and you bade them sing for you, and all the world was full of music through the music that was in your heart. And, after all, what is man but the great musician of the world? The universe is a great organ with mighty pipes. Space, time, eternity, are like the throats of this great organ; and man, a little creature, puts his fingers on the keys, and wakes the universe to thunders of harmony, stirring up the whole creation to mightiest acclamations of praise. Know ye not that man is God's high priest in the universe? All things else are but the sacrifice; but he is the priest,--carrying in his heart the fire, and in his hand the wood, and in his mouth the two-edged sword of dedication, with which he offers up all things to God.

But I have no doubt, beloved, the thought has sometimes struck us that out praise does not go far enough. We seem as if we dwelt in an isle cut off from the mainland. This world, like a fair planet, swims in a sea of ether unnavigated by mortal ship. We have sometimes thought that surely our praise was confined to the shores of this poor narrow world, that it was impossible for us to pull the ropes which might ring the bells of heaven, that we could by no means whatever reach our hands so high as to sweep the celestial chords of angelic harps. We have said to ourselves there is no connection between earth and heaven. A huge black wall divides us. A strait of unnavigable waters shuts us out. Our prayers cannot reach to heaven, neither can our praises affect the celestials. Let us learn from our text how mistaken we are. We are, after all, however much we seem to be shut out from heaven, and from the great universe, but a province of God's vast united empire, and what is done on earth is known in heaven; what is sung on earth is sung

in heaven; and there is a sense in which it is true that the tears of earth are wept again in paradise, and the sorrows of mankind are felt again, even on the throne of the Most High.

My text tells us, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." It seems as if it showed me a bridge by which I might cross over into eternity. It doth, as it were, exhibit to me, certain magnetic wires which convey the intelligence of what is done here to spirits in another world. It teaches me that there is a real and wonderful connection between this lower world, and that which is beyond the skies, where God dwelleth, in the land of the happy.

We shall talk about that subject a little this morning. My first head will be the sympathy of the world above with the world below; the second, the judgment of the angels--they rejoice over repenting sinners; we shall see what is their ground for so doing. The third, will be a lesson for the saints; if the angels in heaven rejoice over repenting sinners, so should we.

I. In the first place, our text teaches us THE SYMPATHY OF THE TWO WORLDS. Imagine not, O son of man, that thou art cut off from heaven: for there is a ladder, the top whereof doth rest at the foot of the throne of the Almighty, the base whereof is fixed in the lowest place of man's misery! Conceive not that there is a great gulph fixed between thee and the Father, across which his mercy cannot come, and over which thy prayers and faith can never leap. Oh, think not, son of man, that thou dwellest in a storm-girt island, cut off from the continent of eternity. I beseech thee, believe that there is a bridge across that chasm, a road along which feet may travel. This world is not separated, for all creation is but one body. And know thou, O son of man, though thou in this world doth but dwell, as it were on the foot, yet from the feet even to the head, there are nerves and veins that do unite the

whole, The same great heart which beats in heaven beats on earth. The love of the Eternal Father which cheers the celestial, makes glad the terrestrial too. Rest assured that though the glory of the celestial be one and the glory of the terrestrial be another, yet are they but another in appearance, for after all, they are the same Oh! list thee, son of man, and thou wilt soon learn that thou art no stranger in a strange land--a homeless Joseph in the land of Egypt, shut out from his Father, and his children, who still remain in the happy paradise of Canaan. No, thy Father loves thee still. There is a connection between thee and him. Strange that though leagues of distance lie between the finite creature and the infinite Creator, yet there are links that unite us both! When a tear is wept by thee, think not thy Father doth not behold; for, "Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Thy sigh is able to move the heart of Jehovah; thy whisper can incline his ear unto thee; thy prayer can stay his hands; thy faith can move his arm. Oh! think not that God sits on high in an eternal slumber, taking no account of thee. "Shall a mother forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Engraven upon the Father's hand thy name remains; and on his heart recorded there thy person stands. He thought of thee before the worlds were made; before the channels of the sea were scooped, or the gigantic mountains lifted their heads in the white clouds, he thought of thee. He thinketh on thee still. "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro in every place, to show himself strong on the behalf of all them that fear him. Thou art not cut off from him. Thou dost move in him; in him thou dost live and have thy being. "He is a very present help in time of trouble."

Remember, again, O heir of immortality, that thou art not only linked to the Godhead, but there is another one in heaven with whom thou hast a strange, yet near connection. In the center of the throne sits one who is thy brother, allied to thee by blood. The Son of God, eternal, equal with his Father, became in the fullness of time the Son of Mary, an infant of a span long. He was, yea is, bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh. Think not that thou art cut off from the celestial world, while he is there; for is he not thy head, and hath he not himself declared that thou art a member of his body, of his flesh and of his bones? Oh, man, thou art not separated from heaven whilst Jesus tells thee--

"I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
For thou art most near me, my flesh and my bones,
In all thy distresses, thy Head feels the pain,
They all are most needful, not one is in vain."

Oh, poor, disconsolate mourner, Christ remembers thee every hour. Thy sighs are his sighs; thy groans are his groans; thy prayers are his prayers:--

"He in his measure feels afresh,
What every member bears."

Crucified he is when thou art crucified; he dies when thou diest; thou livest in him, and he lives in thee, and because he lives shalt thou live also: thou shalt rise in him, and thou shalt sit together in the heavenly places with him. Oh, never was husband nearer to his wife, and never head nearer to the members, and never soul nearer to the body of this flesh, than Christ is unto thee, and while it is so, think not that heaven and earth are divided. They are but kindred worlds; two ships moored close to one another, and one short plank of death will enable you to step from one into the other: this ship, all black and

coaly, having done the coasting trade, the dusty business of to-day, and being full of the blackness of sorrow; and that ship all golden, with its painted pennon flying, and its sail all spread, white as the down of the sea-bird, fair as the angel's wing--I tell thee, man, the ship of heaven is moored side by side with the ship of earth, and rock though this ship may, and careen though she will on stormy winds and tempests, yet the invisible and golden ship of heaven sails by her side never sundered, never divided, always ready, in order that when the hour shall come, thou mayest leap from the black, dark ship, and step upon the golden deck of that thrice happy one in which thou shalt sail for ever.

But, O man of God, there are other golden links besides this which bind the present to the future, and time unto eternity. And what are time and eternity, after all, to the believer, but like the Siamese twins, never to be separated? This earth is heaven below, the next world is but a heaven above; it is the same house--this is the lower room, and that the upper, but the same roof cover both, and the same dew falls upon each. Remember, beloved, that the spirits of the just made perfect are never far from you and me if we are lovers of Jesus. All those who have passed the flood have still communion with us. Do we not sing--

"The saints on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make;
All join in Christ, the living Head,
And of his grace partake."

We have but one Head for the church triumphant and for the church militant;

"One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of the host have cross'd the flood,

And part are crossing now."

Doth not the apostle tell us that the saints above are a cloud of witnesses? After he had mentioned Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Gideon, and Barak, and Jephthah, did he not say, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight." Lo, we are running in the plains, and the glorified ones are looking down upon us. Thy mother's eyes follow thee, young man; a father's eyes are looking down upon thee, young woman. The eyes of my godly grandmother, long since glorified, I doubt not, rest on me perpetually. No doubt, in heaven they often talk of us. Methinks they sometimes visit this poor earth--they never go out of heaven, it is true, for heaven is everywhere to them. This world is to them but just one corner of God's heaven, one shady bower of paradise.

The saints of the living God, are, I doubt not, very near unto us, when we think them very far away. At any rate, they still remember us, still look for us; for this is ever upon their hearts--the truth that they without us cannot be made perfect. They cannot be a perfect church till all are gathered in, and therefore do they long for our appearing.

But, to come to our text a little more minutely. It assures us that the angels have communion with us. Bright spirits, first-born sons of God, do ye think of me? Oh, cherubim, great and mighty; seraphim, burning, winged with lightning, do ye think of us? Gigantic is your stature. Our poet tells us that the wand of an angel might make a mast for some tall admiral; and doubtless he was right when he said so. Those angels of God are creatures mighty and strong, doing his commandments, hearkening to his word--and do they take notice of us? Let the Scripture answer, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those that shall be heirs of salvation?" "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him." "For he shall give his

angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Yes, the brightest angels are but the serving men of the saints; they are our lacqueys and our footmen. They wait upon us; they are the troops of our body guard; and we might, if our eyes were opened, see what Elisha saw, horses of fire and chariots of fire round about us; so that we should joyously say, "More are they that are with us than they that are against us."

Our text tells us that the angels of God rejoice over repenting sinners. How is that? They are always as happy as they can be; how can they be any happier? The text does not say that they are any happier; but perhaps that they show their happiness more. A man may have a Sabbath every day, as he ought to have if he be a Christian, and yet on the first day of the week he will let his Sabbatism come out plainly; for then the world shall see that he doth rest. "A merry heart hath a continual feast;" but then even the merry heart hath some special days on which it feasteth well. To the glorified every day is a Sabbath, but of some it can be said, "and that Sabbath was an high day." There are days when the angels sing more loudly than usual; they are always harping well God's praise, but sometimes the gathering hosts who have been flitting far through the universe, come home to their center; and round the throne of God, standing in serried ranks, marshalled not for battle but for music, on certain set and appointed days they chant the praises of the Son of God, "who loved us and gave himself for us." And do you ask me when those days occur? I tell you, the birthday of every Christian is a sonnet day in heaven. There are Christmas-days in paradise, where Christ's high mass is kept, and Christ is glorified not because he was born in a manger, but because he is born in a broken heart. There are days--good days in heaven; days of sonnet, red letter

days, of overflowing adoration. And these are days when the shepherd brings home the lost sheep upon his shoulder, when the church has swept her house and found the lost piece of money; for then are these friends and neighbors called together, and they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory over one sinner that repenteth.

I have thus, I hope, shown you that there is a greater connection between earth and heaven than any of us dreamed. And now let none of us think, when we look upward to the blue sky, that we are far from heaven; it is a very little distance from us. When the day comes we shall go post-haste there, even without horses and chariots of fire. Balaam called it a land that is very far off; we know better--it is a land that is very near. Even now

"By faith we join our hands
With those that went before.
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon the eternal shore."

All hail, bright spirits! I see you now. All hail, angels! All hail, ye brethren redeemed! A few more hours, or days, or months, and we shall join your happy throng; till then your joyous fellowship, your sweet compassion shall ever be our comfort and our consolation--and having weathered all storms of life, we shall at last anchor with you within the port of everlasting peace.

II. But the angels are said to sing whenever a sinner repents. Let us see if there is any JUDGMENT IN THEIR SONG, or whether they make a mistake. Why do angels sing over penitent sinners?

In the first place, I think it is because they remember the days of creation. You know, when God made this world, and fixed the beams of the heavens in sockets of light, the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy; as they saw star after star flying

abroad like sparks from the great anvil of Omnipotence, they began to sing; and every time they saw a new creature made upon this little earth, they praised afresh. When first they saw light they clapped their hands, and said, "Great is Jehovah; for he said Light be!' and light was." And when they saw sun and moon, and stars, again they clapped their hands, and they said, "He hath made great lights; for his mercy endureth for ever. The sun to rule the day; for his mercy endureth for ever. The moon to rule the night; for his mercy endureth for ever." And over everything he made, they chanted evermore that sweet song, "Creator, thou art to be magnified; for thy mercy endureth for ever." Now, when they see a sinner returning, they see the creation over again; for repentance is a new creation. No man ever repents until God makes in him a new heart and a right spirit. I do not know that ever since the day when God made the world, with the exception of new hearts, the angels have seen God make anything else. He may, if he hath so pleased, have made fresh worlds since that time. But perhaps the only instance of new creation they have ever seen since the first day, is the creation of a new heart and a right spirit within the breast of a poor penitent sinner. Therefore do they sing, because creation cometh over again.

I doubt not, too, that they sing because they behold God's works afresh shining in excellence. When God first made the world, he said of it, "It is very good"--he could not say so now. There are many of you that God could not say that of. He would have to say the very reverse. He would have to say, "No, that is very bad, for the trail of the serpent hath swept away thy beauty, that moral excellence which once dwelt in manhood has passed away;" but when the sweet influences of the Spirit bring men to repentance and faith again, God looks upon man, and he saith, "It is very good." For what his Spirit makes is like

himself--good, and holy and precious; and God smiles again over his twice-made creation, and saith once more, "It is very good." Then the angels begin again, and praise his name, whose works are always good and full of beauty.

But, beloved, the angels sing over sinners that repent, because they know what that poor sinner has escaped. You and I can never imagine all the depths of hell. Shut out from us by a black veil of darkness, we cannot tell the horrors of that dismal dungeon of lost souls. Happily, the wailings of the damned have never startled us, for a thousand tempests were but a maidens whisper, compared with one wail of a damned spirit. It is not possible for us to see the tortures of those souls who dwell eternally within an anguish that knows no alleviation. These eyes would become sightless balls of darkness if they were permitted for an instant to look into that ghastly shrine of torment. Hell is horrible, for we may say of it, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the horrors which God hath prepared for them that hate him. But the angels know better then you or I could guess. They know it; not that they have felt it, but they remember that day when Satan and his angels rebelled against God. They remember the day when the third part of the stars of heaven revolted against their liege Lord; and they have not forgotten how the red right hand of Jehovah Jesus was wrapt in thunder; they do not forget that breach in the battlements of heaven when, down from the greatest heights to the lowest depths, Lucifer and his hosts were hurled. they have never forgotten how, with sound of trumpet, they pursued the flying foe down to the gulphs of black despair; and, as they neared that place where the great serpent is to be bound in chains, they remember how they say, Tophet, which was prepared of old, the pile whereof is fire and much wood, and they recollect how, when

they winged back their flight, every tongue was silent, although they might well have shouted the praise of him who conquered Lucifer; but on them all there did sit a solemn awe of one who could smite a cherubim, and cast him in hopeless bonds of everlasting despair. They knew what hell was, for they had looked within its jaws, and seen their own brothers, fast enclosed within them; and, therefore, when they see a sinner saved, they rejoice, because there is one less to be food for the never-dying worm--one more soul escaped out of the mouth of the lion.

There is yet a better reason. The angels know what the joys of heaven are, and therefore, they rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. We talk about pearly gates and golden streets, and white robes, and harps of gold, and crowns of amaranth, and all that; but if an angel could speak to us of heaven, he would smile and say, "All these fine things are but child's talk, and ye are little children, and ye cannot understand the greatness of eternal bliss, and therefore God has given you a child's horn book, and an alphabet, in which you may learn the first rough letters of what heaven is, but what it is thou dost not know. O mortal, thine eye hath never yet beheld its splendours; thine ear hath never yet been ravished with its melodies; thy heart has never been transported with its peerless joys." Thou mayest talk and think, and guess, and dream, but thou canst never measure the infinite heaven which God has provided for his children: and therefore it is, when they see a soul saved and a sinner repenting, that they clap their hands; for they know that all those blessed mansions are theirs, since all those sweet places of everlasting happiness are the entail of every sinner that repenteth.

But I want you just to read the text again, while I dwell upon another thought. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one

sinner that repenteth." Now, why do they not save their joy till that sinner dies and goes to heaven? Why do they rejoice over him when he repents? My Arminian friend, I think, ought to go to heaven, to set them right upon this matter. According to his theory, it must be very wrong of them, because they rejoice prematurely. According to the Arminian doctrine a man may repent, and yet he may be lost, he may have grace to repent and believe, and yet he may fall from grace and be a castaway. Now, angels, don't be too fast. Perhaps you may have to repent of this one day, if the Arminian doctrine be true, I would advise you to save your song for greater joys. Why, angels, perhaps the men that you are singing over to-day, you will have to mourn over to-morrow. I am quite sure that Arminius never taught his doctrine in heaven. I do not know whether he is there--I hope he is, but he is no longer an Arminian; but if he ever taught his doctrine there, he would be put out. The reason why angels rejoice is because they know that when a sinner repents, he is absolutely saved; or else they would rejoice prematurely, and would have good cause for retracting their merriment on some future occasion. But the angels know what Christ meant when he said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;" and therefore they rejoice over repenting sinners, because they know they are saved.

There is yet one more fact I will mention, before I leave this point. It is said that the angels "rejoice over one sinner that repenteth." Now this evening it shall be my happy privilege to give the right hand of fellowship to no less than forty-eight sinners that have repented, and there will be great joy and rejoicing in our churches to-night, because these forty-eight have been immersed on a profession of their faith. But how loving are the angels to men; for they rejoice over one

sinner that repenteth. There she is, in that garret where the stars look between the tiles. There is a miserable bed in that room, with but one bit of covering, and she lieth there to die! Poor creature! many a night she has walked the streets in the time of her merriment. but now her joys are over; a foul disease, like a demon is devouring her heart! She is dying fast, and no one careth for her soul! But there, in that chamber, she turns her face to the wall, and she cries, "O thou that savedst Magdalene, save me; Lord I repent; have mercy upon me; I beseech thee." Did the bells ring in the street? Was the trumpet blown? Ah! no. Did men rejoice? Was there a sound of thanksgiving in the midst of the great congregation? No; no one heard it; for she died unseen.

But stay! There was one standing at her bedside, who noted well that tear; an angel, who had come down from heaven to watch over this stray sheep, and mark its return. and no sooner was her prayer uttered than he clapped his wings, and there was seen flying up to the pearly gates a spirit like a star. The heavenly guards came crowding to the gate, crying, "What news, O son of fire?" He said, "Tis done." "And what is done?" they said, "Why, she has repented." "What! she who was once a chief of sinners? has she turned to Christ?" "Tis even so," said he.

And then they told it through the streets, and the bells of heaven rang marriage peals, for Magdalene was saved, and she who had been the chief of sinners was turned unto the living God.

It was in another place. A poor neglected little boy in ragged clothing had run about the streets for many a-day. Tutored in crime, he was paving his path to the gallows; but one morning he passed by a humble room, where some men and women were sitting together teaching poor ragged children. He stepped in there a wild Bedouin of the streets; they talked to him, they told him about a soul and about an eternity--things he had never heard before; they spoke of Jesus, and of

good tidings of great joy to this poor friendless lad. He went another Sabbath. and another; his wild habits hanging about him, for he could not get rid of them; At last it happened that his teacher said to him one day, "Jesus Christ receiveth sinners." That little boy ran, but not home, for it was but a mockery to call it so--where a drunken father and a lascivious mother kept a hellish riot together. He ran, and under some dry arch, or in some wild unfrequented corner, he bent his little knees, and there he cried, that poor creature in his rags, "Lord save me, or I perish;" and the little Arab was on his knees--the little thief was saved! He said--

"Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly;"

And up from that old arch, from that forsaken hovel, there flew a spirit, glad to bear the news to heaven, that another heir of glory was born to God. I might picture many such scenes; but will each of you try to picture your own? You remember the occasion when the Lord met with you. Ah! little did you think what a commotion there was in heaven. If the Queen had ordered out all her soldiers, the angels of heaven would not have stopped to notice them; if all the princes of earth had marched in pageant through the streets, with all their robes, and jewellery, and crowns, and all their regalia, their chariots, and their horsemen--if the pomps of ancient monarchies had risen from the tomb--if all the might of Babylon and Tyre and Greece had been concentrated into one great parade, yet not an angel would have stopped in his course to smile at those poor tawdry things; but over you the vilest of the vile, the poorest of the poor, the most obscure and unknown--over you angelic wings were hovering, and concerning you it was said on earth and sung in heaven, "Hallelujah, for a child is born to God to-day."

III. And now I must conclude with this LESSON TO THIS SAINTS. I think

beloved, it will not be hard for you to learn. The angels of heaven rejoice over Sinners that repent: saints of God, will not you and I do the same? 1 do not think the church rejoices enough. We all grumble enough and groan enough: but very few of us rejoice enough. When we take a large number into the church it is spoken of as a great mercy; but is the greatness of that mercy appreciated? I will tell you who they are that can most appreciate the conversion of sinners. They are those that are just converted themselves, or those that have been great sinners themselves. Those who have been saved themselves from bondage, when they see others coming who have so lately worn the chains, are so glad that they can well take the tabret, and the harp, and the pipe, and the psaltery, and praise God that there are other prisoners who have been emancipated by grace. But there are others who can do this better still, and they are the parents and relations of those who are saved. You have thanked God many times when you have seen a sinner saved; but, mother did not you thank him most when you saw your son converted? Oh! those holy tears; they are not tears--they are God's diamonds--the tears of a mother's joy, when her son confesses his faith in Jesus. Oh! that glad countenance of the wife, when she sees her husband, long bestial and drunken at last made into a man and a Christian! Oh, that look of joy which a young Christian gives, when he sees his father converted who had long oppressed and persecuted him. I was preaching this week for a young minister, and being anxious to know his character, I spoke of him with apparent coolness to an estimable lady of his congregation. In a very few moments she began to warm in his favor. She said, "You must not say anything against him, sir; if you do, it is because you do not know him." " Oh," I said, "I knew him long before you did; he is not much, is he?" "Well,' she said, "I must speak well of him, for he has been a blessing to my servants and

family." I went out into the street, and saw some men and women standing about; so I said to them, "I must take your minister away" "If you do," they said, "we will follow you all over the world, if you take away a man who has done so much good to our souls."" After collecting the testimony of fifteen or sixteen witnesses, I said, "If the man gets such witnesses as these let him go on; the Lord has opened his mouth, and the devil will never be able to shut it." These are the witnesses we want--men who can sing with the angels because their own households are converted to God. I hope it may be so with all of you; and if any of you are yourselves brought to Christ to-day--for he is willing to receive you--you will go out of this place singing, and the angels will sing with you. There shall be joy in earth, and joy in heaven; on earth peace, and glory to God in the highest. The Lord bless you one and all, for Jesus' sake.

Chapter 39

The Mission of the Son of Man

A Sermon

(No. 204)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 11, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."--Luke 19:10.

HOW FOND OUR MASTER WAS of the sweet title, the "Son of Man!" If he had chosen, he might always have spoken of himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counseller, the Prince of Peace. He hath a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the throne of heaven, but he careth not to use them: to express his humility and let us see the lowliness of him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. He calls not himself the Son of God, but he speaks of himself evermore as the Son of Man who came down from heaven. Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Saviour; let us never court great titles, nor proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He that hath the most of them is a worm still, and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called himself the Son of Man, when he had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he that humbleth himself shall in due time be exalted. Methinks, however, there is a sweeter thought than this in that name, Son of Man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much, that he always desired to honor it; and since it is a high honor, and indeed the greatest dignity of manhood, that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, he is wont to display

this name, that he may as it were put rich stars upon the breast of manhood, and put a crown upon its head. Son of Man--whenever he said that word he seemed to put a halo round the head of Adam's children.

Yet there is perhaps a more lovely thought still. Jesus Christ called himself the Son of Man, because he loved to be a man. It was a great stoop for him to come from heaven and to be incarnate. It was a mighty stoop of condescension when he left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubims to mingle with the vulgar herd of his own creatures. But condescension though it was, he loved it. You will remember that when he became incarnate he did not become so in the dark. When he bringeth forth the only begotten into the world, he saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him." It was told in heaven; it was not done as a dark secret which Jesus Christ would do in the night that none might know it; but all the angels of God were brought to witness the advent of a Saviour a span long, sleeping upon a Virgin's breast, and lying in a manger. And ever afterwards, and even now, he never blushed to confess that he was man; never looked back upon his incarnation with the slightest regret; but always regarded it with a joyous recollection, thinking himself thrice happy that he had ever become the Son of Man. All hail, thou blessed Jesus! we know how much thou lovest our race; we can well understand the greatness of thy mercy towards thy chosen ones, inasmuch as thou art evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that they are bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh, and thou art one of them, a brother and a near kinsman.

Our text announces as a declaration of our Saviour, that he, the Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In addressing you this morning, I shall simply divide my discourse thus:--First, I shall lay it down as a selfevident truth, that whatever was the intention of Christ in his coming into the world that intention most certainly shall

never be frustrated. We shall then in the second place, look into the intention of Christ, as announced in the text, viz., "to seek and to save that which was lost." Then, in concluding, we shall derive a word of comfort, and perhaps one of warning, from the intention of our Saviour in coming into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost."

I. You are aware that there has been a very great discussion amongst all Christians about the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is one class of men who believe in what is called general redemption, affirming it to be an undoubted truth that Jesus Christ hath shed his blood for every man, and that the intention of Christ in his death was the salvation of men considered as a whole; they have, however, to overlook the fact that in this case Christ's intention would be frustrated in a measure. There are others of us who hold what is called the doctrine of particular redemption. We conceive that the blood of Christ was of an infinite value, but that the intention of the death of Christ never was the salvation of all men; for if Christ had designed the salvation of all men, we hold that all men would have been saved. We believe that the intention of Christ's death is just equal to its effects, and therefore I start this morning by announcing what I regard to be a self-evident truth, that whatever was the intention of Jesus Christ in coming into the world, that intention most certainly shall be fulfilled.

But I shall make use of a few arguments to strengthen this doctrine, although I believe that on the very first announcement it commends itself to every thinking mind.

In the first place, it seems to be inconsistent with the very idea of God that he should ever intend anything which should not be accomplished. When I look at man I see him to be a creature so

distracted with folly and so devoid of power, that I do not wonder that he often begins to build and is not able to finish, I do not marvel that full often he stops short because he hath not counted the cost: I wonder not, when I think how much there is that is above man's control, that he should sometimes propose but that God should dispose far differently from his proposition. I see man to be the insect of a day, a mere ephemera upon the bay-leaf of existence; and when I see him as a mere drop in the great sea of creation, I do not wonder that when he is ambitious he sometimes fashions in himself great designs which he is unable to accomplish because the wheels of providence and destiny will often run quite contrary to all the frolic of his will. But when I think of God whose name is, "I am that I am," the self-existent one, in whom we live and move and have our being, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Almighty God; when I think of him as filling immensity, having all power and strength, knowing all things, having a fullness of wisdom, I cannot associate with such an idea of God the supposition of his ever failing in any of his intentions. It would seem to me that a God who could intend a thing and fail in his intention would be no God, but be a thing like ourselves perhaps superior in strength, but certainly not entitled to worship. I cannot anyhow think of God of a true and real God like Jehovah, except as a being who wills and it is accomplished, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, for ever, settled in heaven. I cannot therefore imagine, since Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that in his atonement and redemption, his real intention and desire can in any way be frustrated. If I were a Socinian and believed Jesus Christ to be a mere man, I could of course imagine, that the result of his redemption would be uncertain; but believing that Jesus Christ was very God of very God, equal and co-eternal with the Father, I dare not, lest I should be

guilty of presumption and blasphemy, associate with that name of Jehovah Jesus any suspicion that the design of his death shall remain unaccomplished.

But again, we have before us the fact, that hitherto, all the works of God have accomplished their purpose. Whenever God has uttered, by the lips of his servants, a prophecy, it has surely come to pass. The instruments of accomplishing that purpose have often been the most factious and rebellious of men: they had no intention whatever of serving God; they have run contrary to his laws; but you will observe that when they have dashed wildly along, his bit has been still in their mouth and his bridle in their jaws. A great monarch has acted like leviathan in the sea; he hath moved himself wherever he pleased; he hath seemed mighty among the sons of men; all the rest of mankind were as minnows, while he was a huge leviathan: but we discover that God has been overruling his thought, that he has been in his council chamber, that the wildest speculations of his ambition have, after all, been but the fulfilling of Jehovah's stern decrees. Look ye abroad through all the nations of the earth, and tell me, is there one prophecy of God that hath failed? May he not still say, "Not one of them hath lost her mate?" Every word of God hath certainly been accomplished. The kings of the earth stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed saying, Let us break his bands asunder and cast his cords from us. But he that sitteth in the heavens did laugh at them; the Lord did have them in derision. Still he worked his own sovereign will; let them do as they pleased, God was over them all, reigning and ruling evermore. If, then, God's purpose in providence certainly never has been frustrated, am I to imagine that God's purpose in the glorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ shall be null and void? If there be any of you who have arrived at such a contortion

of intellect as to conceive that a less work being accomplished, a greater one shall fail, I must leave you to yourselves, with you I could not argue, I should think you incapable of an argument. Surely, if God the Master, the Judge, the King, hath in all things done according to his own pleasure in this lower world, in the mere creation and preservation of men, it is not to be dreamed of for a moment, that when he stoops himself from the highest heaven, to give his own heart's blood for our redemption, he shall in that be foiled. No though earth and hell be against him, every purpose of Jesus on the cross shall be consummated, and as the price was "finished," so shall the purchase be; as the means were fully provided, so shall the end be accomplished to its utmost jot and tittle.

But again, I invite you to stand at the foot of the cross, and take a view of Jesus Christ, and then I will put it to you whether you can imagine that Jesus Christ could in any measure have died in vain. Come, believer, place thyself in the garden of Gethsemane, hide thyself among those dark olives, and listen to yonder man who is in agony. Dost hear those groans? They are the groans of an incarnate God. Dost hear those sighs? They are the sighs of the Son of Man. God over all, blessed for ever. Hearest thou those strong cries, and dost thou see those tears? They are the crying and the tears of him who is equal with his Father, but who condescended to be a man. Rise, for he has risen, Judas has betrayed him and taken him away. Look on that ground. Seest thou those gouts of gore? It is the bloody sweat of the man Christ Jesus. I conjure thee, answer this question. Standing in the garden of Gethsemane, with those blood gouts staining the white frost of that cold midnight, canst thou believe that one of those clots of blood shall fall to the ground and not effect its purposed I challenge thee, O Christian, whatever thy doctrinal opinions, to say me "Yes" to such a

question as that. Canst thou imagine that a sweat of blood from the veins of incarnate Deity shall ever fall to the ground and fail? Why, beloved, the word of God which cometh forth out of his mouth shall not return unto him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases; how much more shall the Great WORD of God, which came forth from the loin; of Deity, accomplish the purpose whereunto God hath sent him, and prosper in the thing for which it pleased God to ordain him!

But now come with me to the hall of judgment. See there your Master placed in mock state in the midst of a ribald band of soldiery. Do you see how they spit on those blessed cheeks, how they pluck his hair, how they buffet him? Do you see the crown of thorns with its ruby drops of gore? Hark! Can you hear the cry of the multitude, as they say, "Crucify him, crucify him?" And will you now stand there and look at this man whom Pilate has just brought forth, still bleeding from the lash of the scourge, covered with shame, and spitting and mockery, and as this "Ecce Homo" is presented to you, will you believe that this, the incarnate Son of God, shall be made such a spectacle to men, to angels, and to devils, and yet fail of his design? Can you imagine that one lash of that whip shall have a fruitless aim? Shall Jesus Christ suffer this shame and spitting, and yet endure what were far worse--a disappointment in the fulfillment of his intentions? No, God forbid! By Gethsemane and Gabbatha, we are pledged to the strong belief that what Christ designed by his death, must certainly be accomplished.

Then again, see him hanging on his cross. The nails have pierced his hands and feet, and there in the broiling sun he hangs,--he hangs to die. The mockery has not ceased; still they put out the tongue and wag the head at him; still they taunt him with "If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross." And now his bodily pains increase, while his soul's anguish is terrible even unto death. Christian canst thou

believe that the blood of Christ was shed in vain? Canst thou look at one of those precious drops as it trickles from his head or his hands or his feet, and canst thou imagine that it shall fall to the ground and perish there? Trust the waters may fail from the sea, the sun may grow dim with age, but I never can imagine that the value, the merit, the power of the blood of Jesus ever shall die out, or that its purpose shall be unaccomplished. It seems to me as clear as noonday, that the design of the Saviour's death must certainly be fulfilled, be it what it may.

I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that his purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish his design of saving the lost, for he has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself. He certainly has no objection to the accomplishment of his own design, for "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." And certainly the Lord cannot fail for want of power, for where we have omnipotence there can be no deficiency of strength. Nor again, can the design be unaccomplished because it was unwise, for God's designs cannot be unwise, simply because they are of God--that is to say--they are of infinite wisdom. I cannot see anything in the character of Christ, nor anything the wide world over, that can for one moment make me imagine that Christ should die, and yet it should be said afterwards, "This man died for a purpose which he never lived to see accomplished: the object of his death was only partially fulfilled; he saw of the travail of his soul, but he was not satisfied, for he did not redeem all whom he intended to redeem."

Now, some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say it so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died

for all men; it commends itself, they say, to the instincts of humanity; there is something in it full of joy and beauty. I admit there is; but beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might well admire in the theory of universal redemption but let me just tell you what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on his cross intended to save every man, then he intended to save those who were damned before he died; because if the doctrine be true, that he died for all men, he died for some that were in hell before he came into this world, for doubtless there were myriads there that had been cast away. Once again, if it were Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has he been disappointed! for we have his own evidence that there is a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit must be cast some of the very persons, who according to that theory, were bought with his blood. That seems to me a thousand times more frightful than any of those horrors, which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of particular redemption. To think that my Saviour died for men in hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to imagine: that he was the substitute for the sons of men, and that God having first punished the substitute punished men again, seems to me to conflict with any idea of justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of men, and that afterwards those very men should be punished for the sins which Christ had already atoned for, seems to me, to be the most marvellous monstrosity that ever could have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, ay, to the god of the Thugs, or the most diabolical heathen demons. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the just and wise. If Christ has suffered in man's stead, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and save us from all unrighteousness.

II. I have thus started the first thought that the intention of

Christ's death cannot be frustrated. And now methinks every one will anxiously listen, and every ear will be attentive, and the question will arise from every heart, "WHAT THING WAS THE INTENTION OF THE Saviour'S DEATH? AND IS IT POSSIBLE: THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT?" For whom, then, did the Saviour die--and is there the slightest probability that I have some lot or portion in that great atonement which he has offered? Beloved, my text is the answer to the question--"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, our text tells us of two things--first, the subjects of the Saviour's atonement, the lost; and, secondly, the objects of it, he came to seek and save.

I must now endeavor to pick out the objects of the Saviour's atonement. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Some of you may turn your heads away at once, and conclude that hitherto you have given no evidence that you have any portion in the death of Christ. You are very good sort of people; you never did much that was wrong--perhaps a little now and then; but nothing particular ever troubles your conscience. You have a notion that you shall certainly enter into the kingdom of heaven, for you are no worse than your neighbors, and if you are not saved, God help other people! for if you do not go to heaven, who will? You are trusting in your own good works, and believing you are righteous. Now let us decide your case at once. Since you are ashamed to put yourselves among those who are lost, I have no Christ to preach to you till you are ready to come and confess that you are lost; for Christ himself tells us, that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" and inasmuch as you belong to the righteous, and trust in yourselves that you are good and excellent you may turn upon your heel and go, for in the blood of Christ there is no portion for men who live and die trusting in their own

self-righteousness.

But I may dismiss another part of you. Some of you are saying, "Well, sir, I know I am guilty, but still I am persuaded that by attention to the law of God in future, I shall certainly be able to take away the demerit of my guilt. I intend henceforward to reform, and I believe that by a consistent course of attention to religious ordinances, and by carefully regarding that which is right and wrong between God and man, and man and man, I shall, without doubt, make an atonement for the sins of the past." Ah, my friend, hitherto thou givest me no hope that thou had any portion in the death of Christ. Christ came not to die for men who can save themselves without him. If thou thinkest thou canst save thyself remember the door of mercy is shut in thy face. Christ came to bring robes from heaven, but not for you who can spin for yourselves. He came to bring bread for the hungry, but he will give none of it to you who can sow and reap, and make bread for yourselves. Christ helps the helpless, but they who can help themselves and have sufficient of their own strength and merit to carry them to heaven, may fight their way there alone, if they can--they shall have no help from him. Whom then did Christ die to save? It is said, he came to save "that which was lost."

Now, you must bear with me while I run over the different ways in which a man may be lost; and then I will conclude by noticing the term as it is used in the proper sense, when we may affirm that Christ died for such. We know that all men are lost in Adam; as soon as we are born into this world, we are lost, when the tiny bark of the infant is launched upon the river of life it is lost; unless Sovereign grace shall stretch forth its hand and save it in infancy, and carry it to heaven or save it afterwards, when it shall have grown up--that infant is lost. "Behold," saith David, "I was born in sin and shapen in

iniquity; in sin did my mother conceive me." "In Adam all die." The fall of Adam was the fall of the human race; then, you and I, and all of us fell down.

Again, we are all lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong, than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good. Early passions soon break out, like weeds immediately after the shower of rain; speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest and we grow up to sin and so we become lost by practice. But mark, a man may be lost in Adam, and lost by practice, and yet not be saved by Christ; but Christ is able to save you; though you be twice lost, his salvation is able to redeem you from death.

Then there be some who go further still. The deadly tree of sin grows taller and taller some become lost to the church. After having been trained up religiously in our Midst, they turn aside; they give up all outward regard to the worship of God, the ministry of the gospel is neglected, the house of prayer is forsaken, and the church tolls its bell and says of such an one, "He is lost to the church." Some go further still; they are lost to society. I have seen many who are dead while they live. We have in the midst of us the harlot and the drunkard, who, like the leper in the camp of Israel, have to be put away, lest the contagion should spread; and those who seek after right are obliged to turn away from them, lest the evil should spread in the midst of the flock. Now there are many who are lost to society whom Jesus Christ came to save, and whom he will save. But a man may be lost to society and may be lost everlastingly; it is no proof that Christ will save him, because he is thus lost, while at the same time it is no proof that he will not save him, for Christ came to save even men who are lost like this. Again, the man may go further, and be lost to the

family. We have known those who have become so vile, that even after society has shut them out, a parent has been obliged to shut then out too. That must be a hell of sin indeed which can make a father say to his son, "My son, you shall not want bread while I have any, but I must forbid you my house, for your brothers and sisters cannot endure your society; I feel you would destroy their souls if I should allow you to associate with them." Now, a man may be lost thus to his own family, and yet sovereign grace will save him. But, mark, a man may be lost to his family and yet not be saved; yea, that may be the increase of his condemnation, that he sinned against a mother's prayers and against a father's exhortations.

Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save--they are those who are lost to themselves. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm: the ship leaks, and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore, and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining; they seek to keep down the devouring element; they still think that they are not quite lost while they have power to use the pumps. At last they see the ship cannot be saved; they give it up for lost, and leap into the boats. The boats are beating for many a-day, full of men who have but little food to eat. "They are lost," we say, "lost out at sea." But they do not think so; they still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship in the horizon; they strain their eyes to look at her; they lift each other up; they wave a flag; they rend their garments to make something which shall attract attention; but she passes away; black night comes, and they are forgotten. At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed; strength fails them, and they lay down their oars in the boat, and lay themselves down to die. You can imagine then

how well they understand the awful meaning of the term--"lost." As long as they had any strength left they felt they were not lost; as long as they could see a sail they felt there was yet hope; while there was yet a mouldy biscuit left, or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone, and the water is gone; now strength has departed, and the oar lies still: they lie down to die by each other's side, mere skeletons; things that should have been dead days ago, if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased. Now they know, I say, what it is to be lost, and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their deathknell pealing forth that awful word, Lost! lost! lost! Now, in a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, thou too art condemned. Our Father Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock, and she is filling even to her bulwarks now; and pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking. Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it hath taken to the boat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavour, and in her you are striving to row with all your might, to reach the shore; but your strength fails you. You say, "Oh, I cannot keep God's law. The more I strive to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb; but the higher I climb, the higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill but now I seem to have ascended half-way up its steps,--there it is, higher than the clouds, and I cannot discern the summit." However, you gather up your strength, you try again, you row once more, and at last unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of mouldy biscuit remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved, and you munch your

dry biscuit; but at last that fails you, and you find that neither baptism, nor the Lord's supper, nor any other outward rites, can make you clean, for the leprosy lies deep within. That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming, and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma, some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship--it is gone, and there you are left at last, with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you, with the deep waters of a bottomless hell beneath you, fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope, you lie down despairing, and you cry--"Lord save me, or I perish!" Is that your condition this morning, my friend, or has that ever been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save you; and you he will save, and no one else. He will save only those who can claim this for their title,--"Lost;" who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost, as to all self-trust, all self-reliance, and all self-hope. I can look back to the time when I knew myself to be lost. I thought that God meant to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of Almighty vengeance; for I said unto the Lord. "Hast thou set me as the target of all thine arrows? Am I a seal or a whale, that thou hast set a mark upon me? Hast thou sewed up mine iniquities in a bag, and sealed my transgressions with a seal. Wilt thou never be gracious? Hast thou made me to be the center of all sorrow, the chosen one of heaven to be cursed for ever?" Ah! fool that I was! I little knew then, that those who have the curse in themselves are the men whom God will bless--that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him who died for us and rose again. Come, I will put the question once again--can you say that you are lost? Was there a time

when you traveled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the caravan with your companions, and are you left in the midst of a sea of sand--a hopeless, arid waste? And do you look around you, and see no helper; and do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the deathbird wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because he hopes soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water-bottle dry, and doth the bread fail you? Have you consumed the last of your dry dates, and drunk the last of that brackish water from the bottle. and are you now without hope, without trust in yourself; ready to lie down in despair? Hark thee! The Lord thy God loveth thee; Jesus Christ has bought thee with his blood; thou art, thou shalt be his. He has been seeking thee all this time, and he has found thee at last, in the vast howling wilderness and now he will take thee upon his shoulders, and carry thee to his house rejoicing, and the angels shall be glad over thy salvation. Now, such people must and shall be saved. and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom he came to save he will save; you, ye lost ones--lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and hell should stand in the way, Christ will perform his vow, and accomplish his design.

I shall be very brief in concluding my discourse; but we have now to notice THE OBJECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST--he came "to seek and to save that which was lost." I am so glad that these two words are both there, for if they were not, what hope would there be for any of us? The Arminian says Christ came to save those that seek him. Beloved, there is a sense in which that is true; but it is a lie. Christ did come to save those that seek him, but no one ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ, unless the Lord Jesus first sought him. Christ does not leave it to ourselves to seek him, or else it would be left indeed, for so vile is human nature that although heaven be offered, and though hell thunder

in our ears, yet there never was and there never will be any man who, unconstrained by sovereign grace, will run in the way of salvation, and so escape from hell and flee to heaven. It is all in vain for me to preach to you, and all in vain for the most earnest exhortations to be addressed to any of you, unless the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to back them up; for man is so infatuated, his disease is one which causes such a madness of the brain, that he refuses the remedy, and puts away from him the healing draught which alone can give him life from the dead. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Let man alone, and with the cross of Christ before him and all hell behind him, he will shut his eyes and prefer to be damned rather than enter into eternal life by the blood of Christ the Lord. Hence Christ came first to seek men, and then to save them. Ah! what a task that is of seeking men! There are some of you to-day on the tops of the mountains of pride, and others of you in the deep glens of despair. Methinks I see the Saviour coming forth to seek you; he finds you to-day in the green pastures of the sanctuary, he comes near to you, and by these hands of mine he seeks to lay hold of you, but no sooner do you discern his approach then you run far away into the wild desert of sin. Perhaps this evening you will be spending the remnant of the Sabbath in profaning God's day. One of you at least I know who will be in the public house as soon as the evening sermon is over, and most probably will go home very late. If Christ intends to save you, he will go to you there; and while you are in that wild waste of sin, he will send some providence after you, and save you there. Away you fly then to the marshes of reformation, and you say, "The shepherd cannot overtake me. I shall be beyond his reach now, I have left off my drunkenness, I have given up my cursing." But he will come to you there, and wade for you ankle deep in your own self-righteousness. And then you will run away

again and jump into the deep pit of despair, and there you will say to yourself, "He can never find me here." But I see him coming with that crook of his: he enters the pit, takes you by the feet, and casts you round his neck, and carries you home rejoicing, saying, "I have found him at last! Wherever he wandered, I sought him, and now I have found him." It is strange what queer places Christ finds some of his people in! I knew one of Christ's sheep who was found out by his Master while committing robbery. I knew another who was found out by Christ, while he was spiting his old mother by reading the Sunday newspaper and making fun of her. Many have been found by Jesus Christ, even in the midst of sin and vanity. I knew a preacher of the Gospel who was converted in a theater. He was listening to a play, an old-fashioned piece, that ended with a sailor's drinking a glass of gin before he was hung, and he said, "Here's to the prosperity to the British Nation, and the salvation of my immortal soul.", and down went the curtain; and down went my friend too, for he ran home with all his might. Those words, "The salvation of my immortal soul;" had struck him to the quick; and he sought the Lord Jesus in his chamber. Many a-day he sought him, and at last he found him to his joy and confidence.

But for the most part Christ finds his people in his own house; but he finds them often in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions; and he softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride, and takes them to himself; but never would they come to him unless he came to them. Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back, and he will tell you, "No, sir; they will wander, but they never return." When you find a sheep that ever came back of himself, then you may hope to find a sinner that will come to Christ of himself. No; it must be sovereign grace that must seek the sinner and bring him home.

And when Christ seeks him he SAVES him. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, he does not take a knife and slay him as the sinner expects, but he takes him by the hand of mercy, and begins to comfort and to save. Oh, ye lost sinners, the Christ who seeks you to-day in the ministry, and who has sought you many a-day by his providence, will save you. He will first find you when you are emptied of self, and then he will save you. When you are stripped he will bring forth the best robe and put it on you. When you are dying he will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned he will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, ye hopeless and helpless souls, Christ seeks you to-day, and seeking, he will save you--save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity, and give you, even you, the lost ones, a portion among them that are sanctified. May the Lord now bless these words to your consolation!

III. I shall not stop to say more, as I intended to have done, lest I should weary you. Let me only remind you, that the time is coming when that word "lost" will have a more frightful meaning to you, than it has to-day. In a few more months, some of you, my hearers, will hear the great bell of eternity tolling forth that awful word--lost, lost, lost! The great sepulchres of hell will toll out your doom--lost, lost, lost! and through the shades of eternal misery this shall for ever assail your ear, that you are lost for ever. But if that bell is ringing in your ear to-day, that you are lost oh, be of good cheer, it is a good thing to be so lost, it is a happy thing to be lost to self, and lost to pride, and lost to carnal hope. Christ will save you. Believe that. Look to him as he hangs upon his cross. One look shall give you comfort. Turn your weeping eyes to him as he bleeds there in misery. He

can, he will save you. Believe on him, for he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believeth not must be damned, but whosoever among the lost ones will now cast himself on Christ Jesus, shall find everlasting life through his death and righteousness. May the Lord now gather in his lost sheep, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Chapter 40

A Lecture for Little-Faith

A Sermon

(No. 205)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 18, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of everyone of you all toward each other aboundeth"--2 Thessalonians 1:3.

WE ARE BOUND to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet." Whether we shall praise God or not, is not left to our opinion Although the commandment saith not, "Thou shalt praise the Lord," yet praise is God's most righteous due, and every man, as a partaker of God's bounty, and especially every Christian, is bound to praise God, as it is meet. It is true we have no authoritative rubric for daily praise; we have no commandment left on record specially prescribing certain hours of song and thanksgiving; but still the law written upon the heart, teacheth us with divine authority that it is right to praise God; and this unwritten mandate hath as much power and authority about it, as if it had been recorded on the tables of stone, or handed to us from the top of thundering Sinai. The Christian's duty is to praise God. Think not ye who are always mourning that ye are guiltless in that respect; imagine not that ye can discharge your duty to your God without songs of praise. It is your duty to praise him. You are bound by the bonds of his love as long as you live to bless his name. It is meet and comely that you should do so. It is not only a pleasurable exercise, but it is the absolute duty of the Christian life to praise God. This is taught

us in the text,--"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet." Let not your harps then hang upon the willows, ye mourning children of the Lord. It is your duty to strike them and bring forth their loudest music. It is sinful if you to cease from praising God; you are blessed in order that you may bless him; and if you do not praise God you are not bringing forth the fruit, which he as the divine husbandman, may well expect at your hands. Go forth then, ye sons of God, and chant his praise. With every morning's dawn lift up your notes of thanksgiving, and every evening let the setting sun be followed with your song. Girdle the earth with your praises; surround it with an atmosphere of melody, so shall God himself look down from heaven and accept your praises as like in kind, though not equal in degree, to the praises of cherubim and seraphim. It seems, however, that the apostle Paul in this instance exercised praise not for himself but for others, for the church at Thessalonica. If any of you should in ignorance ask the question why it was that Paul should take so deep an interest in the salvation of these saints, and in their growth in faith, I would remind you, that this is a secret known only to the men who have brought forth and nourished children, and therefore love them. The apostle Paul had founded the church at Thessalonica, most of these people were his spiritual offspring, by the words of his mouth, attended by the power of the Spirit, they had been brought out of darkness into marvellous light; and they who have had spiritual children who have brought many sons unto God, can tell you that there is an interest felt by a spiritual father, that is not to be equalled even by the tender affection of a mother towards her babe. "Ay," said the apostle, "I have been tender over you as a nursing father," and in another place he says he had "travailed in birth," for their souls. This is a secret not known to the hireling minister. Only he whom God

hath himself ordained and thrust forth into the work, only he who has had his tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar, can tell you what it is to agonize for men's souls before they are converted, and what it is to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, when the travail of their souls is seen in the salvation of God's elect.

And now, beloved, having thus given you two thoughts which seemed to me to arise naturally from the text, I shall repair at once to the object of this morning's discourse. The apostle thanks God that the faith of the Thessalonians had grown exceedingly. Leaving out the rest of the text, I shall direct your attention this morning to the subject of growth in faith. Faith hath degrees.

In the first place, I shall endeavor to notice the inconveniences of little faith; secondly, the means of promoting its growth; and thirdly, a certain high attainment, unto which faith will assuredly grow, if we diligently water and cultivate it.

I. In the first place, THE INCONVENIENCES OF LITTLE FAITH. When faith first commences in the soul, it is like a grain of mustard seed of which the Saviour said it was the least of all seeds, but as God the Holy Spirit is pleased to bedew it with the sacred moisture of his grace, it germinates and grows and begins to spread, until at last it becomes a great tree. To use another figure: when faith commences in the soul it is simply looking unto Jesus, and perhaps even then there are so many clouds of doubts and so much dimness of the eye, that we have need for the light of the Spirit to shine upon the cross before we are able even so much as to see it. When faith grows a little, it rises from looking to Christ to coming to Christ. He who stood afar off and looked to the cross by-and-bye plucks up courage, and getting heart to himself, he runneth up to the cross. or perhaps he doth not run. but hath to be drawn before he can so much as creep thither, and even then

it is with a limping gait that he draweth nigh to Christ the Saviour. But that done, faith goeth a little farther: it layeth hold on Christ; it begins to see him in his excellency, and appropriates him in some degree, conceives him to be a real Christ and a real Saviour, and is convinced of his suitability. And when it hath done as much as that, it goeth further; it leaneth on Christ. it leaneth on its Beloved; casteth all the burden of its cares, sorrows, and griefs upon that blessed shoulder, and permitteth all its sins to he swallowed up in the great red sea of the Saviour's blood. And faith can then go further still; for having seen and ran towards him and laid hold upon him, and having leaned upon him, faith in the next place puts in a humble, but a sure and certain claim to all that Christ is and all that he has wrought; and then, trusting alone in this, appropriating all this to itself, faith mounteth to full assurance; and out of heaven there is no state more rapturous and blessed. But, as I have observed at the beginning, faith is but very small, and there are some Christians who never get out of little faith all the while they are here. You notice in John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," how many Little-faith's he mentions There is our old friend Ready-to-halt, who went all the way to the celestial city on crutches but left them when he went into the river Jordan. Then there is little Feeblemind, who carried his feeble mind with him all the way to the banks of the river and then left it, and ordered it to be buried in a dunghill that none might inherit it. Then there is Mr. Fearing, too, who used to stumble over a straw, and was always frightened if he saw a drop of rain, because he thought the floods of heaven were let loose upon him. And you remember Mr. Despondency and Miss Much-afraid, who were so long locked up in the dungeon of Giant Despair, that they were almost starved to death, and there was little left of them but skin and bone; and poor Mr.

Feeble-mind, who had been taken into the cave of Giant Slay-good who was about to eat him, when Great-heart came to his deliverance. John Bunyan was a very wise man He has put a great many of those characters in his book, because there are a great many of them. He has not left us with one Mr. Ready-to-halt, but he has given us seven or eight graphic characters because he himself in his own time has been one of them, and he had known many others who had walked in the same path. I doubt not I have a very large congregation this morning of this very class of persons. Now let me notice the inconveniences of little faith.

The first inconvenience of little faith is that while it is always sure of heaven it very seldom thinks so. Little-faith is quite as sure of heaven as Great-faith. When Jesus Christ counts up his jewels at the last day he will take to himself the little pearls as well as the great ones. If a diamond be never so small yet it is precious because it is a diamond. So will faith, be it never so little, if it be true faith, Christ will never lose even the smallest jewel of his crown.

Little-faith is always sure of heaven, because the name of Little-faith is in the book of eternal life. Little-faith was chosen of God before the foundation of the world. Little-faith was bought with the blood of Christ; ay, and he cost as much as Great-faith. "For every man a shekel" was of redemption. Every man, whether great or small, prince or peasant, had to redeem himself with a shekel. Christ has bought all, both little and great, with the same most precious blood. Little-faith is always sure of heaven, for God has begun the good work in him and he will carry it on. God loves him and he will love him unto the end. God has provided a crown for him, and he will not allow the crown to hang there without a head; he has erected for him a mansion in heaven, and he will not allow the mansion to stand untenanted for ever.

Little-faith is always safe, but he very seldom knows it. If you meet

him he is sometimes afraid of hell; very often afraid that the wrath of God abideth on him. He will tell you that the country on the other side the flood can never belong to a worm so base as he. Sometimes it is because he feels himself so unworthy, another time it is because the things of God are too good to be true, he says, or he cannot think they can be true to such an one as he is. Sometimes he is afraid he is not elect; another time he fears that he has not been called aright. that he has not come to Christ aright. Another time his fears are that he will not hold on to the end, that he shall not be able to persevere, and if you kill a thousand of his fears he is sure to have another host by to-morrow; for unbelief is one of those things that you cannot destroy. "It hath," saith Bunyan, "as many lives as a cat;" you may kill it over and over again, but still it lives. It is one of those ill weeds that sleep in the soil even after it has been burned, and it only needs a little encouragement to grow again. Now Great-faith is sure of heaven, and he knows it. He climbs Pisgah's top, and views the landscape o'er; he drinks in the mysteries of paradise even before he enters within the pearly gates. He sees the streets that are paved with gold; he beholds the walls of the city, the foundations whereof are of precious stones; he hears the mystic music of the glorified, and begins to smell on earth the perfumes of heaven. But poor Little-faith can scarcely look at the sun; he very seldom sees the light. he gropes in the valley, and while all is safe he always thinks himself unsafe. That is one of the disadvantages of Little-faith.

Another disadvantage is that Little-faith, while always having grace enough (for that is Little-faith's promise, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee") yet never thinks he has grace enough. He will have quite enough grace to carry him to heaven; and Great-heart won't have any more. The greatest saint, when he entered heaven, found that

he went in with an empty wallet: he had eaten his last crust of bread when he got there. The manna ceased when the children of Israel entered into Canaan. they had none to carry with them there: they began to eat the corn of the land when the manna of the wilderness had ceased But Little-faith is always afraid that he has not grace enough. You see him in trouble. "Oh!" says he, "I shall never be able to hold my head above water." Blessed be God he never can sink. If you see him in prosperity, he is afraid he shall be intoxicated with pride; that he shall turn aside like Balaam. If you meet him attacked by an enemy, he is scarcely able to say three words for himself; and he lets the enemy exact upon him. If you find him fighting the battle of the Lord Jesus Christ he holds his sword tight enough, good man, but he has not much strength in his arm to bring his sword down with might. He can do but little, for he is afraid that God's grace will not be sufficient for him.

Great-faith, on the other hand, can shake the world. What cares he about trouble, trial, or duty?

He that helped him bears him through,
And makes him more than conqueror too."

He would face an army single-handed, if God commanded him; and "with the jaw-bone of an ass, he would slay heaps upon heaps, and thousands of men." There is no fear of his lacking strength. He can do all things, or can bear all sufferings, for his Lord is there. Come what may, his arm is always sufficient for him; he treads down his enemy, and his cry every day is like the shout of Deborah, "Oh my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Little-faith treads down strength too, but he does not know it. He kills his enemies, but has not eye-sight enough to see the slain. He often hits so hard that his foemen retreat, but he thinks they are there still. He conjures up a thousand phantoms, and when he has routed his real enemies he makes others, and trembles at

the phantoms which he has himself made. Little-faith will assuredly find that his garments will not wax old, that his shoes shall be iron and brass, and that as his day is so shall his strength be; but all the way he will be murmuring, because he thinks his garments will grow old, that his feet will be blistered and sore; and he is terrified lest the day should be too heavy for him and that the evil of the day shall more than counterbalance his grace. Ay, it is an inconvenient thing to have little faith, for little faith perverts everything into sorrow and grief.

Again, there is a sad inconvenience about Little-faith, namely, that if Little-faith be sorely tempted to sin, he is apt to fall. Strong-faith can well contest with the enemy. Satan comes along, and says, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." "Nay," we say, "thou canst not give us all these things, for they are ours already." "Nay," says he, "but ye are poor, naked and miserable." "Ay," say we to him, "but still these things are ours, and it is good for us to be poor, good for us to be without earthly goods, or else our Father would give them to us." "Oh," says Satan, "you deceive yourselves; you have no portion in these things; but if you will serve me, then I will make you rich and happy here." Strong-faith says, "Serve thee, thou fiend! Avaunt! Dost thou offer me silver?--behold God giveth me gold. Dost thou say to me, "I will give thee this if thou disobey?--fool that thou art! I have a thousand times as great wages for my obedience as thou canst offer for my disobedience." But when Satan meets Little-faith, he says to him, "If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down;" and poor Little faith is so afraid that he is not a son of God that he is very apt to cast himself down upon the supposition. "There," says Satan, "I will give thee all this if thou wilt disobey." Little-faith says, "I am not quite sure that I am a

child of God, that I have a portion among them that are sanctified;" and he is very apt to fall into sin by reason of the littleness of his faith. Yet at the same time I must observe that I have seen some Little-faiths who are far less apt to fall into sin than others. They have been so cautious that they dared not put one foot before the other, because they were afraid they should put it awry: they scarcely even dared to open their lips, but they prayed, "O Lord, open thou my lips;" afraid that they should let a wrong word out, if they were to speak; always alarmed lest they should be falling into sin unconsciously, having a very tender conscience. Well, I like people of this sort. I have sometimes thought that Little-faith holds tighter by Christ than any other. For a man who is very near drowning is sure to clutch the plank all the tighter with the grasp of a drowning man, which tightens and becomes more clenched the more his hope is decreased. Well, beloved, Little-faith may be kept from falling, but this is the fruit of tender conscience and not of little faith. Careful walking is not the result of little faith; it may go with it, and so may keep Little-faith from perishing, but little faith is in itself a dangerous thing, laying us open to innumerable temptations, and taking away very much of our strength to resist them. "The joy of the Lord is your strength;" and if that joy ceases you become weak and very apt to turn aside. Beloved, you who are Little-faiths, I tell you it is inconvenient for you always to remain so; for you have many nights and few days. Your years are like Norwegian years--very long winters and very short summers. You have many howlings, but very little of shouting; you are often playing upon the pipe of mourning, but very seldom sounding the trump of exultation. I would to God you could change your notes a little. Why should the children of a King go mourning all their days? It is not the Lord's will that you should be

always sorrowful. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." Oh, ye that have been fasting, anoint your heads and wash your faces, that ye appear not unto men to fast. Oh, ye that are sad in heart, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Therefore rejoice for ye shall praise him. Say unto yourselves, "Why art thou cast down, Oh, soul and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the light of my countenance and my God."

II. Having thus noticed the inconveniences and disadvantages of little faith, let me give you A FEW RULES WITH REGARD TO THE WAY OF STRENGTHENING IT. If you would have your little faith grow into great faith, you must feed it well. Faith is a feeding grace. It does not ask you to give it the things that are seen, but it does ask you to give it the promise of the things that are not seen, which are eternal. Thou tellest me thou hast little faith. I ask thee whether thou art given to the meditation of God's Word, whether thou hast studied the promises whether thou art wont to carry one of those sacred things about with thee every day? Dost thou reply, "No?" Then, I tell thee, I do not wonder at thine unbelief He who deals largely with the promises, will, under grace, very soon find that there is great room for believing them. Get a promise, beloved, every day, and take it with you wherever you go; mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it. Don't do as some men do--who think it a Christian duty to read a chapter every morning, and they read one as long as your arm without understanding it at all; but take out some choice text and pray the Lord during the day to break it up to your mind. Do as Luther says: "When I get hold of a promise," says he, "I look upon it as I would a fruit tree. I think--there hang the fruits above my head, and if I would get them I must shake the tree to and fro." So I take a promise and meditate upon it; I shake it to

and fro, and sometimes the mellow fruit fans into my hand, at other times the fruit is less ready to fall, but I never leave off till I get it. I shake, shake all the day long; I turn the text over and over again, and at last the pomegranate droppeth down, and my soul is comforted with apples, for it was sick of love. Do that, Christian.

Deal much with the promises; have much commerce with these powders of the merchant: there is a rich perfume in every promise of God; taken; it is an alabaster box, break it by meditation, and the sweet scent of faith shall be shed abroad in your house.

Again, prove the promise, and in that way you will get your faith strengthened. When you are at any time placed in distress, take a promise and see whether it is true. Suppose you are very near lacking bread; take this promise, "Thy bread shall be given thee, thy water shall be sure." Rise up in the morning when nothing is in the cupboard, and say, "I will see whether God will keep this promise;" and if he does, do not forget it; set it down in your book; make a mark in your Bible against it. Do as the old woman did, who put T and P against the promise, and told her minister that it means "tried and proved;" so that when she was again in distress, she could not help believing. Have you been exercised by Satan? There is a promise that says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Take that and prove it, and when you have proved it, make a mark against it, and say, "This I know is true, for I have proved it to be so." There is nothing in the world that can confirm faith like proof. "What I want," said one, "is facts." And so it is with the Christian. What he wants is a fact to make him believe.

The older you grow the stronger your faith ought to become, for you have so many more facts with which to buttress your faith, and compel you to believe in God. Only think of a man who has come to be seventy years of age what a pile of evidence could he accumulate if he kept a

note of all God's providential goodness and all his lovingkindness. You do not wonder when you hear a man, the hairs of whose head are white with the sunlight of heaven, get up and say, "These fifty years have I served God, and he has never forsaken me I can bear willing testimony to his faithfulness, not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord hath promised, all hath come to pass." Now we, who are young beginners, must not expect that our faith will be so strong as it will be in years to come. Every instance of God's love should make us believe him more; and as each promise passes by, and we can see the fulfillment of it at the heels thereof, we must be compelled and constrained to say, that God has kept so many of these promises and will keep them unto the end. But the worst of it is that we forget them all, and so we begin to have grey hairs sprinkled on our heads, and we have no more faith than when we began, because we have forgotten God's repeated answers, and though he has fulfilled the promise we have suffered it to lie buried in forgetfulness.

Another plan I would recommend for the strengthening of your faith, though not so excellent as the last, is to associate yourselves with Godly and much-tried men. It is astonishing how young believers will get their faith refreshed by talking with old and advanced Christians. Perhaps you are in great doubt and distress. you run off to an old brother, and you say, "Oh my dear friend, I am afraid I am not a child of God at all, I am in such deep distress, I have had blasphemous thoughts cast into my heart; if I were a child of God I should never feel like that." The old man smiles, and says, "Ah! you have not gone very far on the road to heaven, or else you would know better. Why I am the subject of these thoughts very often. Old as I am, and though I hope I have enjoyed the full assurance for a long time, yet there are seasons when if I could have heaven for a grain of faith, I could not

think heaven was mine, for I could not find so much as a grain in me, though it is there." And he will tell you what dangers he has passed, and of the sovereign love that kept him; of the temptations that threatened to ensnare him, and of the wisdom that guided his feet; and he will tell you of his own weakness and God's omnipotence; of his own emptiness, and God's fullness; of his own changeableness, and God's immutability, and if after talking with such a man you don't believe surely you are sinful indeed; for "out of the mouth of two witnesses, the whole shall be established," but when there are many such who can bear testimony to God, it would be foul sin indeed if we were to doubt him.

Another way whereby you may obtain increase of faith is to labor to get as much as possible free from self. I have striven with all my might to attain the position of perfect indifference of all men. I have found at times, if I have been much praised in company, and if my heart has given way a little, and I have taken notice of it, and felt pleased, that the very next time I was censured and abused. I felt the censure and abuse very keenly, for the very fact that I took the praise rendered me liable to lay hold upon the censure. So that I have always tried, especially of late, to take no more notice of man's praise than of his censure, but to fix my heart simply upon this--I know that I have a right motive in what I attempt to do, I am conscious that I endeavor to serve God with a single eye to his glory, and therefore it is not for me to take praise from man nor censure, but to stand independently upon the one rock of right doing. Now the same thing will apply to you. Perhaps you find yourself full of virtue and grace one day, and the devil flatters you: "Ah! you are a bright Christian; you might join the church now, you would be quite an honor to it; see how well you are prospering." And unconsciously to yourself you believe the

sound of that syren music, and you half believe that really you are growing rich in grace. Well, the next day you find yourself very low indeed in godly matters. Perhaps you fall into some sin, and now the devil says, "Ah! now you are no child of God; look at your sins." Beloved, the only way in which you can maintain your faith is to live above the praise of self and the censure of self; to live simply upon the blood and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who can say in the midst of all his virtues, "These are but dross and dung; my hope is fixed on nothing less than Jesus Christ's finished sacrifice"--such a man, when sins prevail, will find his faith remain constant, for he will say "I once was full of virtue and then I did not trust in myself, and now I have none still do I trust in my Saviour, for change as I may, he changeth not. If I had to depend on myself in the least degree then it would be up and down, up and down, but since I rely on what Christ has done, since he is the unbuttressed pillar of my hope, then come what may my soul doth rest secure, confident in faith. Faith will never be weak if self be weak, but when self is strong, faith cannot be strong, for self is very much like what the gardener calls the sucker at the bottom of the tree, which never bears fruit but only sucks away the nourishment from the tree itself. Now, self is that sucker which sucks away the nourishment from faith, and you must cut it up or else your faith will always be little faith, and you will have difficulty in maintaining any comfort in your soul.

But, perhaps, the only way in which most men get their faith increased is by great trouble. We don't grow strong in faith on sunshiny days. It is only in strong weather that a man gets faith. Faith is not an attainment that droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven; it generally comes in the whirlwind and the storm. Look at the old oaks: how is it that they have become so deeply rooted in the earth? Ask the March

winds and they will tell you. It was not the April shower that did it, or the sweet May sunshine, but it was March's rough wind, the blustering month of old Boreas shaking the tree to and fro and causing its roots to bind themselves around the rocks. So must it be with us. We don't make great soldiers in the barracks at home; they must be made amidst flying shot and thundering cannon. We cannot expect to make good sailors on the Serpentine; they must be made far away on the deep sea, where the wild winds howl, and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. Storms and tempests are the things that make men tough and hardy mariners. They see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. So with Christians. Great-faith must have great trials. Mr. Great-heart would never have been Mr. Great-heart if he had not once been Mr. Great-trouble. Valiant-for-truth would never have put to fight those foes, and have been so valiant, if the foes had not first attacked him. So with us: we must expect great troubles before we shall attain to much faith.

Then he who would have great faith, must exercise what he has. I should not like to-morrow to go and shoe horses, or to make horse shoes on an anvil. I am sure my arm would ache in the first hour with lifting the heavy hammer and banging it down so many times. Whatever the time might be, I should not be able to keep time. The reason why the blacksmith's arm does not tire is, because he is used to it. He has kept at it all day long these many years, till there's an arm for you! He turns up his sleeve and shows you the strong sinew that never tires, so strong has it become by use. Do you want to get your faith strong? Use it. You lazy lie-a-bed Christians, that go up to your churches and chapels, and take your seats, and hear our sermons, and talk about getting good, but never think about doing good; ye that are letting hell fill beneath you, and yet are too idle to stretch out your hands to pluck brands

from the eternal burning; ye that see sin running down your streets, yet can never put so much as your foot to turn or stem the current, I wonder not that you have to complain of the littleness of your faith. It ought to be little; you do but little. and why should God give you more strength than you mean to use. Strong faith must always be an exercised faith, and he that dares not exercise the faith he has shall not have more "Take away from him the one talent and give it to him that hath, because he did not put it out to usury." In Mr. Whitfield's life, you do not often find him complaining of want of faith, or if he did, it was when he only preached nine times a week; he never complained when he preached sixteen times. Read Grimshaw's life: you do not often find him troubled with despondency when he preached twenty-four times in seven days; it was only when he was growing a little idle and only preached twelve times. Keep always at it, and all at it, and there is not much fear of your faith becoming weak. It is with our faith as with boys in the winter time There they go round the fire, rubbing and chafing their hands to keep the blood in circulation, and almost fighting each other to see which shall sit on the fire and get warm. At last the father comes, and says, "Boys, this won't do, you will never get warm by these artificial means run out and do some work." Then they all go out, and they come in again with a ruddy hue in their cheeks their hands no longer tingles and they say, "Well, father, we didn't think it half so warm as it is." So must it be with you: you must set to work if you would have your faith grow strong and warm. True, your works won't save you; but faith without works is dead, frozen to death; but faith with works groweth to a red heat of fervency and to the strength of stability. Go and teach in the Sunday school, or go and catch seven or eight poor ragged children; go and visit the poor old woman in her hovel; go and see some poor dying creatures in the

back streets of our great city, and you will say, "Dear me, how wonderfully my faith is refreshed just by doing something." You have been watering yourself whilst you were watering others.

Now my last advice shall be this--the best way to get your faith strengthened is to have communion with Christ. If you commune with Christ, you cannot be unbelieving. When his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me, I cannot doubt. When my Beloved sits at his table, and he brings me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me is his love, then indeed I do believe. When I feast with him, my unbelief is abashed and hides its head. Speak, ye that have been led in the green pastures, and have been made to lie down by the still waters; ye who have seen his rod and his stay, and hope to see them even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death; speak, ye that have sat at his feet with Mary, or laid your head upon his bosom with the well-beloved John; have you not found when you have been near to Christ your faith has grown strong, and when you have been far away, then your faith has become weak? It is impossible to look Christ in the face and then doubt him. When you cannot see him then you doubt him; but if you live in fellowship with him, you are like the ewe lambs of Nathan's parable, for you lie in his bosom, and eat from his table, and drink from his cup. You must believe when your Beloved speaks unto you, and says, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." There is no hesitation then; you must arise from the lowlands of your doubt up to the hills of assurance.

III. And now, in conclusion, there is A CERTAIN HIGH ATTAINMENT TO WHICH FAITH MAY, IF DILIGENTLY CULTIVATED, CERTAINLY ATTAIN. Can a man's faith grow so strong that he will never afterwards doubt at all?

I reply, no. He who has the strongest faith will have sorrowful intervals of despondency. I suppose there has scarcely ever been a

Christian who has not, at some time or other, had the most painful doubts concerning his acceptance in the Beloved. All God's children will have paroxysms of doubt even though they be usually strong in faith. Again, may a man so cultivate his faith that he may be infallibly sure that he is a child of God--so sure that he has made no mistake--so sure that all the doubts and fears which may be thrust upon him may not be able at that time to get an advantage over him? I answer, yes, decidedly he may. A man may, in this life, be as sure of his acceptance in the Beloved as he is of his own existence. Nay, he not only may, but there are some of us who have enjoyed this precious state and privilege for years; we do not mean for years together--our peace has been interrupted, we have now and then been subjected to doubts; but I have known some--I knew one especially, who said that for thirty years he had enjoyed almost invariably a full sense of his acceptance in Christ. "I have had," he said "very often a sense of sin, but I have had with that a sense of the power of the blood of Christ; I have now and then for a little time had great despondency, but still I may say, taking it as a general rule, that for thirty years I have enjoyed the fullest assurance of my acceptance in the Beloved." I trust a large portion of God's people can say that for months and years they have not had to sing,

"Tis a point I long to know."

But they can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." I will try to depict the state of the Christian, he may be as poor as poverty can make him, but he is rich; he has no thought with regard to the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. He casts himself upon the providence of God; he believes that he who clothes the lilies, and feeds the ravens, will not allow his children to go

starving or barefooted. He has but little concern as to his temporal estate; he folds his arms and floats down the stream of providence singing all the way whether he float by mud bank, dark, dreary, and noxious, or by palace fair and valley pleasant, he alters not his position; he neither moves not struggles; he has no will nor wish which way to swim, his only desire being to "lie passive in God's hand, and know no will but his." When the storm flies over his head he finds Christ to be a shelter from the tempest; when the heat is hot he finds Christ to be the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He just casts his anchor down deep into the sea, and when the wind blows, he sleeps; hurricanes may come about his ears, the masts creak, and every timber seems to be strained and every nail to start from its place, but there he sleeps. Christ is at the helm. he says, "My anchor is within the vail, I know it will keep its hold." The earth shakes beneath his feet; but he says, "Though the earth be removed and mountains be cast into the sea, yet will not we fear, for God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in time of trouble." Ask him about his eternal interests, and he tells you that his only confidence is in Christ, and that die when he may, he knows he shall stand boldly at the last great day clothed in his Saviour's righteousness. He speaks very confidently though never boastingly; though he has no time to dance the giddy dance of presumption, he stands firmly on the rock of confidence. Perhaps you think he is proud--ah! he is a humble man; he lies low before the cross, but not before you, he can look you boldly in the face, and tell you that Christ is able to keep that which he has committed to him. He knows that--

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep
All that his heavenly Father gave,

His hands securely keep."

And die when he may he can lay his head upon the pillow of the promise, and breathe his life out on the Saviour's breast without a struggle or a murmur, crying--"Victory," in the arms of death; challenging Death to produce his sting, and demanding of the grave its victory. Such is the effect of strong faith; I repeat, the weakest in the world, by diligent cultivation may attain to it. Only seek the refreshing influence of the Divine Spirit, and walk in Christ's commandments, and live near to him; and ye that are dwarfs, like Zaccheus, shall become as giants; the hyssop on the wall shall start up into the dignity of the cedar in Lebanon, and ye that fly before your enemies shall yet be able to chase a thousand, and two of you shall put ten thousand to flight. May the Lord enable his poor little ones so to grow!

As for those of you who have no faith in Christ, let me remind you of one sad thing--namely, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." If thou hast not put thy trust in Christ, then God is angry with thee every day. "If thou turn not he will whet his sword, for he hath bent his bow and made it ready." I beseech thee, cast thyself on Christ; he is worthy of thy trust; there is none other to trust to, he is willing to receive thee; he invites thee; he shed his blood for thee; he intercedes for thee. Believe on him, for thus his promise runs, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do both of these things. Believe on him, and then profess thy faith in baptism; and the Lord bless thee, and hold thee to the end, and make thee to increase exceedingly in faith, to the glory of God. May the Lord add his blessing!

Chapter 41

Everybody's Sermon

A Sermon

(No. 206)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 25, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes."--Hosea 12:10.

WHEN THE LORD would win his people Israel from their iniquities, he did not leave a stone unturned, but gave them precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. He taught them sometimes with a rod in his hand, when he smote them with sore famine and pestilence, and invasion; at other times he sought to win them with bounties, for he multiplied their corn and their wine and their oil, and he laid no famine upon them. But all the teachings of his providence were unavailing, and whilst his hand was stretched out, still they continued to rebel against the Most High. He hewed them by the prophets. He sent them first one, and then another: the golden mouthed Isaiah was followed by the plaintive Jeremy; while at his heels in quick succession, there followed many far-seeing, thunder-speaking seers. But though prophet followed prophet in quick succession, each of them uttering the burning words of the Most High, yet they would have none of his rebukes, but they hardened their hearts, and went on still in their iniquities. Among the rest of God's agencies for striking their attention and their conscience, was the use of similitudes. The prophets were accustomed not only to preach, but to be themselves as signs and wonders to the people. For instance, Isaiah named his child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, that they might know that the judgment of the

Lord was hastening upon them; and this child was ordained to be a sign, "for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." On another occasion, the lord said unto Isaiah, "Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, "Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives young and old, naked and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt." Hosea, the prophet, himself had to teach the people by a similitude. You will notice in the first chapter a most extraordinary similitude. The Lord said to him, "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms; for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord," and he did so; and the children begotten by this: marriage, were made as signs and wonders to the people. As for his first son he was to be called Jezreel, "for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." As for his daughter, she was to be called Lo-ruhamah "for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away." Thus by divers significant signs, God made the people think. He made his prophets do strange things, in order that the people might talk about what he had done, and then the meaning which God would have them learn, should come home more powerfully to their consciences, and be the better remembered.

Now it struck me that God is every day preaching to us by similitudes. When Christ was on earth he preached in parables, and, though he is in heaven now, he is preaching in parables to-day. Providence is God's sermon. The things which we see about us are God's thoughts and God's

words to us; and if we were but wise there is not a step that we take, which me should not find to be full of mighty instruction. O ye sons of men! God warns you every day by his own word; he speaks to you by the lips of his servants, his ministers; but, besides this, by similitudes he addresses you at every time. He leaves no stone unturned to bring his wandering children to himself, to make the lost sheep of the house of Israel return to the fold. In addressing myself to you this morning, I shall endeavor to show how every day, and every season of the year, in every place, and in every calling which you are made to exercise, God is speaking to you by similitudes.

I. EVERY DAY God speaks to you by similitudes. Let us begin with the early morning. This morning you awakened and you found yourselves unclothed, and you began to array yourselves in your garments. Did not God, if you would but have heard him, speak to you by a similitude? Did he not as much as say to thee, "Sinner, what will it be when thy vain dreams shall have ended, if thou shouldst wake up in eternity to find thyself naked? Wherewithal shalt thou array thyself? If in this life thou dost cast away the wedding garment, the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ, what wilt thou do when the trump of the archangel shall awaken thee from thy clay cold couch in the grave, when the heavens shall be blazing with lightnings, and the solid pillars of the earth shall quake with the terror of God's thunder? How wilt thou be able to dress thyself then? Canst thou confront thy Maker without a covering for thy nakedness? Adam dared not, and canst thou attempt it? Will he not affright thee with his terrors? Will he not cast thee to the tormentors that thou mayest be burned up with unquenchable fire, because thou didst forget the clothing of thy soul while thou wast in this place of probation?

Well, you have put on your dress, and you come down to your families,

and your Children gather round your table for the morning meal. If you have been wise God has been preaching to you by a similitude then: he seemed to say to thee--"Sinner, to whom should a child go but to his father? And where should be his resort when he is hungry but to his father's table?" And as you feed your children, if you had an ear to hear, the Lord was speaking to you and saying, "How willingly would I feed you! How would I give you of the bread of heaven and cause you to eat angels, food! But thou hast spent thy money for that which is not bread, and thy labor for that which not. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, let thy soul delight itself in fatness."

Did he not stand there as a Father, and say, "Come my child, come to my table. The precious blood of my Son has been shed to be thy drink, and he has given his body to be thy bread. Why wilt thou wander hungry and thirsty? Come to my table O, my child, for I love my children to be there and to feast upon the mercies I have provided."

You left your home and you went to your business. I knew not in what calling your time was occupied--of that we will say more before we shall have gathered up the ends of your similitudes this morning--but you spend your time in your work; and surely, beloved, All the time that your fingers were occupied, God was speaking to your heart, if the ears of your soul had not been closed, so that you were heavy and ready to slumber, and could not hear his voice And when the sun was shining in high heaven, and the hour of noon was reached, mightest thou not bare lifted up thine eye and remembered that if thou hadst committed thy soul to God, thy path should have been as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day? Did he not speak to thee and say, "I brought the sun from the darkness of the east; I have guided him and helped him to ascend the slippery steeps of heaven and now he standeth in his zenith, like a giant that hath run his race, and

hath attained his goal. And even so will I do with thee. Commit thy ways unto me and I will make thee full of light, and thy path shall be as brightness, and thy life shall be as the noon-day: thy sun shall not go down by day, but the days of thy mourning shall be ended, for the Lord God shall be thy light, and thy salvation."

And the sun began to set, and the shadows of evening were drawing on, and did not the Lord then remind thee of thy death? Suns have their setting, and men have their graves. When the shadows of the evening were stretched out, and when the darkness began to gather, did he not say unto thee, "O man, take heed of thine eventide, for the light of the sun shall not endure for ever? There are twelve hours wherein a man shall work, but when they are past there is no work nor device in the night of that grave whither we are all hastening. Work while ye have the light, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. Therefore, whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." Look I say to the sun at his setting and observe the rainbow hues of glory with which he paints the sky, and mark how he appears to increase his orb as he nears the horizon. O man kneel down and learn this prayer,--"Lord, let my dying be like the setting of the sun; help me, if clouds and darkness are round about me, to light them up with splendor; surround me, O my God, with a greater brightness at my death than I have shown in all my former life. If my death-bed shall be the miserable pallet, and if I expire in some lone cot yet nevertheless, grant, O Lord, that my poverty may be gilded with the light that thou shalt give me, that I may exhibit the grandeur of a Christian's departure at my dying hour." God speaketh to thee, O man, by similitude, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

And now, thou hast lit thy candle and thou sittest down; thy children are about thee. and the Lord sends thee a little preacher to preach

thee a sermon, if thou wilt hear. It is a little gnat, and it flieth round and round about thy candle, and delighteth itself in the light thereof, till, dazzled and intoxicated, it begins to singe its wings and burn itself. Thou seekest to put it away, but it dashes into the flame, and having burned itself it can scarcely fan itself through the air again. But as soon as it has recruited its strength again, mad-like it dashes to its death and destruction. Did not the Lord say to thee, "Sinner, thou art doing this also, thou lovest the light of sin; oh! that thou wert wise enough to tremble at the fire of sin, for he who delights in the sparks thereof, must be consumed in the burning!" Did not the hand seem to be like the hand of thy Almighty, who would put thee away from thine own destruction, and who rebukes and smites thee by his providence, as much as to say to thee, "Poor silly man be not thine own destruction." And whilst thou seest perhaps with a little sorrow the death of the foolish insect, might not that forewarn thee of thine awful doom. when, after having been dazzled with the giddy round of this world's joys, thou shalt at last plunge into the eternal burning and lose thy soul, so madly, for nothing but the enjoyments of an hour? Doth not God preach to thee thus?

And now it is time for thee to retire to thy rest. Thy door is bolted, and thou hast fast closed it. Did not that remind thee of that saying, "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut-to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us;' and he shall answer and say unto you, I know not whence you are?" in vain shall be your knocking then, when the bars of immutable justice shall have fast closed the gates of mercy on mankind; when the hand of the Almighty Master shall have shut his children within the gates of Paradise, and shall have left the thief and the robber in the cold chilly darkness, the outer darkness, where

there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Did he not preach to thee by similitude? Even then, when thy finger was on the bolt, might not his finger have been on thy heart?

And at night time thou wast startled. The watchman in the street awoke thee with the cry of the hour of the night, or his tramp along the street. O man, if thou hadst ears to hear, thou mightest have heard in the steady tramp of the policeman the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." And every sound at midnight that did awaken thee from thy slumber and startle thee upon thy bed, might seem to forewarn thee of that dread trump of the archangel which shall herald the coming of the Son of Man, in the day he shall judge both the quick and the dead, according to my gospel. O that ye were wise, that ye understood this, for all the day long, from dewy morning till the darkness of the eventide, and the thick darkness of midnight, God evermore doth preach to man--he preacheth to him by similitudes.

II. And now we turn the current of our thoughts, and observe that ALL THE YEAR round God doth preach to man by similitudes. It was but a little while ago that we were sowing our seeds in our garden, and scattering the corn over the broad furrows. God had sent the seed time, to remind us that we too are like the ground, and that he is scattering seed in our hearts each day. And did he not say to us, "Take heed, O man, lest thou shouldest be like the highway whereon the seed was scattered, the fowls of the air devoured it. Take heed that thou be not like the ground that had its basement on a hard and arid rock, lest this seed should spring up and by-and-bye should wither away when the sun arose, because it had not much depth of earth. And be thou careful, O son of man, that thou art not like the ground where the seed did spring up, but the thorns sprang up and choked it; but be thou like the good ground whereon the seed did fall, and it brought forth fruit, some

twenty, some fifty, and some a hundred fold."

We thought, when are were sowing the seed, that we expected one day to see it spring up again. Was there not a lesson for us there? Are not our actions all of them as seeds? Are not our little words like grains of mustard seed? Is not our daily conversation like a handful of the corn that we scatter over the soil? And ought we not to remember that our words shall live again, that our acts are as immortal as ourselves, that after having laid a little while in the dust to be matured, they shall certainly arise? The black deeds of sin shall bear a dismal harvest of damnation; and the right deeds which God's grace has permitted us to do, shall, through his mercy and not through our merit, bring forth a bounteous harvest in the day when they who sow in tears slowly reap in joy. Doth not seed-time preach to thee, O man, and say, "Take heed that thou sowest good seed in thy field."

And when the seed sprang up, and the season had changed, did God cease then to preach? Ah! no. First the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, had each its homily. And when at last the harvest came, how loud the sermon which it preached to us! It said to us, "O Israel, I have set a harvest for thee. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." If you have an opportunity to journey into the country during the next three weeks, you will, if your heart is rightly attuned, find a marvellous mass of wisdom couched in a cornfield. Why I could not attempt for a moment to open the mighty mines of gabled treasure which are hidden there. Think, beloved, of the joy of thy harvest. How does it tell us of the joy of the redeemed if we, being saved, shall at last be carried like shocks of corn fully ripe into the garner. Look at the ear of corn when it is fully ripe, and see how it

bendeth toward the earth! It held its head erect before, but in getting ripe how humble does it become! And how does God speak to the sinner and tell him, that if he would be fit for the great harvest he must drop his head and cry "Lord hare mercy upon me a sinner." And when we see the weeds spring up amongst wheat, have we not our Master's parable over again of the tares among the wheat; and are we not reminded of the great day of division, when he shall say to the reaper, "Gather first the tares and bind them in bundles, to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." O yellow field of corn, thou preaches well to me, for thou safest to me, the minister, "Behold, the fields are ripe already to the harvest. Work thou thyself; and pray thou the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers into the harvest." And it preaches well to thee, thou man of years, it tells thee that the sickle of death is sharp, and that thou must soon fall, but it cheers and comforts thee, for it tells thee that the wheat shall be safely housed, and it bids thee hope that thou shalt be carried to thy Master's garner to be his joy and his delight for ever. Hark, then, to the rustling eloquence of the yellow harvest.

In a very little time, my beloved, you will see the birds congregated upon the housetops in great multitudes, and after they have whirled round and round and round as if they were taking their last sight of Old England, or rehearsing their supplications before they launched away, you will see them, with their leader in advance, speed across the purple sea to live in sunnier climes, while winter's cold hand shall strip their native woods. And doth not God seem to preach to you, sinners, when these birds are taking their flight? Do you not remember how he himself puts it? "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment

of the Lord." Doth he not tell us that there is a time of dark winter coming upon this world; a time of trouble, such as there has been none like it, neither shall be any more; a time, when all the joys of sin shall be nipped and frost-bitten, and when the summer of man's estate shall be turned into the dark winter of his disappointment? And does he not say to you, "Sinner fly away--away--away to the goodly land, where Jesus dwells! Away from self and sin! Away from the city of destruction! Away from the whirl of pleasures, and from the tossing to and fro of trouble! Haste thee, like a bird to its rest! Fly thou across the sea of repentance and faith and build thy nest in the land of mercy, that when the great day of vengeance shall pass o'er this world, thou mayest be safe in the clefts of the rock."

I remember well, how once God preached to me by a similitude in the depth of winter The earth had been black, and there was scarcely a green thing or a flower to be seen. As you looked across the field, there was nothing but blackness--bare hedges and leafless trees, and black, black earth, wherever you looked. On a sudden God spake and unlocked the treasures of the snow, and white flakes descended until there was no blackness to be seen, and all was one sheet of dazzling whiteness. It was at that time that I was seeking the Saviour, and it was then I found him; and I remember well that sermon which I say, before me: "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than wool." Sinner! thy heart is like that black ground; thy soul is like that black tree and hedgerow, without leaf or blossom. God's grace is like the white snow--it shall fall upon thee till thy doubting heart shall glitter in whiteness of pardon, and thy poor black soul shall be covered with the spotless purity of the Son of God. He seems to say to you, "Sinner, you are black, but I am ready to

forgive you; I will wrap thy heart in the ermine of my Son's righteousness, and with my Son's own garments on, thou shalt be holy as the Holy One."

And the wind of to-day, as it comes howling through the trees,--many of which have been swept down,--reminds us of the Spirit of the Lord, which, "bloweth where it listeth," and when it pleaseth; and it tells us to seek earnestly after that divine and mysterious influence, which alone can speed us on our voyage to heaven; which shall cast down the trees of our pride, and tear up by the roots the goodly cedars of our self confidence; which shall shake our refuges of lies about our ears, and make us look to Him who is the only covert from the storm, the only shelter when "the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

Ay, and when the heat is coming down, and we hide ourselves beneath the shadow of the tree, an angel standeth there, and whispereth, "Look upwards, sinner, as thou hidest thyself from the burning rays of Sol beneath the tree; so there is One who is like the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and he bids thee come and take shadow beneath his branches, for he will screen thee from the eternal vengeance of God, and give thee shelter when the fierce heat of God's anger shall beat upon the heads of wicked men."

III. And now again, EVERY PLACE to which you journey, every animal that you see, every spot you visit, has a sermon for you. Go into your farm-yard, and your ox and your ass shall preach to you. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." The very dog at your heels may rebuke you. He follows his master; a stranger will he not follow, for he knows not the voice of a stranger, but ye forsake your God and turn aside unto your crooked ways. Look at the chicken by the side of yonder

pond, and let it rebuke your ingratitude. It drinks, and every sip it takes it lifts its head to heaven and thanks the giver of the rain for the drink afforded to it; while thou eatest and drinkest, and there is no blessing pronounced at thy meals and no thanksgiving bestowed upon thy Father for his bounty. The very horse is checked by the bridle, and the whip is for the ass; but thy God hath bridled thee by his commandments, and he hath chastened by his providence, yet art thou more obstinate than the ass or the mule; still thou wilt not run in his commandments, but thou turnest aside, wilfully and wickedly following out the perversity of thine own heart. Is it not so? Are not these things true of you? If you are still without God and without Christ, must not these things strike your conscience? Would not any one of them lead you to tremble before the Most High, and beg of him that he would give you a new heart and a right spirit, and that no longer you might be as the beasts of the field, but might be a man full of the Divine Spirit, living in obedience to your Creator.

And in journeying, you have noticed how often the road is rough with stones, and you have murmured because of the way over which you have to tread; and have you not thought that those stones were helping to make the road better, and that the worst piece of road when mended with hard stones would in time become smooth and fit to travel on? And did you think how often God has mended you; how many stones of affliction he has cast upon you; how many waggon-loads of warnings you have had spread out upon you, and you have been none the better, but have only grown worse, and when he comes to look on you to see whether your life has become smooth, whether the highway of your moral conduct has become more like the king's highway of righteousness, how might he say, "Alas! I have repaired this road, but it is none the better; let it alone until it becomes a very bog and quagmire, until he who keeps it thus

ill shall have perished in it himself."

And thou hast gone by the sea-side, and has not the sea talked to thee? Inconstant as the sea art thou, but thou art not one-half so obedient. God keeps the sea, the mountain-waved sea, in check with a belt of sand; he spreads the sand along the sea-shore and even the sea observes the landmark. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" It is so. Let thy conscience prick thee. The sea obeys Him from shore to shore, and yet thou wilt not have him to be thy God, but thou sayest, "Who is the Lord that I should fear him? Who is Jehovah that I should acknowledge his sway?"

Hear the mountains and the hills, for they have a lesson. Such is God. He abideth for ever, think not that he shall change.

And now, sinner, I entreat thee to open thine eyes as thou goest home today and if nothing that I have said shall smite thee, perhaps God shall put into thy way something that shall give thee a text, from which thou mayest preach to thyself a sermon that never shall be forgotten. Oh! if I had but time, and thought, and words, I would bring the things that are in heaven above, and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth, and I would set them all before thee, and they should every one give their warning before they had passed from thine inspection, and I know that their voice would be, "Consider the Lord thy Creator and fear and serve him, for he hath made thee, and thou hast not made thyself;" we obey him, and we find it is our beauty to be obedient, and our glory ever to move according to his will; and thou shalt find it to be the same." Obey him while thou mayest, lest haply when this life is over all these things shall rise up against

thee, and the stone in the street shall clamor for the condemnation, and the beam out of the wall shall bear witness against thee, and the beasts of the field shall be thine accusers, and the valley and hill shall begin to curse thee. O man, the earth is made for thy warning. God would have thee he saved. He hath set hand-posts everywhere in nature and in providence, pointing thee the way to the City of Refuge, and if thou art but wise thou needest not miss thy way; it is but thy wilful ignorance and thy neglect that shall cause thee to run on in the way of error, for God hath made the way straight before thee and given thee every encouragement to run therein.

IV. And now, lest I should weary you, I will just notice that every man in his CALLING has a sermon preached to him.

The farmer has a thousand sermons; I have brought them out already; let him open wide his eye, and he shall see more. He need not go an inch without hearing the songs of angels, and the voice of spirits wooing him to righteousness, for all nature round about him has a tongue given to it, when man hath an ear to hear.

There are others, however, engaged in a business which allows them to see but very little of nature, and yet even there God has provided them with a lesson. There is the baker who provides us with our bread. He thrusts his fuel into the oven, and he causeth it to glow with heat, and puts bread therein. Well may he if he be an ungodly man, tremble as he stands at the oven's mouth, for there is a text which he may well comprehend as he stands there: "For the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; they shall be consumed." Men ingather them in bundles and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. Out of the oven's mouth comes a hot and burning warning, and the man's heart might melt like wax within him if he would but regard it.

Then see the butcher. How doth the beast speak to him? He sees the lamb almost lick his knife, and the bullock goes unconsciously to the slaughter. How might he think every time that he smites the unconscious animal, (who knows nothing of death), of his own. doom. Are we not, all of us who are without Christ, fattening for the slaughter? Are we not more foolish than the bullock, for doth not the wicked man follow his executioner, and walk after his own destroyer into the very chambers of hell? When we see a drunkard pursuing his drunkenness, or an unchaste man running in the way of licentiousness, is he not as an ox going to the slaughter, until a dart smite him through the liver? Hath not God sharpened his knife and made ready his axe that the fatlings of this earth may he killed, when he shall say to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, "Behold, I have made a feast of vengeance for you, and ye shall feast upon the blood of the slain, and make yourselves drunken with the streams thereof?" Ay butcher, there is a lecture for you in your trade; and your business may reproach you.

And ye whose craft is to sit still all day, making shoes far our feet, the lapstone in your lap may reproach you, for your heart, perhaps, is as hard as that. Have you not been smitten as often as your lapstone, and yet your heart has never been broken or melted? And what shall the Lord say to you at last, when your stony heart being still within you, he shall condemn you and cast you away because you would have none of his rebukes and would not turn at the voice of his exhortation?

Let the brewer remember that as he brews he must drink. Let the potter tremble lest he be like a vessel marred upon the wheel. Let the printer take heed, that his life be set in heavenly type, and not in the black letter of sin. Painter, beware! for paint will not suffice, we must have unvarnished realities.

Others of you are engaged in business where you are continually using

scales and measures. Might you not often put yourselves into those scales? Might you not fancy you saw the great Judge standing by with his Gospel in one scale and you in the other, and solemnly looking down upon you, saying, "Mene, mene, tekel,--thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." Some of you use the measure, and when you have measured out, you cut off the portion that your customer requires. Think of your life too, it is to be of a certain length, and every year brings the measure a little farther, and at last there come the scissors that shall clip off your life, and it is done. How knowest thou when thou art come to the last inch? What is that disease thou hast about thee, but the first snip of the scissors? What is that trembling in thy bones, that failing in thy eyesight, that fleeing of thy memory, that departure off thy youthful vigor, but the first rent? How soon shalt thou be rent in twain, the remnant of thy days past away, and thy years all numbered and gone, misspent and wasted for ever!

But you say you are engaged as a servant and your occupations are diverse. Then diverse are the lectures God preaches to you. "A servant waits for his wages and the hireling fulfilleth his day." There is a similitude for thee, when thou hast fulfilled thy day on earth, and shalt take thy wages at last. Who then is thy master? Art thou serving Satan and the lusts of the flesh, and wilt thou take out thy wages at hast in the hot metal of destruction? or art thou serving the fair prince Emmanuel, and shalt thy wages be the golden crowns of heaven? Oh! happy art thou if thou servest a good master, for according to thy master shall be thy reward; as is thy labor such shall the end be.

Or thou art one that guideth the pen, and from hour to hour wearily thou writest. Ah! man, know that thy life is a writing. When thy hand is not on the pen, thou art a writer still; thou art always writing

upon the pages of eternity; thy sins thou art writing or else thy holy confidence in him that loved thee. Happy shall it be for thee, O writer, if thy name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and if that black writing of thine, in the history of thy pilgrimage below, shall have been blotted out with the red blood of Christ, and thou shalt hare written upon thee the fair name of Jehovah, to stand legible for ever.

Or perhaps thou art a physician or a chemist; thou prescribest or preparest medicines for man's body. God stands there by the side of thy pestle and thy mortar, and by the table where thou writest thy prescriptions, and he says to thee, "Man, thou art sick; I can prescribe for thee. The blood and righteousness of Christ, laid hold of by faith, and applied by the Spirit, can cure thy soul I can compound a medicine for thee that shall rid thee of thy sins and bring thee to the place where the inhabitants shall no more say, I am sick.' Wilt thou take my medicine or wilt thou reject it? Is it bitter to thee, and dost thou turn away from it? Come, drink my child, drink, for thy life lieth here; and how shalt thou escape if thou neglect so great salvation?" Do you cast iron, or melt lead, or fuse the hard metals of the mines? then pray that the Lord may melt thine heart and cast thee in the mould of the gospel? Do you make garments for men? oh, be careful that you find a garment for yourself for ever.

Are you busy in building all day long, laying the stone upon its fellow and the mortar in its crevice? Then remember thou art building for eternity too. Oh that thou mayest thyself be built upon a good foundation! Oh that thou mayest build thereon, not wood, hay, or stubble, but gold, and silver, and precious stones, and things that will abide the fire! Take care man lest thou shouldest be God's scaffold, lest thou shouldest be used on earth to be a scaffolding for building his church, and when his church is built thou shouldest be

cast down and burned up with fire unquenchable. Take heed that thou art built upon a rock, and not upon the sand, and that the vermillion cement of the Saviour's precious blood unites thee to the foundation of the building, and to every stone thereof.

Art thou a jeweller, and dost thou cut thy gem and polish the diamond from day to day? Would to God thou wouldest take warning from the contrast which thou presentest to the stone on which thou dost exercise thy craft. Thou cuttest it, and it glitters the more thou dost cut it; but though thou hast been cut and ground, though thou hast had cholera and fever, and hast been at death's door many a day, thou art none the brighter, but the duller, for alas! thou art no diamond. Thou art but the pebble-stone of the brook, and in the day when God makes up his jewels he shall not enclose thee in the casket of his treasures; for thou art not one of the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold. But be thy situation what it may, be thy calling what it may, there is a continual sermon preached to thy conscience. I could that thou wouldest now from this time forth open both eye and ear, and see and hear the things that God would teach thee.

And now, dropping the similitude while the clock shall tick but a few times more, let us put the matter thus--Sinner, thou art as yet without God and without Christ; thou art liable to death every hour. Thou canst not tell but that thou mayest be in the flames of hell before the clock shall strike ONE to-day. Thou art to-day "condemned already," because thou believest not in the Son of God. And Jesus Christ saith to thee this day, "Oh, that thou wouldest consider thy latter end!" He cries to thee this morning, "How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." I entreat you, consider your ways. If it be worth while to make your bed in hell do it. If the pleasures of this world are worth being damned to all

eternity for enjoying them, if heaven be a cheat and hell a delusion, go on in your sins. But, if there be hell for sinners and heaven for repenting ones, and if thou must dwell a whole eternity in one place or the other, without similitude, I put a plain question to thee--Art thou wise in living as thou dost, without thought,--careless, and godless? Wouldest thou ask now the way of salvation? It is simply this--"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." He died; he rose again; thou art to believe him to be thine. Thou art to believe that he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. But, more than that, believing that to be a fact, thou art to cast thy soul upon that fact and trust to him, sink or swim. Spirit of God! help us each to do this and by similitude, or by providence, or by thy prophets, bring us each to thyself and save us eternally, and unto thee shall be the glory.

Chapter 42

Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility

A Sermon

(No. 207)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 1, 1858, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."--Romans 10:20-21.

DOUBTLESS THESE WORDS primarily refer to the casting away of the Jews, and to the choosing of the Gentiles. The Gentiles were a people who sought not after God, but lived in idolatry; nevertheless, Jehovah was pleased in these latter times to send the gospel of his grace to them: while the Jews who had long enjoyed the privileges of the Word of God, on account of their disobedience and rebellion were cast away. I believe, however, that while this is the primary object of the words of our text, yet, as Calvin says, the truth taught in the text is a type of a universal fact. As God did choose the people who knew him not, so hath he chosen, in the abundance of his grace, to manifest his salvation to men who are out of the way; while, on the other hand, the men who are lost, after having heard the Word, are lost because of their wilful sin; for God doth all the day long "stretch forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. I am taught in one book to believe that what I sow I

shall reap: I am taught in another place, that "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." I see in one place, God presiding over all in providence; and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there was no presidence of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to Atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free enough to be responsible, I am driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

Now, this morning I am about to consider the two doctrines. In the 20th verse, we have taught us the doctrines of sovereign grace--"But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." In the next verse, we have the doctrine of man's guilt in rejecting God. "To Israel he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and

gainsaying people."

I. First, then, DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AS EXEMPLIFIED IN SALVATION. If any man be saved, he is saved by Divine grace, and by Divine grace alone; and the reason of his salvation is not to be found in him, but in God. We are not saved as the result of anything that we do or that we will; but we will and do as the result of God's good pleasure, and the work of his grace in our hearts. No sinner can prevent God; that is, he cannot go before him, cannot anticipate him; God is always first in the matter of salvation. He is before our convictions, before our desires, before our fears, before our hopes. All that is good or ever will be good in us, is preceded by the grace of God, and is the effect of a Divine cause within.

Now in speaking of God's gracious acts of salvation, this morning, I notice first, that they are entirely unmerited. You will see that the people here mentioned certainly did not merit God's grace. They found him, but they never sought for him; he was made manifest to them, but they never asked for him. There never was a man saved yet who merited it. Ask all the saints of God, and they will tell you that their former life was spent in the lusts of the flesh; that in the days of their ignorance, they revolted against God and turned back from his ways, that when they were invited to come to him they despised the invitation, and, when warned, cast the warning behind their back. They will tell you that their being drawn by God, was not the result of any merit before conversion; for some of them, so far from having any merit, were the very vilest of the vile: they plunged into the very kennel of sin; they were not ashamed of all the things of which it would be a shame for us to speak; they were ringleaders in crime, very princes in the ranks of the enemy; and yet sovereign grace came to them, and they were brought to know the Lord. They will tell you that

it was not the result of anything good in their disposition, for although they trust that there is now something excellent implanted in them, yet in the days of their flesh they could see no one quality which was not perverted to the service of Satan. Ask them whether they think they were chosen of God because of their courage; they will tell you, no; if they had courage it was defaced, for they were courageous to do evil. Question them whether they were chosen of God because of their talent; they will tell you, no; they had that talent, but they prostituted it to the service of Satan. Question them whether they were chosen because of the openness and generosity of their disposition; they will tell you that that very openness of temper, and that very generosity of disposition, led them to plunge deeper into the depths of sin, than they otherwise would have done, for they were "hail fellow, well met," with every evil man, and ready to drink and join every jovial party which should come in their way. There was in them no reason whatever why God should have mercy upon them, and the wonder to them is that he did not cut them down in the midst of their sins, blot out their names from the book of life, and sweep them into the gulf where the fire burneth. that shall devour the wicked. But some have said that God chooses his people because he foresees that after he chooses them, they will do this, that, and the other, which shall be meritorious and excellent. Refer again to the people of God, and they will tell you that since their conversion they have had much to weep over. Although they can rejoice that God has begun the good work in them, they often tremble lest it should not be God's work at all. They will tell you that if they are abundant in faith yet there are times when they are superabundant in unbelief; that if sometimes they are full of works of holiness, yet there are times when they weep many tears to think that those very acts of holiness were stained with sin.

The Christian will tell you that he weeps over his very tears; he feels that there is filth even in the best of desires; that he has to pray to God to forgive his prayers, for there is sin in the midst of his supplications, and that he has to sprinkle even his best offerings with the atoning blood, for he never else can bring an offering without spot or blemish. You shall appeal to the brightest saint, to the man whose presence in the midst of society is like the presence of an angel, and he will tell you that he is still ashamed of himself. "Ah!" he will say, "you may praise me, but I cannot praise myself, you speak well of me, you applaud me, but if you knew my heart you would see abundant reason to think of me as a poor sinner saved by grace, who hath nothing whereof to glory, and must bow his head and confess his iniquities in the sight of God." Grace, then is entirely unmerited.

Again, the grace of God is sovereign. By that word we mean that God has an absolute right to give that grace where he chooses, and to withhold it when he pleases. He is not bound to give it to any man, much less to all men; and if he chooses to give it to one man and not to another, his answer is, "Is thine eye evil because mine eye is good? Can I not do as I will with mine own? I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Now, I want you to notice the sovereignty of Divine grace as illustrated in the text: "I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after thee." You would imagine that if God gave his grace to any he would wait until he found them earnestly seeking him. You would imagine that God in the highest heavens would say, "I have mercies, but I will leave men alone, and when they feel their need of these mercies and seek me diligently with their whole heart, day and night, with tears, and vows, and supplications, then will I bless them, but not before." But, beloved, God saith no such thing. It is true he doth bless them that cry unto

him, but he blesses them before they cry, for their cries are not their own cries, but cries which he has put into their lips; their desires are not of their own growth, but desires which he has cast like good seed into the soil of their hearts. God saves the men that do not seek him. Oh, wonder of wonders! It is mercy indeed when God saves a seeker; but how much greater mercy when he seeks the lost himself! Mark the parable of Jesus Christ concerning the lost sheep; it does not run thus: "A certain man had a hundred sheep, and one of them did go astray. And he tarried at home, and lo, the sheep came back, and he received it joyfully and said to his friends, rejoice, for the sheep that I have lost is come back." No; he went after the sheep: it never would have come after him; it would have wandered farther and farther away. He went after it; over hills of difficulty, down valleys of despondency he pursued its wandering feet, and at last he laid hold of it; he did not drive it before him, he did not lead it, but he carried it himself all the way, and when he brought it home he did not say, the sheep is come back," but, "I have found the sheep which was lost." Men do not seek God first; God seeks them first; and if any of you are seeking him to-day it is because he has first sought you. If you are desiring him he desired you first, and your good desires and earnest seeking will not be the cause of your salvation, but the effects of previous grace given to you. "Well," says another, "I should have thought that although the Saviour might not require an earnest seeking and sighing and groaning, and a continuous searching, after him, yet certainly he would have desired and demanded that every man, before he had grace, should ask for it." That, indeed, beloved, seems natural, and God will give grace to them that ask for it; but mark, the text says that he was manifested "to them that asked not for him." That is to say, before we ask, God gives us grace. The only reason why any man

ever begins to pray is because God has put previous grace in his heart which leads him to pray. I remember, when I was converted to God, I was an Arminian thoroughly. I thought I had begun the good work myself, and I used sometimes to sit down and think, "Well, I sought the Lord four years before I found him," and I think I began to compliment myself upon the fact that I had perseveringly entreated of him in the midst of much discouragement. But one day the thought struck me, "How was it you came to seek God?" and in an instant the answer came from my soul, "Why, because he led me to do it; he must first have shown me my need of him, or else I should never have sought him; he must have shown me his preciousness, or I never should have thought him worth seeking;" and at once I saw the doctrines of grace as clear as possible. God must begin. Nature can never rise above itself. You put water into a reservoir, and it will rise as high as that, but no higher if let alone. Now, it is not in human nature to seek the Lord. Human nature is depraved, and therefore, there must be the extraordinary pressure of the Holy Spirit put upon the heart to lead us first to ask for mercy. But mark, we do not know an thing about that, while the Spirit is operating; we find that out afterwards. We ask as much as if we were asking all of ourselves. Our business is to seek the Lord as if there were no Holy Spirit at all. But although we do not know it, there must always be a previous motion of the Spirit in our heart, before there will be a motion of our heart towards him.

"No sinner can be beforehand with thee,
Thy grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

Let me give you an illustration. You see that man on his horse surrounded by a body of troopers. How proud he is, and how he reins up his horse with conscious dignity. Sir, what have you got there? What are those despatches you treasure up with so much care? "Oh, sir, I

have that in my hand that will vex the church of God in Damascus. I have dragged the fellows into the synagogue, both men and women; I have scourged them, and compelled them to blaspheme; and I have this commission from the high priest to drag them to Jerusalem, that I may put them to death." Saul! Saul! have you no love for Christ? "Love to him! No. When they stoned Stephen, I took care of the witnesses' clothes, and I rejoiced to do it. I wish I had had the crucifying of their Master, for I hate them with perfect hatred, and I breathe out threatenings and slaughter against them." What do you say of this man? If he be saved, will you not grant that it must be some Divine sovereignty that converts him? Look at poor Pilate, how much there was that was hopeful in him. He was willing to save the Master, but he feared and trembled. If we had had our choice, we should have said, "Lord, save Pilate, he does not want to kill Christ, he labours to let him escape; but slay the bloodthirsty Saul, he is, the very chief of sinners." "No," says God, "I will do as I will with mine own." The heavens open, and the brightness of glory descends--brighter than the noon-day sun. Stunned with the light he falls to the ground, and a voice is heard addressing him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." He rises up; God appears to him: "Lo, I have made thee a chosen vessel to bear my name among the Gentiles." Is not that sovereignty--sovereign grace, without any previous seeking? God was found of him that sought not for him; he manifested himself to one that asked him not. Some will say, that was it miracle; but it is one that is repeated every day in the week. I knew a man once, who had not been to the house of God for a long time; and one Sunday morning, having been to market to buy a pair of ducks for his Sunday dinner, he happened to see a house of God opened as he was passing by. "Well," he thought, "I will hear what these fellows are

up to." He went inside; the hymn that was being sung struck his attention; he listened to the sermon, forgot his ducks, discovered his own character, went home, and threw himself upon his knees before God, and after a short time it pleased God to give him joy and peace in believing. That man had nothing in him to begin with, nothing that could have led you to imagine he ever would be saved, but simply because God would have it so, he struck the effectual blow of grace, and the man was brought to himself. But we are, each of us who are saved, the very people who are the best illustrations of the matter. To this day, my wonder is, that ever the Lord should have chosen thee. I cannot make it out; and my only answer to the question is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

I have now, I think, stated the doctrine pretty plainly. Let me only say a few words about it. Some people are very much afraid of this truth. They say, "It is true, I dare say, but still you ought not to preach it before a mixed assembly; it is very well for the comfort of God's people, but it is to be very carefully handled, and not to be publicly preached upon." Very well, sir, I leave you to settle that matter with my Master. He gave me this great book to preach from, and I cannot preach from anything else. If he has put anything in it you think is not fit, go and complain to him, and not to me. I am simply his servant, and if his errand that I am to tell is objectionable, I cannot help it. If I send my servant to the door with a message, and he delivers it faithfully, he does not deserve to be scolded. Let me have the blame, not the servant. So I say; blame my Master, and not me, for I do but proclaim his message. "No," says one, "it is not to be preached." But it is to be preached. Every word of God is given by inspiration, and it is profitable for some good end. Does not the Bible say so? Let me tell you, the reason why many of our churches are

declining is just because this doctrine has not been preached. Wherever this doctrine has been upheld. it has always been "Down with Popery." The first reformers held this doctrine and preached it. Well said it Church of England divine to some who railed at him, "Look at your own Luther. Do you not consider him to be the teacher of the Church of England? What Calvin and the other reformers taught is to be found in his book upon the freedom of the will." Besides, we can point you to a string of ministers from the beginning even until now. Talk of apostolic succession! The man who preaches the doctrines of grace has an apostolic succession indeed. Can we not trace our pedigree through a whole line of men like Newton, and Whitfield, and Owen, and Bunyan, straight away on till we come to Calvin, Luther, and Zwingle; and then we can go back from them to Savonarola, to Jerome of Prague, to Huss, and then back to Augustine, the mighty preacher of Christianity; and from St. Augustine to Paul is but one step. We need not be ashamed of our pedigree; although Calvinists are now considered to be heterodox, we are and ever must be orthodox. It is the old doctrine. Go and buy any puritanical book, and see if you can find Arminianism in it. Search all the book stalls over, and see if you can find one large folio book of olden times that anything in it but the doctrine of the free grace of God. Let this once be brought to bear upon the minds of men, and away go the doctrines of penance and confession, away goes paying for the pardon of your sin. If grace be free and sovereign in the hand of God, down goes the doctrine of priestcraft, away go buying and selling indulgences and such like things; they are swept to the four winds of heaven, and the efficacy of good works is dashed in pieces like Dagon before the ark of the Lord. "Well," says one, "I like the doctrine; still there are very few that preach it, and those that do are very high." Very likely; but I care little what anybody calls me. It

signifies very little what men call you. Suppose they call you a "hyper," that does not make you anything wicked, does it? Suppose they call you an Antinomian, that will not make you one. I must confess, however, that there are some men who preach this doctrine who are doing ten thousand times more harm than good, because they don't preach the next doctrine I am going to proclaim, which is just as true. They have this to be the sail. but they have not the other to be the ballast.

They can preach one side but not the other. They can go along with the high doctrine, but they will not preach the whole of the Word. Such men caricature the Word of God. And just let me say here, that it is the custom of a certain body of Ultra-Calvinists, to call those of us who teach that it is the duty of man to repent and believe, "Mongrel Calvinists." If you hear any of them say so, give them my most respectful compliments, and ask them whether they ever read Calvin's works in their lives. Not that I care what Calvin said or did not say; but ask them whether they, ever read his works; and if they say "No," as they must say, for there are forty-eight large voluines, you can tell them, that the man whom they call "a Mongrel Calvinist," though he has not read them all, has read a very good share of them, and knows their spirit; and he knows that he preaches substantially what Calvin preached--that every doctrine he preaches may be found in Calvin's Commentaries on some part of Scripture or other. We are TRUE Calvinists, however. Calvin is nobody to us. Jesus Christ and him crucified, and the old fashioned Bible, are our standards. Beloved, let us take God's Word as it stands. If we find high doctrine there, let it be high; if we find low doctrine, let it be low; let us set up no other standard than the Bible affords.

II. Now then for the second point. "There now," says my ultra friend, "he is going to contradict himself." No, my friend, I am not, I am only

going to contradict you. The second point is MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY. "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Now, these people whom God had cast away had been wooed, had been sought, had been entreated to be saved; but they would not, and inasmuch as they were not saved, it was the effect of their disobedience and their gainsaying. That lies clearly enough in the text. When God sent the prophets to Israel, and stretched forth his hands, what was it for? What did he wish, thein to come to him for? Why, to be saved. "No," says one, "it was for temporal mercies." Not so, my friend; the verse before is concerning spiritual mercies, and so is this one, for they refer to the same thing. Now, was God sincere in his offer? God forgive the man that dares to say he was not. God is undoubtedly sincere in every act he did. He sent his prophets, he entreated the people of Israel to lay hold on spiritual things, but they would not, and though he stretched out his hands all the day long, yet they were "a disobedient and gainsaying people," and would not have his love; and on their head rests their blood.

Now let me notice the wooing of God and of what sort it is. First, it was the most affectionate wooing in the world. Lost sinners who sit under the sound of the gospel are not lost for the want of the most affectionate invitation. God says he stretched out his hands. You know what that means. You have seen the child who is disobedient and will not come to his father. The father puts out his hands, and says, "Come, my child, come; I am ready to forgive you." The tear is in his eye, and his bowels move with compassion, and he says, "Come, come." God says this is what he did--"he stretched out his hands." That is what he has done to some of you. You that are not saved to-day are without excuse, for God stretched out his hands to you, and he said, "Come, come." Long have you sat beneath the sound of the ministry, and it has been a

faithful one, I trust, and a weeping one. Your minister has not forgotten to pray for your souls in secret or to weep over you when no eye saw him, and he has endeavoured to persuade you as an ambassador from God. God is my witness, I have sometimes stood in this pulpit, and I could not have pleaded harder for my own life than I have pleaded with you. In Christ's name, I have cried, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I have wept over you as the Saviour did, and used his words on his behalf, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And you know that your conscience has often been touched; you have often been moved; you could not resist it. God was so kind to you; he invited you so affectionately by the Word; he dealt so gently with you by his providence; his hands were stretched out, and you could hear his voice speaking in your ears, "Come unto me, come: come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." You have heard him cry, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." You have heard him say with all the affection of a father's heart, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh! God does plead with men that they would be saved, and this day he says to every one of you, "Repent, and be converted for the remission of your sins. Turn ye unto me. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways." And with love divine he woos you as a father woos his child, putting out his hands and crying, "Come unto me, come unto me." "No," says one strong-doctrine man, "God never invites all men to himself; he invites none but certain characters." Stop, sir, that is all you know about it.

Did you ever read that parable where it is said, My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage." And they that were bidden would not come. And did you never read that they all began to make excuse, and that they were punished because they did not accept the invitations. Now, if the invitation is not to be made to anybody, but to the man who will accept it, how can that parable be true? The fact is, the oxen and fatlings are killed; the wedding feast is ready, and the trumpet sounds, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come and eat, come and drink." Here are the provisions spread, here is an all-sufficiency; the invitation is free; it is a great invitation. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And that invitation is couched in tender words, "Come to me, my child, come to me." "All day long I have stretched forth my hands."

And note again, this invitation was very frequent. The words, "all the day long," may be translated "daily"--"Daily have I stretched forth my hands." Sinner, God has not called you once to come, and then let you alone, but every day has he been at you; every day has conscience spoken to you; every day has providence warned you, and every Sabbath has the Word of God wooed you. Oh! how much some of you will have to account for at God's great bar! I cannot now read your characters, but I know there are some of you who will have a terrible account at last. All the day long has God been wooing you. From the first dawn of your life, he wooed you through your mother, and she used to put your little hands together, and teach you to say,

"Gentle Jesus meek and mild,
Look upon a little child,
Pity my simplicity;
Suffer me to come to thee."

And in your boyhood God was still stretching out his hands after you. How your Sunday-school teacher endeavoured to bring you to the Saviour! How often your youthful heart was affected; but you put all that away, and you are still untouched by it. How often did your mother speak to you, and your father warn you; and you have forgotten the prayer in that bed-room when you were sick, when your mother kissed your burning forehead, knelt down and prayed to God to spare your life, and then added that prayer, "Lord, save my boy's soul!" And you recollect the Bible she gave you, when you first went out apprentice, and the prayer she wrote on that yellow front leaf. When she gave it, you did not perhaps know, but you may now; how earnestly she longed after you, that you might be formed anew in Christ Jesus; how she followed you with her prayers, and how she entreated with her God for you. And you have not yet surely forgotten how many Sabbaths you have spent, and how many times you have been warned. Why you have had waggon-loads of sermons wasted on you. A hundred and four sermons you have heard every year, and some of you more, and yet you are still just what you were.

But sinners, sermon hearing is an awful thing unless it is blessed to our souls. If God has kept on stretching out his hands every day and all the day, it will be a hard thing for you when you shall be justly condemned not only for your breaches of the law, but for your wilful rejection of the gospel. It is probable that God will keep on stretching out his hands to you until your hairs grow grey, still continually inviting you: and perhaps when you are nearing death he will still say, "Come unto me, come unto me." But if you still persist in hardening your heart, if still you reject Christ, I beseech you let nothing make you imagine that you shall go unpunished. Oh! I do tremble sometimes when I think of that class of ministers who tell sinners that they are not guilty if they do not seek the Saviour. How they shall be

found innocent at God's great day I do not know. It seems to be a fearful thing that they should be lulling poor souls into sleep by telling them it is not their duty to seek Christ and repent, but that they may do as they like about that, and that when they perish they will be none the more guilty for having heard the Word. My Master did not say that. Remember how he said, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Jesus did not talk thus when he spoke to Chorazin and Bethsaida; for he said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." It was not the way Paul preached. He did not tell sinners that there was no guilt in despising the cross. Hear the apostle's words once more: "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Sinner, at the great day of God thou must give an account for every warning thou hast ever had, for every time thou hast read thy Bible, ay, and for every time thou hast neglected to read it; for every Sunday when the house of God was open and thou didst neglect to avail thyself of the opportunity of hearing the Word, and for every time thou didst hear it and didst not improve it. Ye who are careless hearers, are tying faggots for your own burning for ever. Ye that hear and straightway forget, or hear with levity, are

digging for yourselves a pit into which ye must be cast. Remember, no one will be responsible for your damnation but yourself, at the last great day. God will not be responsible for it. "As I live saith the Lord"--and that is a great oath--"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." God has done much for you. He sent you his Gospel. You are not born in a heathen land; he has given you the Book of Books; he has given you an enlightened conscience; and if you perish under the sound of the ministry, you perish more fearfully and terribly, than if you had perished anywhere else.

This doctrine is as much God's Word as the other. You ask me to reconcile the two. I answer, they do not want any reconcilement; I never tried to reconcile them to myself, because I could never see a discrepancy. If you begin to put fifty or sixty quibbles to me, I cannot give any answer. Both are true; no two truths can be inconsistent with each other; and what you have to do is to believe them both. With the first one, the saint has most to do. Let him praise the free and sovereign grace of God, and bless his name. With the second, the sinner has the most to do. O sinner, humble thyself under the mighty hand of God, when thou thinkest of how often he hath shown his love to thee, by bidding thee come to himself, and yet how often thou hast spurned his Word and refused his mercy, and turned a deaf ear to every invitation, and hast gone thy way to rebel against a God of love, and violate the commands of him that loved thee.

And now, how shall I conclude? My first exhortation shall be to Christian people. My dear friends, I beseech you do not in any way give yourselves lip to any system of faith apart from the Word of God. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants; I am the successor of the great and venerated Dr. Gill, whose theology is almost

universally received among the stronger Calvinistic churches; but although I venerate his memory, and believe his teachings, yet he is not my Rabbi. What you find in God's Word is for you to believe and to receive. Never be frightened at a doctrine; and above all, never be frightened at a name. Some one said to me the other day, that he thought the truth lay somewhere between the two extremes. He meant right, but I think he was wrong, I do not think the truth lies between the two extremes, but in them both. I believe the higher a man goes the better, when he is preaching the matter of salvation. The reason why a man is saved is grace, grace, grace; and you may go as high as you like there. But when you come to the question as to why men are damned, then the Arminian is far more right than the Antinomian. I care not for any denomination or party, I am as high as Huntingdon upon the matter of salvation, but question me about damnation, and you will get a very different answer. By the grace of God I ask no man's applause, I preach the Bible as I find it. Where we get wrong is where the Calvinist begins to meddle with the question of damnation, and interferes with the justice of God; or when the Arminian denies the doctrine of grace.

My second exhortation is,--Sinners, I beseech every one of you who are unconverted and ungodly, this morning to put away every form and fashion of excuse that the devil would have you make concerning your being unconverted. Remember, that all the teaching in the world can never excuse you for being enemies to God by wicked works. When we beseech you to be reconciled to him, it is because we know you will never be in your proper place until you are reconciled. God has made you; can it be right that you should disobey him? God feeds you every day: can it be right that you should still live in disobedience to him? Remember, when the heavens shall be on a blaze, when Christ shall come to judge the earth in righteousness and his people with equity, there

will not be one excuse that you can make which will be valid at the last great day. If you should attempt to say, "Lord, I have never heard the word;" his answer would be, "Thou didst hear it; thou heardest it plainly." "But Lord, I had an evil will." "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee; thou hadst that evil will, and I condemn thee for it. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "But Lord," some will say, "I was not predestinated." "What hadst thou to do with that? Thou didst; do according to thine own will when thou didst rebel. Thou wouldest not come unto me, and now I destroy thee for ever. Thou hast broken my law--on thine own head be the guilt." If a sinner could say at the great day, "Lord, I could not be saved anyhow his torment in hell would be mitigated by that thought: but this shall be the very edge of the sword, and the very burning of the fire"--Ye knew your duty and ye did it not: ye trampled on everything that was holy; ye neglected the Saviour, and how shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?"

Now, with regard to myself; you may some of you go away and say, that I was Antinomian in the first part of the sermon and Arminian at the end. I care not. I beg of you to search the Bible for yourselves. To the law and to the testimony; if I speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in me. I am willing to come to that test. Have nothing to do with me where I have nothing to do with Christ. Where I separate from the truth, cast my words away. But if what I say be God's teaching, I charge you, by him that sent me, give these things your thoughts, and turn unto the Lord with all your hearts.

Chapter 43

Righteous Hatred

A Sermon

(No. 208)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 8, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."--Psalm 97:10.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION is a golden chain with which the hands of men are fettered from all hatred. The spirit of Christ is love. Wherever he governs, love reigns as a necessary consequence. The Christian man is not allowed to hate any one. Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy; but I say unto you," said Jesus, "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." The word "hate" must be cut out of the language of a Christian, except it be used with one meaning and intention only, and that, the meaning of my text. Thou hast no right, O Christian, to tolerate within thy bosom wrath, malice, anger, harshness, or uncharitableness, towards any creature that God's hands have made. When thou hatest the man's sins, thou art not to hate him, but to love the sinner, even as Christ loved sinners and came to seek and save them. When thou hatest a man's false doctrine, thou art still to love the man, and hate his doctrine even out of love to his soul, with an earnest desire that he may be reclaimed from his error, and brought into the way of truth. Thou hast no right to excrete thy hatred upon any creature, however fallen or debased, however much he may irritate thy temper, or injure thee in thy estate or reputation.

Still hatred is a power of manhood, and we believe that all powers of

manhood are to be exercised, and may every one of them be exercised as in the fear of God. It is possible to be angry, and yet sin not, and it is possible to hate, and yet not be guilty of sin, but be positively performing a duty. Christian man, thou mayest have hatred in thy heart, if thou wilt only allow it to run in one stream, then it shall not do mischief, but it shall even do good--"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." As much as the revengeful man hates his enemy, so much hate thou evil. As much as contending despots in battle hate one another, end only seek an opportunity to meet each other face to face, so hate thou evil. As much as hell hateth heaven, and as much as heaven hateth hell, so much mayest thou hate evil. The whole of that passion which, when let loose in a wrong track, becomes as a fierce lion on its prey, thou mayest keep in leash, (like a noble lion, only destitute of ferocity) against any whom it should not hurt, and thou mayest let it slip against the enemies of the Lord thy God and do great exploits thereby. Tell me of a man who is never angry, that man has not any true zeal for God. We must sometimes be angry against sin. When we see evil, though not vindictive against the persons who commit it, yet angry against the evil we must be; we must hate wickedness always. Doth not David say, "I hate them with a perfect hatred yea, I count them mine enemies." We are to love our enemies, but we are to hate God's enemies. We are to love sinners, but we are to hate sin. As much as it is in the power of man to hate, so much are we to hate evil in every form and fashion.

The duty here enjoined is a general one to all God's people. We are to hate all evi--not some evils. It was said, you know, long ago, of certain professors, that they did

"Compound for sins they were inclined to
By damning those they had no mind to."

And there are some, I dare say, at this day, who think others extremely

guilty for committing iniquities which they do not care to commit, but they themselves commit other sins with which they deal very gently. O Christian, never take hold of sin, except with a gauntlet on thy hand; never go to it with the kid-glove of friendship, never talk delicately of it; but always hate it in every shape. If it come to thee as a little fox, take heed of it, for it will spoil the grapes; if it come to thee as a warring lion, seeking whom it may devour; or if it come with the hug of a bear, seeking by a pretended affection to entice thee into sin, smite it, for its hug is death, and its clasp destruction.

Sin of every kind thou art to war with--of lip, of hand, of heart. Sin, however gilded over with profit, however varnished with the seemliness of morality, however much it may be complimented by the great, or however popular it may be with the multitude, thou art to hate it everywhere, in all its disguises, every day in the week, and in every place. War to the knife with sin! We are to draw the sword, and throw away the scabbard. With all thy hosts, O hell, with every brat of thy offspring, O Satan, we are to be at enmity. Not one sin are we to spare, but against the whole are we to proclaim an utter and entire war of extermination.

In endeavoring to address you upon this subject, I shall first of all begin with it at home: Christian man, hate all evil in thyself. And then, secondly, we will let it go abroad: Christian man, hate all evil in other people, wherever thou seest it.

I. First, then, CHRISTIAN MAN HATE ALL EVIL IN THYSELF. I will strive now to excite thy hate against it, and then I will try to urge thee and assist thee to destroy it.

Thou hast good reason to hate all evil; greater reason than ever the most injured man could bring forward for the hatred of his enemies. Consider what evil has already done thee. Oh! what a world of mischief

sin has brought into thy heart! Sin stopped up your eyes, so that you could not see the beauty of the Saviour; it thrust its finger into your ears, so that you could not hear the sweet invitations of Jesus: sin turned your feet into the way of evil, and filled your hands with filthiness. nay, worse than that sin poured poison into the very fountain of your being; it tainted your heart and made it "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Oh! what a creature thou wast when sin had done its utmost with thee before Divine grace began to mend thee! Thou wast an heir of wrath even as others; thou didst "run with the multitude to do evil;" thy mouth was an "open sepulcher." thou didst flatter with thy tongue, and there is nought that can be said of thy fellow-creature living in sin, that could not be said of thee. You must plead guilty to the charge, "such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Oh! you have good cause for hating sin when you look back to the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Such mischief did evil do you that your soul would have been everlastingly lost, had not omnipotent love interfered to redeem you. Christian, hate evil. It has been your murderer; it has put its dagger to your heart; it has thrust poison into your mouth; it has done you all the mischief that hell itself could do--mischief which would have wrought your eternal undoing, had not the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ prevented. Thou hast good reason, then, to hate sin.

Again, Christian, hate evil, for it would be unbecoming if thou didst not when thou considerest thy position in life. A Christian belongs to the blood royal of the universe. Beggars' children may run about the street with unkempt hair and shoeless feet; but should princes of the blood revel in uncleanness? We do not expect to see monarchs' children

apparelled in rags; we do not expect to see them rolling themselves in the mire of the streets. And thou, Christian, thou art one of God's aristocracy, a prince of the blood of heaven, a friend of angels, yea, and a friend of God. Good reason hast thou to hate all evil. Why, man, thou art a Nazarite, dedicated to God. Now, to the Nazarite it was enjoined that not only he should not drink wine, but he was not even to eat the grape, nor might he so much as taste the bark of the vine, or anything whatsoever that grew upon it; he must neither touch nor handle it, or else he would be defiled. So is it with thee; thou art the Lord's Nazarite, set apart for himself. Avoid, then, every false way. Let the appearance of evil be kept from thee: it is beneath thy dignity to indulge in the sins which disgrace other men. Thou art not snob as they are; thou art of a nobler race, thou hast sprung from the loins of the Son of God: is he not shine everlasting Father, even he who is the Prince of Peace? I beseech thee, never demean thy royal lineage, nor let thy holy ancestry be stained. You are a peculiar people, a royal generation; wherefore, then, should ye stain your garments in the dust. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

Again, you have good reason to hate sin, because it weakens you. Go when you have committed a folly, retire to your chamber and fall upon your knees in prayer. Before the sin was committed, your prayer reached the ear of God and the blessings came down swift as the lightning-flash; but now your knees are weak, your heart refuses to desire, and your tongue refuses to express the faint desires you strive to reach. You attempt, but you fail; you groan, but heaven is shut against your cry; you weep, but your tear penetrates not so as to obtain an answer from the breast of God. There you are; you bring your wants before the throne, and you carry them away again. Prayer becomes a painful duty instead of a most gracious and excellent privilege. This

is the result of sin. "Sin will make thee leave off praying, or else praying will make thee leave off sinning." Oh! thou canst never be strong in sin and strong in prayer. As long as thou indulgest in lust, or sin, or wantonness of any kind, thy power in prayer is taken away, and thy lips are shut when thou attemptest to approach thy God. Or if thou willest, try another exercise: after committing a sin, go into the world and seek to do good. Why, man, thou canst not do it; thou hast lost the power to cleanse others when them art impure thyself. What! can I with filthy fingers wash the face of others? Shall I essay to plough another man's field while my own is lying fallow, and the tall, rank thistle and weed are overspreading it? I am powerless to do good until I have first cleansed my own vessel and made that pure. An unholy minister must be an unsuccessful one, and an unholy Christian must be an unfruitful one. Unless thou desirest to have thy sinews loosed, to have the marrow of thy bones scorched from thee, unless thou willest that the sap of thy being should be dried up, I beseech thee, hate sin, for sin can debilitate and weaken thee so much that thou shalt drag along a miserable existence, the very skeleton of a soul instead of flourishing in the ways of thy God. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

In the next place. you will find it extremely useful if, in order to get rid of sin, you are not content with merely restraining it, but always seeking to have it taken clean away by the Holy Spirit. You know, mere moralists restrain their sins, like a river that has locks and dykes: the water is kept from flowing, but then it gradually swells upward and upward, till by-and-bye it overflows with terrible fury. Now, don't be content with mere restraining grace; that will never purge you, for the sin may be there though it break not out. Pray to God that your sin may be taken away, and that though the remnant and the root thereof remain, though the channel be there, yet the stream

may be dried up like the stream of the Euphrates before the presence of the Lord your God.

Again, ye have good reason to hate evil, for if you indulge in it you will have to smart for it. God will never kill his children, he has put his sword away; he sheathed that once for all in the breast of Christ, but he has a rod, and that rod sometimes he lays on with a very heavy hand, and maketh the whole body to tingle. The Lord will not be angry with his people so as to cast them off but he will be so angry with them that they shall have to cry, "Heal the bones that thou hast broken, and restore my soul. O Lord my God." Ah! you that ever have backslidden, you know what it is to be well scourged for when Christ's sheep run way from the shepherd he will not let them perish, but he will often allow the black dog to bring them back in his mouth; he will allow sore trouble and sharp affliction to lay hold upon them, so that they are cast down almost to the gates of hell. A Christian shall never be destroyed, but he shall almost be destroyed; his life shall not totally fail him, but he shall be so beaten and bruised that he shall scarcely know whether he has any life left in him at all. Hate sin, O Christian, unless thou desirest trouble. If thou wouldst strew thy path with thorns and put nettles in thy death pillow, then live in sin; but if thou wouldst dwell in the heavenly places, hearing the everlasting chimes of Paradise ringing in thine own heart, then walk in all the ways of holiness unto the end. Christian man, hate evil.

So far, I have only addressed you selfishly; I have shown you how evil may hurt yourselves; now I will address you with another argument. Christian, hate evil; hate it in yourself, because evil in you will do hurt to others. What hurt the sin of a Christian does to the children of God! The sharpest trials God's church has ever had, has come from her own sons and daughters. I see her, I see her with her garments rent

and defiled; I see her hands all bleeding, and her back scarred. O church of the living God, thou fairest among women, how art thou wounded! Where hast thou received these wounds? Has the infidel spit in thy face and reviled thee? Has the Arian rent thy garments? Has the Socinian cast filth upon the whiteness of thine apparel? Who hath wounded thy hands, and who hath scarred thy back? Hath this been done by the impious and profane? "No," saith she, "these are the wounds I have received in the house of my friends. Against my enemies I wear a secret armor, but my friends penetrate within it, and cut me to the very quick." The bishops of God's church, the professed leaders of the Lord's hosts, the pretended followers of the Redeemer, have done more damage to the church than all the church's enemies. If the church were not a divine thing, protected by God, she must have ceased to exist, merely through the failure and iniquity of her own professed friends. I do not wonder that the church of God survived martyrdom and death; but I do marvel that she has survived the unfaithfulness of her own children, and the cruel backsliding of her own members. O Christians, ye do not know how you cause God's name to be blasphemed, how you stain his church, and bring dishonor upon her escutcheon, when you indulge in sin. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil"

Again, hate it not only for the church's sake, but for the poor sinner's sake. How many sinners every year are driven away from all thought of religion by the inconsistency of professors! And have you ever noticed how the world always delights to chronicle the inconsistency of a professor? I saw only yesterday an account in the paper of a wretch who had committed lust, and it was said that "he had a very sanctified appearance." Ay, I thought, that is the way the press always likes to speak; but I very much question whether there are many editors that know what a sanctified appearance means; at least they

will have to look a long time among their own class before they find many that have got much sanctification. However, the reporter put it down that the man had "a sanctified appearance;" and of course it was intended as a fling against all those who make a profession of religion, by making others believe that this man was a professor too. And really the world has had some grave cause for it, for we have seen professing Christians in these days that are an utter disgrace to Christianity, and there are things done in the name of Jesus Christ that it would be a shame to do in the name of Beelzebub. There are things done, too, by those who are accounted members of the church of our Lord Jesus, Methinks, so shameful that Pandemonium itself would scarcely own them. The world has had much cause to complain of the church; O children of God, be careful. The world has a lynx eye: it will see your faults; it will be impossible to hide them; and it will magnify your faults. It will slander you if you have none; give it at least no ground to work upon; "let your garments be always white;" walk in the fear of the Lord, and let this be your daily prayer, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

Once more: I have one argument that methinks must touch your hearts and make you hate evil. You have a friend, the best friend you ever had. I know him, and have loved him, and he has loved me. There was a day, as I took my walks abroad, when I came hard by a spot for ever engraved upon my memory, for there I saw this friend my best, my only friend, murdered. I stooped down in sad affright and looked at him. He was basely murdered. I saw that his hands had been pierced with rough iron nails, and his feet had been rent with the same. There was misery in his dead countenance so terrible that I scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger, his back was red with bloody scourges, and his brow had a circle of wounds about it: clearly could

one see that these had been pierced by thorns. I shuddered, for I had known this friend full well. He never had a fault; he was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy. Who could have injured him? For he never injured any man: all his life long he "went about doing good;" he had healed the sick, he had fed the hungry, he had raised the dead: for which of these works did they kill him? He had never breathed out anything else but love. And as I looked into the poor sorrowful face so full of agony and yet so full of love, I wondered who could have been a wretch so vile us to pierce hands like his. I said within myself "Where live these traitors? Where can they live? Who are these that could have smitten such an one as this?" Had they murdered an oppressor we might have forgiven them; had they slain one who had indulged in vice or villainy, it might have been his due desert; had it been a murderer and a rebel, or one who had committed sedition, we would have said, "Bury his corpse: justice has at last given him his due." But when thou wast slain, my best, my only beloved, where lodged the traitors? Let me seize them, and they shall be put to death. If there be torments that I can devise, surely they shall endure them all. Oh! what jealousy; what revenge I felt! If I might but find these murderers what would I do with them! And as I looked upon that corpse I heard a footstep, and wondered where it was. I listened, and I clearly perceived that the murderer was close at hand. It was dark, and I groped about to find him. I found that somehow or other wherever I put my hand I could not meet with him, for he was nearer to me than my hand would go. At last I put my hand upon my breast. "I have thee now," said I; for lo! he was in my own heart; the murderer was hiding within my own bosom, dwelling in the recesses of my inmost soul. Ah! then I wept indeed, that I, in the very presence of my murdered Master, should be harbouring the murderer; and I felt myself most guilty while I bowed over his corpse

and sung that plaintive hymn:

"Twere you my sins, my cruel sins,

His chief tormentors were:

Each of my crimes became a nail

And unbelief the spear."

Revenge! revenge! Ye that fear the Lord, and love his name, take vengeance on your sins, and hate all evil.

Now, my beloved, my next endeavor must be to urge you to put your sins to death. What shall be done in order that you and I may get rid of our sins? There is the axe of the law; shall we bring that out and smite our sins with it? Alas! they will never die under the blow of Moses.

"Law and terrors do but harden

All the while they work alone."

I have often striven to overcome sin by the thought of the punishment attached to it but I have very seldom found myself in a frame of mind in which my heart would receive that reason. I believe that to the most of us the terrors of the law, although they ought to be exceedingly terrible, have but little power to check us from sin. I met with a story the other day which showed me, if nothing else, the utter powerlessness of terror for curbing the heart from sin. It is pretended by some that it is necessary that men who commit murder should be capitally executed in order to deter others from crime. There is not, however I believe, the shadow of a hope that the execution of a murderer will ever produce any such effect. Three traitors were once executed in this country--Thistlewood was one of them,--and when the executioner smote off the head of the first man and held it up, saying, "this is the head of a traitor," there was a shudder running through the multitude, a chill, cold feeling which was perceptible even by the executioner. When he killed the next man, and held up the head in like

manner, it was evidently looked upon with intense curiosity and awe, but with nothing like so much thrilling caution as the first. And strange to say, when the third head was smitten off, the man was about to hold it up, but he let it drop, and the crowd with one voice cried, "Aha! butter fingers!" and laughed. Would you have supposed that an English crowd, on seeing a poor man die, could have become so hardened in so short a time, as actually to have made a joke of such an incident? Yet so it is; law and terrors never do and never will produce any other effect than to drive men to sin and make them think lightly of it. I would not, therefore, advise a Christian, if he would get rid of his sins, to indulge continually in the thought of the punishment; but let him adopt a better process: let him go and sit down at the cross of Christ, and endeavor to draw evangelical repentance from the atonement which Christ has offered for our guilt. I know of no cure for sin in a Christian like an abundant intercourse with the Lord Jesus. Dwell much with him, and it is impossible for you to dwell much with sin. What! my Lord Jesus, can I sit at the foot of that tree accursed, and see thy blood flowing for my guilt, and after that indulge in transgression? Yes, I may do it, for I am vile enough for anything, but still this shall be the great clog upon the wheel of my sin, and this repress my lust the most of all,--the thought that Jesus Christ hath lived and died for me.

Again, if you would cheek sin, endeavor to get as much light as you can upon it. The housewife, when she is busy about her house, with curtains drawn, she may have dusted all the tables, and think everything looks clean; but she opens a little corner of the window, and in streams a ray of light, in which ten thousand grains of dust are dancing up and down. "Ah!" she thinks, "my room is not so clean as I thought it was; here is dust where I thought there was none." Now, endeavor to get, not

the farthing rushlight of your own judgment, but the sunlight of the Holy Spirit, streaming upon your heart, and it will help you to detect your sin--and detection of sin is half-way towards its cure. Look well at your transgressions and endeavor to find them out.

Yet another thing, when you have fallen into one sin make confession of it, and let that lead you to search for all the rest. David, you know, never wrote so abject a confession as he did after he had committed one act of sin; then he was led to search his heart, and find out all the rest of his iniquities, and he made a complete confession of them all. When thou seest one sin, be quite sure there is a host there, for they always hunt in packs; and take care when thou dischargest thy confession against one, that there is enough powder and shot in thy confession to wound all thy sins and send them limping away. Be not content with overcoming one sin or one transgression, but labor to get rid of all.

Again, there are many sins by which you will be enticed unless you always take care to strip sin of its disguises. Sin will sometimes come to you, wrapped up in a Babylonish garment, like Achan's wedge: pull off the covering and you will discover its iniquity. It will sometimes come to you like the iniquity of king Saul, under the form of a sacrifice; strip it and discover that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Alas! sin is like Jezebel; it attires its head and paints its face and appears lovely to us; unmask it, see its vileness, discover its filthiness, disdain the profit with which it gilds itself, take away the applause with which it endeavors to plume itself, and let it stand in all its naked deformity, and then thou wilt not be so likely to run into it.

Once again. Try always, when your mind is in a sanctified state, to estimate the weight of the evil of sin. When you are in a sinful state

you will not feel the weight of the evil. A man that dives into the water may have a thousand tons of water above his head, and not feel the weight because the water is round about him; but take him out of the water, and if you put half a tubful on his head, it presses him down. Now, while you indulge in sin, you will not feel its weight; but when you are out of sin, after it is over, and the Spirit has applied the blood of sprinkling for your forgiveness, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit has begun to restore you, then labor to realize the enormity of your guilt, and by so doing you will be helped to hate it and to overcome it.

With regard to some sins, if thou wouldst avoid them, take one piece of advice--run away from them. Sins of lust especially are never to be fought with, except after Joseph's way; and you know what Joseph did--he ran away. A French philosopher said, "Fly, fly, Telemaque; there remains no way of conquest but by flight." The true soldiers of Christ's cross will stand foot to foot with any sin in the world except this; but here they turn their backs and fly, and then they become conquerors. "Flee fornication," said one of old, and there was wisdom in the counsel; there is no way of overcoming it but by flight. If the temptation attack thee, shut thine eye and stop thy ear, and away, away from it; for thou art only safe when thou art beyond sight and earshot. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil;" and endeavor with all your might to resist and overcome it in yourselves.

Once again, ye that love the Lord, if ye would keep from sin, seek always to have a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, never trust yourselves a single day without having a fresh renewal of your piety before you go forth to the day's duties. We are never safe except we are in the Lord's hands. No Christian, be he who he may or what he may, though he be renowned for his piety and prayerfulness, can exist a day

without falling into great sin unless the Holy Spirit shall be his protector. Old master Dyer says, "Lock up your hearts by prayer every morning, and give God the key, so that nothing can get in; and then when thou unlockest thy heart at night, there will be a sweet fragrance and perfume of love, joy, and holiness." Take care of that. It is only by the Spirit that you can be preserved from sin.

Above all, let us add, avoid all preachers who endeavor in any way to palliate sin; avoid all experiences and books of experience that give you a way of getting over the fact that the sin of God's people is a vile thing. I know some folks who talk of their sins as if they were proud of them; they speak of their falls, and their backslidings, and transgressions, as if they were blessed experiences: like the dog that had a bell round his neck because he was dangerous, they are proud of that very thing which is their shame. Remember, a nettle is bad anywhere but it is never so bad as in a flower garden, and sin is bad anywhere, but never so hateful as in a Christian. If as you are going home to day you see a boy breaking windows, very likely you will speak to him; but if it is your own boy you will severely chastise him as sure as he is your own son. So likewise doth God deal with his people. When sinners do mischief he rebukes them; when his people do the same he smites them. He will not pass over sin in his own children at any time; it shall never go unchastened. Ye that fear the Lord never palliate sin, for God will not do so; he hateth it with perfect hatred.

II. My second point is, HATE SIN IN OTHERS. Mark it, do not hate others, but hate sin in others. As we have only a few minutes left I will occupy them with but one or two practical remarks.

If you hate sin in others, it will be necessary for you never in any way to countenance it. There is many a Christian who does more mischief than he knows of by a smile. You have heard a young man telling a story

of some of his freaks; perhaps it has been in a railway carriage, and he has been very witty, and you have smiled at him. He knows you, and he seems to think he has done a brave thing--didn't he make a Christian man smile at his sins? You have sometimes heard loose, lewd conversation proceeding from ungodly men, and you have not liked it; it has grated upon your ears; but you have sat very quietly, and others have said, "Ah well, he was still enough; he was sucking it in, and it was clear he liked it." Thus it was stamped at once with the seal of your approbation. Now, never let sin have your countenance. Wherever you are, let it be known that you not only cannot endure it, but that you positively hate it. Don't let people say, "Well, I don't think he likes it;" but let them know you hate it, that you are absolutely angry with it, that you cannot smile at it, but feel your anger rise at the very mention of such shameful things. In the last century it used to be even fashionable and honorable to commit sins, which are now looked upon with scorn, and in another hundred years, some things that are done to-day will be discovered to be desperately vile, and we shall look upon them with disdain also. Christian, I say, never stamp another man's sins with approval.

Again, whenever you are called upon to do it--and that will be very often--take care to let your sentiments with regard to sin come out. Sinful silence may make you a partaker in a sinner's evil ways. If I saw a man breaking into a house and I were going by late in the evening, if I passed very gently, knowing that he was doing wrong, and did not give the alarm, I think I should be an accomplice in the crime. And so, if you are sitting in company where there is evil speaking, or where Christ is blasphemed, if you do not say a word for your Master, you are committing sin in your silence, you are an accomplice in the iniquity. Speak up for your Lord and Master. What if you should get

upbraided for it and be called a Puritan? It is a grand name. What if some should say, You are too precise? There is good need that some should be too precise where a great many are far too lax; or if they should never welcome you in their company again, it will be a great gain to be out of it. What if they should speak evil of you? Know you not that you are to rejoice in that day when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's namesake? Always by your speaking boldly, let sin be put to the blush.

Then again, when you see evil in any one, always seek, if you see the slightest hope of doing good, for an opportunity of telling him privately of it. I have heard of a gentleman who was swearing, and a godly man who stood by, instead of upbraiding him for it, publicly said, "Sir, I wish to speak to you a moment." "Well," said the gentleman, "you had better come into the coffee-room." They went accordingly; and the godly man said to the other, "My dear friend, I noticed that you took the name of God in vain I know you will excuse my mentioning it. I did not say a word about it when others could hear; but really it is a great sin, and no profit can come from it. Could you not avoid it in future?" The check was thankfully received; the gentleman bowed his acknowledgments, he confessed that it was the fault of his early education, and he trusted that the rebuke might do him good. Do you not think that very often we lose an opportunity of showing our hatred of evil by not endeavoring privately to speak to those whom we discover indulging in sin? Never let slip an opportunity of having a shot at the devil, be it where it may; always let fly at him whenever you see him. If you cannot do it in public, yet if you see a man doing evil, rebuke him in private for his sin.

And yet another thing. If you hate evil, do not get into it yourself, because it is of no use your talking to others about evil unless your

own life be blameless. They that live in glass houses must not throw stones. Get out of your own glass house, and then throw as many as you like. Speak to other people, when you have first of all endeavored to set your own life according to the compass of the Gospel.

And now, beloved fellow-men, all of you who love the Saviour, are exhorted this morning to hate evil; and I will just enlarge once more upon this exhortation. Join heart and hand in the hatred of evil, with all men who seek to put it down. Wherever you see a society endeavoring to do good, encourage it. Let this be your doctrine--preach nothing up but Christ, and nothing down but evil. Help all those that are for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. There is nothing else that can put evil away so quickly as the proclamation of right. Help the minister of the Gospel; pray for him; hold up his hands; endeavor to strengthen him. As for yourself, become a tract distributor, a Sunday-school teacher, or a village preacher. Show your hatred to evil by active efforts in putting it down. Distribute Bibles, scatter the Word of God broadcast over the land. Send your missionaries to foreign parts and let them penetrate the dens and alleys of London. Go among the rags and filth of our own population and seek to bring some one or two of the Lord's precious jewels who are hidden in the dunghills of the metropolis. Thus, let the Lord Jesus Christ by your means get the victory, and let the evil of this world be cast out. How shall that be done but by the combined exertions of all Christ's church? In these days we have a great many men to fight Christ's battles, if they would but fight. Our churches are increasing at a great rate. There are an immense number of Christians now alive; but I think I would rather have the one hundred and twenty men that were in the upper chamber at the day of Pentecost, than I would have the whole lot of you. I do think those one hundred and twenty men had got more blood in them, more

divine Christian blood and zeal, than as many millions of such poor creatures as we are. Why, in those days every member of the church was a missionary. The women did not preach, it is true; but they did what is better than preaching. they lived out the Gospel; and all the men had something to say. They did not leave it as you do to your minister serving God by proxy; they did not set deacons up, and leave them to do all God's work while they folded their arms. Oh! no; all Christ's soldiers went to battle. There was no drafting out one or two of them, and then leaving the others to tarry at home and share the spoil. No, every one fought, and great was the victory. Now, beloved Christians, all of you, at it, and always at it. O Spirit of the living God, descend on every heart, and bid every one of thy soldiers take his sword in his hand, and go straightway up to the victory. For when Zion's children shall feel their individual responsibility, then shall come the day of her triumph. Then shall the walls of Jericho fall flat to the ground, and every soldier of the living God shall be crowned a conqueror. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil," henceforth and for ever.

Chapter 44

The Way of Salvation

A Sermon

(No. 209)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 15, 1858, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."--Acts 4:12.

IT IS A VERY HAPPY CIRCUMSTANCE when the servants of God are able to turn everything to account in their ministry. Now, the apostle Peter was summoned before the priests and Sadducees, the chief of his nation, to answer for having restored a man who was lame from his mother's womb. Whilst accounting for this case of cure, or, if I may use the expression, for this case of temporal salvation, the apostle Peter had this thought suggested to him, "While I am accounting for the salvation of this man from lameness, I have now a fine opportunity of showing to these people, who otherwise will not listen to us, the way of the salvation of the soul." So he proceeds from the less to the greater, from the healing of a man's limb to the healing of a man's spirit; and having informed them once that it was through the name of Jesus Christ that the impotent man had been made whole, he now announces that salvation,--the great salvation, must be wrought by the selfsame means; "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

What a great word that word "salvation" is! It includes the cleansing of our conscience from all past guilt, the delivery of our soul from all those propensities to evil which now so strongly predominate in us;

it takes in, in fact, the undoing of all that Adam did. Salvation is the total restoration of man from his fallen estate; and yet it is something more than that, for God's salvation fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. It finds us broken in pieces by the sin of our first parent, defiled, stained, accursed: it first heals our wounds, it removes our diseases, it takes away our curse, it puts our feet upon the rock Christ Jesus, and having thus done, at last it lifts our heads far above all principalities. and powers, to be crowned for ever with Jesus Christ, the King of heaven. Some people, when they use the word "salvation," understand nothing more by it than deliverance from hell and admittance into heaven. Now, that is not salvation: those two things are the effects of salvation. We are redeemed from hell because we are saved, and we enter heaven because we have been saved beforehand. Our everlasting state is the effect of salvation in this life. Salvation, it is true, includes all that, because salvation is the mother of it, and carrieth it within its bowels; but still it were wrong for us to imagine that that is all the meaning of the word. Salvation begins with us as wandering sheep; it follows us through all our mazy wanderings; it puts us on the shoulders of the shepherd; it carries us into the fold; it calls together the friends and the neighbors; it rejoices over us; it preserves us in that fold through life; and then at last it brings us to the green pastures of heaven, beside the still waters of bliss, where we lie down for ever, in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, never more to be disturbed.

Now our text tells us there is only one way of salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." I shall take first of all a negative truth taught here, namely, that there is no salvation out of Christ; and then, secondly, a positive truth inferred, namely, that

there is salvation in Jesus Christ whereby we must be saved.

I. First, then, A NEGATIVE FACT. "Neither is there salvation in any other." Did you ever notice the intolerance of God's religion? In olden times the heathen, who had different gods, all of them respected the gods of their neighbors. For instance, the king of Egypt would confess that the gods of Nineveh were true and real gods, and the prince of Babylon would acknowledge that the gods of the Philistines were true and real gods: but Jehovah, the God of Israel, put this as one of his first commandments, "Thou shalt have none other gods besides me;" and he would not allow them to pay the slightest possible respect to the gods of any other nation: "Thou shalt hew them in pieces, thou shalt break down their temples, and cut down their groves." All other nations were tolerant the one to the other, but the Jew could not be so. One part of his religion was, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God;" and as the consequence of his belief that there was but one God, and that that one God was Jehovah, he felt it his bounden duty to call all pretended gods by nicknames, to spit upon them, to treat them with contumely and contempt. Now the Christian religion, you observe, is just as intolerant as this. If you apply to a Brahmin to know the way of salvation, he will very likely tell you at once, that all persons who follow out their sincere religious convictions will undoubtedly be saved. "There," says he, "are the Mohammedans; if they obey Mohammed, and sincerely believe what he has taught without doubt, Alla will glorify them at last." And the Brahmin turns round upon the Christian missionary, and says, "What is the use of your bringing your Christianity here to disturb us? I tell you our religion is quite capable of carrying us to heaven, if we are faithful to it." Now just hear the text: how intolerant is the Christian religion! "Neither is there salvation in any other." The Brahmin may admit, that there is

salvation in fifty religions besides his own; but we admit no such thing. There is no true salvation out of Jesus Christ. The gods of the heathens may approach us with their mock charity, and tell us that every man may follow out his own conscientious conviction and be saved. We reply--No such thing: there is no salvation in any other; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"

Now, what do you suppose is the reason of this intolerance--if I may use the word again? I believe it is just because there is the truth both with the Jew and with the Christian. A thousand errors may live in peace with one another, but truth is the hammer that breaks them all in pieces. A hundred lying religions may sleep peaceably in one bed, but wherever the Christian religion goes as the truth, it is like a fire-brand, and it abideth nothing that is not more substantial than the wood, the hay, and the stubble of carnal error. All the gods of the heathen, and all other religions are born of hell, and therefore, being children of the same father, it would seem amiss that they should fall out, and chide, and fight; but the religion of Christ is a thing of God's--its pedigree is from on high, and, therefore, when once it is thrust into the midst of an ungodly and gainsaying generation, it hath neither peace, nor parley, nor treaty with them, for it is truth, and cannot afford to be yoked with error: it stands upon its own rights, and gives to error its due, declaring that it hath no salvation, but that in the truth, and in the truth alone, is salvation to be found.

Again, it is because we have here the sanction of God. It would be improper in any man who had invented a creed of his own, to state that all others must he damned who do not believe it; that would be an overweening censoriousness and bigotry, at which we might afford to smile; but since this religion of Christ is revealed from heaven

itself, God, who is the author of all truth, hath a right to append to this truth the dreadful condition, that who so rejecteth it shall perish without mercy; and in proclaiming that, apart from Christ, no man can be saved. We are not really intolerant, for we are but echoing the words of him that speaketh from heaven, and who declares, that cursed is the man who rejects this religion of Christ, seeing that there is no salvation out of him. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Now I hear one or two persons saying, "Do you imagine then, sir, that none are saved apart from Christ?" I reply, I don t imagine it, but I have it here in my text plainly taught. "Well but," saith one, how is it concerning the death of infants? Do not infants die without actual sin? Are they saved? and if so, how?" I answer, saved they are beyond a doubt; all children dying in infancy are caught away to dwell in the third heaven of bliss for ever. But mark this--no infant was ever saved apart from the death of Christ. Christ Jesus hath with his blood bought all those who die in infancy; they are all regenerated, not in sprinkling, but probably in the instant of their death a marvellous change passes over them by the breathing of the Holy Spirit, the blood of Jesus is applied to them, and they are washed from all original corruption which they had inherited from their parents, and thus washed and cleansed they enter into the kingdom of heaven. Otherwise, beloved, infants would be unable to join in the everlasting song,."Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood." If infants were not washed in the blood of Christ, they could not join in that universal song which perpetually surrounds the throne of God. We believe that they are all saved--every one of them without exception--but not apart from the one great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another says,

"But how about the heathen? They know not Christ; are any of the heathen saved?" Mark, Holy Scripture saith but very little concerning the salvation of the heathen. There are many texts in Scripture which would lead us to infer that all the heathen perish; but there are some texts which, on the other hand, lead us to believe that there are some out of the heathen race who, led by God's secret spirit, are seeking after him in the dark, endeavoring to find out something they cannot discover in nature; and it may be that the God of infinite mercy who loves his creatures, is pleased to make to them these revelations in their own heart--dark and mysterious revelations concerning the things of heaven--so that even they may be made partakers of the blood of Jesus Christ, without having such an open vision as we have received, without beholding the cross visibly elevated, and Christ set forth crucified among them. It has been observed in many heathen lands, that before the missionaries have gone there, there has been a strong desire after the religion of Christ. In the Sandwich Islands, before our missionaries went there, there was a strange commotion in the minds of those poor barbarians; they did not know what it was, but they were all on a sudden discontented with their idolatries, and had a longing desire after something higher, better, and purer, than anything they had hitherto discovered; and no sooner was Jesus Christ preached, than they willingly renounced all their idolatries, and laid hold upon him to be their strength and their salvation. Now, we believe this was the Work of God's Spirit secretly inclining these poor creatures to seek after him; and we cannot tell but that in some sequestered spots where we had thought the gospel never has been preached, there may be some lone tract, some chapter of the Bible, some solitary verse of Holy Writ remembered, which may be sufficient to open blind eyes, and to guide poor benighted hearts to the foot of the cross of Christ. But this much

is certain; no heathen, however moral--whether in the days of their old philosophy, or in the present time of their barbarism--ever did or ever could enter the kingdom of heaven apart from the name of Jesus Christ. "Neither is their salvation in any other." A man may seek after it and labor after it in his own way, but there he cannot possibly find it, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

But after all, my dear friends, it is a great deal better, when we are dealing with these subjects, not to talk upon speculative matters, but to come home personally to ourselves. And let me now ask you this question, have you ever proved by experience the truth of this great negative fact, that there is no salvation in any other? I can speak what I do know, and testify what I have seen, when I solemnly declare in the presence of this congregation, that it is even so. Once I thought there was salvation in good works, and I labored hard, and strove diligently to preserve a character for integrity and uprightness; but when the Spirit of God came into my heart, "sin revived and I died," that which I thought had been good proved to be evil; wherein I thought I had been holy I found myself to be unholy. I discovered that my very best actions were sinful. that my tears needed to be wept over, and that my very prayers needed God's forgiveness. I discovered that I was seeking after salvation by the works of the law, that I was doing all my good works from a selfish motive, namely to save myself, and therefore they could not be acceptable to God. I found out that I could not be saved by good works for two very good reasons: first, I had not got any and secondly, if I had any, they could not save me. After that I thought, surely salvation might be obtained, partly by reformation, and partly by trusting in Christ; so I labored hard again, and thought if I added a few prayers here and there, a few

tears of penitence, and a few vows of improvement, all would be well. But after forging on for many a weary day, like a poor blind horse toiling round the mill, I found I had got no farther, for there was still the curse of God hanging over me: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" and there was still an aching void in my heart the world could never fill--a void of distress and care, for I was sorely troubled because I could not attain unto the rest which my soul desired. Have you tried those two ways of getting to heaven? If you have, I trust the Lord, the Holy Spirit, has made you heartily sick of them, for you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven by the right door, until you have first of all been led to confess that all the other doors are barred in your teeth. No man ever will come to God through the straight and narrow way until he had tried all the other ways; and when we find ourselves beaten, and foiled, and defeated, then it is, that pressed by sore necessity, we betake ourselves to the one open fountain, and there wash ourselves, and are made clean. Perhaps I have in my presence this morning some who are trying to gain salvation by ceremonies. You have been baptized in your infancy; you regularly take the Lord's Supper; you attend your church or chapel; and if you knew any other ceremonies you would attend to them. Ah! my dear friends, all these things are as the chaff before the wind in the matter of salvation; they cannot help you one step towards acceptance in the person of Christ. As well might you labor to build your house with water, as to build salvation with such poor things as these. These are good enough for you when you are saved, but if you seek salvation in them, they shall be to your soul as wells without water, clouds without rain, and withered trees, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Whatever is your way of salvation--for there are a thousand different

inventions of men whereby they seek to save themselves--whatever it may be, hear thou its death. knell tolled from this verse: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

II. Now, this brings me to the POSITIVE FACT which is inferred in the text, namely, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ. Surely, when I make that simple statement I might burst forth with the song of the angels, and say--"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Here are a thousand mercies all bound up in one bundle, in this sweet, sweet fact, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ. I shall endeavor now merely to deal with any soul here present who entertains a doubt as to his own salvation in Jesus Christ; I shall single him out, and address him affectionately and earnestly, and endeavor to show him that he may yet be saved, and that in Christ there is salvation for him.

I know thee, sinner! Thou hast long been trying to find the road to heaven, and thou hast missed it. Hitherto thou hast had a thousand dazzling cheats to deceive thee, and never yet one solid ground of comfort for thy poor weary foot; and now, encompassed about by thy sins, thou art not able to look up. Guilt, like a heavy burden, is on thy back, and thy finger is on thy lip, for thou darest not yet cry for pardon; thou art afraid to speak, lest out of thine own mouth thou shouldest be condemned. Satan whispers in thine ear, "It is all over with thee; there is no mercy for such as thou art: thou art condemned, and condemned thou must be; Christ is able to save many, but not to save thee." Poor soul! what shall I say unto thee but this--Come with me to the cross of Christ, and thou shalt there see something which shall remove thine unbelief. Seest thou that man nailed to yonder tree? Dost thou know his character? He is without spot or blemish, or any

such thing: he was no thief, that he should die a felon's death: he was no murderer and no assassin, that he should be crucified between two malefactors. No; his original was pure, without a sin; and his life was holy, without a flaw. Out of his mouth there proceeded only blessing; his hands were full of good deeds, and his feet were swift for acts of mercy; his heart was white with holiness. There was nought in him that man could blame; even his enemies, when they sought to accuse him, found false witnesses, but even they "agreed not together." Dost thou see him dying? Sinner, there must be merit in the death of such a man as that; for without sin himself, when he is put to grief, it must be for other men's sins. God would not afflict and grieve him when he deserved it not. God is no tyrant that he should crush the innocent; he is not unholy that he should punish the righteous. He suffered, then, for the sins of others.

"For sins, not his own, he died to atone."

Think of the purity of Christ, and then see whether there is not salvation in him. Come now With thy blackness about thee, and look at his whiteness; come with thy defilement, and look at his purity; and as thou lookest at that purity, like the lily, and thou seest the crimson of his blood overflowing it, let this whisper be heard in thine ear,--he is able to save thee, sinner, inasmuch as though he was "tempted in all points like as we are," yet he was "without sin;" therefore, the merit of his blood must be great. Oh, may God help thee to believe on him!

But this is not the grand thing which should recommend him to thee. Remember, he who died upon the cross, was no less than the everlasting Son of God. Dost see him there? Come, turn thine eye once more to him. Seest thou his hands and feet trickling with streamlets of gore? That man is Almighty God. Those hands that are nailed to the tree, are hands

that could shake the world; those feet that are there pierced have in them, if he willed to put it forth, a potency of strength that might make the mountains melt beneath their tread. That head, now bowed in anguish and in weakness, has in it the wisdom of the Godhead, and with its nod it could make the universe tremble. He who hangs upon the cross yonder, is he without whom was not anything made that was made: by him all things consist--Maker, Creator, Preserver, God of providence, and God of grace--he who died for thee is God over all, blessed for ever. And now, sinner, is there any power to save in such a Saviour as this? If he were a mere man, a Socinian's Christ, or an Arian's Christ, I would not bid thee trust him; but since he is none other than God himself incarnate in human flesh, I beseech thee cast thyself upon him;

"He is able,
He is willing, doubt no more."

"He is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God by him."

Will you recollect again, as a further consolation for your faith that you may believe that God the Father has accepted the sacrifice of Christ. It is the Father's anger that you have the most cause to dread. The Father is angry with you, for you have sinned, and he has sworn with an oath that he will punish you for your offenses. Now, Jesus Christ was punished in the room, place, and stead of every sinner who hath repented. or ever shall repent. Jesus Christ stood as his substitute and scapegoat. God the Father hath accepted Christ in the stead of sinners. Oh, ought not this to lead you to accept him? If the Judge has accepted the sacrifice, sure you may accept it too; and if he be satisfied, sure you may be content also. If the creditor has written a full and free discharge; you, the poor debtor, may rejoice and believe that that discharge is satisfactory to you, because it is

satisfactory to God. But do you ask me how I know that God has accepted Christ's atonement? I remind you that Christ rose again from the dead. Christ was put into the prison-house of the tomb after he died, and there he waited until God should have accepted the atonement.

"If Jesus ne'er had paid the debt,
He ne'er had been at freedom set."

Christ would have been in the tomb at this very day, if God had not accepted his atonement for our justification; but the Lord looked down from heaven, and he surveyed the work of Christ, and said within himself, "It is very good; it is enough;" and turning to an angel, he said, "Angel, my Son is confined in prison, a hostage for my elect; he has paid the price; I know he will not break the prison down himself; go, angel, go and roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, and set him at liberty." Down flew the angel, and rolled away the massive stone; and rising from the shades of death the Saviour lived. "He died and rose again for our justification." Now, poor soul, thou seest God has accepted Christ; surely then, thou mayest accept him and believe on him.

Another argument, which may perhaps come nearer to thine own soul is this--many have been saved who were as vile as thou art. and therefore there is salvation. "No," sayest thou, "none are so vile as I am." It is a mercy that thou thinkest so, but nevertheless it is quite certain that others have been saved, who have been as filthy as thyself. Have you been a persecutor? "Yes," you say. Ay, but you have not been more blood-thirsty than Saul! And yet that chief of sinners became the chief of saints. Have you been a swearer? Have you cursed the Almighty to his face? Ay; and such were some of us who now lift up our voices in prayer, and approach his throne with acceptance. Have you been a drunkard? Ay, and so have many of God's people been for many a day and

many a year; but they have forsaken their filthiness, and they have turned unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. However great thy sin, I tell thee, man, there have been some saved as deep in sin as thou art. And if even none have been saved, who are such great sinners as thou art, so much the more reason why God should save thee, that he may go beyond all that he ever has done. The Lord always delights to be doing wonders; and if thou standest the chief of sinners, a little ahead of all the rest, I believe he will delight to save thee, that the wonders of his love and his grace may be the more manifestly known. Do you still say that you are the chief of sinners? I tell you I do not think it. The chief of sinners was saved years ago; that was the Apostle Paul: but even if you should exceed him, still that word "uttermost" goes a little beyond you. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Recollect, sinner, if thou dost not find salvation in Christ it will be because thou dost not look for it, for it certainly is there. If thou shalt perish without being saved through the blood of Christ, it will not be through a want of power in that blood to save thee, but entirely through a want of will on thy part--even that thou wilt not believe on him, but dost wantonly and wilfully reject his blood to thine own destruction. Take heed to thyself, for as surely as there is salvation in none other, so surely there is salvation in him.

I could turn to you myself, and tell you that surely there must be salvation in Christ for you, since I have found salvation in Christ for myself. Often have I said, I will never doubt the salvation of any one, so long as I can but know that Christ has accepted me. Oh! how dark was my despair when I first sought his mercy seat, I thought then that if he had mercy on all the world, yet he would never have mercy on me; the sins of my childhood and my youth haunted me; I sought to get rid of

them one by one, but I was caught as in an iron net of evil habits, and I could not overthrow them; and even when I could renounce my sin, yet the guilt still did cling to my garments--I could not wash myself clean; I prayed for three long years, I bent my knees in vain, and sought, but found no mercy. But, at last, blessed be his name, when I had given up all hope, and thought, that his swift anger would destroy me, and that the pit would open its mouth and swallow me up, then in the hour of my extremity did he manifest himself to me, and teach me to cast myself simply and wholly upon him. So shall it be with thee, only trust him, for there is salvation in him--rest assured of that.

To quicken thy diligence, however, I will conclude by noting that if you do not find salvation in Christ, remember you will never find it elsewhere. What a dreadful thing it will be for you if you should lose the salvation provided by Christ! For "how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" To-day, very probably I am not speaking to very many of the grossest of sinners, yet I know I am speaking to some even of that class; but whether we are gross sinners or not, how fearful a thing it will be for us to die without first having found an interest in the Saviour! Oh sinner! this should quicken thee in going to the mercy seat; this thought, that if thou findest no mercy at the feet of Jesus, thou canst never find it any where else. If the gates of heaven shall never open to thee, remember there is no other gate that ever can be opened for thy salvation. If Christ refuse thee thou art refused; if his blood be not sprinkled on thee thou art lost indeed.

Oh! if he keeps thee waiting a little while, still continue in prayer; it is worth waiting for, especially when thou hast this thought to keep thee waiting, namely, that there is none other, no other way, no other hope, no other ground of trust, no other refuge. There I see the gate of heaven, and if I must enter it, I must creep on my hands and knees,

for it is a low gate; there I see it, it is a strait and narrow one, I must leave my sins behind me, and my proud righteousness, and I must creep in through that wicket. Come sinner, what sayest thou? Wilt thou go beyond this strait and narrow gate, or wilt thou despise eternal life and risk eternal bliss? Or wilt thou go through it humbly hoping that he who gave himself for thee will accept thee in himself, and save thee now, and save thee everlastingly?

May these few words have power to draw some to Christ, and I am content. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Chapter 45

"As Thy Days, So Shall Thy Strength Be"

A Sermon

(No. 210)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 22, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be;"--Deuteronomy 33:25.

BELOVED, IT SEEMS A SAD THING that every day must die and be followed by a night. When we have seen the hills clad with verdure to their summit, and the seas laving their base with a silver glory; when we have stretched our eye faraway, and have seen the widening prospect full of loveliness and beauty we have felt sad that the sunlight should ever set upon such a scene, and that so much beauty should be shrouded in the oblivion of darkness. But how much reason have we to bless God for nights! for if it were not for nights how much of beauty never would be discovered. Never should I have considered the heavens the work of thy fingers, O my God, if thou hadst not first covered the sun with a thick mantle of darkness: the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, had never been bright in mine eyes, if thou hadst not hidden the light of the sun and bidden him retire within the curtains of the west. Night seems to be the great friend of the stars: they must be all unseen by eyes of men, were they not set in the foil of darkness. It is even so with winter. We might feel sad, that all the flowers of summer must die, and all the fruits of autumn must be gathered into their store-house, that every tree must be stripped. and that all the fields must lose their fair flowers. But were it not for winter we should never see the glistening crystals of the snow; we

should never behold the beauteous festoons of the icicles that hang from the eaves. Much of God's marvellous miracles of hoar frost must have been hidden from us, if it had not been for the cold chill of winter, which, when it robs us of one beauty, gives us another,--when it takes away the emerald of verdure, it gives us the diamond of ice--when it casts from us the bright rubies of the flowers, it gives us the fair white ermine of snow. Well now, translate those two ideas, and you will see why it is that even our sin, our lost and ruined estate, has been made the means, in the hand of God, of manifesting to us the excellencies of his character. My dear friends, if you and I had been without trouble, we never could have had such a promise as this given to us:--"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." It is our weakness that has made room for God to give us such a promise as this. Our sins make room for a Saviour; our frailties make room for the Holy Spirit to correct them; all our wanderings make room for the good Shepherd, that he may seek us and bring us back. We do not love nights, but we do love stars; we do not love weakness, but we do bless God for the promise that is to sustain us in our weakness, we do not admire winter, but we do admire the glittering snow; we must shudder at our own trembling weakness, but we still do bless God that we are weak because it makes room for the display of his own invincible strength in fulfilling such a promise as this.

In addressing you this morning, I shall first have to notice the self-weakness which is implied in our text; secondly, I shall come to the great promise of the text; and then I shall try and draw one or two inferences from it, ere I conclude.

I. First, the SELF-WEAKNESS HINTED AT IN THE TEXT. To keep to my figure, if this promise be like a star, you know there is no seeing the stars in the daytime when we stand here upon the upper land; we must go

down a deep well, and then we shall be able to discover them. Now, beloved, as this is day-time with our hearts, it will be necessary for us to go down the deep well of old recollections of our past trials and troubles. We must first get a good fair idea of the great depth of our own weakness, before we shall be able to behold the brightness of this rich and exceeding precious promise. A self-sufficient man can no more understand this promise, than a coal heaver can understand Greek: he has never been in a position in which to understand it; he has never learned his own need of another's strength, and therefore he cannot possibly understand the value of a promise which consists in giving to us a strength beyond our own. Let us for a few minutes consider our own weakness.

Ye children of God, have ye not proved your own weakness in the day of duty? The Lord has spoken to you, and he has said, "Son of man, run, and do such and such a thing which I bid thee;" and you have gone to do it, but as you have been upon your way, a sense of great responsibility has bowed you down, and you have been ready to turn back even at the outset, and to cry, "Send by whomsoever thou wilt send, but not by me." Reinforced by strength, you have gone to the duty, but while performing it, you have at times felt your hands hanging exceeding heavy, and you have had to look up many a time and cry, "O Lord, give me more strength, for without thy strength this work must be unaccomplished, I cannot perform it myself." And when the work has been done, and you have looked back upon it you have either been filled with amazement that it should have been done at all by so poor and weak a worm as yourself, or else you have been overcome with horror because you have been afraid the work was marred, like the vessel on the potter's wheel, by reason of your own want of skilfulness. I confess in my own position, I have a thousand causes to confess my own weakness every

day. In preparing for the pulpit how often do we discover our weakness when a hundred texts exhibit themselves, and we know not which to choose, and when we have selected our subject, distracting thoughts come in, and when we would concentrate our minds upon some holy topic, we find they are carried hither and thither, driven about like the minds of children by every wind of thought. And when we bow our knees to seek the Lord's help before we preach how often does our tongue refuse to give utterance to the earnestness of our hearts. And alas! how frequently too is our heart cold when we are about to enter upon an occupation which requires the heart to be hot like a furnace, and the lip to be burning like a live coal. Here in this pulpit I have often learned my weakness, when words have fled from me, and thoughts have departed too; and when that seal which I thought would have poured itself forth like a cataract, has trickled forth in unwilling drops like a sullen stream, the source of which doth almost fail, and which seemeth itself as if it longed to be dried up and dead. And after preaching, how have I cast myself upon my bed, and tossed to and fro, groaning because I thought I had failed to deliver my message, and had not preached my Master's Word as my Master would have me preach it. All of you, in your own callings I dare say, have had enough to prove that. I do not believe a Christian man can examine himself without finding every day that weakness is proven even in the doing of his duty. Your shop, however small, will be enough to prove to you your weakness, your business, however little, your cares, however light, your family, how ever small, will furnish you with enough proofs of the fact: "Without me ye can do nothing;" "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

But, beloved, we prove our weakness, perhaps more visibly, when we come into the day of suffering. There it is that we are weak indeed. I have

sat by the side of those who have been exceedingly sick, and have marked their patience; but I do not know that I ever wondered at the patience of a sick man so much as I do when I am sick myself: then patience is an extraordinary virtue. Women suffer, and suffer well; but I do think there are very few men who could bear the tithe of the suffering that many women endure, without exhibiting a hundred times as much impatience. Most of us who are gifted with strong constitutions, and have but little of sickness, have to chasten ourselves, that what little sickness we have to contend with is borne with so little resignation and with so much impatience; that we are so ready to repine, so prepared to bow our heads and wish we were dead, because a little pain is rending our body. Here it is that we prove our weakness indeed. Ah! people of God, it is one thing to talk about the furnace; it is another thing to be in it. It is one thing to look at the doctor's knife, but quite another thing to feel it. You will find it one thing to sip the cup of medicine, but quite another thing to lie in bed a dreary week or month, and to drink on, and on, and on of that nauseating draught. When you are on dry land most of you are good sailors; out at sea you are vastly different. There is many a man who makes a wonderfully brave soldier till he gets into the battle, and then he wishes himself miles away, and except his spurs there is no weapon he can use with much advantage. That man has never been sick who does not know his weakness, his want of patience and of endurance. Again, beloved, there is another thing which will very soon prove our weakness, if neither duty nor suffering will do it--namely, progress. You sit down to-morrow and you read the life of some eminent servant of God: perhaps the life of David Brainard, and how he gave up his life for his Master in the wilderness, or the heroic life of Henry Martin, and how he sacrificed all for Christ: and as you read you say within

yourself, "I will endeavor to be like this man; I will seek to have his faith, his self denial, his love to never-dying souls" Try and get them, beloved, and you will soon find your own weakness. I have sometimes thought I would try to have more faith but I have found it very hard to keep as much as I had. I have thought, "I will love my Saviour more," and it was right that I should strive to do so; but when I sought to love him more I found that perhaps I was going backward instead of forward. How often do we find out our weakness when God answers our prayers!

"I ask'd the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of his salvation know
And seek more earnestly his face.
I hop'd that in some favor'd hour
At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.
Instead of this he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry power of hell
Assault my soul in every part.
'Lord why is this?' I trembling cried
'Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?'
'Tis in this way,' the Lord replied;
'I answer prayer for grace and faith.'"

That is, the Lord helps us to grow downward when we are only thinking about growing upward. Let any of you try to grow in grace, and seek to run the heavenly race, and make a little progress, and you will soon find, in such a slippery road as that which we have to travel, that it

is very hard to go one step forward, though remarkably easy to go a great many steps backward.

If neither of these three things will prove thy weakness, Christian, I will advise thee to try another. See what thou art in temptation. I have seen a tree in the forest that seemed to stand fast like a rock, I have stood beneath its widespreading branches, and have sought to shake its trunk, to see if I could, but it stood immovable. The sun shone upon it, and the rain descended, and many a winter's frost sprinkled its boughs with snow, but it still stood fast and firm. But one night there came a howling wind which swept through the forest, and the tree that seemed to stand so fast lay stretched along the ground, its gaunt arms which once were lifted up to heaven lying hopelessly broken, and the trunk snapped in twain. And so have I seen many a professor strong and mighty, and nothing seemed to move him; but I have seen the wind of persecution and temptation come against him, and I have heard him creak with murmuring, and at last have seen him break in apostasy and he has lain along the ground a mournful specimen of what every man must become who maketh not the Lord his strength, and who relieth not upon the Most High. "Ah!" says one, "I do not believe I could be tempted to sin." My friend, it depends upon what kind of temptation it should be. There are many of us who could not be tempted to drunkenness, and others who could not he tempted to lust. If the devil should set before some of you cups of the richest wines that ever came from the vintages of Burgundy or of Xeres, you would not care for them, if you did but sip them it would suffice you; it would be in vain to tempt you with the drunkard's song; nothing could induce you to lose your equilibrium by intoxicating liquors; but perhaps you are the very man whom a temptation of lust might overthrow. While there be other men whom neither lust nor wine can overcome, who may be led by a prospect of

profit into that which is dishonest; and others again, whom neither profit, nor lust, nor wine, would turn aside, may be overthrown by anger, or envy, or malice. We have all our tender points. When Thetis dipped Achilles in the Styx, you remember she held him by the heel; he was made invulnerable wherever the water touched him, but his heel not being covered with the water, was vulnerable, and there Paris shot his arrow, and he died. It is even so with us. We may think that we are covered with virtue till we are totally invulnerable, but we have a heel somewhere; there is a place where the arrow of the devil can make way: hence the absolute necessity of taking to ourselves "the whole armor of God," so that there may not be a solitary joint in the harness that shall be unprotected against the arrows of the devil. Satan is very crafty; he knows the ins and outs of manhood. There is many an old castle that has stood against every attack, but at last some traitor from within has gone without, and said "I know an old deserted passage, a subterranean back way, that has not been used for many a-day. In such and such a field you will see an opening; clear away a heap of stones there, and I will lead you down the passage: you will then come to an old door, of which I have the key and I can let you in; and so by a back way I can lead you into the very heart of the citadel, which you may then easily capture." It is so with Satan. Man knoweth not himself so well as Satan knows him. There are back ways and subterranean passages into man's heart which the devil doth well understand. and he who thinketh that he is safe, let him take heed lest he fall. That is not a bad hymn of Dr. Watts, after all, where he tells us that Samson was very strong while he wore his hair, but

"Samson, when his hair was lost,
Met the Philistines to his cost:
Shook his vain limbs with vast surprise,

Made feeble fight, and lost his eyes."

The reason was, because there was a back way into Samson's heart. The Philistines could not overcome him: "Heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men." Come on, Philistines, he will rend you in pieces as he did the young lion; bind him with green withes, and he will snap them as tow; weave his locks with a weaver's beam, and he will carry away loom and all, and go out like a giant refreshed with new wine. But, O Delilah, he hath a back way to his heart; thou hast found it out, and now thou canst overthrow him. Tremble, for ye may yet be overcome! Ye are as weak as water if God shall leave you alone.

Now, I think, if we have well surveyed these different points of our moral standing on earth, every child of God will be ready to confess that he is weak. I imagine there may be some of you ready to say, "Sir, I am nothing." Then I shall reply, "Ah! you are a young Christian." There will be others of you who will say, "Sir, I am less than nothing." And I shall say, "Ah! you are an old Christian;" for the older Christians get, the less they become in their own esteem, the more they feel their own weakness, and the more entirely they rely upon the strength of God.

II. Having thus dwelt upon the first point, we shall now come to the second--THE GREAT PROMISE,--"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." In the first place, this is a well-guaranteed promise. A promise is nothing unless I have good security that it shall be fulfilled. It is in vain for men to promise largely unless their fulfillment shall be as large as their promise, for the largeness of their promise is just the largeness of deception. But here every word of God is true. God has issued no more notes for the bank of heaven than he can cash in an hour if he wills. There is enough bullion in the vaults of Omnipotence to

pay off every bill that ever shall be drawn by the faith of man or the promises of God. Now look at this one--"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Beloved, God has a strong reserve with which to pay off this promise; for is he not himself omnipotent, able to do all things? Believer, till thou canst drain dry the ocean of omnipotence, till thou canst break into pieces the towering mountains of almighty strength, thou never needest to fear. Until thine enemy can stop the course of a whirlwind with a reed, till he can twist the hurricane from its path by a word of his puny lip, thou needest not think that the strength of man shall ever be able to overcome the strength which is in thee, namely, the strength of God. Whilst the earth's huge pillars stand, thou hast enough to make thy faith firm. The same God who guides the stars in their courses, who directs the earth in its orbit, who feeds the burning furnace of the sun, and keeps the stars perpetually burning with their fires--the same God has promised to supply thy strength. While he is able to do all these things, think not that he shall be unable to fulfill his own promise. Remember what he did in the days of old, in the former generations. Remember how he spoke and it was done; how he commanded, and it stood fast. Do you not see him in the black eternity? When there was nothing but grim darkness, there he stood--the mighty Artificer: upon the anvil there he cast a hot mass of flame, and hammering it with his own ponderous arm, each spark that flew from it made a world; there those sparks are glittering now, the offspring of the anvil of the eternal purposes, and the hymned of his own majestic might. And shall he, that created the world, grow weary? Shall he fail? Shall he break his promises for want of strength? He hangeth the world upon nothing; he fixed the pillars of heaven in silver sockets of light and thereon he hung the golden lamps, the sun and the moon, and shall he that did all this be unable to support his children? Shall he be

unfaithful to his word for want of power in his arm or strength in his will? Remember again, thy God, who has promised to be thy strength, is the God who upholdeth all things by the power of his hand. Who feedeth the ravens? Who supplies the lions? Doth not he do it? And how? He openeth his hand and supplieth the want of every living thing. He has to do nothing more than simply to open his hand. Who is it that restrains the tempest? Doth not he say that he rides upon the wings of the wind, that he maketh the clouds his chariots, and holds the water in the hollow of his hand? Shall he fail thee? When he has put such a promise as this on record, shalt thou for a moment indulge the thought that he has out-promised himself, and gone beyond his power to fulfill? Ah! no. Who was it that cut Rahab in pieces, and wounded the dragon? Who divided the Red Sea, and made the waters thereof stand upright as a heap? Who led the people through the wilderness? Who was it that did oust Pharoah into the depths of the sea, his chosen captains also, in the depth of the Red Sea? Who rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Who chased out the Canaanite with the hornet, and made a way of escape for his people Israel? Who was it that brought them again from their captivity and did settle them again in their own land? Who is he that hath put down kings, yea and slew mighty kings, that he might make room for his people wherein they might dwell in a quiet habitation? Hath not the Lord done it: and is his arm shortened that he cannot save: or is his ear heavy that he cannot hear? O thou who art my God and my strength, I can believe that this promise shall be fulfilled for the boundless reservoir of thy grace can never be exhausted, and the unlimitable storehouse of thy strength can never be emptied or rifled by the enemy. It is, then, a well guaranteed promise. But now I want you to notice it is a limited promise. "What!" says one, "limited" Why it says, As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' " Ay, it

is limited. I know it is unlimited in our troubles, but still it is limited. First, it says our strength is to be as our days are; it does not say our strength is to be as our desires are. Oh! how often have we thought, "How I wish I were as strong as so and so"--one who had a great deal of faith. Ah! but then you would have rather more faith than you wanted, and what would be the good of that? It would be like the manna the children of Israel had--if they did not eat it in the day it bred worms and stank. "Still," says one, "if I had faith like so-and-so, I think I should do wonders." Yes, but you would get the glory of them. That is why God does not let you have the faith, because he does not want you to do wonders. That is reserved for God, not for you,--"He only doeth wondrous things." Once more, it does not say, our strength shall be as our fears. God often leaves us to shift alone with our fears,--never with our troubles. Many of God's people have a manufactory at the back of their houses in which they manufacture troubles; and home-made troubles, like other home made things, last a very long while, and generally fit very comfortably. Troubles of God's sending are always suitable--the right sort for our backs; but those that we make are of the wrong sort, and they always last us longer than God's; I have known an old lady sit and fret because she believed she should die in a workhouse and she wanted God to give her grace accordingly; but what would have been the good of that? because the Lord meant that she should die in her own quiet bedroom? I have heard of and known men who, being sick, believed they were dying, and wanted grace to die complacently; but God would not give it because he intended them to live, and why should he give them dying grace till they came to die? And we have known others who said they wanted grace to endure many troubles which they expected to come upon them. They were going to fail in a fortnight or so, but they did not fail and it

was no wonder they had not grace given to carry them through it, because they did not require it. The promise is "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "When your vessel gets empty then will I fill it; I will not give you any extra, over and above. When you are weak then I will make you strong; but I will not give you any extra strength to lay by: strength enough to bear your sufferings, and to do your duty; but no strength to play at matches with your brethren and sisters in order to get the glory to yourselves." Oh! if we had strength according to our wishes we should soon all of us be like Jeshurun,--wax fat, and begin to kick against the Most High. Then again, there is another limit. It says "As thy days so shall thy strength be." It does not any, "as thy weeks," or "months," but "as thy days." You are not going to have Monday's grace given you on a Sunday, nor Tuesday's grace on a Monday. You shall have Monday's grace given you on Monday morning as soon as you rise and want it; you shall not have it given you on Saturday night; you shall have it "day by day"--no more than you want, no less than you want. I do not believe God's people are to be trusted with a week's grace all at once. They are like many of our London workman: they get their wages on Saturday night, and then the rascals go and have Saint Monday and Saint Tuesday, and never do a stroke of work till Wednesday, when they go to the pawnbrokers with their tools to help them over till the next Saturday night. Now, I think God's children would do the same. If they had grace given them on Saturday to last them all through the week, I question whether the devil would not get a good deal of it,--whether they would not be pawning some of their old evidences before the week was out, in order to live upon them: spending all their grace on Monday and Tuesday. spending very much of their strength in indulging in pride and boasting, instead of walking humbly with their God. No, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Now, having said that the promise is limited, perhaps I am bound to add--what an extensive promise this is! "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Some days are very little things, in our pocket book we have very little to put down, for there was nothing done of any importance. But some days are very big days. Ah! I have known a big day--a day of great duties, when great things had to be done for God--too great, it seemed, for one man to do; and when great duty was but half done there came great trouble, such as my poor heart had never felt before.

Oh! what a great day it was! there was a night of lamentation in this place, and the cry of weeping, and of mourning, and of death. Ah! but blessed be God's name, though the day was big with tempest, and though it swelled with horror, yet as that day was, so was God's strength.

Look at poor Job. What a great day he had once! "Master," says one, "The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away." In comes another and he says, "The fire of God hath fallen on the sheep." "Oh," says another "the Chaldeans have fallen upon the camels and taken them away, and I, only I, am left to tell thee." Still, you see, grace kept growing with the day. Still strength grew as the trouble grew. At last comes the back stroke: "A great wind came from the wilderness, and smote the house where thy sons and daughters were feasting, and they are dead, and I, only I, am left to tell thee." Grace still kept growing, and at last the grace did overflow the trouble, and the poor old patriarch cried, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Ah! Job, that was a big day indeed, and it was big grace that went with that big day. Satan sometimes blows up our days with his black breath till they grow to such a cursed height that we know not how great the days must be. Our head whirls at the thought of

passing through such a sea of trouble in so short a space of time. But oh! how sweet it is to think that the bed of grace is never shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it; nor is the covering of Almighty love ever shorter than that it may cover us. We never need be afraid. If our troubles should become high as mountains. God's grace would become like Noah s flood: it would go twenty cubits higher till the mountains were covered. If God should send to you and to me a day such as there was none like it, neither should be any more, he would send us strength such as there was none like it, neither should there be any more. Do you see Martin Luther riding into Worms? There is a solitary monk going before a great council: he knows they will burn him; did not they burn John Huss, and Jerome of Prague? Both those men had a safe conduct, and it was violated and they were put to death by Papists, who said that no faith was to be kept with heretics. Luther placed very little reliance on his safe conduct; and you would have expected as he rode into Worms that he would have a dejected countenance. Not so. No sooner does he catch sight of Worms, than some one advises him not to go into the city. Said he, "If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would enter." And he does ride in. He goes to the inn, and eats his bread and drinks his beer, as complacently as if he were at his own fire-side; and then he goes quietly to bed. When summoned before the council, and asked to retract his opinion, he does not want time to consider, or debate about it; but he says, "These things that I have written are the truth of God, and by them will I stand till I die; so help me God!" The whole assembly trembles, but there is not a flush upon the cheek of the brave monk, nor do his knees knock together. He is in the midst of armed men and those that seek his blood. There sit fierce cardinals and bloodthirsty bishops and the Pope's legate; like spiders longing to suck his blood.

He cares for none of them; he walks away, and is confident that "God is his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "Ah! but," you say, "I could not do that."" Yea you could, if God called you to it. Any child of God can do what any other child of God has done, if God gives him the strength. You could not do what you are doing even now, without God's strength; and you could do ten thousand times more, if he should be pressed to fill you with his might. What an expansive promise this is!

Once more, what a varying promise it is! I do not mean that the promise varies but adapts itself to all our changes. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Here is a fine sunshiny morning; all the world is laughing; everything looks glad; the birds are singing, the trees seem to be all alive with music. "My strength shall be as my day is," says the pilgrim. Ah! pilgrim, there is a little black cloud gathering. Soon it increases; the flash of lightning wounds the heaven, and it begins to bleed in showers. Pilgrim, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The birds have done singing, and the world has done laughing; but "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Now the dark night comes on, and another day approaches--a day of tempest, and whirlwind, and storm. Dost thou tremble, pilgrim?--"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are robbers in the wood."--"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are lions which shall devour me."--"As thy days. so shall thy strength be." "But there are rivers: how shall I swim them?" Here is a boat to carry thee over: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are fires: how shall I pass through them?" Here is the garment that will protect thee: "As thy days so shall thy strength be." "But there are arrows that fly by day." Here is thy shield: "As thy days so shall thy strength be." "But there is the pestilence that walketh in darkness." Here is thy antidote: "As thy

days so shall thy strength be." Wherever you may be, and whatever trouble awaits you, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Children of God, cannot you say that this has been true hitherto? I can. It might seem egotistical if I were to talk of the evidence I have received of this during the past week, but nevertheless I cannot help recording my praise to God. I left this pulpit last Sunday as sick as any man ever left the pulpit, and I left this country too as ill as I could be, but no sooner had I set my foot upon the other shore, where I was to preach the gospel, than my wonted strength entirely returned to me. I had no sooner buckled on the harness to go forth and fight my Master's battle, than every ache and pain was gone, and all my sickness fled; and as my day was, so certainly was my strength. I believe if I were lying upon a dying couch, if God called me to preach in America, and I had but faith to be carried down to the boat, I should have strength given me, though I seemed to be dying, to minister as the Lord had appointed me. And so would each of you, wherever you might be find that as your day was, so your strength should be.

And, in conclusion, what a long promise this is! You may live till you are never so old, but this promise will outlive you. When thou comest into the depths of the river Jordan, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be;" thou shalt have confidence to face the last grim tyrant, and grace to smile even in the jaws of the grave. And when thou shalt rise again in the terrible morning of the resurrection, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be:" though the earth be reeling with dismay thou shalt know no fear; though the heavens are tottering with confusion thou shalt know no trouble. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And when thou shalt see God face to face, though thy weakness were enough to make thee die, thou shalt have strength to bear the beatific vision: thou shalt see him face to face, and thou shalt live; thou

shalt lie in the bosom of thy God; immortalized and made full of strength, thou shalt be able to bear even the brightness of the Most High.

III. What INFERENCE shall I draw except this? Children of the living God, be rid of your doubts, be rid of your trouble and your fear. Young Christians, do not be afraid to set forward on the heavenly race. You bashful Christians, that, like Nicodemus, are ashamed to come out and make an open profession, don't be afraid, "As your day is, so shall your strength be." Why need you fear? You are afraid of disgracing your profession, you shall not; your day shall never be more troublesome, or more fun of temptation, than your strength shall be full of deliverance.

And as for you that have not God to be yours, I must draw one inference for you. Your strength is decaying. You are growing old, and your old age will not be like your youth, You have strength--strength which you prostitute to the cause of Satan, which you misuse in the service of the devil. When you grow old, as you will do, unless your wickedness shall bring you to an early grave; they that look out of the windows must be darkened, and the grasshopper must be burden to you; and your strength shall not be as your day. And when you come to die, as die you must, then you shall have no strength to die with; you must die alone; you must hear yon iron gates creak on their hinges, and no guardian angel to comfort you as you go through the dreary vault. And you must stand at God's great bar at the day of resurrection, and no one to strengthen you there. How will your cheek blanch with terror! How will your soul be affrighted with horror when you shall hear it said, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." You have no such promise as this to cheer you onward, but you have this to drive you to despair: your days shall

become heavier, but your strength shall become lighter; your sorrows shall be multiplied, and your joys shall be diminished; your days shall shorten, and your nights shall lengthen; your summers shall become dimmer and your winters shall become blacker; all your hopes shall die, and your fears shall live. Ye shall reap the harvest of your sins in the dreadful vintage of eternal wrath. May God give us all grace, so that when days and years are past, we all may meet in heaven. There are some people here that I have seen a great many times, and I thought they would have been converted before now. I ask them one question, (there are some of them whom I sincerely respect) and it is this--what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? When death shall get hold upon you? What, what will you do then? May God help you to answer and prepare to meet Him!

Chapter 46

The Voice of the Blood of Christ

A Sermon

(No. 211)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 29, 1858, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."--Hebrews 12:24.

OF all substances blood is the most mysterious, and in some senses the most sacred. Scripture teacheth us,--and after all there is very much philosophy in Scripture,--that "the blood is the life thereof,"--that the life lieth in the blood. Blood, therefore, is the mysterious link between matter and spirit. How it is that the soul should in any degree have an alliance with matter through blood, we cannot understand; but certain it is that this is the mysterious link which unites these apparently dissimilar things together, so that the soul can inhabit the body, and the life can rest in the blood. God has attached awful sacredness to the shedding of blood. Under the Jewish dispensation, even the blood of animals was considered as sacred. Blood might never be eaten by the Jews; it was too sacred a thing to become the food of man. The Jew was scarcely allowed to kill his own food: certainly he must not kill it except he poured out the blood as a sacred offering to Almighty God. Blood was accepted by God as the symbol of the atonement. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, because, I take it, blood hath such an affinity with life, that inasmuch as God would accept nought but blood, be signified that there must be a life offered to him, and that his great and glorious Son must surrender his

life as a sacrifice for his sheep.

Now, we have in our text "blood" mentioned--two-fold blood. We have the blood of murdered Abel, and the blood of murdered Jesus. We have also two things in the text:--a comparison between the blood of sprinkling, and the blood of Abel; and then a certain condition mentioned. Rather, if we read the whole verse in order to get its meaning, we find that the righteous are spoken of as coming to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel; so that the condition which will constitute the second part of our discourse, is coming to that blood of sprinkling for our salvation and glory.

I. Without further preface I shall at once introduce to you the CONTRAST AND COMPARISON IMPLIED IN THE TEXT. "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." I confess I was very much astonished when looking at Dr. Gill and Albert Barnes, and several of the more eminent commentators, while studying this passage, to find that they attach a meaning to this verse which had never occurred to me before. They say that the meaning of the verse is not that the blood of Christ is superior to the blood of murdered Abel, although that is certainly a truth, but that the sacrifice of the blood of Christ is better, and speaketh better things than the sacrifice which Abel offered. Now, although I do not think this is the meaning of the text and I have my reasons for believing that the blood here contrasted with that of the Saviour, is the blood of the murdered man Abel, yet on looking to the original there is so much to be said on both sides of the question, that I think it fair in explaining the passage to give you both the meanings. They are not conflicting interpretations; there is indeed a shade of difference but still they amount to the same idea. First, then, we may understand here a comparison between the offerings Abel presented, and the offerings Jesus Christ presented, when he gave

his blood to be a ransom for the flock.

Let me describe Abel's offering. I have no doubt Adam had from the very first of his expulsion from the garden of Eden offered a sacrifice to God; and we have some dim hint that this sacrifice was of a beast, for we find that the Lord God made Adam and Eve skins of beasts to be their clothing, and it is probable that those skins were procured by the slaughter of victims offered in sacrifice. However, that is but a dim hint: the first absolute record that he have of an oblatory sacrifice is the record of the sacrifice offered by Abel. Now, it appears that very early there was a distinction among men. Cain was the representative of the seed of the serpent, and Abel was the representative of the seed of the woman. Abel was God's elect, and Cain was one of those who rejected the Most High. However, both Cain and Abel united together in the outward service of God. They both of them brought on a certain high day a sacrifice. Cain took a different view of the matter of sacrifice from that which presented itself to the mind of Abel. Cain was proud and haughty: he said "I am ready to confess that the mercies which we receive from the soil are the gift of God, but I am not ready to acknowledge that I am a guilty sinner, deserving God's wrath, therefore," said he, "I will bring nothing but the fruit of the ground." "Ah, but" said Abel, "I feel that while I ought to be grateful for temporal mercies, at the same time I have sins to confess, I have iniquities to be pardoned, and I know that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; therefore," said he, "O Cain, I will not be content to bring an offering of the ground, of the ears of corn, or of first ripe fruits, but I will bring of the firstlings of my flock, and I will shed blood upon the altar, because my faith is, that there is to come a great victim who is actually to make atonement for the sins of men, and by the slaughter of this lamb, I express my solemn

faith in him." Not so Cain; he cared nothing for Christ; he was not willing to confess his sin; he had no objection to present a thank-offering, but a sin-offering he would not bring. He did not mind bringing to God that which he thought might be acceptable as a return for favors received, but he would not bring to God an acknowledgment of his guilt, or a confession of his inability to make atonement for it, except by the blood of a substitute. Cain, moreover, when he came to the altar, came entirely without faith. He piled the unhewn stones, as Abel did, he laid his sheaves of corn upon the altar, and there he waited, but it was to him a matter of comparative indifference whether God accepted him or not. He believed there was a God, doubtless, but he had no faith in the promises of that God. God had said that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head--that was the gospel as revealed to our first parents; but Cain had no belief in that gospel--whether it were true or not, he cared not--it was sufficient for him that he acquired enough for his own sustenance from the soil; he had no faith. But holy Abel stood by the side of the altar, and while Cain the infidel perhaps laughed and jeered at his sacrifice, he boldly presented there the bleeding lamb as a testimony to all men, both of that time and all future times, that he believed in the seed of the woman--that he looked for him to come who should destroy the serpent, and restore the ruins of the fall. Do you see holy Abel, standing there, ministering as a priest at God's altar? Do you see the flush of joy which comes over his face, when he sees the heavens opened, and the living fire of God descend upon the victims? Do you note with what a grateful expression of confident faith he lifts to heaven his eye which had been before filled with tears, and cries, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast accepted my sacrifice, inasmuch as I presented it through faith in the blood of

thy Son, my Saviour, who is to come."

Abel's sacrifice, being the first on record, and being offered in the teeth of opposition, has very much in it which puts it ahead of many other of the sacrifices of the Jews. Abel is to be greatly honored for his confidence and faith in the coming Messiah. But compare for a moment the sacrifice of Christ with the sacrifice of Abel, and the sacrifice of Abel shrinks into insignificance. What did Abel bring? He brought a sacrifice which showed the necessity of blood-shedding but Christ brought the blood-shedding itself. Abel taught the world by his sacrifice that he looked for a victim, but Christ brought the actual victim. Abel brought but the type and the figure, the Lamb which was but a picture of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; but Christ was that Lamb. He was the substance of the shadow, the reality of the type. Abel's sacrifice had no merit in it apart from the faith in the Messiah with which he presented it; but Christ's sacrifice had merit of itself; it was in itself meritorious. What was the blood of Abel's lamb? It was nothing but the blood of a common lamb that might have been shed anywhere, except that he had faith in Christ the blood of the lamb was but as water, a contemptible thing; but the blood of Christ was a sacrifice indeed, richer far than all the blood of beasts that ever were offered upon the altar of Abel, or the altar of all the Jewish high priests. We may say of all the sacrifices that were ever offered, however costly they might be, and however acceptable to God, though they were rivers of oil and tens of thousands of fat beasts, yet they were less than nothing, and contemptible, in comparison with the one sacrifice which our high priest hath offered once for all, whereby he hath eternally perfected them that are sanctified.

We have thus found it very easy to set forth the difference between the

blood of Christ's sprinkling and the blood which Abel sprinkled. But now I take it that there is a deeper meaning than this, despite what some commentators have said. I believe that the allusion here is to the blood of murdered Abel. Cain smote Abel, and doubtless his hands and the altar were stained with the blood of him who had acted as a priest. "Now," says our apostle, "that blood of Abel spoke." We have evidence that it did, for God said to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," and the apostle's comment upon that in another place is--"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh," speaketh through his blood, his blood crying unto God from the ground. Now, Christ's blood speaks too. What is the difference between the two voices?--for we are told in the text that it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Abel's blood spoke in a threefold manner. It spoke in heaven; it spoke to the sons of men; it spoke to the conscience of Cain. The blood of Christ speaks in a like threefold manner, and it speaks better things. First, the blood of Abel spoke in heaven. Abel was a holy man, and all that Cain could bring against him was, "His own works were evil, and his brother's were righteous." You see the brothers going to the sacrifice together. You mark the black scowl upon the brow of Cain, when Abel's sacrifice is accepted while his remains untouched by the sacred fire. You note how they begin to talk together--how quietly Abel argues the question, and how ferociously Cain denounces him. You note again how God speaks to Cain, and warns him of the evil which he knew was in his heart; and you see Cain, as he goes from the presence chamber of the Most High, warned and forewarned; but yet with the dreadful thought in his heart that he will imbrue his hands in his

brother's blood. He meets his brother; he talks friendly with him: he gives him, as it were, the kiss of Judas; he entices him into the field where he is alone; he takes him unawares; he smites him, and smites him yet again, till there lies the murdered bleeding corpse of his brother.

O earth! earth! earth! cover not his blood. This is the first murder thou hast ever seen; the first blood of man that ever stained thy soil.

Hark! there is a cry heard in heaven, the angels are astonished; they rise up from their golden seats, and they enquire, "What is that cry?"

God looketh upon them, and he saith, "It is the cry of blood, a man hath been slain by his fellow; a brother by him who came from the bowels of the self-same mother has been murdered in cold blood, through malice. One of my saints has been murdered, and here he comes, And Abel entered into heaven blood-red, the first of God's elect who had entered Paradise, and the first of God's children who had worn the blood red crown of martyrdom. And then the cry was heard, loud and clear and strong; and thus it spoke--"Revenge! revenge! revenge!" And God himself, upstarting from his throne, summoned the culprit to his presence, questioned him, condemned him out of his own mouth, and made him henceforth a fugitive and a vagabond, to wander over the surface of the earth, which was to be sterile henceforth to his plough.

And now, beloved, just contrast with this the blood of Christ. That is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God; he hangs upon a tree; he is murdered--murdered by his own brethren. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not, but his own led him out to death." He bleeds; he dies; and then is heard a cry in heaven. The astonished angels again start from their seats, and they say," What is this? What is this cry that we hear?" And the Mighty Maker answers yet again, "It is the cry of blood; it is the cry of the blood of my only-begotten and well-beloved Son!" And God, uprising from his throne, looks down from

heaven and listens to the cry. And what is the cry? It is not revenge; but the voice crieth, "Mercy! mercy! mercy!" Did you not hear it? It said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Herein, the blood of Christ "speaketh better things than that of Abel," for Abel's blood said, "Revenge!" and made the sword of God start from its scabbard; but Christ's blood cried "Mercy!" and sent the sword back again, and bade it sleep for ever.

"Blood hath a voice to pierce the skies,
'Revenge!' the blood of Abel cries;
But the rich blood of Jesus slain,
Speaks peace as loud from every vein."

You will note too that Abel's blood cried for revenge upon one man only--upon Cain; it required the death of but one man to satisfy for it, namely. the death of the murderer. "Blood for blood!" The murderer must die the death. But what saith Christ's blood in heaven? Does it speak for only one? Ah! no, beloved; "the free gift hath come upon many." Christ's blood cries mercy! mercy! mercy! not on one, but upon a multitude whom no man can number--ten thousand times ten thousand. Again: Abel's blood cried to heaven for revenge, for one transgression of Cain that for ought that Cain had done, worthless and vile before, the blood of Abel did not demand any revenge: it was for the one sin that blood clamoured at the throne of God, and not for many sins. Not so the voice of the blood of Christ. It is "for many offenses unto justification." Oh, could ye hear that cry, that all-prevailing cry, as now it comes up from Calvary's summit--"Father, forgive them!" not one, but many. "Father, forgive them." And not only forgive them this offense, but forgive them all their sins, and blot out all their iniquities. Ah! beloved, we might have thought that the blood of Christ would have demanded vengeance at the hands of God. Surely, if Abel be

revenged seven fold, then must Christ be revenged seventy times seven. If the earth would not swallow up the blood of Abel, till it had had its fill, surely we might have thought that the earth never would have covered the corpse of Christ, until God had struck the world with fire and sword, and banished all men to destruction. But, O precious blood! thou sayest not one word of vengeance! All that this blood cries is peace! pardon! forgiveness! mercy! acceptance! Truly it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Again: Abel's blood had a second voice. It spoke to the whole world. "He being dead yet speaketh"--not only in heaven, but on earth. God's prophets are a speaking people. They speak by their acts and by their words as long as they live, and when they are buried they speak by their example which they have left behind. Abel speaks by his blood to us. And what does it say? When Abel offered up his victim upon the altar he said to us, "I believe in a sacrifice that is to be offered for the sins of men," but when Abel's own blood was sprinkled on the altar he seemed to say, "Here is the ratification of my faith; I seal my testimony with my own blood; you have now the evidence of my sincerity, for I was prepared to die for the defense of this truth which I now witness unto you." It was a great thing for Abel thus to ratify his testimony with his blood. We should not have believed the martyrs half so easily if they had not been ready to die for their profession. The Gospel in ancient times would never have spread at such a marvellous rate, if it had not been that all the preachers of the gospel were ready at any time to attest their message with their own blood. But Christ's blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Abel's blood ratified his testimony, and Christ's blood has ratified his testimony too; but Christ's testimony is better than that of Abel. For what is the testimony of Christ? The covenant of grace--that

everlasting covenant. He came into this world to tell us that God had from the beginning chosen his people--that he had ordained them to eternal life, and that he had made a covenant with his son Jesus Christ that if he would pay the price they should go free--if he would suffer in their stead they should be delivered. And Christ cried e'er "he bowed his head and gave up the ghost"--"It is finished." The covenant purpose is finished. That purpose was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Such was the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, as his own blood gushed from his heart, to be the diestamp, and seal, that the covenant was ratified. When I see Abel die I know that his testimony was true; but when I see Christ die I know that the covenant is true.

"This covenant, O believer, stands
Thy rising fears to quell;
'Tis signed and sealed and ratified,
In all things ordered well."

When he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, he did as much as say, "All things are made sure unto the seed by my giving myself a victim." Come, saint, and see the covenant all blood-bestained, and know that it is sure. He is "the faithful and true witness, the prince of the kings of the earth." First of martyrs, my Lord Jesus, thou hadst a better testimony to witness than they all, for thou hast witnessed to the everlasting covenant; thou hast witnessed that thou art the shepherd and bishop of souls; thou hast witnessed to the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of thyself Again: I say, come, ye people of God, and read over the golden roll. It begins in election--it ends in everlasting life, and all this the blood of Christ crieth in your ears. All this is true; for Christ's blood proves it to be true, and to be sure to all

the seed. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Now we come to the third voice, for the blood of Abel had a three-fold sound. It spoke in the conscience of Cain. Hardened though he was, and like a very devil in his sin, yet he was not so deaf in his conscience that he could not hear the voice of blood. The first thing that Abel's blood said to Cain was this: Ah! guilty wretch, to spill thy brother's blood! As he saw it trickling from the wound and flowing down in streams, he looked at it, and as the sun shone on it, and the red glare came into his eye, it seemed to say, "Ah! cursed wretch, for the son of thine own mother thou hast slain. Thy wrath was vile enough, when thy countenance fell, but to rise up against thy brother and take away his life, Oh! how vile!" It seemed to say to him, "What had he done that thou shouldst take his life? Wherein had he offended thee? Was not his conduct blameless, and his conversation pure? If thou hadst smitten a villain or a thief, men might not have blamed thee; but this blood is pure, clean, perfect blood; how couldest thou kill such a man as this?" And Cain put his hand across his brow, and felt there was a sense of guilt there that he had never felt before. And then the blood said to him again, "Why, whither wilt thou go? Thou shalt be a vagabond as long as thou livest." A cold chill ran through him, and he said, "Whosoever findeth me will kill me." And though God promised him he should live, no doubt he was always afraid. If he saw a company of men together, he would hide himself in a thicket, or if in his solitary wanderings he saw a man at a distance, he started back, and sought to bury his head, so that none should observe him. In the stillness of the night he started up in his dreams. It was but his wife that slept by his side; but he thought he felt some one's hands gripping his throat, and about to take away his life. Then he would sit up in his bed and took around at the grim shadows, thinking some fiend was haunting him and seeking

after him. Then, as he rose to go about his business, he trembled. He trembled to be alone, he trembled to be in company. When he was alone he seemed not to be alone; the ghost of his brother seemed staring him in his face; and when he was in company he dreaded the voice of men, for he seemed to think every one cursed him, and he thought every one knew the crime he had committed, and no doubt they did, and every man shunned him. No man would take his hand, for it was red with blood, and his very child upon his knee was afraid to look up into his father's face, for there was the mark which God had set upon him. His very wife could scarcely speak to him,--for she was afraid that from the lips of him who had been cursed of God some curse might fall on her. The very earth cursed him. He no sooner put his foot upon the ground, than where it had been a garden before it suddenly turned into a desert, and the fair rich soil became hardened into an arid rock. Guilt, like a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red, did draw the curtain of his bed each night. His crime refused him sleep. It spoke in his heart, and the walls of his memory reverberated the dying cry of his murdered brother. And no doubt that blood spoke one more thing to Cain. It said, "Cain, although thou mayest now be spared there is no hope for thee; thou art a man accursed on earth, and accursed for ever, God hath condemned thee here, and he will damn thee hereafter." And so wherever Cain went, he never found hope. Though he searched for it in the mountain top, yet he found it not there. Hope that was left to all men, was denied to him: a hopeless, houseless, helpless vagabond, he wandered up and down the surface of the earth. Oh! Abel's brood had a terrible voice indeed.

But now see the sweet change as ye listen to the blood of Christ. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Friend! hast thou ever heard the blood of Christ in thy conscience? I have, and I thank God I ever heard that sweet soft voice.

Once a sinner near despair;

Sought the mercy seat by prayer."

He prayed: he thought he was praying in vain. The tears gushed from his eyes; his heart was heavy within him; he sought, but he found no mercy. Again, again, and yet again, he besieged the throne of the heavenly grace and knocked at mercy's door Oh! who can tell the mill-stone that lay upon his beating heart, and the iron that did eat into his soul. He was a prisoner in sore bondage; deep, as he thought, in the bondage of despair was he chained, to perish for ever. That prisoner one day heard a voice, which said to him, "Away, away to Calvary!" Yet he trembled at the voice, for he said, "Why should I go thither, for there my blackest sin was committed; there I murdered the Saviour by my trangressions? Why should I go to see the murdered corpse of him who became my brother born for adversity?" But mercy beckoned, and she said, "Come, come away, sinner!" And the sinner followed. The chains were on his legs and on his hands, and he could scarcely creep along. Still the black vulture Destruction seemed hovering in the air. But he crept as best he could, till he came to the foot of the hill of Calvary. On the summit he saw a cross; blood was distilling from the hands, and from the feet, and from the side, and mercy touched his ears and said, "Listen!" and he heard that blood speak; and as it spoke the first thing it said was, "Love!" And the second thing it said was, "Mercy!" The third thing it said was, "Pardon." The next thing it said was, "Acceptance." The next thing it said was, "Adoption." The next thing it said was, "Security." And the last thing it whispered was, "Heaven." And as the sinner heard that voice, he said within himself, "And does that blood speak to me?" And the Spirit said, "To thee--to thee it speaks." And he listened, and oh what music did it seem to his poor troubled heart, for in a moment all his doubts were gone. He had no sense of guilt. He knew that he was

vile, but he saw that his vileness was all washed away; he knew that he was guilty, but he saw his guilt all atoned for, through the precious blood that was flowing there. He had been full of dread before; he dreaded life, he dreaded death; but now he had no dread at all; a joyous confidence took possession of his heart. He looked to Christ, and he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" he clasped the Saviour in his arms, and he began to sing:--"Oh! confident am I; for this blest blood was shed for me." And then Despair fled and Destruction was driven clean away. and instead thereof came the bright white-winged angel of Assurance, and she dwelt in his bosom, saying evermore to him, "Thou art accepted in the Beloved: thou art chosen of God and precious: thou art his child now, and thou shalt be his favourite throughout eternity." "The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel."

And now I must have you notice that the blood of Christ bears a comparison with the blood of Abel in one or two respects, but it excelleth in them all.

The blood of Abel cried "Justice!" It was but right that the blood should be revenged. Abel had no private pique against Cain; doubtless could Abel have done so, he would have forgiven his brother; but the blood spoke justly, and only asked its due when it shouted "Vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!" And Christ's blood speaketh justly, when it saith, "Mercy!" Christ has as much right to demand mercy upon sinners, as Abel's blood had to cry vengeance against Cain. When Christ saves a sinner, he does not save him on the sly, or against law or justice, but he saves him justly. Christ has a right to save whom he will save, to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, for he can do it justly, he can be just, and yet be the justifier of the ungodly.

Again, Abel's blood cried effectively. It did not cry in vain. It said,

"Revenge!" and revenge it had. And Christ's blood, blessed be his name, never cries in vain. It saith, "Pardon;" and pardon every believer shall have it saith, "Acceptance," and every penitent is accepted in the Beloved. If that blood cry for me, I know it cannot cry in vain. That all-prevailing blood of Christ shall never miss its due; it must, it shall be heard. Shall Abel's blood startle heaven, and shall not the blood of Christ reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth?

And again, Abel's blood cries continually, there is the mercy-seat, and there is the cross, and the blood is dropping on the mercy-seat. I have sinned a sin. Christ says, "Father, forgive him." There is one drop. I sin again: Christ intercedes again. There is another drop. In fact, it is the drop that intercedes, Christ need not speak with his mouth; the drops of blood as they fall upon the mercy-seat, each seemeth to say, "Forgive him! forgive him! forgive him!"

Dear friend, when thou hearest the voice of conscience, stop and try to hear the voice of the blood too. Oh! what a precious thing it is to hear the voice of the blood of Christ. You who do not know what that means, do not know the very essence and joy of life; but you who understand that, can say, "The dropping of the blood is like the music of heaven upon earth." Poor sinner! I would ask thee to come and listen to that voice that distils upon thy ears and thy heart to-day. Thou art full of sin; the Saviour bids thee lift thine eyes to him. See, there, his blood is flowing from his head, his hands, his feet, and every drop that falls, still cries, "Father, O forgive them! Father, O forgive them." And each drop seems to cry also as it falls, "It is finished: I have made an end of sin, I have brought in everlasting righteousness." Oh! sweet, sweet language of the dropping of the blood of Christ" It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

II. Having thus, I trust, sufficiently enlarged upon this subject I

shall now close by addressing you with a few earnest words concerning the second point.--The CONDITION INTO WHICH EVERY CHRISTIAN IS BROUGHT. He is said to be "come to the blood of sprinkling." I shall make this a very brief matter, but a very solemn and pointed one. My hearers, have you come to the blood of Christ? I do not ask you whether you have come to a knowledge of doctrine, or of an observance of ceremonies, or of a certain form of experience; but I ask you if you have come to the blood of Christ. If you have, I know how you come. You must come to the blood of Christ with no merits of your own. Guilty, lost, and helpless, you must come to that blood, and to that blood alone, for your hopes; you come to the cross of Christ and to that blood too, I know, with a trembling and an aching heart. Some of you remember how you first came, cast down and full of despair; but that blood recovered you. And this one thing I know: if you have come to that blood once, you will come to it every day. Your life will be just this--"Looking unto Jesus." And your whole conduct will be epitomized in this--"To whom coming as unto a living stone." Not to whom I have come, but to whom I am always coming. If thou hast ever come to the blood of Christ thou wilt feel thy need of coming to it every day. He that does not desire to wash in that fountain every day, has never washed in it at all. I feel it every day to be my joy and my privilege that there is still a fountain opened. I trust I came to Christ years ago but ah! I could not trust to that, unless I could come again to-day. Past experiences are doubtful things to a Christian; it is present coming to Christ that must give us joy and comfort. Did you not, some of you, sing twenty years age that hymn,

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine
While like a penitent I stand,

And there confess my sin."

Why, beloved you can sing it as well to-day as you did then. I was reading the other day some book, in which the author states, that we are not to come to Christ as sinners as long as we live; he says we are to grow into saints. Ah! he did not know much, I am sure; for saints are sinners still, and they have always to come to Christ as sinners. If ever I go to the throne of God as a saint, I get repulsed; but when I go just as a poor humble seeking sinner, relying upon nothing but thy blood, O Jesus, I never can get a repulse, I am sure. To whom coming as unto "blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Let this be our experience every day.

But there are some here who confess that they never did come. I cannot exhort you, then, to come every day, but I exhort you to come now for the first time. But you say, "May I come?" Yes, if thou art wishing to come thou mayest come; if thou feelest that thou hast need to come thou mayest come.

"All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him;"

And even

This he gives you,
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

But you say, "I must bring some merits." Hark to the blood that speaks! It says, "Sinner, I am full of merit: why bring thy merits here?" "Ah! but," thou sayest "I have too much sin." Hark to the blood: as it falls, it cries, "Of many offenses unto justification of life." "Ah! but," thou sayest, "I know I am too guilty." Hark to the blood! "Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." "Nay," says one, "but I have such a poor desire, I have such a little faith." Hark to the

blood! "The bruised reed I will not break, and smoking flax I will not quench." "Nay, but," thou sayest, "I know he will cast me out, if I do come." Hark to the blood! "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Nay, but," sayest thou, "I know I have so many sins that I cannot be forgiven." Now, hear the blood once more, and I have done. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." That is the blood's testimony, and its testimony to thee. "There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood;" and behold the blood's witness is--"The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Come, poor sinner, cast thyself simply on that truth. Away with your good works and all your trustings! Lie simply flat on that sweet word of Christ. Trust his blood; and if thou canst put thy trust alone in Jesus, in his sprinkled blood, it shall speak in thy conscience better things than that of Abel.

I am afraid there are many that do not know what we mean by believing. Good Dr. Chalmers once visiting a poor old woman, told her to believe in Christ, and she said, "But that is just the thing I do not know what you mean by." So Dr. Chalmers said, "Trust Christ." Now, that is just the meaning of believing. Trust him with your soul; trust him with your sins; trust him with the future; trust him with the past; trust him with everything. Say,

"A guilty, weak, and worthless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

May the Lord now give you his blessing; for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Chapter 47

The New Heart

A Sermon

(No. 212)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 5, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."--Ezekiel 36:26.

BEHOLD A WONDER of divine love. When God maketh his creatures, one creation he regardeth as sufficient, and should they lapse from the condition in which he has created them, he suffers them, as a rule, to endure the penalty of their transgression, and to abide in the place into which they are fallen. But here he makes an exception; man, fallen man, created by his Maker, pure and holy, hath wilfully and wickedly rebelled against the Most High, and lost his first estate, but behold, he is to be the subject of a new creation through the power of God's Holy Spirit. Behold this and wonder! What is man compared with an angel? Is he not little and insignificant? "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." God hath no mercy upon them; he made them pure and holy, and they ought to have remained his, but inasmuch as they wilfully rebelled, he cast them down from their shining seats for ever; and without a single promise of mercy, he hath bound them fast in the fetters of destiny, to abide in eternal torment. But wonder, ye heavens, the God who destroyed the angels stoops from his highest throne in glory, and speaks to his

creature man, and thus saith unto him, "Now, thou hast fallen from me even as the angels did; thou hast grossly erred, and gone astray from my ways--not for thy sake do I this, but for mine own name's sake--behold I will undo the mischief which thine own hand hath done; I will take away that heart which has rebelled against me. Having made thee once, thou hast unmade thyself--I will make thee over again. I will put my hand a second time to the work; once more shalt thou revolve upon the pottery wheel, and I will make thee a vessel of honor, fit for my gracious use. I will take away thy stony heart, and give thee a heart of flesh; a new heart will I give thee; a new spirit will I put within thee." Is not this a wonder of divine sovereignty and of infinite grace, that mighty angels should be cast into the fire for ever, and yet God hath made a covenant with man that he will renew and restore him?

And now, my dear friends I shall attempt this morning, first of all, to show the necessity for the great promise contained in my text, that God will give us a new heart and a new spirit, and after that, I shall endeavor to show the nature of the great work which God works in the soul, when he accomplishes this promise; afterwards, a few personal remarks to all my hearers.

I. In the first place, it is my business to endeavor to show THE NECESSITY FOR THIS GREAT PROMISE. Not that it needs any showing to the quickened and enlightened Christian; but this is for the conviction of the ungodly, and for the humbling of our carnal pride. O that this morning the gracious Spirit may teach us our depravity, that we may thereby be driven to seek the fulfillment of this mercy, which is most assuredly and abundantly necessary, if we would he saved. You will notice that in my text God does not promise to us that he will improve our nature, that he will mend our broken hearts. No, the promise is

that he will give us new hearts and right spirits. Human nature is too far gone ever to be mended. It is not a house that is a little out of repair, with here and there a slate blown from the roof, and here and there a piece of plaster broken down from the ceiling. No, it is rotten throughout, the very foundations have been sapped; there is not a single timber in it which has not been eaten by the worm, from its uppermost roof to its lowest foundation; there is no soundness in it; it is all rottenness and ready to fall. God doth not attempt to mend, he does not shore up the walls, and re-paint the door; he does not garnish and beautify, but he determines that the old house shall be entirely swept away, and that he will build a new one. It is too far gone, I say, to be mended. If it were only a little out of repair, it might be mended If only a wheel or two of that great thing called "manhood" were out of repair, then he who made man might put the whole to rights; he might put a new cog where it had been broken off, and another wheel where it had gone to ruin and the machine might work anew. But no, the whole of it is out of repair; there is not one 1ever which is not broken; not one axle which is not disturbed; not one of the wheels which act upon the others. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot, to the crown of the head, it is all wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. The Lord, therefore, does not attempt the repairing of this thing; but he says, "I will give you a new heart, and a right spirit will I put within you; I will take away the heart of stone, I will not try to soften it, I will let it be as stony as ever it was, but I will take it away, and I will give you a new heart, and it shall be a heart of flesh."

Now I shall endeavor to show that God is justified in this, and that there was an abundant necessity for his resolution so to do. For in the first place, if you consider what human nature has been, and what it

is, you will not be very long before you will say of it, "Ah, it is a hopeless case indeed."

Consider, then, for a moment how bad human nature must be if we think how ill it has treated its God. I remember William Huntingdon says in his autobiography, that one of the sharpest sensations of pain that he felt after he had been quickened by divine grace was this, "He felt such pity for God." I do not know that I ever met with the expression elsewhere, but it is a very expressive one; although I might prefer to say sympathy with God and grief that he should be so evil entreated. Ah, my friends, there are many men that are forgotten, that are despised, and that are trampled on by their fellows; but there never was a man who was so despised as the everlasting God has been. Many a man has been slandered and abused, but never was man abused as God has been. Many have been treated cruelly and ungratefully, but never one was treated as our God has been. Let us look back upon our past 1ives--how ungrateful have we been to him! It was he who gave us beings and the first utterance of our lips should have been in his praise; and so long as we were here, it was our duty to have perpetually sung his glory; but Instead of that, from our birth we spoke that which was false and untrue, and unholy; and since then we have continued to do the same. We have never returned his mercies into his bosom with gratitude and thankfulness; but we have let them lie forgotten without a single hallelujah, from our carelessness concerning the Most High, that he had entirely forgotten us, and that therefore we were trying to forget him. It is so very seldom that we think of him that one would imagine that surely he never gave us occasion to think of him. Addison said,--

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,

Transported with the view I'm lost

In wonder, love, and praise."

But I think if we look back with the eye of penitence we shall be lost in wonder shame, and grief, for our cry will be, "What! could I treat so good a friend so ill? Have I had so gracious a benefactor, and have I been so unmindful of him; and so devoted a father, and yet have I never embraced him? Have I never given him the kiss of my affectionate gratitude? Have I never studied to do something whereby I might let him know that I was conscious of his kindness, and that I felt a grateful return in my bosom for his love?"

But worse than this, we have not only been forgetful of him, but we have rebelled against him. We have assailed the Most High. If we knew that anything was God-like we hated it at once; we have despised his people, we have called them cants, and hypocrites, and Methodists. We have despised his day; he set it apart on purpose for our good, and that day we take for our own pleasure and our own labor instead of consecrating it to him. He gave us a book as a love-token. and he desired us to read it, for it was full of love to us; and we have kept it fast closed till the very spiders have spun their cobwebs over the leaves. He opened a house of prayer and bade us go there, and there would he meet with us and speak to us from off the mercy seat; but we have often preferred the theater to God's house and have been found listening to any sound rather than the voice which speaketh from heaven.

Ah, my friends, I say again there never was a man treated by his fellow-creatures, even by the worst of men, so bad as God has been, and yet while men have been ill-treating him, he has still continued to bless them; he has put breath into the nostrils of man, even while he has been cursing him; has given him food to eat even while he has been

spending the strength of his body in warfare against the Most High; and on the very Sabbath, when you have been breaking his commandment and spending the day on your own lusts, it is he who has given light to your eyes, breath to your lungs, and strength to your nerves and sinews; blessing you even while you have been cursing him. Oh! it is a mercy that he is God and changeth not, or else we sons of Jacob would long ago have been consumed, and justly too.

You may picture to yourselves, if you like, a poor creature dying in a ditch. I trust that such a thing never happens in this land, but such a thing might happen as a man who had been rich on a sudden becoming poor, and all his friends deserting and leaving him; he begs for bread and no man will help him, until at last, without a rag to cover him, his poor body yields up life in a ditch. This, I think, is the very extreme of human negligence to mankind; but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was treated even worse than this. It would have been a thousand mercies to him if they had permitted him to die unregarded in a ditch; but that would have been too good for human nature. He must know the very worst, and therefore God allowed human nature to take Christ and nail him to the tree. He allowed it to stand and mock his thirst and offer him vinegar, and taunt and jeer him in the extreme of his agonies; it allowed human nature to make him its jest and scorn, and stand staring with lascivious and cruel eyes upon his stripped and naked body.

Oh! shame on manhood: never could there have been a creature worse than man. The very beasts are better than man, for man has all the worst attributes of the beasts and none of their best. He has the fierceness of the lion without its nobility; he has the stubbornness of an ass without its patience; he has all the devouring gluttony of the wolf, without the wisdom which bids it avoid the trap. He is a carrion

vulture but he is never satisfied; he is a very serpent with the poison of asps beneath his tongue, but he spits his venom afar off as well as nigh. Ah, if you think of human nature as it acts towards God, you will say indeed it is too bad to be mended, it must be made anew.

Again, there is another aspect in which we may regard the sinfulness of human nature: that is its pride. It is the very worst phase of man--that he is so proud. Beloved, pride is woven into the very warp and woof of our nature, and we shall never get rid of it until we are wrapped in our winding sheet. It is astonishing, that when we are at our prayers--when we try to make use of humble expressions, we are betrayed into pride. It was but the other day, I found myself on my knee, making use of such an expression as this: "O Lord, I grieve before thee, that ever I should have been such a sinner as I have been. Oh that I should ever have revolted and rebelled as I have done." There was pride in that; for who am I? Was there any wonder in it? I ought to have known that I was myself so sinful that there was no wonder that I should have gone astray. The wonder was, that I had not been even worse and there the credit was due to God, not to myself. So that when we are trying to be humble, we may be foolishly rushing into pride. What a strange thing it is to see a sinful, guilty wretch proud of his morality! and yet that is a thing you may see every day. A man who is an enemy to God, proud of his honesty, and yet he is robbing God; a man proud of his chastity, and yet if he knew his own thoughts, they are full of lasciviousness and uncleanness; a man proud of the praise of his fellows, while he knows himself that he has the blame of his own conscience and the blame of God Almighty. It is a wild, strange thing to think that man should be proud, when he has nothing to be proud of. A living, animated lump of clay--defiled and filthy, a living hell, and yet proud. I, a base-born son of one that robbed his Master's garden of

old, and went astray and would not be obedient; of one that sunk his whole estate for the paltry bribe of a single apple! and yet proud of my ancestry! I, who am living on God's daily charity to be proud of my wealth! when I have not a single farthing with which to bless myself, unless God chooses to give it to me. I, that came naked into this world, and must go naked out of it. I, proud of my riches--what a strange thing! I, a wild asses colt, a fool that knoweth nothing, proud of my learning! Oh, what a strange thing, that the fool called man, should call himself a doctor, and make himself a master of all arts when he is a master of none, and is most a fool when be thinks his wisdom culminates to its highest point. And oh, strangest of all, that man who has a deceitful heart--full of all manner of evil concupiscence, and adultery, idolatry, and lust, should yet talk about being a good-hearted fellow, and should pride himself upon having at least some good points about him, which may deserve the veneration of his fellows, if not, some consideration from the Most High. Ah, human nature, this is, then, thine own condemnation, that thou art insanely proud, while thou hast nothing to be proud of. Write "Ichabod" upon it. The glory has departed for ever from human nature. Let it be put away, and let God give us something new for the old can never be made better. It is helplessly insane, decrepid, and defiled.

Furthermore, it is quite certain that human nature cannot be made better, for many have tried it, but they have always failed. A man, trying to improve human nature, is like trying to change the position of a weathercock, by turning it round to the east when the wind is blowing west; he has but to take his hand off and it will be back again to its place. So have I seen a man trying to restrain nature--he is an angry bad-tempered man, and he is trying to cure himself a bit and he does, but it comes out, and if it does not burn right out, and the

sparks do not fly abroad, yet it burns within his bones till they grow white with the heat of malice and there remains within his heart a residuum of the ashes of revenge. I have seen a man trying to make himself religious, and what a monstrosity he makes himself in trying to do it, for his legs are not equal, and he goes limping along in the service of God; he is a deformed and ungainly creature, and all who look at him can very soon discover the inconsistencies of his profession. Oh! we say, it is vain for such a man to try to appear white, as well might the Ethiopian think he could make his skin appear white by applying cosmetics to it, or as well might the leopard think that his spots might be brushed away as for this man to imagine that he can conceal the baseness of his nature by any attempts at religion. Ah, I know I tried a long time to improve myself, but I never did make much of it; I found I had a devil within me when I began, and I had ten devils when I left off. Instead of becoming better, I became worse; I had now got the devil of self-righteousness, of self-trust, and self-conceit, and many others had come and taken up their lodging-place. While I was busy sweeping my house, and garnishing it, behold the one that I sought to get rid of, and which had only gone for a little season, returned and brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they entered in and dwelt there. Ah, you may try and reform, dear friends, but you will find you cannot do it, and remember even if you could, still it would not be the work which God requires; he will not have reformation, he will have renovation, he will have a new heart, and not a heart changed a little for the better. But, once again, you will easily perceive we must have a new heart when you consider what are the employments and the enjoyments of the Christian religion. The nature that can feed on the garbage of sin, and devour the carrion of iniquity, is not the nature that ever can sing

the praises of God and rejoice in his holy name. The raven yonder has been feeding on the most loathsome food, do you expect that she shall have all the kindliness of the dove and toy with the maiden in her bower. Not unless you could change the raven into a dove; for as long as it is a raven its old propensities will cling to it and it will be incapable of anything above the raven's nature. Ye have seen the vulture gorge to his very full with the very filthiest of flesh, and do you expect to see that vulture sitting on the spray singing God's praises with its hoarse screaming and croaking throat? and do you imagine you will see it feeding like the barn-door fowl on the clean grain, unless its character and disposition be entirely changed? Impossible. Can you imagine that the lion will lie down with the ox, and eat straw like the bullock, so long as it is a lion? No; there must be a change. You may put on it the sheep's clothing but you cannot make it a sheep unless the lion-like nature be taken away. Try and improve the lion as long as ye like--Van Amburgh himself, if he had improved his lions for a thousand years, could not have made them into sheep. And you may try to improve the raven or the vulture as long as you please, but you cannot improve them into a dove--there must be a total change of character, and you ask me, then, whether it can be possible for a man that has sung the lascivious song of the drunkard, and has defiled his body with uncleanness, and has cursed God, to sing the high praises of God in heaven as well as he who has long loved the ways of purity and communion with Christ? I answer, no, never, unless his nature be entirely changed. For if his nature remain what it is, improve it as you may, you can make nothing better of it. So long as his heart is what it is, you can never bring it to be capable of the high delights of the spiritual nature of the child of God. Therefore, beloved, there must assuredly be a new nature put into us.

And yet once again, and I will have concluded upon this point. God hates a depraved nature, and therefore it must be taken away, before he can be accepted in him. God does not hate our sin so much as he does our sinfulness. It is not the overflowing of the spring, it is the well itself. It is not the arrow that doth shoot from the bow of our depravity; it is the arm itself that doth hold the bow of sin, and the motive that wings the arrow against God. The Lord is angry not only against our overt acts, but against the nature which dictates the acts. God is not so short-sighted as merely to look at the surface, he looks at the source and fountain. He saith, "in vain shall it be, though thou shouldst make the fruit good, if the tree remain corrupt. In vain shalt thou attempt to sweeten the waters, so long as the fountain itself is defiled." God is angry with man's heart; he has a hatred against man's depraved nature, and he will have it taken away, he will have it totally cleansed before he will admit that man into any communion with himself--and above all, into the sweet communion of Paradise. There is, therefore, a demand for a new nature, and that we must have, or otherwise we can never see his face with acceptance.

II. And now it shall be my joyful business to endeavor, in the second place, to set before you very briefly THE NATURE OF THIS GREAT CHANGE WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS IN US.

And, I may begin by observing, that it is a divine work from first to last. To give a man a new heart and a new spirit is God's work, and the work of God alone. Arminianism falls to the ground when we come to this point. Nothing will do here but that old-fashioned truth men call Calvinism. "Salvation is of the Lord alone;" this truth will stand the test of ages and can never be moved, because it is the immutable truth of the living God. And all the way in salvation we have to learn this truth, but especially when we come here to this particular and

indispensable part of salvation, the making of a new heart within us. That must be God's work; man may reform himself, but how can man give himself a new heart? I need not enlarge upon the thought it will strike you in a moment, that the very nature of the change, and the terms in which it is mentioned here, put it beyond all power of man. How can man put into himself a new heart, for the heart being the motive power of all life, must exert itself before anything can be done? But how could the exertions of an old heart bring forth a new heart? Can you imagine for a moment a tree with a rotten heart, by its own vital energy, giving to itself a new young heart? You cannot suppose such a thing. If the heart were originally right, and the defects were only in some branch of the tree, you can conceive that the tree, through the vital power of its sap within its heart, might rectify the wrong. We have heard of some kind of insects that have lost their limbs, and by their vital power have been able to recover them again. But take away the seat of the vital power--the heart, lay the disease there, and what power is there that can, by any possibility, rectify it, unless it be a power from without--in fact, a power from above? Oh, beloved, there never was a man yet, that did so much as the turn of a hair towards making himself a new heart. He must lie passive there--he shall become active afterwards--but in the moment when God puts a new life into the soul, the man is passive: and if there be aught of activity, it is an active resistance against it, until God, by overcoming victorious grace, gets the mastery over man's will.

Once, again, this is a gracious change. When God puts a new heart into man, it is not because man deserves a new heart--because there was anything good in his nature, that could have prompted God to give him a new spirit. The Lord simply gives a man a new heart because he wishes to do it; that is his only reason. "But," you say, "suppose a man cries

for a new heart?" I answer, no man ever did cry for a new heart until he had got one, for the cry for a new heart proves that there is a new heart there already. But, says one "Are we not to seek for a right spirit?" Yes, I know it is your duty,--but I equally know it is a duty you will never fulfill. You are commanded to make to yourselves new hearts, but I know you will never attempt to do it, until God first of all moves you thereunto. As soon as you begin to seek a new heart, it is presumptive evidence that the new heart is there already in its germ, for there would not be this germinating in prayer, unless the seeds were there before it.

"But," says one, "suppose the man has not a new heart, and were earnestly to seek one, would he have it?" You must not make impossible suppositions; so long as the man's heart is depraved and vile, he never will do such a thing. I cannot, therefore, tell you what might happen, if he did what he never will do. I cannot answer your suppositions; if you suppose yourself into a difficulty you must suppose yourself out of it. But the fact is, that no man ever did, or ever will seek a new heart, or a right spirit, until, first of all, the grace of God begins with him. If there be a Christian here, who began with God, let him publish it to the world; let us hear for once that there was a man who was beforehand with his Maker. But I have never met with such a case; all Christian people declare that God was first with them, and they will all sing,

"Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced me in
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

It is a gracious change, freely given without any merit of the creature, without any desire or good-will coming beforehand. God doeth

it of his own pleasure, not according to man's will.

Once more, it is a victorious effort of divine grace. When God first begins the work of changing the heart, he finds man totally averse to any such a thing. Man by nature kicks and struggles against God; he will not be saved. I must confess I never would have been saved, if I could have helped it. As long as ever I could I rebelled and revolted, and struggled against God. When he would have me pray, I would not pray: when he would have me listen to the sound of the ministry, I would not. And when I heard, and the tear rolled down my cheek, I wiped it away and defied him to melt my heart. When my heart was a little touched, I tried to divert it with sinful pleasures. And when that would not do I tried self-righteousness, and would not then have been saved, until I was hemmed in, and then he gave me the effectual blow of grace, and there was no resisting that irresistible effort of his grace. It conquered my depraved will, and made me bow myself before the scepter of his grace. And so it is in every case. Man revolts against his Maker and his Saviour; but where God determines to save, save he will. God will have the sinner, if he designs to have him. God never was thwarted yet in any one of his purposes. Man does resist with all his might, but all the might of man, tremendous though it be for sin, is not equal to the majestic might of the Most High, when he rideth forth in the chariot of his salvation. He doth irresistibly save and victoriously conquer man's heart.

And furthermore, this change is instantaneous. To sanctify a man is the work of the whole life; but to give a man a new heart is the work of an instant in one solitary second, swifter than the lightning flash, God can put a new heart into a man, and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus. You may be sitting where you are to-day, an enemy to God, with a wicked heart within; hard as a stone, and dead and cold; but if the

Lord wills it, the living spark shall drop into your soul, and in that moment you will begin to tremble--begin to feel; you will confess your sin, and fly to Christ for mercy. Other parts of salvation are done gradually but regeneration is the instantaneous work of God's sovereign, effectual, and irresistible grace.

III. Now we have in this subject a grand field of hope and encouragement to the very vilest of sinners. My hearers, let me very affectionately address you pouring out my heart before you for a moment or two. There are some of you here present who are seeking after mercy, for many-a-day you have been in prayer in secret, till your very knees seemed sore with the oftenness of your intercession. Your cry to God has been, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Let me comfort you by this reflection, that your prayer is already heard. You have a new heart and a right spirit; perhaps you will not be able to perceive the truth of this utterance for months to come, therefore continue in prayer till God shall open your eyes, so that you may see that the prayer is answered; but rest assured it is answered already. If thou hatest sin, that is not human nature; if thou longest to be a friend of God, that is not human nature; if thou desirest to be saved by Christ, it is not human nature if thou desirest that without any stipulations of thine own, if thou art this day willing that Christ should take thee to be his own, to have and to hold, through life and through death, if thou art willing to live in his service, and if needful to die for his honor, that is not of human nature--that is the work of divine graces. There is something good in thee already; the Lord hath begun a good work in thy heart, and he will carry it, on even unto the end. All these feelings of thine are more than thou ever couldst have attained of thyself. God has helped thee up this divine ladder of grace, and as sure as he has brought thee up so many staves

of it, he will carry thee to the very summit, till he grasps thee in the arms of his love in glory everlasting.

There are others of you here however, who have not proceeded so far, but you are driven to despair. The devil has told you that you cannot be saved; you have been too guilty, too vile. Any other people in the world might find mercy, but not you, for you do not deserve to be saved. Hear me then, dear friend. Have I not tried to make it as plain as the sunbeam all through this service, that God never saves a man for the sake of what he is, and that he does not either begin or carry on the work in us because there is anything good in us. The greatest sinner is just as eligible for divine mercy as the very least of sinners. He who has been a ringleader in crime, I repeat, is just as eligible for God's sovereign grace, as he that has been a very paragon of morality. For God wants nothing of us. It is not as it is with the ploughman; he does not desire to plough all day upon the rocks, and send his horses upon the sand; he wants a fertile soil to begin with, but God does not. He will begin with the rocky soil, and he will pound that rocky heart of yours until it turns into the rich black mould of penitential grief, and then he will scatter the living seed in that mould, till it brings forth a hundredfold. But he wants nothing of you, to begin with. He can take you, a thief, a drunkard, a harlot, or whoever you may be; he can bring you on your knees, make you cry for mercy, and then make you lead a holy life, and keep you unto the end. "Oh!" says one, "I wish he would do that to me, then." Well, soul, if that be a true wish, he will. If thou desirest this day that thou shouldest be saved, there never was an unwilling God where there was a willing sinner. Sinner, if thou willest to be saved, God willeth not the death of any, but rather that they should come to repentance; and thou are freely invited this morning to turn thine eye to the cross of

Christ. Jesus Christ has borne the sins of men, and carried their sorrows; thou art bidden to look there, and trust there, simply and implicitly. Then thou art saved. That very wish, if it be a sincere one, shows that God has just now been begetting thee again to a lively hope. If that sincere wish shall endure, it will be abundant evidence that the Lord hath brought thee to himself, and that thou art and shall be his.

And now reflect every one of you--you that are not converted--that we are all this morning in the hands of God. We deserve to be damned: if God damneth us, there is not a single word that will be heard against his doing it. We cannot save ourselves; we lie entirely in his hands; like a moth that lies under the finger, he can crush us now, if he pleases, or he can let us go and save us. What reflections ought to cross our mind, if we believe that. Why, we ought to cast ourselves on our faces, as soon as we reach our homes, and cry, "Great God, save me, a sinner! Save me! I renounce all merit for I have none; I deserve to be lost; Lord, save me, for Christ's sake;" and as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, there is not one of you that shall do this who shall find my God shut the gates of mercy against you. Go and try him, sinner; go and try him! Fall upon thy knees in thy chamber this day, and try my Master. See if he will not forgive you. You think too harshly of him. He is a great deal kinder than you think he is. You think he is a hard master, but he is not. I thought he was severe and angry, and when I sought him, "Surely," I said, "if he accepteth all the world beside, he will reject me." But I know he took me to his bosom; and when I thought he would spurn me for ever, he said, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins," and I wondered how it was, and I do wonder now. But it shall be so in your case. Only try him, I beseech thee. The Lord help thee to

try him, and to him shall be the glory, and to thee shall be happiness and bliss, for ever and ever.

Chapter 48

The Fatherhood of God

A Sermon

(No. 213)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 12, 1858, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"Our Father which art in heaven."--Matthew 6:9.

I THINK there is room for very great doubt, whether our Saviour intended the prayer, of which our text forms a part, to be used in the manner in which it is commonly employed among professing Christians. It is the custom of many persons to repeat it as their morning prayer, and they think that when they have repeated these sacred words they have done enough. I believe that this prayer was never intended for universal use. Jesus Christ taught it not to all men, but to his disciples, and it is a prayer adapted only to those who are the possessors of grace, and are truly converted. In the lips of an ungodly man it is entirely out of place. Doth not one say, "Ye are of your father the devil, for his works ye do?" Why, then, should ye mock God by saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." For how can he be your Father? Have ye two Fathers? And if he be a Father, where is his honor? Where is his love? You neither honor nor love him, and yet you presumptuously and blasphemously approach him, and say, "Our Father," when your heart is attached still to sin, and your life is opposed to his law, and you therefore prove yourself to be an heir of wrath, and not a child of grace! Oh! I beseech you, leave off sacrilegiously employing these sacred words; and until you can in sincerity and truth say, "Our Father which art in heaven," and in your lives seek to honor

his holy name, do not offer to him the language of the hypocrite, which is an abomination to him.

I very much question also, whether this prayer was intended to be used by Christ's own disciples as a constant form of prayer. It seems to me that Christ gave it as a model, whereby we are to fashion all our prayers, and I think we may use it to edification, and with great sincerity and earnestness, at certain times and seasons. I have seen an architect form the model of a building he intends to erect of plaster or wood; but I never had an idea that it was intended for me to live in. I have seen an artist trace on a piece of brown paper, perhaps, a design which he intended afterwards to work out on more costly stuff; but I never imagined the design to be the thing itself. This prayer of Christ is a great chart, as it were: but I cannot cross the sea on a chart. It is a map; but a man is not a traveler because he puts his fingers across the map. And so a man may use this form of prayer, and yet be a total stranger to the great design of Christ in teaching it to his disciples. I feel that I cannot use this prayer to the omission of others. Great as it is, It does not express all I desire to say to my Father which is in heaven. There are many sins which I must confess separately and distinctly; and the various other petitions which this prayer contains require, I feel, to be expanded, when I come before God in private; and I must pour out my heart in the language which his Spirit gives me; and more than that, I must trust in the Spirit to speak the unutterable groanings of my spirit, when my lips cannot actually express all the emotions of my heart. Let none despise this prayer; it is matchless, and if we must have forms of prayer, let us have this first, foremost, and chief; but let none think that Christ would tie his disciples to the constant and only use of this. Let us rather draw near to the throne of the heavenly grace with boldness, as

children coming to a father, and let us tell forth our wants and our sorrows in the language which the Holy Spirit teacheth us.

And now, coming to the text, there are several things we shall have to notice here. And first, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon the double relationship mentioned: "Our Father which art in heaven." There is sonship--"Father;" there is brotherhood, for it says, "Our Father;" and if he be the common father of us, then we must be brothers; for there are two relationships, sonship and brotherhood. In the next place, I shall utter a few words upon the spirit which is necessary to help us before we are able to utter this--"The spirit of adoption," whereby we can cry, "Our Father which art in heaven." And then, thirdly, I shall conclude with the double argument of the text, for it is really an argument upon which the rest of the prayer is based. "Our Father which art in heaven," is, as it were, a strong argument used before supplication itself is presented.

I. First, THE DOUBLE RELATIONSHIP IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.

We take the first one. Here is sonship--"Our Father which art in heaven." How are we to understand this, and in what sense are we the sons and daughters of God? Some say that the Fatherhood of God is universal, and that every man, from the fact of his being created by God, is necessarily God's son, and that therefore every man has a right to approach the throne of God, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven." To that I must demur. I believe that in this prayer we are to come before God, looking upon him not as our Father through creation, but as our Father through adoption and the new birth. I will very briefly state my reasons for this.

I have never been able to see that creation necessarily implies fatherhood. I believe God has made many things that are not his children. Hath he not made the heavens and the earth, the sea and the

fullness thereof? and are they his children? You say these are not rational and intelligent beings; but he made the angels, who stand in an eminently high and holy position, are they his children? "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my son?" I do not find, as a rule, that angels are called the children of God; and I must demur to the idea that mere creation brings God necessarily into the relationship of a Father. Doth not the potter make vessels of clay? But is the potter the father of the vase, or of the bottle? No, beloved, it needs something beyond creation to constitute the relationship, and those who can say, "Our Father which art in heaven," are something more than God's creatures: they have been adopted into his family. He has taken them out of the old black family in which they were born; he has washed them. and cleansed them, and given them a new name and a new spirit, and made them "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" and all this of his own free, sovereign, unmerited, distinguishing grace. And having adopted them to be his children, he has in the next place, regenerated them by the Spirit of the living God. He has "begotten them again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and no man hath a right to claim God as his Father, unless he feeleth in his soul, and believeth, solemnly, through the faith of God's election, that he has been adopted into the one family of which is in heaven and earth, and that he has been regenerated or born again. This relationship also involves love, If God be my Father, he loves me. And oh, how he loves me! When God is a Husband he is the best of husbands. Widows, somehow or other, are always well eared for. When God is a Friend, he is the best of friends, and sticketh closer than a brother; and when he is a Father he is the best of fathers. O fathers! perhaps ye do not know how much ye love your children. When they are sick ye find it out, for ye stand by their couches and ye pity them, as

their little frames are writhing in pain. Well, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Ye know how ye love your children too, when they grieve you by their sin; anger arises, and you are ready to chasten them, but no sooner is the tear in their eye, than your hand is heavy, and you feel that you had rather smite yourself than smite them; and every time you smite them you seem to cry, "Oh that I should have thus to afflict my child for his sin! Oh that I could suffer in his stead!" And God, even our Father, "doth not afflict willingly." Is not that a sweet thing? He is, as it were, compelled to it; even the Eternal arm is not willing to do it; it is only his great love and deep wisdom that brings down the blow. But if you want to know your love to your children, you will know it most if they die. David knew that he loved his son Absalom, but he never knew how much he loved him till he heard that he had been slain, and that he had been buried by Joshua "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." He knows then how deep and pure is the love that death can never sever, and the terrors of eternity never can unbind.

But, parents, although ye love your children much, and ye know it, ye do not know, and ye cannot tell how deep is the unfathomable abyss of the love of God to you. Go out at midnight and consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained; and I am sure you will say, "What is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him?" But, more than all, you will wonder, not at your loving him, but that while he has all these treasures, he should set his heart upon so insignificant a creature as man. And the sonship that God has given us is not a mere name; there is all our Father's great heart given to us in the moment when be claims us as his sons.

But if this sonship involves the love of God to us, it involves also, the duty of love to God. Oh! heir of heaven, if thou art God's child,

wilt thou not love thy Father? What son is there that loveth not his father? Is he not less than human if he loveth not his sire? Let his name be blotted from the book of remembrance that loveth not the woman that brought him forth, and the father that begat him. And we, the chosen favourites of heaven, adopted and regenerated, shall not we loose him? Shall we not say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee? My father, I will give thee my heart; thou shalt be the guide of my youth; thou dost love me, and the little heart that I have shall be all thine own for ever."

Furthermore, if we say "Our Father which art in heaven," we must recollect that our being sons involves the duty of obedience to God. When I say "My Father," it is not for me to rise up and go in rebellion against his wishes; if he be a father, let me note his commands, and let me reverentially obey; if he hath said "Do this," let me do it, not because I dread him, but because I love him; and if he forbids me to do anything, let me avoid it. There are some persons in the world who have not the spirit of adoption, and they can never be brought to do a thing unless they see some advantage to themselves in it; but with the child of God, there is no motive at all; he can boldly say, "I have never done a right thing since I have followed Christ because I hoped to get to heaven by it, nor have I ever avoided a wrong thing because I was afraid of being damned." For the child of God knows his good works do not make him acceptable to God, for he was acceptable to God by Jesus Christ long before he had any good works; and the fear of hell does not affect him, for he knows that he is delivered from that, and shall never come into condemnation, having passed from death unto life. He acts from pure love and gratitude, and until we come to that state of mind, I do not think there is such a thing as virtue; for if a man has

done what is called a virtuous action because he hoped to get to heaven or to avoid hell by it, whom has he served? Has he not served himself? and what is that but selfishness? But the man who has no hell to fear and no heaven to gain, because heaven is his own and hell he never can enter, that man is capable of virtue; for he says--

"Now for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
I pour contempt on all my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross"--

to his cross who loved, and lived, and died for me who loved him not, but who desires now to love him with all my heart, and soul, and strength.

And now permit me to draw your attention to one encouraging thought that may help to cheer the downcast and Satan-tempted child of God. Sonship is a thing which all the infirmities of our flesh, and all the sins into which we are hurried by temptation, can never violate or weaken. A man hath a child; that child on a sudden is bereaved of its senses; it becomes an idiot. What a grief that is to a father, for a child to become a lunatic or an idiot, and to exist only as an animal, apparently without a soul! But the idiot child is a child, and the lunatic child is a child still; and if we are the fathers of such children they are ours, and all the idiocy and all the lunacy that can possibly befall them can never shake the fact that they are our sons. Oh! what a mercy, when we transfer this to God's case and ours! How foolish we are sometimes--how worse than foolish! We may say as David did, "I was as a beast before thee." God brings before us the truths of his kingdom; we cannot see their beauty, we cannot appreciate them; we seem to be as if we were totally demented ignorant, unstable, weary, and apt to slide. But, thanks be unto God, we are his children still!

And if there be anything worse that can happen to a father than his child becoming a lunatic or an idiot, it is when he grows up to be wicked. It is well said, "Children are doubtful blessings." I remember to have heard one say, and, as I thought, not very kindly, to a mother with an infant at her breast--"Woman! you may be suckling a viper there." It stung the mother to the quick, and it was not needful to have said it. But how often is it the fact, that the child that has hung upon its mother's breast, when it grows up, brings that mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!

"Oh! sharper than a serpent's tooth
To have a thankless child!"

ungodly, vile, debauched--a blasphemer! But mark, brethren: if he be a child he cannot lose his childship, nor we our fatherhood, be he who or what he may. Let him be transported beyond the seas, he is still our son; let us deny him the house because his conversation might lead others of our children into sin, yet our son he is, and must be, and when the sod shall cover his head and ours, "father and son" shall still be on the tombstone. The relationship never can be severed as lone as time shall last. The prodigal was his father's son, when he was amongst the harlots, and when he was feeding swine; and God's children are God's children anywhere and everywhere, and shall be even unto the end. Nothing can sever that sacred tie, or divide us from his heart.

There is yet another thought that may cheer the Little-faiths and Feeble minds. The fatherhood of God is common to all his children. Ah! Little-faith, you have often looked up to Mr. Great-heart, and you have said, "Oh that I had the courage of Great-heart, that I could wield his sword and cut old giant Grim in pieces! Oh that I could fight the dragons, and that I could overcome the lions! But I am stumbling at every straw, and a shadow makes me afraid." List thee, Little-faith.

Great-heart is God's child, and you are God's child too; and Great-heart is not a whit more God's child than you are. David was the son of God, but not more the son of God than thou. Peter and Paul, the highly-favored apostles, were of the family of the Most High; and so are you. You have children yourselves; one is a son grown up, and out in business, perhaps, and you have another, a little thing still in arms. Which is most your child the little one or the big one? "Both alike," you say. "This little one is my child near my heart and the big one is my child too." And so the little Christian is as much a child of God as the great one.

"This cov'nant stands secure,
Though earth's old pillars bow;
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now;"

and they are one in the family of God, and no one is ahead of the other. One may have more grace than another, but God does not love one more than another. One may be an older child than another, but he is not more a child; one may do more mighty works, and may bring more glory to his Father, but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of heaven is as much the child of God as he who stands among the king's mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

I will make but one more remark before I leave this point, namely, this,--that our being the children of God brings with it innumerable privileges. Time would fail me, if I were to attempt to read the long roll of the Christian's joyous privileges. I am God's child: if so, he will clothe me; my shoes shall be iron and brass; he will array me with the robe of my Saviour's righteousness, for he has said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," and he has also said that he will put

a crown of pure gold upon my head and inasmuch as I am a king's son, I shall have a royal crown. Am I his child? Then he will feed me; my bread shall be given me, and my water shall be sure; he that feeds the ravens will never let his children starve. If a good husbandman feeds the barn-door fowl, and the sheep and the bullocks, certainly his children shall not starve. Does my Father deck the lily, and shall I go naked? Does he feed the fowls of the heaven that sow not, neither do they reap, and shall I feel necessity? God forbid! My Father knoweth what things I have need of before I ask him, and he will give me all I want. If I be his child, then I have a portion in his heart here, and I shall have a portion in his house above. for "if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," "If we suffer with him we shall be also glorified together." And oh! brethren, what a prospect this opens up! The fact of our being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, proves that all things are ours--the gift of God, the purchase of a Saviour's blood.

"This world is ours, and worlds to come;
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home."

Are there crowns? They are mine if I be an heir. Are there thrones? Are there dominions? Are there harps, palm branches, white robes? Are there glories that eye hath not seen? and is there music that ear hath not heard? All these are mine, if I be a child of God. "And it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Talk of princes, and kings, and potentates: Their inheritance is but a pitiful foot of land, across which the bird's wing can soon direct its flight; but the broad acres of the Christian cannot be measured by eternity. He is rich, without a limit to his wealth. he is blessed, without a boundary to his bliss. All this, and more than I can enumerate, is involved in our

being able to say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

The second tie of the text is brotherhood. It does not say my Father, but our Father. Then it seems there are a great many in the family. I will be very brief on this point.

"Our Father." When you pray that prayer, remember you have a good many brothers and sisters that do not know their Father yet, and you must include them all; for all God's elect ones, though they be uncalled as yet, are still his children, though they know it not. In one of Krummacher's beautiful little parables there is a story like this:

"Abraham sat one day in the grove at Mamre, leaning his head on his hand, and sorrowing. Then his son Isaac came to him, and said, My father, why mournest thou? what aileth thee?' Abraham answered and said, My soul mourneth for the people of Canaan, that they know not the Lord, but walk in their own ways, in darkness and foolishness.' Oh, my father,' answered the son, is it only this? Let not thy heart be sorrowful; for are not these their own ways?' Then the patriarch rose up from his seat, and said, Come now, follow me.' And he led the youth to a hut. and said to him, Behold.' There was a child which was an imbecile, and the mother sat weeping by it. Abraham asked her, Why weepest thou? Then the mother said, Alas, this my son eateth and drinketh, and we minister unto him; but he knows not the face of his father, nor of his mother. Thus his life is lost, and this source of joy is sealed to him.' " Is not that a sweet little parable, to teach us how we ought to pray for the many sheep that are not yet of the fold, but which must be brought in? We ought to pray for them, because they do not know their Father. Christ has bought them, and they do not know Christ; the Father has loved them from before the foundation of the world, and yet, they know not the face of their Father. When thou sayest "Our Father," think of the many of thy brothers and sisters that

are in the back streets of London, that are in the dens and caves of Satan. Think of thy poor brother that is intoxicated with the spirit of the devil; think of him, led astray to infamy, and lust, and perhaps to murder, and in thy prayer pray thou for them who know not the Lord. "Our Father." That, then, includes those of God's children who differ from us in their doctrine. Ah! there are some that differ from us as wide as the poles; but yet they are God's children. Come, Mr. Bigot, do not kneel down, and say, "My Father," but "Our Father." "If you please, I cannot put in Sir. So-and-So, for I think he is a heretic." Put him in, sir. God has put him in, and you must put him in too, and say, "Our Father." Is it not remarkable how very much alike all God's people are upon their knees? Some time ago at a prayer-meeting I called upon two brothers in Christ to pray one after another, the one a Wesleyan and the other a strong Calvinist, and the Wesleyan prayed the most Calvinistic prayer of the two, I do believe--at least, I could not tell which was which. I listened to see if I could not discern some peculiarity even in their phraseology, but there was none. "Saints in prayer appear as one." for when they get on their knees, they are all compelled to say "Our Father," and all their language afterwards is of the same sort.

When thou prayest to God put in the poor; for is he not the Father of many of the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, though they be poor in this world. Come my sister, if thou bowest thy knee amid the rustling of silk and satin, yet remember the cotton and the print. My brother, is there wealth in thy hand, yet I pray thee, remember thy brethren of the horny hand and the dusty brow; remember those who could not wear what thou wearest, nor eat what thou eatest, but are as Lazarus compared with thee, while thou art as Dives. Pray for them; put them all in the same prayer and say, "Our Father."

And pray for those that are divided from us by the sea--those that are in heathen lands, scattered like precious salt in the midst of this world's putrefaction. Pray for all that name the name of Jesus, and let thy prayer be a great and comprehensive one. "Our Father, which art in heaven." And after thou hast prayed that rise up and act it. Say not "Our Father," and then look upon thy brethren with a sneer or a frown. I beseech thee, live like a brother, and act like a brother Help the needy; cheer the sick; comfort the faint-hearted; go about doing good, minister unto the suffering people of God, wherever thou findest them, and let the world take knowledge of thee, that thou art when on thy feet what thou art upon thy knees--that thou art a brother unto all the brotherhood of Christ, a brother born for adversity, like thy Master himself.

II. Having thus expounded the double relationship, I have left myself but little time for a very important part of the subject, namely, THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

I am extremely puzzled and bewildered how to explain to the ungodly what is the spirit with which we must be filled, before we can pray this prayer. If I had a foundling here, one who had never seen either father or mother, I think I should have a very great difficulty in trying to make him understand what are the feelings of a child towards its father. Poor little thing, he has been under tutors and governors; he has learned to respect them for their kindness, or to fear them for their austerity, but there never can be in that child's heart that love towards tutor or governor, however kind he may be, that there is in the heart of another child towards his own mother or father. There is a nameless charm there: we cannot describe or understand it: it is a sacred touch of nature, a throb in the breast that God has put there, and that cannot be taken away. The fatherhood is recognized by the

childship of the child. And what is that spirit of a child--that sweet spirit that makes him recognize and love his father? I cannot tell you unless you are a child yourself, and then you will know. And what is "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father?" I cannot tell you; but if you have felt it you will know it. It is a sweet compound of faith that knows God to be my Father, love that loves him as my Father, joy that rejoices in him as my Father, fear that trembles to disobey him because he is my Father and a confident affection and trustfulness that relies upon him, and casts itself wholly upon him, because it knows by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit, that Jehovah, the God of earth and heaven, is the Father of my heart. Oh! have you ever felt the spirit of adoption? There is nought like it beneath the sky. Save heaven itself there is nought more blissful than to enjoy that spirit of adoption. Oh! when the wind of trouble is blowing and waves of adversity are rising, and the ship is reeling to the rock how sweet then to say "My Father," and to believe that his strong hand is on the helm!--when the bones are aching, and when the loins are filled with pain, and when the cup is brimming with wormwood and gall, to say "My Father," and seeing that Father's hand holding the cup to the lip, to drink it steadily to the very dregs because we can say, "My Father, not my will, but thine be done." Well says Martin Luther, in his Exposition of the Galatians, "there is more eloquence in that word, Abba. Father,' than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero put together." "My Father!" Oh! there is music there; there is eloquence there; there is the very essence of heaven's own bliss in that word, " My Father," when applied to God, and when said by us with an unfaltering tongue, through the inspiration of the Spirit of the living God.

My hearers, have you the spirit of adoption? If not, ye are miserable

men. May God himself bring you to know him! May he teach you your need of him! May he lead you to the cross of Christ, and help you to look to your dying Brother! May he bathe you in the blood that flowed from his open wounds, and then, accepted in the beloved, may you rejoice that you have the honor to be one of that sacred family.

III. And now, in the last place, I said that there was in the title, A DOUBLE ARGUMENT. "Our Father." That is, "Lord, hear what I have got to say. Thou art my Father." If I come before a judge I have no right to expect that he shall hear me at any particular season in aught that I have to say. If I came merely to crave for some boon or benefit to myself, if the law were on my side, then I could demand an audience at his hands; but when I come as a law-breaker, and only come to crave for mercy, or for favors I deserve not, I have no right to expect to be heard. But a child, even though he is erring, always expects his father will hear what he has to say. "Lord, if I call thee King thou wilt say, Thou art a rebellious subject; get thee gone.' If I call thee Judge thou wilt say, Be still, or out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee.' If I call thee Creator thou wilt say unto me It repenteth me that I made man upon the earth.' If I call thee my Preserver thou wilt say unto me, I have preserved thee, but thou hast rebelled against me.' But if I call thee Father, all my sinfulness doth not invalidate my claim. If thou be my Father, then thou lovest me; if I be thy child, then thou wilt regard me, and poor though my language be, thou wilt not despise it." If a child were called upon to speak in the presence of a number of persons, how very much alarmed he would be lest he should not use right language. I may sometimes feel when I have to address a mighty auditory, lest I should not select choice words, full well knowing that if I were to preach as I never shall, like the mightiest of orators I should always have enough of carping critics to rail at

me. But if I had my Father here and if you could all stand in the relationship of father to me, I should not be very particular what language I used. When I talk to my Father I am not afraid he will misunderstand me; if I put my words a little out of place he understands my meaning somehow. When we are little children we only prattle; still our father understands us. Our children talk a great deal more like Dutchmen than Englishmen when they begin to talk, and strangers come in and my, "Dear me, what is the child talking about?" But we know what it is and though in what they say there may not be an intelligible sound that any one could print, and a reader make it out, we know they have got certain little wants, and having a way of expressing their desires, and we can understand them. So when we come to God, our prayers are little broken things; we cannot put them together but our Father, he will hear us. Oh! what a beginning is "Our Father," to a prayer full of faults, and a foolish prayer perhaps, a prayer in which are going to ask what we ought not to ask for! "Father, forgive the language! forgive the matter!" As one dear brother said the other day at the prayer meeting. He could not get on in prayer, and he finished up on a sudden by saying, "Lord, I cannot pray to-night as I should wish; I cannot put the words together; Lord, take the meaning take the meaning," and sat down. That is just what David said once, "Lo, all my desire is before thee"--not my words, but my desire, and God could read it. We should say, "Our Father," because that is a reason why God should hear what we have to say.

But there is another argument. "Our Father." "Lord, give me what I want." If I come to a stranger, I have no right to expect he will give it me. He may out of his charity; but if I come to a father, I have a claim, a sacred claim. My Father, I shall have no need to use arguments to move thy bosom; I shall not have to speak to thee as the beggar who

crieth in the street: for because thou art my Father thou knowest my wants, and thou art willing to relieve me. It is thy business to relieve me; I can come confidently to thee, knowing thou wilt give me all I want. If we ask our Father for anything when we are little children, we are under an obligation certainly; but it is an obligation we never feel. If you were hungry and your father fed you, would you feel an obligation like you would if you went into the house of a stranger? You go into a stranger's house trembling, and you tell him you are hungry. Will he feed you? He says yes, he will give you somewhat; but if you go to your father's table, almost without asking, you sit down as a matter of course, and feast to your full, and you rise and go, and feel you are indebted to him; but there is not a grievous sense of obligation. Now, we are all deeply under obligation to God, but it is a child's obligation--an obligation which impels us to gratitude, but which does not constrain us to feel that we have been demeaned by it. Oh! if he were not my Father, how could I expect that he would relieve my wants? But since he is my Father, he will, he must hear my prayers, and answer the voice of my crying, and supply all my needs out of the riches of his fullness in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Has your father treated you badly lately? I have this word to you, then; your father loves you quite as much when he treats you roughly as when he treats you kindly. There is often more love in an angry father's heart than there is in the heart of a father who is too kind.

I will suppose a case. Suppose there were two fathers, and their two sons went away to some remote part of the earth where idolatry is still practiced. Suppose these two sons were decoyed and deluded into idolatry. The news comes to England, and the first father is very angry. His son, his own son, has forsaken the religion of Christ and become an idolater. The second father says, "Well, if it will help him

in trade I don't care, if he gets on the better by it, all well and good." Now, which loves most, the angry father, or the father who treats the matter with complacency? Why, the angry father is the best. He loves his son; therefore he cannot give away his son's soul for gold. Give me a father that is angry with my sins, and that seeks to bring me back, even though it be by chastisement. Thank God you have got a father that can be angry, but that loves you as much when he is angry as when he smiles upon you.

Go away with that upon your mind, and rejoice. But if you love not God and fear him not, go home, I beseech you, to confess your sins, and to seek mercy through the blood of Christ; and may this sermon be made useful in bringing you into the family of Christ though you have strayed from him long; and though his love has followed you long in vain, may it now find you, and bring you to his house rejoicing!

Chapter 49

His Name--Wonderful!

A Sermon

(No. 214)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 19, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"His name shall be called Wonderful."--Isaiah 9:6.

ONE EVENING LAST WEEK I stood by the sea-shore when the storm was raging. The voice of the Lord was upon the waters; and who was I that I should tarry within doors, when my Master's voice was heard sounding along the water? I rose and stood to behold the flash of his lightnings, and listen to the glory of his thunders. The sea and the thunders were contesting with one another; the sea with infinite clamor striving to hush the deep-throated thunder, so that his voice should not be heard; yet over and above the roar of the billows might be heard that voice of God, as he spoke with flames of fire, and divided the way for the waters. It was a dark night, and the sky was covered with thick clouds, and scarce a star could be seen through the rifts of the tempest; but at one particular time, I noticed far away on the horizon, as if miles across the water, a bright shining, like gold. It was the moon hidden behind the clouds, so that she could not shine upon us; but she was able to send her rays down upon the waters, far away, where no cloud happened to intervene. I thought as I read this chapter last evening, that the prophet seemed to have stood in a like position, when he wrote the words of my text. All round about him were clouds of darkness; he heard prophetic thunders roaring, and he saw flashes of the lightnings of divine vengeance; clouds and darkness, for many a

league, were scattered through history; but he saw far away a bright spot--one place where the clear shining came down from heaven. And he sat down, and he penned these words: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined;" and though he looked through whole leagues of space, where he saw the battle of the warrior "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," yet he fixed his eye upon one bright spot in futurity, and he declared, that there he saw hope of peace, prosperity and blessedness; for said he, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shad be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful."

My dear friends, we live to-day upon the verge of that bright spot. The world has been passing through these clouds of darkness, and the light is gleaming on us now, like the glintings of the first rays of morning. We are coming to a brighter day, and "at evening time it shall be light." The clouds and darkness shall be rolled up as a mantle that God needs no longer, and he shall appear in his glory, and his people shall rejoice with him. But you must mark, that all the brightness was the result of this child born, this son given, whose name is called Wonderful; and if we can discern any brightness in our own hearts, or in the world's history, it can come from nowhere else, than from the one who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God."

The person spoken of in our text, is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a child born, with reference to his human nature; he is born of the virgin, a child. But he is a son given, with reference to his divine nature, being given as well as born. Of course. the Godhead could not be born of woman. That was from everlasting, and is to everlasting. As a child he was born, as a son he was given. "The government is upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called

Wonderful." Beloved, there are a thousand things in this world, that are called by names that do not belong to them; but in entering upon my text, I must announce at the very opening, that Christ is called Wonderful, because he is so. God the Father never gave his Son a name which he did not deserve. There is no panegyric here, no flattery. It is just the simple name that he deserves, they that know him best will say that the word doth not overstrain his merits, but rather falleth infinitely short of his glorious deserving. His name is called Wonderful. And mark, it does not merely say, that God has given him the name of Wonderful--though that is implied; but "his name shall be called" so. It shall be; it is at this time called Wonderful by all his believing people, and it shall be. As long as the moon endureth, there shall be found men, and angels, and glorified spirits, who shall always call him by his right name. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

I find that this name may bear two or three interpretations. The word is sometimes in Scripture translated "marvellous." Jesus Christ may be called marvellous; and a learned German interpreter says, that without doubt, the meaning of miraculous is also wrapt up in it. Christ is the marvel of marvels, the miracle of miracles. "His name shall be called Miraculous," for he is more than a man, he is God's highest miracle. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." It may also mean separated, or distinguished. And Jesus Christ may well be called this; for as Saul was distinguished from all men, being head and shoulders taller than they, so is Christ distinguished above all men; he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and in his character, and in his acts he is infinitely separated from all comparison with any of the sons of men. "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips." He is "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely." "His name shall be called the

Separated One," the distinguished one, the noble one, set apart from the common race of mankind.

We shall, however, this morning, keep to the old version, and simply read it thus, "His name shall be called Wonderful." And first I shall notice that Jesus Christ deserveth to be called Wonderful for what he was in the past; secondly, that he is called Wonderful by all his people for what he is in the present; and in the third place, that he shall be called Wonderful, for what he shall be in the future.

I. First, Christ shall be called Wonderful for WHAT HE WAS IN THE PAST. Gather up your thoughts, my brethren. for a moment, and center them all on Christ, and you will soon see how wonderful he is. Consider his eternal existence, "begotten of his Father from before all worlds," being of the same substance with his Father: begotten, not made, co-equal, co-eternal, in every attribute, "very God of very God." For a moment remember that he who became an infant of a span long, was no less than the King of ages, the everlasting Father, who was from eternity. and is to be to all eternity. The divine nature of Christ is indeed wonderful. Just think for a moment, how much interest clusters round the life of an old man. Those of us who are but as children in years, look up to him with wonder and astonishment, as he tells us the varied stories of the experience through which he has passed; but what is the life of an aged man--how brief it appears when compared with the life of the tree that shelters him. It existed long before that old man's father crept a helpless infant into the world. How many storms have swept over its brow! how many kings have come and gone! how many empires have risen and fallen since that old oak was slumbering in its acorn cradle! But what is the life of the tree compared with the soil on which it grows? What a wonderful story that soil might tell! What changes it has passed through in all the eras of time that have elapsed

since "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." There is a wonderful story connected with every atom of black mould which furnishes the nourishment of the oak. But whilst is the history of that soil compared with the marvellous history of the rock on which it rests--the cliff on which it lifts its head. Oh! what stories might it tell, what records lie hidden in its bowels. Perhaps it could tell the story of the time when "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the earth." Perhaps it might speak and tell us of those days when the morning and the evening were the first day, and the morning and the evening were the second day, and could explain to us the mysteries of how God made this marvellous piece of miracle,--the world. But what is the history of the cliff, compared with that of the sea that rolls at its base--that deep blue ocean, over which a thousand navies have swept, without leaving a furrow Upon its brow! But what is the history of the sea, compared with the history of the heavens that are stretched like a curtain over that vast basin! What a history is that of the hosts of heaven--of the everlasting marches of the sun, moon, and stars! Who can tell their generation, or who can write their biography? But what is the history of the heavens, compared with the history of the angels? They could tell you of the day when they saw this world wrapped in swaddling bands of mist--when, like a newborn infant, the last of God's offspring, it came forth from him, and the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. But what is the history of the angels that excel in strength, compared with the history of the Lord Jesus Christ? The angel is but of yesterday, and he knoweth nothing; Christ, the Eternal One, chargeth even his angels with folly, and looks upon them as his ministering spirits, that come and go at his good pleasure. Oh, Christians, gather with reverence and mysterious awe around the throne of him who is your

great Redeemer; for "his name is called Wonderful," since he has existed before all things, and "by him all things were made; and without him was not anything made that was made."

Consider, again, the incarnation of Christ, and you will rightly say, that his name deserveth to be called "Wonderful." Oh! what is that I see? Oh! world of wonders, what is that I see? The Eternal of ages, whose hair is white like wool, as white as snow, becomes an infant. Can it be? Ye angels, are ye not astonished? He becomes an infant, hangs at a virgin's breast, draws his nourishment from the breast of woman. Oh wonder of wonders! Manger of Bethlehem, thou hast miracles poured into thee. This is a sight that surpasses all others. Talk ye of the sun, moon, and stars; consider ye the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars that he hath ordained; but all the wonders of the universe shrink into nothing, when we come to the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a marvellous thing when Joshua bade the sun to stand still, but more marvellous when God seemed to stand still, and no longer to move forward, but rather, like the sun upon the dial of Ahaz, did go back ten degrees, and veil his splendor in a cloud. There have been sights matchless and wonderful, at which we might look for years, and yet turn away and say, "I cannot understand this; here is a deep into which I dare not dive; my thoughts are drowned; this is a steep without a summit; I cannot climb it; it is high, I cannot attain it!" But all these things are as nothing, compared with the incarnation of the Son of God. I do believe that the very angels have never wondered but once and that has been incessantly ever since they first beheld it. They never cease to tell the astonishing story, and to tell it with increasing astonishment too, that Jesus Christ. the Son of God, was born of the Virgin Mary, and became a man. Is he not rightly called Wonderful? Infinite, and an

infant--eternal, and yet born of a woman--Almighty, and yet hanging on a woman's breast supporting the universe, and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arms--king of angels, and yet the reputed son of Joseph--heir of all things and yet the carpenter's despised son. Wonderful art thou O Jesus, and that shall be thy name for ever.

But trace the Saviours course, and all the way he is wonderful. Is it not marvellous that he submitted to the taunts and jeers of his enemies--that for a long life he should allow the bulls of Bashan to gird him round, and the dogs to encompass him? Is it not surprising that he should have bridled in his anger when blasphemy was uttered against his sacred person? Had you or I been possessed of his matchless might, we should have dashed our enemies down the brow of the hill, if they had sought to cast us there; we should never have submitted to shame and spitting; no, we would have looked upon them, and with one fierce look of wrath, have dashed their spirits into eternal torment.

But he hears it all--keeps in his noble spirit--the lion of the tribe of Judah, but bearing still the lamb-like character of

"The humble man before his foes,
A weary man, and full of woes."

I do believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the king of heaven, and yet he was a poor, despised, persecuted, slandered man; but while I believe it I never can understand it. I bless him for it; I love him for it; I desire to praise his name while immortality endures for his infinite condescension in thus suffering for me; but to understand it, I can never pretend. His name must all his life long be called Wonderful.

But see him die. Come O my brothers, ye children of God, and gather round the cross. See your Master. There he hangs. Can you understand this riddle: God was manifest in the flesh, and crucified of men? My Master, I cannot understand how thou couldst stoop thine awful head to

such a death as this--how then couldst take from thy brow the coronet of stars which from old eternity had shone resplendent there; but how thou shouldest permit the thorn-crown to gird the temples astonishes me far more. That thou shouldest cast away the mantle of thy glory, the azure of thine everlasting empire, I cannot comprehend; but how thou shouldest have become veiled in the ignominious purple for awhile, and then be bowed to by impious men, who mocked thee as a pretended king, and how thou shouldest be stripped naked to thy shame, without a single covering, this is still more incomprehensible. Truly thy name is Wonderful. Oh thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of woman. Was ever grief like thine? Was ever love like thine, that could open the flood gates of such grief. Thy grief is like a river; but was there ever spring that poured out such a torrent? Was ever love so mighty as to become the fount from which such an ocean of grief could come rolling down? Here is matchless love--matchless love to make him suffer, matchless power to enable him to endure all the weight of his Father's wrath. Here is matchless justice, that he himself should acquiesce in his Father's will, and not allow men to be saved without his own sufferings; and here is matchless mercy to the chief of sinners, that Christ should suffer even for them. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

But he died. He died! See Salem's daughters weep around. Joseph of Arimathea takes up the lifeless body after it has been taken down from the cross. They bear it away to the sepulcher. It is put in a garden.

Do you can him Wonderful now?

"Is this the Saviour long foretold
To usher in the age of gold?"

And is he dead? Lift his hands! They drop motionless by his side. His foot exhibits still the nail-print; but there is no mark of life.

"Aha," cries the Jew, "is this the Messiah? He is dead; he shall see corruption in a little space of time. Oh! watchman, keep good ward lest his disciples steal his body. His body can never come forth, unless they do steal it; for he is dead. Is this the Wonderful the Counsellor?" But God did not leave his soul in Hades; nor did he suffer his body--"his holy one"--to see corruption? Yes, he is wonderful, even in his death. That clay-cold corpse is wonderful. Perhaps this is the greatest wonder of all, that he who is "Death of death and hell's destruction" should for awhile endure the bonds of death. But here is the wonder. He could not be holden of those bonds. Those chains which have held ten thousand of the sons and daughters of Adam, and which have never been broken yet by any man of human mould, save by a miracle, were but to him as green withes. Death bound our Samson fast and said, "I have him now, I have taken away the locks of his strength; his glory is departed, and now he is mine; but the hands that kept the human race in chains were nothing to the Saviour; the third day he burst them, and he rose again from the dead, from henceforth to die no more. Oh! thou risen Saviour--thou who couldst not see corruption--thou art wonderful in thy resurrection. And thou art wonderful too in thine ascension--as I see thee leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

Pause here one moment, and let us think--Christ is surpassingly wonderful. The little story I have told you just now--not little in itself, but little as I have told it--has in it something surpassingly wonderful. All the wonders that you ever saw are nothing compared with this. As we have passed through various countries we have seen a wonder, and some older traveler than ourselves has said, "Yes this is wonderful to you. but I could show you something that utterly eclipses that." Though we have seen some splendid landscapes, with glorious

hills, and we have climbed up where the eagle seemed to knit the mountain and the sky together in his flight, and we have stood and looked down, and said, "How wonderful!" Saith he, "I have seen fairer lands than these, and wider and richer prospects far." But when we speak of Christ, none can say they ever saw a greater wonder than he is. You have come now to the very summit of everything that may be wondered at. There are no mysteries equal to this mystery, there is no surprise equal to this surprise; there is no astonishment, no admiration that should equal the astonishment and admiration that we feel when we behold Christ in the glories of the past. He surpasses everything.

And yet again. Wonder is a short-lived emotion; you know, it is proverbial that a wonder grows gray-headed in nine days. The longest period that a wonder is found to last is about that time. It is such a short-lived thing. But Christ is and ever shall be wonderful. You may think of him through three-score years and ten, but you shall wonder at him more at the end than at the beginning. Abraham might wonder at him, when he saw his day in the distant future; but I do mat think that even Abraham himself could wonder at Christ so much as the very least in the kingdom of heaven of to-day wonders at him, seeing that we know more than Abraham, and therefore wonder more. Think again for one moment, and you will say of Christ that he deserves to be called Wonderful, not only because he is always wonderful, and because he is surpassingly wonderful, but also because he is altogether wonderful. There have been some great feats of skill in the arts and sciences; for instance, if we take a common wonder of the day, the telegraph--how much there is about that which is wonderful! But there are a great many things in the telegraph that we can understand. Though there are many mysteries in it, still there are parts of it that are like keys to the mysteries, so

that if we cannot solve the riddle wholly, yet it is disrobed of some of the low garments of its mystery. But now if you look at Christ anyhow, anywhere, anyway, he is all mystery, he is altogether wonderful, always to be looked at and always to be admired.

And again, he is universally wondered at. They tell us that the religion of Christ is very good for old women. I was once complimented by a person, who told me he believed my preaching would be extremely suitable for blacks--for negroes. He did not intend it as a compliment, but I replied, "Well sir, if it is suitable for blacks I should think it would be very suitable for whites; for there is only a little difference of skin, and I do not preach to people's skins, but to their hearts." Now, of Christ we can say that he is universally a wonder, the strongest intellects have wonderful at him. Our Lockes and our Newtons have felt themselves to be as little children when they have come to the foot of the cross. The wonder has not been confined to ladies, to children, to old women and dying men, the highest intellects, and the lustiest minds have all wondered at Christ. I am sure it is a difficult task to make some people wonder. Hard thinkers and close mathematicians are not easily brought to wonder: but such men have covered their faces with their hands and cast themselves in the dust, and confessed that they have been lost in wonder and amazement. Well then may Christ be called Wonderful.

II. "His name shall be called Wonderful." He is wonderful for WHAT HE IS IN THE PRESENT. And here I will not diverge, but will just appeal to you personally. Is he wonderful to you? Let me tell the story of my own wonderment at Christ, and in telling it, I shall be telling the experience of all God's children. There was a time when I wondered not at Christ. I heard of his beauties, but I had never seen them; I heard of his power, but it was nought to me; it was but news of something

done in a far country--I had no connection with it, and therefore I observed it not. But once upon a time, there came one to my house of a black and terrible aspect. He smote the door; I tried to bolt it--to hold it fast. He smote again and again, till at last he entered, and with a rough voice he summoned me before him; and he said, "I have a message from God for thee; thou art condemned on account of thy sins." I looked at him with astonishment; I asked him his name. He said, "My name is the Law." and I fell at his feet as one that was dead. "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." As I lay there, he smote me. He smote me till every rib seemed as if it must break, and the bowels be poured forth. My heart was melted like wax within me; I seemed to be stretched upon a rack--to be pinched with hot irons--to be beaten with whips of burning wire. A misery extreme dwelt and reigned in my heart. I dared not lift up mine eyes, but I thought within myself, "There may be hope, there may be mercy for me. Perhaps the God whom I have offended may accept my tears and my promises of amendment, and I may live." But when that thought crossed me, heavier were the blows and more poignant my sufferings than before, till hope entirely failed me, and I had nought wherein to trust. Darkness black and dense gathered round me; I heard a voice as it were, of rushing to and fro, and of wailing and gnashing of teeth. I said within my soul, "I am cast out from his sight, I am utterly abhorred of God, he hath trampled me in the mire of the streets in his anger." And there came one by, of sorrowful but of loving aspect, and he stooped over me, and he said, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." I arose in astonishment, and he took me, and he led me to a place where stood a cross, and he seemed to vanish from my sight. But he appeared again hanging there. I looked upon him as he bled upon that tree. His eyes

darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, looking at him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed; the gaping wounds were cured; the broken bones rejoiced; the rags that had covered me were all removed; my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off north; I had melody within my spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, through him that did hang upon the tree. Oh, how I wondered that I should be pardoned! It was not the pardon that I wondered at so much; the wonder was that it should come to me. I wondered that he should be able to pardon such sins as mine; such crimes, so numerous and so black, and that after such an accusing conscience he should have power to still every wave within my spirit, and make my soul like the surface of a river, undisturbed, quiet, and at ease. His name then to my spirit was Wonderful. But, brethren and sisters, if you have felt this, you can say you thought him wonderful then--if you are feeling it, a sense of adoring wonder enraptures your heart even now.

And has he not been wonderful to you since that auspicious hour, when first you heard Mercy's voice spoken to you? How often have you been in sadness, sickness, and sorrow! But your pain has been light, for Jesus Christ has been with you on your sick-beds; your care has been no care at all, for you have been able to cast your burden upon him. The trial which threatened to crush you, rather lifted you up to heaven, and you have said "How wonderful that Jesus Christ's name should give me such comfort, such joy, such peace, such confidence." Various things bring to my recollection a period now removed by the space of nearly two years. Never shall we forget, beloved, the judgments of the Lord, when by terrible things in righteousness he answered our prayer that he would give us success in this house. We cannot forget how the people were scattered--how some of the sheep were slain, and the shepherd

himself was smitten. I may not have told in your hearing the story of my own woe. Perhaps never soul went so near the burning furnace of insanity, and yet came away unharmed. I have walked by that fire until these locks seemed to be crisp with the heat thereof. My brain was racked. I dared not look up to God, and prayer that was once my solace, was cause of my affright and terror, if I attempted it. I shall never forget the time when I first became restored to myself. It was in the garden of a friend. I was walking solitary and alone, musing upon my misery, much cheered as that was by the kindness of my loving friend, yet far too heavy for my soul to bear, when on a sudden the name of Jesus flashed through my mind. The person of Christ seemed visible to me. I stood still. The burning lava of my soul was cooled. My agonies were hushed. I bowed myself there, and the garden that had seemed a Gethsemane became to me a Paradise. And then it seemed so strange to me, that nought should have brought me back but that name of Jesus. I thought indeed at that time that I should love him better all the days of my life. But there were two things I wondered at. I wondered that he should be so good to me, and I wondered more that I should have been so ungrateful to him. But his name has been from that time "Wonderful" to me, and I must record what he has done for my soul.

And now, brothers and sisters, you shall all find, every day of your life, whatever your trials and troubles, that he shall always be made the more wonderful by them. He sends your troubles to be like a black foil, to make the diamond of his name shine the brighter. You would never know the wonders of God if it were not that you find them out in the furnace. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep," and we shall never see the wonders of God except in that deep; we must go into the deeps before we know how wonderful his power

and his might to save.

I must not leave this point without one more remark. There have been times when you and I have said of Christ, "His name is wonderful indeed, for we have been by it transported entirely above the world, and carried upward to the very gates of heaven itself." I pity you, beloved, if you do not understand the rhapsody I am about to use. There are moments when the Christian feels the charms of earth all broken, and his wings are loosed, and he begins to fly; and up he soars, till he forgets earth's sorrows and leaves them far behind, and up he goes till he forgets earth's joys, and leaves them like the mountain tops far below, as when the eagle flies to meet the sun; and up, up, up he goes, with his Saviour full before him almost in vision beatific. His heart is full of Christ; his soul beholds his Saviour, and the cloud that darkened his view of the Saviour's face seems to be dispersed. At such a time the Christian can sympathise with Paul. He says, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell--God knoweth!" but I am, as it were, "caught up to the third heaven." And how is this rapture produced? By the music of flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of instruments? No. How then? By riches? By fame? By wealth? Ah, no. By a strong mind? By a lively disposition? No. By the name of Jesus. That one name is all sufficient to lead the Christian into heights of transport that verge upon the region where the angels fly in cloudless day.

III. I have no more time to stay upon this point, although the text is infinite, and one might preach upon it for ever. I have only to notice that his name shall be called Wonderful IN THE FUTURE.

The day is come, the day of wrath, the day of fire. The ages are ended; the last century, like the last pillar of a dilapidated temple, has crumbled to its fall. The clock of time is verging to its last hour. It

is on the stroke. The time is come when the things that are made must disappear. Lo, I see earth's bowels moving. A thousand hillocks give up the slumbering dead. The battle fields are clothed no more with the rich harvests that have been manured with blood; but a new harvest has sprung up. The fields are thick with men. The sea itself becomes a prolific mother, and though she hath swallowed men alive, she gives them up again, and they stand before God, an exceeding great army. Sinners! ye have risen from your tombs; the pillars of heaven are reeling; the sky is moving to and fro; the sun, the eye of this great world, is rolling like a maniac's, and glaring with dismay. The moon that long has cheered the night now makes the darkness terrible, for she is turned into a clot of blood. Portents, and signs, and wonders past imagination, make the heavens shake, and make men's hearts quail within them. Suddenly upon a cloud there comes one like unto the Son of Man. Sinners! picture your astonishment and your wonder when you see him. Where art thou, Voltaire? Thou saidst, "I will crush the wretch." Come and crush him now! "Nay" saith Voltaire, "he is not the man I thought he was." Oh how will he wonder when he finds out what Christ is! Now, Judas, come and give him a traitor's kiss! "Ah! nay," says he, "I knew not what I kissed: I thought I kissed only the son of Mary, but lo! he is the everlasting God." Now, ye kings and princes, that stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us!" Come now, take counsel once more; rebel against him now! Oh! can ye picture the astonishment, the wonder the dismay, when careless, godless infidels and Socinians find out what Christ is? "Oh!" they will say, "this is wonderful, I thought not he was such as this;" while Christ shall say to them, "thou thoughtest that I was altogether such as yourselves; but I am no such thing; I am come in all my Father's glory

to judge the quick and dead."

Pharaoh led his hosts into the midst of the Red Sea. The path was dry and shingly, and on either shore stood like a wall of alabaster the clear white water stiff as with the breath of frost, consolidated into marble. There it stood. Can ye guess the astonishment and dismay of the hosts of Pharaoh, when they saw those walls of water about to close upon them? "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" Such will be your astonishment, when Christ, whom ye have despised to-day--Christ, whom ye would not have to be your Saviour--Christ whose Bible ye left unread, whose Sabbath ye despised--Christ, whose gospel ye rejected, shall come in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him. Ay, then indeed will ye "behold, and wonder, and perish," and you shall say, "His name is Wonderful."

But perhaps, the most wonderful part of the day of judgment is this, do you see all the horrors yonder--the black darkness the horrid night, the clashing comets the pale stars, sickly and wan, falling like figs from the fig tree? Do you hear the cry, "Rocks, hide us, mountains, on us fall?" "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise;" but there never was a battle like this. This is with fire and smoke indeed. But do ye see yonder? All is peaceful all serene and quiet. The myriads of the redeemed, are they shrieking, crying, wailing? No; see them! They are gathering--gathering round the throne. That very throne that seems to scatter, as with a hundred hands, death and destruction on the wicked, becomes the sun of light and happiness to all believers. Do you see them coming robed in white, with their bright wings? while gathering round him they veil their faces. Do ye hear them cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, for thou wast slain, and thou hast risen from the dead; worthy art thou to live and reign, when death itself is dead?" Do ye hear them? It is all song, and no shriek. Do ye see them?

It is all joy, and no terror. His name to them is Wonderful; but it is the wonder of admiration the wonder of ecstacy, the wonder of affection, and not the wonder of horror and dismay. Saints of the Lord! ye shall know the wonders of his name, when ye shall see him as he is, and shall be like him in the day of his appearing. Oh! my enraptured spirit, thou shalt bear thy part in thy Redeemer's triumph, unworthy though thou art, the chief of sinners, and less than the least of saints. Thine eye shall see him and not another; "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, though worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Oh! make your selves ready, ye virgins! Behold the bridegroom cometh. Arise and trim your lamps, and go ye out to meet him. He comes--he comes--he comes; and when he comes, you shall well say of him as you meet him with joy, "Thy name is called Wonderful. All hail! all hail! all hail!"

Chapter 50

His Name--The Counsellor

A Sermon

(No. 215)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 26, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor."--Isaiah 9:6.

LAST SABBATH MORNING we considered the first title, "His name shall be called Wonderful:" this morning we take the second word, "Counsellor." I need not repeat the remark, that of course these titles belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we cannot understand the passage except by referring it to Messiah--the Prince. It was by a Counsellor that this world was ruined. Did not Satan mask himself in the serpent, and counsel the woman with exceeding craftiness, that she should take unto herself of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in the hope that thereby she should be as God? Was it not that evil counsel which provoked our mother to rebel against her Maker, and did it not as the effect of sin, bring death into this world with all its train of woe? Ah! beloved, it was meet that the world should have a Counsellor to restore it, if it had a Counsellor to destroy it. It was by counsel that it fell and certainly, without counsel it never could have arisen. But mark the difficulties that surrounded such a Counsellor. Tis easy to counsel mischief; but how hard to counsel wisely! To cast down is easy, but to build up how hard! To confuse this world, and bring upon it all its train of ills was, an easy thing. A

woman plucked the fruit and it was done; but to restore order to this confusion, to sweep away the evils which brooded over this fair earth, this was work indeed, and "Wonderful" was that Christ who came forward to attempt the work, and who in the plentitude of his wisdom hath certainly accomplished it, to his own honor and glory, and to our comfort and safety.

We shall now enter upon the discussion of this title which is given to Christ, a title peculiar to our Redeemer; and you will see why it should be given to him and why there was a necessity for such a Counsellor.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is a Counsellor in a three-fold sense. First, he is God's Counsellor; he sits in the cabinet council of the King of heaven; he has admittance into the privy chamber, and is the Counsellor with God. In the second place, Christ is a Counsellor in the sense which the Septuagint translation appends to this term. Christ is said to be the angel of the great council. He is a Counsellor in that he communicates to us in God's behalf, what has been done in the great council before the foundation of the world. And thirdly, Christ is a Counsellor to us and with us, because we can consult with him, and he doth counsel and advise us as to the right way and the path of peace.

I. Beginning then, with the first point, Christ may well be called Counsellor, for he is a COUNSELLOR WITH GOD. And here let us speak with reverence, for we are about to enter upon a very solemn subject. It hath been revealed to us that before the world was, when as yet God had not made the stars, long ere space sprang into being, the Almighty God did hold a solemn conclave with himself; Father, Son and Spirit held a mystic council with each other, as to what they were about to do. That council, although we read but little of it in Scripture, was nevertheless most certainly held; we have abundant traces of it, for

though it is a doctrine obscure through the effulgence of that light to which no man can approach, and not simply and didactically explained, as some other doctrines are, yet we have continual tracings and incidental mentionings of that great, eternal and wonderful council, which was held between the three glorious persons of Trinity before the world began. Our first question with ourselves is, why did God hold a council at all? And here, we must answer, that God did not hold a council because of any deficiency in his knowledge, for God understandeth all things from the beginning; his knowledge is the sum total of everything that is noble, and infinite is that sum total, infinitely above everything that is counted noble. Thou, O God, hast thoughts that are unsearchable, and thou knowest what no mortal ken can ever attain unto. Nor, again, did God hold any consultation for the increase of his satisfaction. Sometimes men, when they have determined what to do, will nevertheless seek counsel of their friends, because they say, "If their advice agrees with mine it adds to my satisfaction. and confirms me in my resolution." But God is everlastingly satisfied with himself, and Knoweth not the shadow of a doubt to cloud his purpose; therefore, the council was not held with any motive or intent of that sort. Nor, again, was it held with a view of deliberation; Men take weeks and months and sometimes years, to think out a thing that is surrounded with difficulties; they have to find the clue with much research; enveloped in folds of mystery, they have to take off first one garment and then another, before they find out the naked glorious truth. Not so God. God's deliberations are as flashes of lightning; they are as wise as if he had been eternally considering, but the thoughts of his heart, though swift as lightning, are as perfect as the whole system of the universe. The reason why God is represented as holding a council, if I think rightly, is this: that we might

understand how wise God is. "In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom." It is for us to think that in the council of the Eternal Three, each Person in the undivided Trinity being omniscient and full of wisdom, there must have been the sum total of all wisdom. And again, it was to show the unanimity and co-operation of the sacred persons: God the Father hath done nothing alone in creation or salvation. Jesus Christ hath done nothing alone; for even the work of his redemption, albeit that he suffered in some sense alone, needed the sustaining hand of the Spirit, and the accepting smile of the Father, before it could be completed. God said not, "I will make man," but "Let us make man in our own image." God saith not merely, "I will save," but the inference from the declarations of Scripture is, that the design of the three persons of the blessed Trinity was to save a people to themselves, who should show forth their praise. It was, then, for our sakes, not for God's sake, the council was held--that we might know the unanimity of the glorious persons, and the deep wisdom of their devices.

Yet another remark concerning the council. It may be asked, "What were the topics deliberated upon at that first council, which was held before the day-star knew its place, and planets ran their round?" We reply, "The first topic was creation." We are told in the passage we have read, (Proverbs viii,) that the Lord Jesus Christ, who represents himself as Wisdom, was with God before the world was created, and we have every reason to believe that we are to understand this as meaning, that he was not only with God in company, but with God in co-operation. Besides, we have other Scriptures to prove that "all things were made by him and without him was not any thing made that was made." And to quote yet another passage that clinches this truth. God said, "Let us make man;" so that a part of the consultation was with reference to the making of worlds, and the creatures that should inhabit them. I believe

that in the sovereign council of eternity, the mountains were weighed in scales, and the hills in balances; then was it fixed in sovereign council how far the sea should go, and where should be its bounds--when the sun should arise and come forth, like a giant from the chambers of his darkness, and when he should return again to his couch of rest. Then did God decree the moment when he should say, "Let there be light," and the moment when the sun should be turned into darkness, and the moon into a clot of blood. Then did he ordain the form and size of every angel, and the destinies of every creature; then did he sketch in his infinite thought, the eagle as he soared to heaven and the worm as he burrowed into the earth. Then the little as well as the great, the minute as well as the immense, came under the sovereign decree of God. There was that book written, of which Dr. Watts sings--

"Chained to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel's form and size,
Drawn by th' eternal pen."

Christ was a Counsellor in the matter of creation; with none else took he counsel; none else instructed him. Christ was the Counsellor for all the wondrous works of God.

The second topic that was discussed in this council was the work of Providence. God does not act towards this world like a man who makes a watch, and lets it have its own way till it runs down; he is the controller of every wheel in the machine of providence. He has left nothing to itself. We talk of general laws, and philosophers tell us that the world is governed by laws, and then they put the Almighty out of the question. Now, how can a nation be governed by laws apart from a sovereign, or apart from magistrates and rulers to carry out the laws? All the laws may be in the statute book, but put all the police away,

take away every magistrate, remove the high court of parliament, what is the use of laws? Laws cannot govern without active agency to carry them out; nor could nature proceed in its everlasting cycles, by the mere force of law. God is the great motive-power of all things; he is in everything. Not only did he make all things, but by him all things consist. From all eternity, Christ was the Counsellor of his Father with regard to providence--when the first man should be born, when he should wander, and when he should be restored--when the first monarchy should rise, and when its sun should set--where his people should be placed, how long they should be placed, and where they should be moved. Was it not the Most High who divided to the nations their inheritance? Hath he not appointed the bounds of our habitation? Oh! heir of heaven, in the day of the great council Christ counselled his Father as to the weight of thy trials, as to the number of thy mercies, if they be numerable, and as to the time, the way, and the means whereby thou shouldst be brought to himself. Remember, there is nothing that happens in your daily life, but what was first of all devised in eternity, and counselled by Jesus Christ for your good and in your behalf, that all things might work together for your lasting benefit and profit. But, my friends, what unfathomable depths of wisdom must have been involved, when God consulted with himself with regard to the great book of providence! Oh, how strange providence seems to you and to me! Does it not look like a zig-zag line, this way and that way, backward and forward, like the journeyings of the children of Israel in the wilderness? Ah! my brethren, but to God it is a straight line. Directly, God always goes to his object. and yet to us, he often seems to go round about. Ah! Jacob, the Lord is about to provide for thee in Egypt, when there is a famine in Canaan, and he is about to make thy son Joseph great and mighty. Joseph must be sold for a slave; he must

be accused wrongfully, he must be put into the pit, and in the round-house prison he must suffer. But God was going straight to his purpose all the while: he was sending Joseph before them into Egypt that they might be provided for, and when the good old patriarch said, "All these things are against me," he did not perceive the providence of God, for there was not a solitary thing in the whole list that was against him, but everything was ruled for his weal. Let us learn to leave providence in the hand of the Counsellor, let us rest assured that he is too wise to err in his predestination, and too good to be unkind, and that in the council of eternity, the best was ordained that could have been ordained--that if you and I had been there, we could not have ordained half so well, but that we should have made ourselves eternal fools by meddling therewith. Rest certain, that in the end we shall see that all was well, and must be well for ever. He is "Wonderful, the Counsellor," for he counselled in matters of providence.

And now with regard to matters of grace. These were also discussed in the everlasting council. When the Three Divine Persons in the solemn seclusion of their own loneliness consulted together with reference to the works of grace, one of the first things they had to consider was, how God should be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly--how the world should be reconciled unto God. Hence you read in the book of Zechariah, if you turn to the sixth chapter and the thirteenth verse, this passage--"The council of peace shall be between them both." The Son of God with his Father and the Spirit, ordained the council of peace. Thus was it arranged. The Son must suffer, he must be the substitute, must bear his people's sins and be punished in their stead; the Father must accept the Son's substitution and allow his people to go free, because Christ had paid their debts. The Spirit of the living

God must then cleanse the people whom the blood had pardoned, and so they must be accepted before the presence of God, even the Father. That was the result of the great council. But O my brethren, if it had not been for that council, what a question would have been left unsolved? Neither you nor I could ever have thought how the two should meet together--how mercy and justice should kiss each other over the mountain of our sins. I have always thought that one of the greatest proofs that the gospel is of God, is its revelation that Christ died to save sinners. That is a thought so original, so new so wonderful; you have not got it in any other religion in the world; so that it must have come from God. As I remember to have heard an un-schooled and illiterate man say, when I first told him the simple story of how Christ was punished in the stead of his people: he burst out with an air of surprise, "Faith! that's the gospel, I know; no man could have made that up; that must be of God." That wonderful thought, that a God himself should die, that he himself should bear our sins, that so God the Father might be able to forgive and yet exact the utmost penalty, is super-human, super-angelic; not even the cherubim and seraphim could have been the inventors of it: but that thought was first struck out from the mind of God in the councils of eternity, when the "Wonderful, the Counsellor," was present with his Father.

Again, another part of the great council was this--who should be saved, Now my friends, you that like not old Calvinistic doctrine will perhaps be horrified but that I cannot help; I will never modify a doctrine I believe to please any man that walks upon earth; but I will prove from Scripture that I have the warrant of God in this matter, and that it is not my own invention. I say that one part of the council of eternity was the predestination of those whom God had determined to save, and I will read you the passage that proves it. "In whom also we have

obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The predestination of everyone of God's people was arranged at the eternal council, where God's will sat as the sovereign umpire and undisputed president. There was it said of each redeemed one, "At such an hour I will call him by my grace, for I have loved him with an everlasting love, and by my lovingkindness will I draw him." There was it originated when the peace-speaking blood shall be laid to that elect one's conscience, when the Spirit of the living God shall breathe joy and consolation into his heart. There was it settled how that chosen one should be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; and there was it determined and settled by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that everyone of these should be eternally saved, beyond the shadow of a risk of perishing. The apostle Paul was not like some preachers, who are afraid to say a word about the everlasting council, for he says in his epistle to the Hebrews--"God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his council, confirmed it by an oath." Now, you hear some talk about the immutability of the promise: that is good. But the immutability of God's counsel,--that is to fathom to the very uttermost the doctrines of grace. The council of God from all eternity is immutable; not one purpose has he ever altered, not one decree has he ever changed, he has nailed his decrees against the pillars of eternity, and though the devils have sought to rend them down from the posts of his magnificent palace, yet, saith he, "have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion;" the decree shall stand; I will do all my pleasure. Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth, thou, Lord, in the beginning hast made the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, thou hast determined thy plans and purposes, and they stand fast

for ever and ever.

I think I have sufficiently declared how Christ was the Counsellor, in the transcendent affairs of nature, providence, and grace, in the everlasting council-chamber of eternity. But now I would have you notice what a mercy it was that there was such a Counsellor with God, and how fit Christ was to be the Counsellor. Christ himself is wisdom. He chargeth his angels with folly; but he is God only wise himself. If a fool undertake to be a counsellor, his counsel is folly, but when Christ counselled, his counsel was full of wisdom. But there is another qualification necessary for a counsellor. However wise a man be, he has no right to be a counsellor with a king, unless he has some dignity and standing. There may happen to be in my congregation some person of great talent, but if my friend should present himself at the cabinet council and give his advice, he would most probably be unceremoniously dismissed, for they would say, "Art thou of the king's council; if not, what right hast thou to stand here?" Now Christ was glorious; he was equal with his Father, therefore he had a right to counsel God--to counsel with God. Had an angel offered his advice to God it would have been as insufferable impertinence; had the cherubim or seraphim volunteered to give so much as one word of counsel it would have been blasphemy. He would take no counsel from his creatures. Why should wisdom stoop from its throne, to counsel with created folly? But because Christ was far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, therefore he had a right, not only from his wisdom, but from his rank, to be a Counsellor with God.

But there is one thing that is always necessary in a man, before we can rejoice in his being a counsellor. There are some counsellors concerning the legislation of our country in whom you or I could not rejoice much, because we feel that in their counsels the most of us

would be forgotten. Our farming friends would probably rejoice in them; they will consult their interests, there is not much doubt; but whoever heard of a counsellor yet who counselled for the poor? or who has these many years heard as much as an inkling of the name of a man who really counselled for economy and for the good of his nation. We have plenty of men who promise us that they will counsel for us--abundance of men who, if we would but return them to parliament would most assuredly pour forth such wisdom in our behalf that without doubt we should be the most happy and enlightened people in the world according to their promise. but alas! when they get into office they have no hearty sympathy with us; they belong to a different rank from the most of us, they do not sympathize with the wants and the desires of the middle class and of the poor. But, with regard to Christ, we can put every confidence in him, for we know that in that council from eternity he symphathized with man. He says, "My delights were with the sons of men." Happy men to have a counsellor who delights in them! Moreover, he then though he was not man, yet foresaw that he was to be "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," and therefore in the counsels of eternity he pleaded his own cause when he pleaded our cause, for he well knew that he was to be tempted in all points like as we are, and was to suffer our sufferings and to be our covenant head in union with ourselves. Sweet Counsellor! I love to think thou wast in the everlasting council, my friend, my brother born for adversity!

II. Having thus discussed the first point, I shall proceed to consider briefly the second, according to the translation of the Septuagint. Christ is THE ANGEL OF THE GREAT COUNCIL. Do you and I want to know what was said and done in the great council of eternity? Yes, we do. I will defy any man, whoever he may be, not to want to know something about destiny. What means the ignorance of the common people, when they

appeal to the witch, the pretender? when they enquire of the astrologer, and read the book of the pretended soothsayer? Why, it means that man wants to know something about the everlasting council. And what mean all the perplexing researches of certain persons into the prophecies? I consider very often that the inferences drawn from prophecy are very little better, after all, than the guesses of the Norwood gipsey, and that some people who have been so busy in foretelling the end of the world, would have been better employed if they had foretold the end of their own books, and had not imposed on the public by predictions, assaying to interpret the prophecies, without the shadow of a foundation. But, from their credulity we may learn, that among the higher class as well as among the more ignorant, there is a strong desire to know the councils of eternity. Beloved, there is only one glass through which you and I can look back to the dim darkness of the shrouded past, and read the counsels of God, and that glass is the person of Jesus Christ. Do I want to know what God ordained with regard to the salvation of man from before the foundation of the world? I look to Christ; I find that it was ordained in Christ that he should be the first elect, and that a people should be chosen in him. Do you ask the way in which God ordained to save? I answer, he ordained to save by the cross. Do you ask how God ordained to pardon? The answer comes, he ordained to pardon through the sufferings of Christ, and to justify through his resurrection from the dead. Everything that you want to know with regard to what God ordained, everything that you ought to know, you can find out in the person of Jesus Christ. And again, do I long to know the great secret of destiny? I must look to Christ. What mean these wars, this confusion, these garments rolled in blood? I see Christ born of a virgin, and then I read the world's history backwards, and I see that all this led to

Christ's coming. I see that all these leaned one upon another, as I have sometimes seen clusters of rocks leaning on each other, and Christ the great leading rock bearing up the superincumbent mass of all past history. And if I want to read the future I look at Christ, and I learn that he who has gone up to heaven, is to come again from heaven in like manner as he went up to heaven. So all the future is clear enough to me. I do not know whether the Pope of Rome is to obtain universal empire or not; I do not mind whether the Russian empire is to swallow up all the nations of the continent; there is one thing I know, God will overturn, overturn, overturn, till he shall come whose right it is to reign; and I know that though the worms devour my body, yet when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, in my flesh shall I see God, and there is enough in that for me. All the rest of history is unimportant compared with its end, its issues, its purpose. The end of the first Testament is the first advent of Christ; the end of this second Testament of modern history is the second advent of the Saviour and then shall the book of time be closed. But none could open the Old Testament history and make it out, except through Christ. Abraham could understand it, for he knew that Christ was to come; Christ opened the book for him. And so modern history is never to be understood except through Christ. None but the Lamb can take the book and open every seal; but he who believeth in Christ and looks for his glorious advent, he may open the book and read therein, and have understanding, for in Christ there is a revelation of the eternal councils.

"Now," says one, "Sir, I want to know one thing, and if I knew that, I would not care what happened. I want to know whether God from all eternity ordained me to be saved." Well, friend, I will tell you how to find that out, and you may find it out to a certainty. "Nay," says one, "but how can I know that? You cannot read the book of fate; that is

impossible." I have heard of some divine, of a very hyper school indeed, who said, "Ah! blessed be the Lord, there are some of God's dear people here; I can tell them by the very look of their faces. I know that they are among God's elect." He was not half so discreet as Rowland Hill, who when he was advised to preach to none but the elect, said, "He would certainly do so if some one would chalk them all on the back first." That was never attempted by anybody, so Rowland Hill went on preaching the gospel to every creature, as I desire to do. But you may find out whether you are among his chosen ones. "How?" says one. Why, Christ is the angel of the covenant, and you can find it out by looking to him. Many people want to know their election before they look to Christ. Beloved you cannot know your election, except as you see it in Christ. If you want to know your election, thus shall you assure your hearts before God.--Do you feel yourself this morning to be a lost, guilty sinner? go straightway to the cross of Christ, and tell Christ that, and tell him that you have read in the Bible, "That him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out." Tell him that he has said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom you are chief." Look to Christ and believe on him, and you shall make proof of your election directly, for so surely as thou believest thou art elect. If thou wilt give thyself wholly up to Christ and trust him, then thou art one of God's chosen ones; but if you stop and say, "I want to know first whether I am elect," that is impossible. If there be something covered up, and I say, "Now, before you can see this you must lift the veil;" and you say, "Nay, but I want to see right through that veil," you cannot. Lift the veil first and you shall see. Go to Christ guilty, just as you are. Leave all curious inquiry about thy election alone. Go straight away to Christ, just as you are, black, naked, penniless and

poor, and say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,

Simply to thy cross I cling,"

and you shall know your election. The assurance of the Holy Spirit shall be given to you, so that you shall be able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." Now do notice this. Christ was at the everlasting council: he can tell you whether you were chosen or not, but you cannot find that out anyhow else. You go and put your trust in him, and I know what the answer will be. His answer will be--"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore in lovingkindness have I drawn thee." There will be no doubt about his having chosen you, when you shall feel no doubt about having chosen him.

So much for the second point. Christ is the Counsellor. He is the angel of the council, because he tells out God's secrets to us. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

III. The last point was, Christ is A COUNSELLOR TO US. And here I shall want to give some practical hints to God's people. Some how or other, brethren, it is not good for man to be alone. A lonely man must be, I think, a miserable man, and a man without a Counsellor, I think, must of necessity go wrong. "Where there is no counsellor," says Solomon, "the people fall." I think most persons will find it so. A man says, "Well, I'll have my own way, and I will ask nobody." Have it, sir,--have it--and you will find that in having your own way you have probably had the worst way you could. We all feel our need at times of a counsellor. David was a man after God's own heart and dealt much with his God; but he had his Ahithophel, with whom he took sweet council, and they walked to the house of God in company. Kings must have some

advisers. Woe unto the man that hath got a bad counsellor. Rehoboam took counsel of the young men, and not of the old men, and they counselled him so that he lost ten-twelfths of his empire. Some take counsel of stocks and stones. We know many who counsel at the hands of foolish charms, instead of going to Christ. They shall have to learn that there is but one Christ, who is to be trusted; and that however necessary a Counsellor may be, yet none other shall be found to fulfill the necessity, but Jesus Christ the Counsellor. Let me make a remark or two with regard to this Counsellor, Jesus Christ.

And, first, Christ is a necessary Counsellor. So sure as we do anything without asking counsel of God we fall into trouble. Israel made a league with Gibeon, and it is said, they took of their victuals, and they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, and they found out that the Gibeonites had deceived them. If they had asked counsel first, no cunning deception could have imposed on them in the matter. Saul, the son of Kish, died before the Lord upon the mountains of Gilboa, and in the book of Chronicles it is written, he died because he asked not counsel of God, but sought unto the wizards. Joshua, the great commander, when he was appointed to succeed Moses, was not left to go alone, but it is written, "And Eliezer the priest shall be his counsellor, and he shall ask counsel of the Lord for him." And all the great men of olden times, when they were about to do an action, paused, and they said to the priest, "Bring hither the ephod," and he put on the Urim and the Thummim, and appealed to God, and the answer came, and sound advice was vouchsafed. You and I will have to learn how necessary it is always to take advice of God. Did you ever seek God's advice on your knees about a difficulty and then go amiss? Brethren, I can testify for my God that when I have submitted my will to his directing Spirit, I have always had reason to thank him for his wise counsel. But

when I have asked at his hands, having already made up my own mind, I have had my own way, but like as he fed the Israelites with the quails of heaven, while the meat was yet in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them. Let us take heed always that we never go before the cloud. He that goes before the cloud goes a fool's errand, and will be glad to get back again. An old puritan used to say, "He that carves for himself will cut his fingers. Leave God to carve for you in providence, and all shall be well. Seek God's guidance and nothing can go amiss." It is necessary counsel.

In the next place, Christ's counsel is faithful counsel. When Ahithophel left David, it proved that he was not faithful, and when Hushai went to Absalom and counselled him, he counselled him craftily, so that the good counsel of Ahithophel was brought to nought. Ah! how often do our friends counsel us craftily! We have known them do so. They have looked first to their own advantage, and then they have said, "If I can get him to do so-and-so it will be the best for me." That was not the question we asked them. It was what would be best for ourselves. But we may trust Christ, that in his advice to us there never will be any self-interest. He will be quite certain to advise us with the most disinterested motives, so that the good shall be to us, and the profit to ourselves.

Again, Christ's counsel is hearty counsel. I hate to go to a lawyer above all people, to talk with him upon matters of business. The worst kind of conversation is, I think, conversation with a lawyer. There is your case! Dear me, what an interest you feel in it! You spread it out before him, and he says, "There is a word upon the second page not quite correct." You look at it, and you say, "Ah! that is totally unimportant; that does not signify." He turns to another clause and he says, "Ah! there is a good deal here!" "My dear fellow, you any, "I do

not care about those petty clauses, whether it says lands, properties, or hereditaments: what I want you to do is to set this difficulty right in point of law." "Be patient" he says; you must go through a great many consultations before he will come the point, and all the while your poor heart is boiling over because you feel such an interest in the main point. But he is as cool as possible; you think you are asking counsel of a block of marble. No doubt his advice will come out all right at last, and it is pretty certain it will be good for you; but it is not hearty. He does not enter into the sympathies of the matter with you. What is it to him whether you succeed or not--whether the object of your heart shall be accomplished or not. It is but a professional interest he takes. Now, Solomon says, "As ointment for perfume, so is hearty counsel." When a man throws his own soul into your ease, and says, "My dear friend, I'll do anything I can to help you. let me look at it," and he takes as deep an interest in it as you do yourself. "If I were in your position," he says, "I should do so-and-so, by-the-bye, there is a word wrong there." Perhaps he tells you so, but he only tells you because he is anxious to have it all right; and you can see that his drift is always towards the same end you are seeking, and that he is only anxious for your good. Oh! for a Counsellor that could tie your heart into unison with his own! Now Christ is such a Counsellor as that. He is a hearty Counsellor. His interests and your interests are bound up together, and he is hearty with you.

But there is another kind of counsel still. David says of one, who afterwards became his enemy, "We took sweet counsel together." Christian, do you know what sweet counsel is? You have gone to your Master in the day of trouble, and in the secret of your chamber you have poured out your heart before him. You have laid your case before him, with all its difficulties, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter, and

you have felt, that though Christ was not there in flesh and blood, yet he was there in spirit, and he counselled you. You felt that his was counsel that came from the very heart. But he was something better than that. There was such a sweetness coming with his counsel, such a radiance of love, such a fullness of fellowship, that you said, " Oh that I were in trouble every day, if I might have such sweet counsel as this!" Christ is the Counsellor whom I desire to consult every hour, and I would that I could sit in his secret chamber all day and all night long, because to counsel with him is to have sweet counsel, hearty counsel, and wise counsel, all at the same time. Why, you may have a friend that talks very sweetly with you, and you will say, "Well, he is a kind, good soul, but I really cannot trust his judgment." You have another friend, who has a good deal of judgment, and yet you say of him, "Certainly, he is a man of prudence above a great many, but I cannot find out his sympathy; I never get at his heart, if he were ever so rough and untutored, I would sooner have his heart without his prudence, than his prudence without his heart," But we go to Christ, and we get wisdom; we get love, we get sympathy, we get everything that can possibly be wanted in a Counsellor.

And now we must close by noticing that Christ has special councils for each of us this morning, and what are they? Tried child of God, your daughter is sick; your gold has melted in the fire; you are sick yourself, and your heart is sad. Christ counsels you, and he says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he will sustain thee; he will never suffer the righteous to be moved." Young man, you that are seeking to be great in this world, Christ counsels you this morning. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." I shall never forget Midsummer Common. I was ambitious; I was seeking to go to college, to leave my poor people in the wilderness that I might become something

great; and as I was walking there that text came with power to my heart--"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." I suppose about forty pounds a year was the sum total of my income, and I was thinking how I should make both ends meet, and whether it would not be a great deal better for me to resign my charge and seek something for the bettering of myself, and so forth. But this text ran in my ears "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." "Lord," said I, "I will follow thy counsel and not my own devices;" and I have never had cause to regret it. Always take the Lord for thy guide, and thou shalt never go amiss. Backslider! thou that hast a name to live, and art dead, or nearly dead, Christ gives thee counsel. "I counsel thee to buy of me, gold tried in the fire and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." And sinner! thou that art far from God, Christ gives thee counsel. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Depend on it, it is loving counsel. Take it. Go home and cast yourself upon your knees. Seek Christ, obey his counsel, and you shall have to rejoice that you ever listened to his voice, and heard it, and lived.

Chapter 51

Confession and Absolution

A Sermon

(No. 216)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 3, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

"And the publican, standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."--Luke 18:13.

THE HEROES OF OUR Saviour's stories are most of them selected to illustrate traits of character entirely dissimilar to their general reputation. What would you think of a moral writer of our own day, should he endeavor in a work of fiction, to set before us the gentle virtue of benevolence by the example of a Sepoy? And yet, Jesus Christ has given us one of the finest examples of charity in the case of a Samaritan. To the Jews, a Samaritan was as proverbial for his bitter animosity against their nation, as the Sepoy is among us for his treacherous cruelty, and as much an object of contempt and hatred; but Jesus Christ, nevertheless, chose his hero from the Samaritans, that there should be nothing adventitious to adorn him, but that all the adorning might be given to the grace of charity. Thus, too in the present instance, our Saviour, being desirous of setting before us the necessity of humiliation in prayer, has not selected some distinguished saint who was famed for his humility, but he has chosen a tax-gatherer, probably one of the most extortionate of his class, for the Pharisee seems to hint as much; and I doubt not he cast his eye askance at this publican, when he observed, with selfgratulation, "God, I thank thee,

that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Still, our Lord, in order that we might see that there was nothing to predispose in the person, but that the acceptance of the prayer might stand out, set even in a brighter light by the black foil of the publican's character, has selected this man to be the pattern and model of one who should offer an acceptable prayer unto God. Note that, and you will not be surprised to find the same characteristic exhibited very frequently in the parables of our Lord Jesus Christ. As for this publican, we know but little of his previous career, but we may, without perilling any serious error, conjecture somewhat near the truth. He may have been, and doubtless he was a Jew, piously brought up and religiously trained, but, perhaps like Levi, he ran away from his parents, and finding no other trade exactly suited to his vicious taste, he became one of that corrupt class who collected the Roman taxes, and, ashamed to be known as Levi any longer, he changed his name to Matthew, lest anyone should recognize in the degraded cast of the publican, the man whose parents feared God, and bowed their knees before Jehovah. It may be that this publican had in his youth forsaken the ways of his fathers, and given himself up to lasciviousness, and then found this unworthy occupation to be most accordant with his vicious spirit. We cannot tell how often he had ground the faces of the poor, or how many curses had been spilled upon his head when he had broken into the heritage of the widow, and had robbed the friendless, unprotected orphan. The Roman government gave a publican far greater power than he ought to possess, and he was never slow to use the advantage for his own enrichment. Probably half of all he had was a robbery, if not more, for Zaccheus seems to hint as much in his own instance, when he says--"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have gotten anything of any man by false

accusation, I restore it unto him four-fold." It was not often that this publican troubled the temple; the priests very seldom saw him coming with a sacrifice; it would have been an abomination, and he did not bring it. But so it happened, that the Spirit of the Lord met with the publican; and had made him think upon his ways, and their peculiar blackness: he was full of trouble, but he kept it to himself, pent up in his own bosom, he could scarcely rest at night nor go about his business by day, for day and night the hand of God was heavy upon him. At last, unable to endure his misery any longer, he thought of that house of God at Zion, and of the sacrifice that was daily offered there. "To whom, or where should I go," said he, "but to God?--and where can I hope to find mercy, but where the sacrifice is offered." No sooner said than done. He went; his unaccustomed feet bent their steps to the sanctuary, but he is ashamed to enter. Yon Pharisee holy man as he appeared to be, goes up unblushingly to the court of the Israelites. he goes as near as he dare to the very precincts, within which the priesthood alone might stand; and he prays with boastful language. But as for the publican, he chooses out for himself some secluded corner where he shall neither be seen nor heard, and now he is about to pray, not with uplifted hands as yonder Pharisee, not with eyes turned up to heaven with a sanctimonious gaze of hypocrisy, but fixing his eyes upon the ground, the hot tears streaming from them, not daring to lift them up to heaven. At last his stifled feelings found utterance; yet that utterance was a groan, a short prayer that must all be comprehended in the compass of a sigh: "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is done; he is heard; the angel of mercy registers his pardon, his conscience is at peace;he goes down to his house a happy man, justified rather than the Pharisee, and rejoicing in the justification that the Lord had given to him. Well then, my business this morning is to invite, to urge, to

beseech you to do what the publican did, that you may receive what he obtained. There are two particulars upon which I shall endeavor to speak solemnly and earnestly: the first is confession, the second is absolution.

I. Brethren, let us imitate the publican, first of all in his CONFESSION. There has been a great deal of public excitement during the last few weeks and months about the confessional. As for that matter, it is perhaps a mercy that the outward and visible sign of Popery in the Church of England has discovered to its sincere friends the inward and spiritual evil which had long been lurking there. We need not imagine that the confessional, or priestcraft, of which it is merely an offshoot, in the Church of England is any novelty: it has long been there, those of us who are outside her borders have long observed and mourned over it, but now we congratulate ourselves on the prospect that the Church of England herself will be compelled to discover her own evils; and we hope that God may give her grace and strength to cut the cancer out of her own breast before she shall cease to be a Protestant Church, and God shall cast her away as an abhorred thing. This morning, however, I have nothing to do with the confessional. Silly women may go on confessing as long as they like, and foolish husbands may trust their wives if they please to such men as those. Let those that are fools show it; let those that have no sense do as they please about it; but as for myself, I should take the greatest care that neither I nor mine have ought to do with such things. Leaving that, however, we come to personal matters, endeavoring to learn, even from the errors of others, how to act rightly ourselves.

Note the publican's confession; to whom was it presented? "God be merciful to me a sinner." Did the publican ever think about going to the priest to ask for mercy, and confessing his sins? The thought may

have crossed his mind, but his sin was too great a weight upon his conscience to be relieved in any such way, so he very soon dismissed the idea. "No," saith he, "I feel that my sin is of such a character that none but God can take it away; and even if it were right for me to go and make the confession to my fellow creature, yet I should think it must be utterly unavailing in my case, for my disease is of such a nature, that none but an Almighty Physician ever can remove it." So he directs his confession and his prayer to one place, and to one alone--"God be merciful to me a sinner." And you will note in this confession to God, that it was secret: all that you can hear of his confession is just that one word--"a sinner." Do you suppose that was all he confessed? No, beloved, I believe that long before this, the publican had made a confession of all his sins privately, upon his knees in his own house before God. But now, in God's house, all he has to say for man to hear, is--"I am a sinner." And I counsel you, If ever you make a confession before man, let it be a general one but never a particular one. You ought to confess often to your fellow creatures, that you have been a sinner, but to tell to any man in what respect you have been a sinner, is but to sin over again, and to help your fellow creature to transgress. How filthy must be the soul of that priest who makes his ear a common sewer for the filth of other men's hearts. I cannot imagine even the devil to be more depraved, than the man who spends his time in sitting with his ear against the lips of men and women, who, if they do truly confess, must make him an adept in every vice, and school him in iniquities that he otherwise never could have known. Oh, I charge you never pollute your fellow creature; keep your sin to yourself, and to your God. He cannot be polluted by your iniquity; make a plain and full confession of it before him; but to your fellow creature, add nothing to the general confession--"I am a

sinner!"

This confession which he made before God, was spontaneous, There was no question put to this man as to whether he were a sinner or no; as to whether he had broken the seventh commandment, or the eighth, or the ninth, or the tenth; no, his heart was full of penitence and it melted out in this breathing--"God be merciful to me a sinner." They tell us that some people never can make a full confession, except a priest helps them by questions. My dear friends, the very excellence of penitence is lost, and its spell broken, if there be a question asked: the confession is not true and real unless it be spontaneous. The man cannot have felt the weight of sin, who wants somebody to tell him what his sins are. Can you imagine any man with a burden on his back, who, before he groaned under it, wanted to be told that he had got one there? Surely not. The man groans under it, and he does not want to be told--"There it is on your back," he knows it is there. And if, by the questioning of a priest, a full and thorough confession could be drawn from any man or woman, it would be totally useless, totally vain before God, because it is not spontaneous. We must confess our sins, because we cannot help confessing them; it must come out, because we cannot keep it in; like fire in the bones, it seems as if it would melt our very spirit, unless we gave vent to the groaning of our confession before the throne of God. See this publican, you cannot hear the abject full confession that he makes; all that you can hear is his simple acknowledgment that he is a sinner; but that comes spontaneously from his lips; God himself has not to ask him the question but he comes before the throne, and freely surrenders himself up to the hands of Almighty Justice, confessing that he is a rebel and a sinner. That is the first thing we have to note in his confession--that he made it to God secretly and spontaneously; and all he said openly was that he was

"a sinner."

Again: what did he confess? He confessed, as our text tells us that he was a sinner. Now, how suitable is this prayer for us! For is there a lip here present that this confession will not suit--"God be merciful to me a sinner?" Do you say,--"the prayer will suit the harlot, when, after a life of sin, rottenness is in her bones and she is dying in despair--that prayer suits her lips?" Ay, but my friend, it will suit thy lips and mine too. If thou knowest thine heart, and I know mine, the prayer that will suit her will suit us also. You have never committed the sins which the Pharisee disowned; you have neither been extortionate, nor unjust, nor an adulterer; you have never been even as the publican, but nevertheless the word "sinner" will still apply to you; and you will feel it to be so if you are in a right condition. Remember how much you have sinned against light. It is true the harlot hath sinned more openly than you, but had she such light as you have had? Do you think she had such an early education and such training as you have received? Did she ever receive such checkings of conscience and such guardings of providence, as those which have watched over your career? This much I must confess for myself--I do, and must feel a peculiar heinousness in my own sin, for I sin against light, against conscience, and more, against the love of God received, and against the mercy of God promised. Come forward, thou greatest among saints, and answer this question,--dost not this prayer suit thee? I hear thee answer, without one moment's pause--"Ay, it suits me now; and until I die, my quivering lips must often repeat the petition, Lord have mercy upon me a sinner.' " Men and brethren, I beseech you use this prayer to-day, for it must suit you all. Merchant, hast thou no sins of business to confess? Woman, hast thou no household sins to acknowledge? Child of many prayers, hast thou no offense against father and mother

to confess? Have we loved the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength; and have we each loved our neighbor as ourself. Oh, let us close our lips as to any boasting, and when we open them, let these be the first words that escape from them, "I have sinned, O Lord; I have broken thy commandments; Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner." But mark, is it not a strange thing that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to plead his sinnership before the throne of God? One would think that when we come before God we should try to talk a little of our virtues. Who would suppose that when a man was asking for mercy he would say of himself, "I am a sinner?" Why surely reason would prompt him to say, "Lord have mercy upon me; there is some good point about me: Lord have mercy upon me; I am not worse than my neighbors: Lord have mercy upon me. I will try to be better." Is it not against reason, is it not marvellously above reason, that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to urge at the throne of grace, that which seems to be against his plea, the fact that he is a sinner? And yet, dear brethren, if you and I want to be heard, we must come to Christ as sinners. Do not let us attempt to make ourselves better than we are. When we come to God's throne, let us not for one moment seek to gather any of the false jewels of our pretended virtues; rags are the garments of sinners. Confession is the only music that must come from our lips; "God be merciful to ME--a sinner;" that must be the only character in which I can pray to God. Now, are there not many here who feel that they are sinners, and are groaning, sighing, and lamenting, because the weight of sin lies on their conscience? Brother, I am glad thou feelest thyself to be a sinner, for thou hast the key of the kingdom in thy hands. Thy sense of sinnership is thy only title to mercy. Come. I beseech thee, just as thou art--thy nakedness is thy only claim on heaven's wardrobe; thy hunger is thy only claim on heaven's granaries,

thy poverty is thy only claim on heaven's eternal riches. Come just as thou art, with nothing of thine own, except thy sinfulness, and plead that before the throne--"God be merciful to me a sinner." This is what this man confessed, that he was a sinner, and he pleaded it, making the burden of his confession to be the matter of his plea before God.

Now again, how does he come? What is the posture that he assumes? The first thing I would have you notice is that he "stood afar off." What did he do that for? Was it not because he felt himself a separated man? We have often made general confessions in the temple, but there never was a confession accepted, except it was particular, personal, and heartfelt. There were the people gathered together for the accustomed service of worship; they join in a psalm of praise, but the poor publican stood far away from them. Anon, they unite in the order of prayer, still he could not go near them. No, he was come there for himself, and he must stand by himself. Like the wounded hart that seeks the deepest glades of the forest where it may bleed and die alone in profound solitude, so did this poor publican seem to feel he must be alone. You notice he does not say anything about other people in his prayer. "God be merciful to me," he says. He does not say "one of a company of sinners," but "a sinner," as if there were not another sinner in all the world. Mark this, my hearer, that thou must feel thyself solitary and alone, before thou canst ever pray this prayer acceptably. Has the Lord ever picked thee out in a congregation? Has it seemed to you in this Hall as if there were a great black wall round about you, and you were closed in with the preacher and with your God, and as if every shaft from the preacher's bow was levelled at you, and every threatening meant for you, and every solemn upbraiding was an upbraiding for you? If thou hast felt this, I will congratulate thee.

No man ever prayed this prayer aright unless he prayed alone, unless he

said "God be merciful to me," as a solitary, lonely sinner. "The publican stood afar off."

Note the next thing. "He would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." That was because he dare not, not because he would not; he would have done it if he dared. How remarkable it is that repentance takes all the daring out of men. We have seen fellows very dare-devils before they were touched by sovereign grace, who have become afterwards, the most trembling and conscientious men with the tenderest conscience that one could imagine. Men who were careless, bragging and defying God, have become as humble as little children, and even afraid to lift their eyes to heaven, though once they sent their oaths and curses there. But why did he not dare to lift his eyes up? It was because he was dejected in his "spirit," so oppressed and burdened that he could not look up. Is that thy case my friend this morning? Are you afraid to pray? Do you feel as if you could not hope that God would have mercy on you, as if the least gleam of hope was more light than you could possibly bear; as if your eyes were so used to the darkness of doubt and despondency, that even one stolen ray seemed to be too much for your poor weak vision? Ah! well, fear not, for happy shall it be for thee; thou art only following the publican in his sad experience now, and the Lord who helps thee to follow him in the confession, shall help thee to rejoice with him in the absolution.

Note what else he did. He smote upon his breast. He was a good theologian he was a real doctor of divinity. What did he smite his breast for? Because he knew where the mischief lay--in his breast. He did not smite upon his brow as some men do when they are perplexed, as if the mistake were in their understanding. Many a man will blame his understanding, while he will not blame his heart, and say, "Well, I have made a mistake. I have certainly been doing wrong, but I am a

good-hearted fellow at the bottom." This man knew where the mischief lay, and he smote the right place.

"Here on my heart the burden lies."

He smote upon his breast as if he were angry with himself. He seemed to say, "Oh! that I could smite thee, my ungrateful heart, the harder, that thou hast loved sin rather than God."" He did not do penance, and yet it was a kind of penance upon himself when he smote his breast again and again, and cried "Alas! alas! woe is me that I should ever have sinned against my God"--"God be merciful to a sinner." Now, can you come to God like this, my dear friend? Oh, let us all draw near to God in this fashion. Thou hast enough, my brother, to make thee stand alone for there have been sins in which thou and I have stood each of us in solitary guilt. There are iniquities known only to ourselves, which we never told to the partner of our own bosom, not to our own parents or brothers, nor yet to the friend with whom we took sweet counsel. If we have sinned thus alone, let us go to our chambers, and confess alone, the husband apart, and the wife apart, the father apart, and the child apart. Let us each one wail for himself. Men and brethren, leave off to accuse one another. Cease from the bickerings of your censoriousness. and from the slanders of your envy. Rebuke yourselves and not your fellows. Rend your own hearts, and not the reputation of your neighbors. Come, let each man now look to his own case, and not to the case of another, let each cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, as here I stand alone, a sinner." And hast thou not good reason to cast down thine eyes? Does it not seem sometimes too much for us ever to look to heaven again. We have blasphemed God, some of us, and even imprecated curses on our own limbs and eyes; and when those things come back to our memory we may well be ashamed to look up. Or if we have been preserved from the crime of open blasphemy--how often have

you and I forgotten God! how often have we neglected prayer! how have we broken his Sabbaths and left his Bible unread! Surely these things as they flash across our memory, might constrain us to feel that we cannot lift up so much as our eyes towards heaven. And as for smiting on our breast, what man is there among us that need not do it? Let us be angry with ourselves, because we have provoked God to be angry with us. Let us be in wrath with the sins that have brought ruin upon our souls, let us drag the traitors out, and put them at once to a summary death; they deserve it well; they have been our ruin; let us be their destruction. He smote upon his breast and said, "God, be merciful unto me a sinner."

There is one other feature in this man's prayer, which you must not overlook. What reason had he to expect that God would have any mercy upon him? The Greek explains more to us than the English does, and the original word here might be translated--"God be propitiated to me a sinner." There is in the Greek word a distinct reference to the doctrine of atonement. It is not the Unitarian's prayer--"God be merciful to me," it is more than that--it is the Christian's prayer, "God be propitiated towards me, a sinner." There is, I repeat it, a distinct appeal to the atonement and the mercy-seat in this short prayer, Friend, if we would come before God with our confessions, we must take care that we plead the blood of Christ. There is no hope for a poor sinner apart from the cross of Jesus. We may cry, "God be merciful to me," but the prayer can never be answered apart from the victim offered, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. When thou hast thine eye upon the mercy-seat, take care to have thine eye upon the cross too. Remember that the cross is, after all "the mercy seat; that mercy never was enthroned, until she did hang upon the cross crowned with thorns. If thou wouldst find pardon, go to dark

Gethsemane, and see thy Redeemer sweating, in deep anguish, gouts of gore. If thou wouldst have peace of conscience, go to Gabbatha, the pavement, and see thy Saviour's back flooded with a stream of blood. If thou wouldst have the last best rest to thy conscience, go to Golgotha; see the murdered victim as he hangs upon the cross, with hands and feet and side all pierced, as every wound is gaping wide with misery extreme. There can be no hope for mercy apart from the victim offered--even Jesus Christ the Son of God. Oh, come; let us one and all approach the mercy-seat, and plead the blood. Let us each go and say, "Father, I have sinned; but have mercy upon me, through thy Son." Come, drunkard, give me thy hand; we will go together. Harlot, give me thy hand too; and let us likewise approach the throne. And you, professing Christians, come ye also, be not ashamed of your company. Let us come before his presence with many tears, none of us accusing our fellows, but each one accusing himself; and let us plead the blood of Jesus Christ, which speaketh peace and pardon to every troubled conscience. Careless man, I have a word with thee before I have done on this point. You say, "Well, that is a good prayer, certainly, for a man who is dying. When a poor fellow has the cholera, and sees black death staring him in the face, or when he is terrified and thunderstruck in the time of storm, or when he finds himself amidst the terrible confusion and alarm of a perilous catastrophe or a sudden accident, while drawing near to the gates of death, it is only right that he should say, Lord have mercy upon me." Ah, friend, the prayer must be suitable to you then, if you are a dying man; it must be suitable to you, for you know not how near you are to the borders of the grave. Oh, if thou didst but understand the frailty of life and the slipperiness of that poor prop on which thou art resting, thou wouldst say, "Alas for my soul! if the prayer will suit me dying, it must suit me now; for I am dying, even

this day, and know not when I may come to the last gasp." "Oh," says one, "I think it will suit a man that has been a very great sinner." Correct, my friend, and therefore, if you knew yourself; it would suit you. You are quite correct in saying, that it won't suit any but great sinners; and if you don't feel yourself to be a great sinner, I know you will never pray it. But there are some here that feel themselves to be what you ought to feel and know that you are. Such will, constrained by grace, use the prayer with an emphasis this morning, putting a tear upon each letter, and a sigh upon each syllable, as they cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." But mark, my friend, thou mayest smile contemptuously on the man that makes this confession, but he shall go from this house justified, while thou shalt go away still in thy sins, without a hope, without a ray of joy to cheer thy unchastened spirit.

II. Having thus briefly described this confession, I come more briefly still to notice the ABSOLUTION which God gave. Absolution from the lips of man I do believe is little short of blasphemy. There is in the Prayer Book of the Church of England an absolution which is essentially Popish, which I should think must be almost a verbatim extract from the Romish missal. I do not hesitate to say, that there was never anything more blasphemous printed in Holywell Street, than the absolution that is to be pronounced by a clergyman over a dying man; and it is positively frightful to think that any persons calling themselves Christians should rest easy in a church until they have done their utmost to get that most excellent book thoroughly reformed and revised, and to get the Popery purged out of it. But there is such a thing as absolution, my friends, and the publican received it. "He went to his house justified rather than the other." The other had nought of peace revealed to his heart, this poor man had all, and he went to his house justified. It does not say that he went to his house, having eased his

mind; that is true, but more: he went to his house "justified." What does that mean? It so happens that the Greek word here used is the one which the apostle Paul always employs to set out the great doctrine of the righteousness of Jesus Christ--even the righteousness which is of God by faith. The fact is, that the moment the man prayed the prayer, every sin he had ever done was blotted out of God's book, so that it did not stand on the record against him; and more, the moment that prayer was heard in heaven, the man was reckoned to be a righteous man. All that Christ did for him was cast about his shoulders to be the robe of his beauty, that moment all the guilt that he had ever committed himself was washed entirely away and lost for ever. When a sinner believes in Christ, his sins positively cease to be, and what is more wonderful they all cease to be, as Kent says in those well known lines--

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,
And, O my soul with wonder view
For sins to come here's pardon too."

They are all swept away in one solitary instant; the crimes of many years; extortions, adulteries, or even murder, wiped away in an instant; for you will notice the absolution was instantaneously given. God did not say to the man--"Now you must go and perform some good works, and then I will give you absolution." He did not say as the Pope does, "Now you must swelter awhile in the fires of Purgatory, and then I will let you out." No, he justified him there and then; the pardon was given as soon as the sin was confessed. "Go, my son, in peace; I have not a charge against thee; thou art a sinner in thine own estimation, but thou art none in mine; I have taken all thy sins away, and cast them into the depth of the sea, and they shall be mentioned

against thee no more for ever." Can you tell what a happy man the publican was, when all in a moment he was changed? If you may reverse the figure used by Milton, he seemed himself to have been a loathsome toad, but the touch of the Father's mercy made him rise to angelic brightness and delight; and he went out of that house with his eye upward, no longer afraid. Instead of the groan that was on his heart, he had a song upon his lip. He no longer walked alone, he sought out the godly and he said, "Come and hear, ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul." He did not smite upon his breast, but he went home to get down his harp, and play upon the strings, and praise his God. You would not have known that he was the same man, if you had seen him going out, and all that was done in a minute. "But," says one, " do you think he knew for certain that all his sins were forgiven? Can a man know that?" Certainly he can. And there be some here that can bear witness that this is true. They have known it themselves. The pardon which is sealed in heaven is re-sealed in our own conscience. The mercy which is recorded above is made to shed its light into the darkness of our hearts. Yes, a man may know on earth that his sins are forgiven, and may be as sure that he is a pardoned man as he is of his own existence. And now I hear a cry from some one saying, "And may I be pardoned this morning? and may I know that I am pardoned? May I be so pardoned that all shall be forgotten--I who have been a drunkard, a swearer, or what not? May I have all my transgressions washed away? May I be made sure of heaven, and all that in a moment?" Yes, my friend, If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, if thou wilt stand where thou art, and just breathe this prayer out, "Lord, have mercy! God be merciful to me a sinner, through the blood of Christ." I tell thee man, God never did deny that prayer yet; if it came out of honest lips he never shut the gates of mercy on it.

It is a solemn litany that shall be used as long as time shall last, and it shall pierce the ears of God as long as there is a sinner to use it. Come, be not afraid, I beseech you, use the prayer before you leave this Hall. Stand where you are; endeavor to realize that you are an alone, and if you feel that you are guilty. now let the prayer ascend. Oh, what a marvellous thing, it from the thousands of hearts here present, so many thousand prayers might go up to God! Surely the angels themselves never had such a day in Paradise, as they would have to-day, if every one of us could unfeignedly make that confession. Some are doing it; I know they are; God is helping them. And sinner, do you stay away? You, who have most need to come, do you refuse to join with us. Come, brother come. You say you are too vile. No, brother, you cannot be too vile to say, "God be merciful to me." Perhaps you are no viler than we are; at any rate, this we can say--we feel ourselves to be viler than you, and we want you to pray the same prayer that we have prayed. "Ah," says one, "I cannot; my heart won't yield to that; I cannot." But friend, if God is ready to have mercy upon thee, thine must be a hard heart, if it is not ready to receive his mercy. Spirit of God, breathe on the hard heart, and melt it now! Help the man who feels that carelessness is overcoming him--help him to get rid of it from this hour. You are struggling against it; you are saying, "Would to God I could pray that I could go back to be a boy or a child again, and then I could; but I have got hardened and grown grey in sin, and prayer would be hypocrisy in me. No, brother, no, it would not. If thou canst but cry it from thy heart, I beseech thee say it. Many a man thinks he is a hypocrite, when he is not, and is afraid that he is not sincere, when his very fear is a proof of his sincerity. "But," says one, "I have no redeeming trait in my character at all." I am glad you think so; still you may use the prayer, "God be merciful to me." "But

it will be a useless prayer," says one. My brother, I assure thee not in my own name, but in the name of God, my Father and your Father, it shall not be a useless prayer. As sure as God is God, him that cometh unto Christ he will in no wise cast out. Come with me now, I beseech thee; tarry no longer; the bowels of God are yearning over thee. Thou art his child, and he will not give thee up. Thou hast run from him these many years, but he has never forgotten thee; thou hast resisted all his warnings until now, and he is almost weary, but still he has said concerning thee, "How shall I make thee as Admah; how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

"Come humbled sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve;
Come with thy guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve:
I'll go to Jesus; though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose,
I know his courts; I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.
Prostrate I'll lie before his face,
And there my sins confess;
I'll tell him I'm a wretch undone,
Without his sov'reign grace."

Go home to your houses: let everyone--preacher, deacon, people, ye of the church, and ye of the world, everyone of you, go home, and ere you feast your bodies, pour out your hearts before God, and let this one cry go up from all our lips, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

I pause. Bear with me.

I must detain you a few moments. Let us use this prayer as our own now.

Oh that it might come up before the Lord at this time as the earnest supplication of every heart in this assembly! I will repeat it,--not as a text, but as a prayer,--as my own prayer, as your prayer. Will each one of you take it personally for himself? Let everyone, I entreat you, who desires to offer the prayer, and can join in it, utter at its close an audible "Amen."

Let us pray,

"GOD-BE-MERCIFUL-TO-ME-A-SINNER."

[And the people did with deep solemnity say] "AMEN."

P.S.--The preacher hopes that he who reads will feel constrained most solemnly to do likewise.

Chapter 52

Declension from First Love

A Sermon

(No. 217)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, September 26, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."--Revelation 2:4.

IT IS A GREAT THING to have as much said in our commendation as was said concerning the church at Ephesus. Just read what "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness," said of them--"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, we may feel devoutly thankful if we can humbly, but honestly say, that this commendation applies to us. Happy the man whose works are known and accepted of Christ. He is no idle Christian, he has practical godliness; he seeks by works of piety to obey God's whole law, by works of charity to manifest his love to the brotherhood, and by works of devotion to show his attachment to the cause of his Master. "I know thy works." Alas! some of you cannot get so far as that. Jesus Christ himself can bear no witness to your works, for you have not done any. You are Christians by profession, but you are not Christians as to your practice. I say again, happy is that man to whom Christ can say, "I know thy works." It is a commendation worth a world to have as much as that said of us. But further, Christ said, "and thy

labour." This is more still. Many Christians have works, but only few Christians have labour. There were many preachers in Whitfield's day that had works, but Whitfield had labour. He toiled and travailed for souls. He was "in labours more abundant." Many were they in the apostle's days who did works for Christ; but pre-eminently the apostle Paul did labour for souls. It is not work merely, it is anxious work; it is casting forth the whole strength, and exercising all the energies for Christ. Could the Lord Jesus say as much as that of you--"I know thy labour?" No. He might say, "I know thy loitering; I know thy laziness; I know thy shirking of the work; I know thy boasting of what little thou dost; I know thine ambition to be thought something of , when thou art nothing." But ah! friends, it is more than most of us dare to hope that Christ could say, "I know thy labour."

But further, Christ says, "I know thy patience." Now there be some that labour, and they do it well. But what does hinder them? They only labour for a little season, and then they cease to work and begin to faint. But this church had laboured on for many years; it had thrown out all its energies--not in some spasmodic effort, but in a continual strain and unabated zeal for the glory of God. "I know thy patience." I say again, beloved, I tremble to think how few out of this congregation could win such praise as this. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil." The thorough hatred which the church had of evil doctrine, of evil practice, and its corresponding intense love for pure truth and pure practice--in that I trust some of us can bear a part. "And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." Here, too, I think some of us may hope to be clear. I know the difference between truth and error. Arminianism will never go down with us; the doctrine of men will not suit our taste. The husks, the

bran, and the chaff, are not things that we can feed upon. And when we listen to those who preach another gospel, a holy anger burns within us, for we love the truth as it is in Jesus; and nothing but that will satisfy us. "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." They had borne persecutions, difficulties, hardships, embarrassments, and discouragements, yet had they never flagged, but always continued faithful. Who among us here present could lay claim to so much praise as this? What Sunday-school teacher have I here who could say, "I have laboured, and I have borne, and have had patience, and have not fainted." Ah, dear friends, if you can say it, it is more than I can. Often have I been ready to faint in the Master's work; and though I trust I have not been tired of it, yet there has sometimes been a longing to get from the work to the reward, and to go from the service of God, before I had fulfilled, as a hireling, my day. I am afraid we have not enough of patience, enough of labour, and enough of good works, to get even as much as this said of us. But it is in our text, I fear the mass of us must find our character. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." There may be a preacher here present. Did you ever hear of a minister who had to preach his own funeral sermon? What a labour that must have been, to feel that he had been condemned to die, and must preach against himself, and condemn himself! I stand here to-night, not in that capacity, but in one somewhat similar. I feel that I who preach shall this night condemn myself; and my prayer before I entered this pulpit was, that I might fearlessly discharge my duty, that I might deal honestly with my own heart, and that I might preach, knowing myself to be the chief culprit, and you each in your measure to have offended in this respect, even though none of you so grievously as I have done. I pray that God the Holy Spirit, through his

renewings, may apply the word, not merely to your hearts, but to mine, that I may return to my first love, and that you may return with me.

In the first place, what was our first love? Secondly, how did we lose it? And thirdly, let me exhort you to get it again.

I. First, WHAT WAS OUR FIRST LOVE? Oh, let us go back--it is not many years with some of us. We are but youngsters in God's ways, and it is not so long with any of you that you will have very great difficulty in reckoning it. Then if you are Christians, those days were so happy that your memory will never forget them, and therefore you can easily return to that first bright spot in your history. Oh, what love was that which I had to my Saviour the first time he forgave my sins. I remember it. You remember each for yourselves, I dare say, that happy hour when the Lord appeared to us, bleeding on his cross, when he seemed to say, and did say in our hearts, "I am thy salvation; I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins." Oh, how I loved him! Passing all loves except his own was that love which I felt for him then. If beside the door of the place in which I met with him there had been a stake of blazing faggots, I would have stood upon them without chains; glad to give my flesh, and blood, and bones, to be ashes that should testify my love to him. Had he asked me then to give all my substance to the poor, I would have given all and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for his name's sake. Had he commanded me then to preach in the midst of all his foes, I could have said:--

"There's not a lamb amongst thy flock
I would disdain to feed,
There's not a foe before whose face
I'd fear thy cause to plead."

I could realize then the language of Rutherford, when he said, being

full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen--"Oh, my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and thee, if I could not get at thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice but I would plunge through it all, if I might embrace thee and call thee mine."

Now it is that first love that you and I must confess I am afraid we have in a measure lost. Let us just see whether we have it. When we first loved the Saviour how earnest we were; there was not a single thing in the Bible, that we did not think most precious; there was not one command of his that we did not think to be like fine gold and choice silver. Never were the doors of his house open without our being there. if there were a prayer meeting at any hour in the day we were there. Some said of us that we had no patience, we would do too much and expose our bodies too frequently--but we never thought of that "Do yourself no harm," was spoken in our ears; but we would have done anything then. Why there are some of you who cannot walk to the Music Hall on a morning, it is too far. When you first joined the church, you would have walked twice as far. There are some of you who cannot be at the prayer meeting--business will not permit; yet when you were first baptized, there was never a prayer meeting from which you were absent. It is the loss of your first love that makes you seek the comfort of your bodies instead of the prosperity of your souls. Many have been the young Christians who have joined this church, and old ones too, and I have said to them, "Well, have you got a ticket for a seat?" "No, sir." "Well, what will you do? Have you got a preference ticket?" "No, I cannot get one; but I do not mind standing in the crowd an hour, or two hours. I will come at five o'clock so that I can get in. Sometimes I don't get in, sir; but even then I feel that I have done what I ought to do in attempting to get in." "Well," but I have said, "you live five

miles off, and there is coming and going back twice a day--you cannot do it." "Oh, sir," they have said "I can do it; I feel so much the blessedness of the Sabbath and so much enjoyment of the presence of the Saviour." I have smiled at them; I could understand it, but I have not felt it necessary to caution them--and now their love is cool enough. That first love does not last half so long as we could wish. Some of you stand convicted even here; you have not that blazing love, that burning love, that ridiculous love as the worldling would call it, which is after all the love to be most coveted and desired. No, you have lost your first love in that respect. Again, how obedient you used to be. If you saw a commandment, that was enough for you--you did it. But now you see a commandment, and you see profit on the other side; and how often do you dally with the profit and choose the temptation, instead of yielding an unsullied obedience to Christ.

Again, how happy you used to be in the ways of God. Your love was of that happy character that you could sing all day long; but now your religion has lost its lustre, the gold has become dim; you know that when you come to the Sacramental table, you often come there without enjoying it. There was a time when every bitter thing was sweet; whenever you heard the Word, it was all precious to you. Now you can grumble at the minister. Alas! the minister has many faults, but the question is, whether there has not been a greater charge in you than there has been in him. Many are there who say, "I do not hear Mr. So-and-so as I used to,"--when the fault lies in their own ears. Oh, brethren, when we live near to Christ, and are in our first love, it is amazing what a little it takes to make a good preacher to us. Why, I confess I have heard a poor illiterate Primitive Methodist preach the gospel, and I felt as if I could jump for joy all the while I was listening to him, and yet he never gave me a new thought or a pretty

expression, nor one figure that I could remember, but he talked about Christ; and even his common things were to my hungry spirit like dainty meats. And I have to acknowledge, and, perhaps, you have to acknowledge the same--that I have heard sermons from which I ought to have profited, but I have been thinking on the man's style, or some little mistakes in grammar. When I might have been holding fellowships with Christ in and through the ministry, I have, instead thereof, been getting abroad in my thoughts even to the ends of the earth. And what is the reason for this, but that I have lost my first love.

Again: when we were in our first love, what would we do for Christ; now how little will we do. Some of the actions which we performed when we were young Christians, but just converted, when we look back upon them, seem to have been wild and like idle tales. You remember when you were a lad and first came to Christ, you had a half-sovereign in your pocket; it was the only one you had, and you met with some poor saint and gave it all away. You did not regret that you had done it, your only regret was that you had not a great deal more, for you would have given all. You recollected that something was wanted for the cause of Christ. Oh! we could give anything away when we first loved the Saviour. If there was a preaching to be held five miles off, and we could walk with the lay-preacher to be a little comfort to him in the darkness, we were off. If there was a Sunday-school, however early it might be, we would be up, so that we might be present. Unheard-of feats, things that we now look back upon with surprise, we could perform them. Why cannot we do them now? Do you know there are some people who always live upon what they have been. I speak very plainly now. There is a brother in this church who may take it to himself; I hope he will. It is not very many years ago since he said to me, when I asked him why he did not do something--"Well, I have done my share; I

used to do this, and I have done the other; I have done so-and-so." Oh, may the Lord deliver him, and all of us, from living on "has beens!" It will never do to say we have done a thing. Suppose, for a solitary moment, the world should say, "I have turned round; I will stand still." Let the sea say, "I have been ebbing and flowing, lo! these many years; I will ebb and flow no more." Let the sun say, "I have been shining, and I have been rising and setting so many days; I have done this enough to earn me a goodly name; I will stand still;" and let the moon wrap herself up in veils of darkness, and say, "I have illuminated many a night, and I have lighted many a weary traveller across the moors; I will shut up my lamp and be dark forever." Brethren, when you and I cease to labour, let us cease to live. God has no intention to let us live a useless life. But mark this; when we leave our first works, there is no question about having lost our first love; that is sure. If there be strength remaining, if there be still power mentally and physically, if we cease from our office, if we abstain from our labours, there is no solution of this question which an honest conscience will accept, except this, "Thou hast lost thy first love, and, therefore, thou hast neglected thy first works." Ah! we were all so very ready to make excuses for ourselves. Many a preacher has retired from the ministry, long before he had any need to do so. He has married a rich wife. Somebody has left him a little money, and he can do without it. He was growing weak in the ways of God, or else he would have said,

"My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."

And let any man here present who was a Sunday-school teacher and who has left it, who was a tract distributor and who has given it up, who was active in the way of God but is now idle, stand to-night before the

bar of his conscience, and say whether he be not guilty of this charge which I bring against him, that he has lost his first love.

I need not stop to say also, that this may be detected in the closet as well as in our daily life; for when first love is lost, there is a want of that prayerfulness which we have. I remember the day I was up at three o'clock in the morning. Till six, I spent in prayer, wrestling with God. Then I had to walk some eight miles, and started off and walked to the baptism. Why, prayer was a delight to me then. My duties at that time kept me occupied pretty well from five o'clock in the morning till ten at night, and I had not a moment for retirement, yet I would be up at four o'clock to pray; and though I feel very sleepy now-a-days, and I feel that I could not be up to pray, it was not so then, when I was in my first love. Somehow or other, I never lacked time then. If I did not get it early in the morning, I got it late at night. I was compelled to have time for prayer with God; and what prayer it was! I had no need then to groan because I could not pray; for love, being fervent, I had sweet liberty at the throne of grace.

But when first love departs, we begin to think that ten minutes will do for prayer, instead of an hour, and we read a verse or two in the morning, whereas we used to read a portion, but never used to go into the world without getting some marrow and fatness. Now, business has so increased, that we must get into bed as soon as we can; we have not time to pray. And then at dinner time, we used to have a little time for communion; that is dropped. And then on the Sabbath-day, we used to make it a custom to pray to God when we got home from his house, for just five minutes before dinner, so that what we heard we might profit by; that is dropped. And some of you that are present were in the habit of retiring for prayer when you went home; your wives have told that story; the messengers have heard it when they have called at your

houses, when they have asked the wife--"What is your husband?" "Ah!" she has said, "he is a godly man; he cannot come home to his breakfast but he must slip upstairs alone. I know what he is doing--he is praying. Then when he is at table, he often says--"Mary, I have had a difficulty to-day, we must go and have a word or two of prayer together." And some of you could not take a walk without prayer, you were so fond of it you could not have too much of it. Now where is it? You know more than you did; you have grown older; you have grown richer, perhaps. You have grown wiser in some respects; but you might give up all you have got, to go back to

"Those peaceful hours you once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!"

Oh, what would you give if you could fill

"That aching void,
The world can never fill,"

but which only the same love that you had at first, can ever fully satisfy!

II. And now, beloved, WHERE DID YOU AND I LOSE OUR FIRST LOVE, if we have lost it? Let each one speak for himself, or rather, let me speak for each.

Have you not lost your first love in the world some of you? You used to have that little shop once, you had not very much business; well, you had enough, and a little to spare. However, there was a good turn came in business; you took two shops, and you are getting on very well. Is it not marvellous, that when you grew richer and had more business, you began to have less grace?

Oh, friends, it is a very serious thing to grow rich? Of all the temptations to which God's children are exposed it is the worst, because it is one that they do not dread, and therefore it is the more

subtle temptation. You know a traveller if he is going a journey, takes a staff with him, it is a help to him; but suppose he is covetous, and says, "I will have a hundred of these sticks," that will be no help to him at all; he has only got a load to carry, and it stops his progress instead of assisting him. But I do believe there are many Christians that lived near to God, when they were living on a pound a week, that might give up their yearly incomes with the greatest joy, if they could have now the same contentment, the same peace of mind, the same nearness of access to God, that they had in times of poverty. Ah, too much of the world is a bad thing for any man! I question very much whether a man ought not sometimes to stop, and say, "There is an opportunity of doing more trade, but it will require the whole of my time, and I must give up that hour I have set apart for prayer; I will not do the trade at all; I have enough, and therefore let it go. I would rather do trade with heaven than trade with earth."

Again: do you not think also that perhaps you may have lost your first love by getting too much with worldly people? When you were in your first love, no company suited you but the godly; but now you have got a young man that you talk with, who talks a great deal more about frivolity, and gives you a great deal more of the froth and scum of levity, than he ever gives you of solid godliness. Once you were surrounded by those that fear the Lord, but now you dwell in the tents of "Freedom," where you hear little but cursing. But, friends, he that carrieth coals in his bosom must be burned; and he that hath ill companions cannot but be injured. Seek, then, to have godly friends, that thou mayest maintain thy first love.

But another reason. Do you not think that perhaps you have forgotten how much you owe to Christ? There is one thing, that I feel from experience I am compelled to do very often, viz., to go back to where I

first started:--

" I, the chief of sinners am,

But Jesus died for me."

You and I get talking about our being saints; we know our election, we rejoice in our calling, we go on to sanctification; and we forget the hole of the pit whence we were digged. Ah, remember my brother, thou art nothing now but a sinner saved through grace; remember what thou wouldst have been, if the Lord had left thee. And surely, then, by going back continually to first principles, and to the great foundation stone, the cross of Christ, thou wilt be led to go back to thy first love.

Dost thou not think, again, that thou hast lost thy first love by neglecting communion with Christ? Now preacher, preach honestly, and preach at thyself. Has there not been, sometimes, this temptation to do a great deal for Christ, but not to live a great deal with Christ? One of my besetting sins, I feel, is this. If there is anything to be done actively for Christ, I instinctively prefer the active exercise to the passive quiet of his presence. There are some of you, perhaps, that are attending a Sunday school, who would be more profitably employed to your own souls if you were spending that hour in communion with Christ. Perhaps, too, you attend the means so often, that you have no time in secret to improve what you gain in the means. Mrs. Bury once said, that if "all the twelve apostles were preaching in a certain town, and we could have the privilege of hearing them preach, yet if they kept us out of our closets, and led us to neglect prayer, better for us never to have heard their names, than to have gone to listen to them." We shall never love Christ much except we live near to him. Love to Christ is dependent on our nearness to him. It is just like the planets and the sun. Why are some of the planets cold? Why do they move at so slow

a rate? Simply because they are so far from the sun: put them where the planet Mercury is, and they will be in a boiling heat, and spin round the sun in rapid orbits. So, beloved, if we live near to Christ, we cannot help loving him: the heart that is near Jesus must be full of his love. But when we live days and weeks and months without personal intercourse, without real fellowship, how can we maintain love towards a stranger? He must be a friend, and we must stick close to him, as he sticks close to us--closer than a brother; or else, we shall never have our first love.

There are a thousand reasons that I might have given, but I leave each of you to search your hearts, to find out why you have lost, each of you, your first love.

III. Now, dear friends, just give me all your attention for a moment, while I earnestly beseech and implore of you to SEEK TO GET YOUR FIRST LOVE RESTORED. Shall I tell you why? Brother, though thou be a child of God, if thou hast lost thy first love, there is some trouble near at hand. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," and he is sure to chasten thee when thou sinnest. It is calm with you to night, is it? Oh! but dread that calm, there is a tempest lowering. Sin is the harbinger of tempest: read the history of David. All David's life, in all his troubles, even in the rocks of the wild goats, and in the caves of Engedi, he was the happiest of men till he lost his first love; and from the day when his lustful eye was fixed upon Bathsheba, even to the last, he went with broken bones sorrowing to his grave. It was one long string of afflictions: take heed it be not so with thee. "Ah, but," you say, "I shall not sin as David did." Brother, you cannot tell: if you have lost your first love, what should hinder you but that you should lose your first purity? Love and purity go together. He that loveth is pure; he that loveth little shall find his purity decrease, until it

becomes marred and polluted. I should not like to see you, my dear friends, tried and troubled: I do weep with them that weep. If there be a child of yours sick, and I hear of it, I can say honestly, I do feel something like a father to your children, and as a father to you. If you have sufferings and afflictions, and I know them, I desire to feel for you, and spread your griefs before the throne of God. Oh, I do not want my heavenly Father to take the rod out to you all; but he will do it, if you fall from your first love. As sure as ever he is a Father, he will let you have the rod if your love cools. Bastards may escape the rod. If you are only base-born professors you may go happily along; but the true-born child of God, when his love declines, must and shall smart for it.

There is yet another thing, my dear friends, if we lose our first love--what will the world say of us if we lose our first love? I must put this, not for our name's sake, but for God's dear name's sake. O what will the world say of us? There was a time, and it is not gone yet, when men must point at this church, and say of it, "There is a church, that is like a bright oasis in the midst of a desert, a spot of light in the midst of darkness." Our prayer meetings were prayer meetings indeed, the congregations were as attentive as they were numerous. Oh, how you did drink in the words; how your eyes flashed with a living fire, whenever the name of Christ was mentioned! And what, if in a little time it shall be said, "Ah, that church is quite as sleepy as any other; look at them when the minister preaches, why they can sleep under him, they do not seem to care for the truth. Look at the Spurgeonites, they are just as cold and careless as others; they used to be called the most pugnacious people in the world, for they were always ready to defend their Master's name and their Master's truth, and they got that name in consequence, but now you may swear in

their presence and they will not rebuke you: how near these people once used to live to God and his house, they were always there; look at their prayer meetings, they would fill their seats as full at a prayer meeting as at an ordinary service; now they are all gone back." "Ah," says the world, "just what I said; the fact is, it was a mere spasm, a little spiritual excitement, and it has all gone down." And the worldling says, "Ah, ah, so would I have it, so would I have it!" I was reading only the other day of an account of my ceasing to be popular; it was said my chapel was now nearly empty, that nobody went to it: and I was exceedingly amused and interested. "Well, if it come to that," I said, "I shall not grieve or cry very much; hut if it is said the church has left its zeal and first love, that is enough to break any honest pastor's heart." Let the chaff go, but if the wheat remain we have comfort. Let those who are the outer-court worshippers cease to hear, what signifieth? let them turn aside, but O, ye soldiers of the Cross, if ye turn your backs in the day of battle, where shall I hide my head? what shall I say for the great name of my Master, or for the honour of his gospel? It is our boast and joy, that the old-fashioned doctrine has been revived in these days, and that the truth that Calvin preached, that Paul preached, and that Jesus preached, is still mighty to save, and far surpasses in power all the neologies and new-fangled notions of the present time. But what will the heretic say, when he sees it is all over? "Ah," he will say, "that old truth urged on by the fanaticism of a foolish young man, did wake the people a little; but it lacked marrow and strength, and it all died away!" Will ye thus dishonour your Lord and Master, ye children of the heavenly king? I beseech you do not so--but endeavour to receive again as a rich gift of the Spirit your first love.

And now, once again, dear friends, there is a thought that ought to

make each of us feel alarmed, if we have lost our first love. May not this question arise in our hearts--Was I ever a child of God at all? Oh, my God, must I ask myself this question? Yes, I will. Are there not many of whom it is said, they went out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us? Are there not some whose goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew--may that not have been my case? I am speaking for you all. Put the question--may I not have been impressed under a certain sermon, and may not that impression have been a mere carnal excitement? May it not have been that I thought I repented but did not really repent? May it not have been the case, that I got a hope somewhere but had not a right to it? And I never had the loving faith that unites me to the Lamb of God. And may it not have been that I only thought I had love to Christ, and never had it, for if I really had love to Christ should I be as I now am? See how far I have come down! May I not keep on going down until my end shall be perdition, and the never-dying worm, and the fire unquenchable? Many have gone from heights of a profession to the depths of damnation, and may not I be the same? May it not be true of me that I am as a wandering star for whom is reserved blackness of darkness for ever? May I not have shone brightly in the midst of the church for a little while, and yet may I not be one of those poor foolish virgins who took no oil in my vessel with my lamp, and therefore my lamp will go out? Let me think, if I go on as I am, it is impossible for me to stop, if I am going downwards I may go on going downwards. And O my God, if I go on backsliding for another year--who knows where I may have backslidden to? Perhaps into some gross sin. Prevent, prevent it by thy grace! Perhaps I may backslide totally. If I am a child of God I know I cannot do that. But still, may it not happen that I only thought I was a child of God, and may I not so far go back

that at last my very name to live shall go because I always have been dead? Oh! how dreadful it is to think and to see in our church, members who turn out to be dead members! If I could weep tears of blood, they would not express the emotion that I ought to feel, and that you ought to feel, when you think there are some among us that are dead branches of a living vine. Our deacons find that there is much of unsoundness in our members. I grieve to think that because we cannot see all our members, there are many who have backslidden. There is one who says, "I joined the church, it is true, but I never was converted. I made a profession of being converted, but I was not, and now I take no delight in the things of God. I am moral, I attend the house of prayer, but I am not converted. My name may be taken off the books; I am not a godly man." There are others among you who perhaps have gone even further than that--have gone into sin, and yet I may not know it. It may not come to my ears in so large a church as this. Oh! I beseech you, my dear friends, by him that liveth and was dead, let not your good be evil spoken of, by losing your first love.

Are there some among you that are professing religion, and not possessing it? Oh, give up your profession, or else get the truth and sell it not. Go home, each of you, and cast yourselves on your faces before God, and ask him to search you, and try you, and know your ways, and see if there be any evil way in you, and pray that he may lead you in the way everlasting. And if hitherto you have only professed, but have not possessed, seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near. Ye are warned, each one of you; you are solemnly told to search yourselves and make short work of it. And if any of you be hypocrites, at God's great day, guilty as I may be in many respects, there is one thing I am clear of--I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I do not believe that any people in

the world shall be damned more terribly than you shall if you perish; for of this thing I have not shunned to speak--the great evil of making a profession without being sound at heart. No, I have even gone so near to personality, that I could not have gone further without mentioning your names. And rest assured, God's grace being with me, neither you nor myself shall be spared in the pulpit in any personal sin that I may observe in any one of you. But oh, do let us be sincere! May the Lord sooner split this church till only a tenth of you remain, than ever suffer you to be multiplied a hundred-fold unless you be multiplied with the living in Zion, and with the holy flock that the Lord himself hath ordained, and will keep unto the end. To-morrow morning, we shall meet together and pray, that we may have our first love restored; and I hope many of you will be found there to seek again the love which you have almost lost.

And as for you that never had that love at all, the Lord breathe it upon you now for the love of Jesus. Amen.

Chapter 53

Self-Examination

A Sermon

(No. 218)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 10, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."--2 Corinthians 13:5.

I HAD INTENDED to address you this morning from the third title given to our blessed Redeemer, in the verse we have considered twice before--"Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God;" but owing to excruciating pain and continual sickness, I have been unable to gather my thoughts together, and therefore I feel constrained to address you on a subject which has often been upon my heart and not unfrequently upon my lips, and concerning which, I dare say, I have admonished a very large proportion of this audience before. You will find the text in the thirteenth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, at the fifth verse--"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"--a solemn text, that we cannot preach too impressively, or too frequently meditate.

The Corinthians were the critics of the apostles' age. They took to themselves great credit for skill in learning and in language, and as most men do who are wise in their own esteem, they made a wrong use of their wisdom and learning--they began to criticise the apostle Paul.

They criticised his style. "His letters," say they, "are weighty and

powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." Nay, not content with that, they went so far as to deny his apostleship, and for once in his life, the apostle Paul found himself compelled to "become a fool in glorying; for," says he, "ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." The apostle wrote two letters to them; in both he is compelled to upbraid them while he defends himself, and when he had fully disarmed his opponents, and wrested the sword of their criticism out of their hands, he pointed it at their own breasts, saying, "Examine yourselves.' You have disputed my doctrine; examine whether ye be in the faith. You have made me prove my apostleship; prove your own selves.' Use the powers which you have been so wrongfully exercising upon me for a little season upon your own characters."

And now, my dear friends, the fault of the Corinthians is the fault of the present age. Let not any one of you, as he goeth out of the house of God, say unto his neighbour. "How did you like the preacher? What did you think of the sermon this morning?" Is that the question you should ask as you retire from God's house? Do you come here to judge God's servants? I know it is but a small thing unto us to be judged of man's judgment; for our judgment is of the Lord our God; to our own Master we shall stand or fall. But, O men! ye should ask a question more profitable unto yourselves than this. Ye should say, "Did not such-and-such a speech strike me? Did not that exactly consort with my condition? Was that not a rebuke that I deserve, a word of reproof or of exhortation? Let me take unto myself that which I have heard, and let me not judge the preacher, for he is God's messenger to my soul: I came up here to be judged of God's Word, and not to judge God's Word myself." But since there is in all our hearts a great backwardness to

self-examination, I shall lay out myself for a few minutes this morning, earnestly to exhort myself, and all of you, to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.

First, I shall expound my text; secondly, I shall enforce it; and thirdly, I shall try and help you to carry it into practice here and on the spot.

I. First, I shall EXPOUND MY TEXT; though in truth it needs no exposition, for it is very simple, yet by studying it, and pondering it, our hearts may become more deeply affected with its touching appeal. "Examine yourselves." Who does not understand that word? And yet, by a few suggestions you may know its meaning more perfectly. "Examine:" that is a scholastic idea. A boy has been to school a certain time, and his master puts him through his paces--questions him, to see whether he has made any progress,--whether he knows anything. Christian, catechise your heart; question it, to see whether it has been growing in grace; question it, to see if it knows anything of vital godliness or not. Examine it: pass your heart through a stern examination as to what it does know and what it does not know, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Again: it is a military idea. "Examine yourselves," or renew yourselves. Go through the rank and file of your actions, and examine all your motives. Just as the captain on review-day is not content with merely surveying the men from a distance, but must look at all their accoutrements, so do you look well to yourselves; examine yourselves with the most scrupulous care.

And once again, this is a legal idea. "Examine yourselves." You have seen the witness in the box, when the lawyer has been examining him, or, as we have it, cross-examining him. Now, mark: never was there a rogue less trustworthy or more deceitful than your own heart, and as

when you are cross-examining a dishonest person--one that hath bye-ends to serve, you set traps for him to try and find him out in a lie, so do with your own heart. Question it backward and forward, this way and that way; for if there be a loophole for escape, if there he any pretence for self-deception, rest assured your treacherous heart will be ready enough to avail itself of it.

And yet once more: this is a traveller's idea. I find in the original, it has this meaning: "Go right through yourselves." As a traveller, if he has to write a book upon a country, is not content to go round its borders merely, but goes, as it were, from Dan to Beersheba, right through the country. He climbs the hill top, where he bathes his forehead in the sunshine: he goes down into the deep valleys, where he can only see the blue sky like a strip between the lofty summits of the mountains. He is not content to gaze upon the broad river unless he trace it to the spring whence it rises. He will not be satisfied with viewing the products of the surface of the earth, but he must discover the minerals that lie within its bowels. Now, do the same with your heart. "Examine yourselves." Go right through yourselves from the beginning to the end. Stand not only on the mountains of your public character, but go into the deep valleys of your private life. Be not content to sail on the broad river of your outward actions, but go follow back the narrow nil till you discover your secret motive. Look not only at your performance, which is but the product of the soil, but dig into your heart and examine the vital principle. "Examine yourselves." This is a very big word--a word that needs thinking over; and I am afraid there be very few, if any of us, who ever come up to the full weight of this solemn exhortation--"Examine yourselves."

There is another word you will see a little further on, if you will kindly look at the text. "Prove your own selves." That means more than

self-examination: let me try to show the difference between the two. A man is about to buy a horse; he examines it; he looks at it; he thinks that possibly he may find out some flaw, and therefore he carefully examines it; but after he has examined it, if he be a prudent man, he says to the person of whom he is about to buy--"I must prove this horse: will you let me have it for a week, for a month, or for some given time, that I may prove the animal before I actually invest in him? You see, there is more in proof than in examination; it is a deeper word, and goes to the very root and quick of the matter. I saw but yesterday an illustration of this. A ship, before she is launched, is examined; when launched she is carefully looked at; and yet before she is allowed to go far out to sea, she takes a trial trip; she is proved and tried, and when she has roughed it a little, and it has been discovered that she will obey the helm, that the engines will work correctly, and that all is in right order, she goes out on her long voyages. Now, "prove yourselves." Do not merely sit in your closet and look at yourselves alone, but go out into this busy world and see what kind of piety you have. Remember, many a man's religion will stand examination that will not stand proof. We may sit at home and look at our religion, and say, "Well, I think this will do!" It is like cotton prints that you can buy in sundry shops; they are warranted fast colours, and so they seem when you look at them, but they are not washable when you get them home. There is many a man's religion like that. It is good enough to look at, and it has got the "warranted" stamped upon it; but when it comes out into actual daily life, the colours soon begin to run, and the man discovers that the thing was not what he took it to be. You know, in Scripture we have an account of certain very foolish men that would not go to a great supper; but, foolish as they were, there was one of them who said, "I have bought a

yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Thus he had at least worldly wisdom, enough to prove his oxen. So do you prove yourselves. Try to plough in the furrows of duty: see whether you can be accustomed to the yoke of gospel servitude; be not ashamed to put yourselves through your paces; try yourself in the furnace of daily life, est haply the mere examination of the chamber should detect you to be a cheat, and you should after all prove to be a castaway. "Examine yourselves; prove your own selves."

There is a sentence which I omitted, namely, this one: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Oh! says one, "You may examine me whether I am in the faith; I am an orthodox Christian, fully up to the standard, good genuine weight; there is no fear whatever of my coming up to the mark, and going a little beyond it too." Ah! but, my friend, that is not the question; I would have you orthodox, for a man who is heterodox in his opinions, will most likely be heterodox in his actions; but the question now is not whether you believe the truth--but whether you are in the truth? Just to give you an illustration of what I mean. There is the ark; and a number of men around it. "Ah!" says one, I believe that ark will swim." "Oh!" says another, "I believe that ark is made of gopher-wood, and is strong from stem to stern; I am quite sure that ark will float, come what may; I am a firm believer in that ark." Ay, but when the rain descended, and the flood came, it was not believing the ark as a matter of fact--it was being in the ark that saved men, and only those that were in it escaped in that dread day of deluge. So there may be some of you that say of the gospel of Christ, "I believe it to be of a particular character," and you may be quite correct in your judgment; you may say, "I think it to be that which honours God, and casts down the pride of man;" herein too you may think quite right; but mark, it is not having an orthodox faith, but it is

being in the faith, being in Christ, taking refuge in Him as in the ark; for he that only has the faith as a thing ab extra, and without being in the faith, shall perish in the day of God's anger; but he that lives by faith, he who feels that faith operates upon him, and is to him a living principle; he who realises that faith is his dwelling place, that there he can abide, that it is the very atmosphere he breathes and the very girdle of his loins to strengthen him,--such a man is in the faith. But, we repeat again, all the orthodoxy in the world, apart from its effect upon the heart as a vital principle, will not save a man. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

"Know ye not your own selves?" If you do not, you have neglected your proper study. What avails all else that you do know, if you know not yourself? You have been roaming abroad, while the richest treasure was lying at home; you have been busying yourself with irrelevant affairs, while the main business has been neglected and ruined. "Know ye not your own selves?" And especially know ye not this fact, that Jesus Christ must be in your heart, formed and living there, or else ye are reprobates? That is, ye are worthless persons, vain pretenders, spurious professors; your religion is but a vanity and a show. "Reprobate silver shall men call you, because the Lord hath rejected you."

Now, what is it to have Jesus Christ in you? The Roman Catholic hangs the cross on his bosom; the true Christian carries the cross in his heart; and a cross inside the heart, my friends, is one of the sweetest cares for a cross on the back. If you have a cross in your heart--Christ crucified in you, the hope of glory--all the cross of this world's troubles will seem to you light enough, and you will easily he able to sustain it. Christ in the heart means Christ believed

in, Christ beloved, Christ trusted, Christ espoused, Christ communed with, Christ as our daily food, and ourselves as the temple and palace wherein Jesus Christ daily walks. Ah! there are many here that are total strangers to the meaning of this phrase. They do not know what it is to have Jesus Christ in them. Though ye know a little about Christ on Calvary, ye know nothing about Christ in the heart. Now, remember, that Christ on Calvary will save no man, unless Christ be in the heart. The Son of Mary, born in the manger, will not save a soul, unless he be also born in your hearts, and live there--your joy, your strength, and your consolation. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

II. The second point was to ENFORCE THE TEXT. I have proved it; now I am to enforce it; and here is the tug of war. May the Spirit of the living God drive the sword in up to its very hilt this morning, that now the power of God may be felt in every heart, searching and trying the reins. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."

"Examine yourselves," first, because it is a matter of the very highest importance. Small tradesmen may take coppers over the counter without much examination; but when it comes to gold, they will ring it well, for they could not afford to lose a sovereign out of their little gains; and if it comes to a five pound note, there is an anxious holding it up to the window to see if the water mark be there, and whether all be correct, for it might be ruin to the man if he lost a sum to him so large. Ah! but, merchants and tradesmen, if ye be deceived in the matter of your own souls, ye are deceived indeed. Look well to the title deeds of your estate; look well to your life policies, and to all the business that you do; but, remember, all the gold and silver you have, are but as the rack and scum of the furnace, compared with the matter now in hand. It is your soul, your own soul,

your never dying soul! Will you risk that? In times of panic, men will scarcely trust their fellows; I would to God there was a panic this day, so that no man would trust himself. Ye may trust your fellows far more safely than ye may trust yourselves. Will ye think, men and brethren, what your soul is? "The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment;" but the soul is as much more to be accounted of than the body, as the body is more important than the raiment. Here are my clothes: let me be robbed of my garments; if my body be secure, what signifies it? And as for my body, what is it, after all, but the rag that enshrines and covers my soul? Let that be sick, let that become like a worn-out vesture, I can afford to lose my body; but, O God, I cannot afford to have my soul cast into hell. What a frightful hazard is that which you and I are running, if we do not examine ourselves! It is an everlasting hazard; it is a hazard of heaven or of hell, of God's eternal favour, or of his everlasting curse. Well might the apostle say, "Examine yourselves."

Again: "Examine yourselves," because if ye make a mistake ye can never rectify it, except in this world. A bankrupt may have lost a fortune once, and yet may make another; but make bankruptcy--spiritual bankruptcy in this life, and you will never have an opportunity to trade again for heaven. A great general may lose one battle, but with skill and courage he may retrieve his honour by winning another; but get defeated in the battle of this life, and you can no more gird on your armour, you are defeated for ever; the day is lost, and there is no hope of your being able to gain it again, or so much as to make the attempt. Now, or never, man! remember that. Thy soul's eternal state hangs on the turn of to-day. Loiter thy time away, waste thine abilities, take thy religion at second hand, of thy priest, of thy minister, or of thy friend, and in the next world thou shalt

everlastingly rue the error, but thou shalt have no hope of amending it.

"Fix'd is their everlasting state,
Could man repent, tis then too late.
There are no acts of pardon pass'd
In the cold grave, to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there."

"Examine yourselves," again, because many have been mistaken. That is a matter which I will undertake to affirm upon my own authority, certain that each one of you can confirm it by your own observation. How many in this world think themselves to be godly when they are not? You have in the circle of your own friends, persons making a profession, of whom you often stand in astonishment, and wonder how they dare to do it. Friend, if others have been mistaken, may not you be? If some here and there fall into an error, may not you also do the same? Are you better than they? No, in nowise. You may be mistaken also. Methinks I see the rocks on which many souls have been lost--the rocks of presumption, and the syren song of self-confidence entices you on to those rocks this morning. Stay, mariner, stay, I beseech thee! Let you bleached bones keep thee back. Many have been lost, many are lost now, and are wailing at this present hour their everlasting ruin, and their loss is to be traced to nothing more than this, that they never examined themselves whether they were in the faith.

And here let me appeal to each person now present. Do not tell me that you are an old church member; I am glad to hear it; but still, I beseech you, examine yourself, for a man may be a professor of religion thirty or forty years, and yet there may come a trial-day, when his religion shall snap after all and prove to be a rotten bough of the

forest. Tell me not you are a deacon: that you may be, and yet you may be damnably deceived. Ay, and whisper not to me that you are a minister. My brethren in the ministry,--we may lay aside our cassocks to wear belts of flame in hell; we may go from our pulpit, having preached to others what we never knew ourselves, and have to join the everlasting wailings of souls we have helped to delude. May God save us from such a doom as that! But let no man fold his arms, and say, "I need not examine myself;" for there is not a man here, or anywhere, who has not good cause to test and try himself to-day.

Furthermore: examine yourselves, because God will examine you. In the hand of God there is the scale and the balance: you shall not be taken into heaven for what you profess to be; but you shall be weighed--every one of you put into the scale. What a moment will that be with me and with you, when we are in God's great scale; surely where it not for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and for a certainty that we shall be clothed in his righteousness at last, we might all tremble at the thought of ever being there, lest we should have to come out of the scale with this verdict, "Tekel,"--("Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin")--"thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." God will not take his gold and silver by appearance, but every vessel must be purified in the fire. We must each one of us pass through a most searching test and scrutiny. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us, how much more shall God condemn us? If we are afraid to examine ourselves, what cause have we to tremble at the thought of the dread searching of God? Some of you feel that you are condemned this very day by a poor creature like myself: how much more, then, shall you be condemned when God, in thunder robed, shall summon you and all your fellows to the last infallible judgment. Oh! may God help us now to examine ourselves!

And I have yet one more reason to give. Examine yourselves, my dear friends, because, if you are in doubt now, the speediest way to get rid of your doubts and fears is by self-examination I believe that many persons are always doubting their eternal condition, because they do not examine themselves. Self-examination is the safest cure for one half the doubts and fears that vex God's people. Look at the captain over yonder. He is in his ship, and he says to the sailors, "You must sail very warily and carefully, and be upon your watch, for to tell you the truth, I do not know where I am; I do not exactly know my latitude and longitude, and there may be rocks very close ahead, and we may soon have the ship broken up." He goes down into the cabin, he searches the chart, he takes an inspection of the heavens, he comes up again, and he says, "Hoist every sail, and go along as merrily as you please, I have discovered where we are; the water is deep, and there is a wide sea room; there is no need for you to be in any trouble, searching has satisfied me." And how happy will it be with you, if, after having searched yourself you can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Why, then you will go along merrily and joyfully, because the search has had a good result. And what if it should have a bad result? Better that you should find it out now than find it out too late. One of the prayers I often pray, and desire to pray as long as I live, is this,--"Lord, let me know the worst of my case. If I have been living in a false comfort, Lord, rend it away; let me know just what I am and where I am, and rather let me think too harshly of my condition before thee than think too securely, and so be ruined by presumption." May that be a prayer of each heart, and be heard in heaven!

III. And now HOW ARE YOU TO SEARCH YOURSELVES? I am to try and help you, though it must be very briefly.

First, if you would examine yourselves, begin with your public life. Are you dishonest? Can you thieve? Can you swear? Are you given to drunkenness, uncleanness, blasphemy, taking God's name in vain, and violation of his holy day? Make short work with yourself; there will be no need to go into any further tests. "He that doeth these things, hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God." You are reprobate; the wrath of God abideth on you. Your state is fearful; you are accursed now, and except you repent you must be accursed for ever.

And yet, Christian, despite thy many sins, canst thou say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; but I seek to live a righteous, godly, and sober life, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Remember, professor, by thy works thou shalt be judged at last. Thy works cannot save thee, but they can prove that thou art saved; or if they be evil works, they can prove that thou art not saved at all. And here I must say, every one of us has good cause to tremble, for our outward acts are not what we would have them to be. Let us go to our houses, and fall upon our face, and cry again, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and let us seek for more grace, that henceforth our lives may be more consistent, and more in accordance with the spirit of Christ.

Again: another set of tests--private tests. How about your private life? Do you live without prayer, without searching the Scriptures? Do you live without thoughts of God? Can you live as an habitual stranger to the Most High, having no love to him, and no fear of him? If so, I make short work of the matter: you are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." But if thou art right at heart, thou wilt be able to say, "I could not live without prayer; I have to weep over my prayers, but still I should weep ten times more if I did not pray; I do love God's word, it is my meditation all the day; I love his people; I love his house; and I can say that my hands are often lifted upward

towards him; and when my heart is busy with this world's affairs, it is often going up to his throne." A good sign, Christian, a good sign for thee; if thou canst go through this test, thou mayest hope that all is well.

But go a little deeper. Hast thou ever wept over thy lost condition? Hast thou ever bemoaned thy lost estate before God? Say, hast thou ever tried to save thyself, and found it a failure? and hast thou been driven to rely simply, wholly, and entirely on Christ? If so, then thou hast passed the test well enough. And hast thou now faith in Christ--a faith that makes thee love him; a faith that enables thee to trust him in the darkest hour? Canst thou say of a truth that thou hast a secret affection towards the Most High--that thou lovest his Son, that thy desire is after his ways, that thou feelest the influence of the Divine Spirit, and seekest every day to experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit more and more?

And lastly, canst thou say that Jesus Christ is in thee? If not, thou art reprobate. Sharp though that word be, thou art a reprobate. But if Jesus Christ be in thy heart, though thy heart sometimes be so dark that thou canst scarcely tell he is there, yet thou art accepted in the beloved, and thou mayest "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I intended to have enlarged; but it is impossible for me to go further; I must therefore dismiss you with a sacred blessing.

Chapter 54

An Appeal To Sinners

A Sermon

(No. 219)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, September 14th, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at Exeter Hall, Strand.

DEARLY BELOVED,

It hath pleased the Lord by a painful illness to interrupt for a little while my usual labors. As I was unable to preach last Lord's day, accept this week the issue of an old sermon. Though it has been buried in my publisher's warehouse for two years, I pray God it may bud afresh and bring forth fruit, even as old corn after having been entombed in Egyptian sepulchres for centuries will often germinate again and yield an abundant crop. Ye have prayed for me. The Lord hath visited me in the chamber of affliction. I am recovering; and God knoweth "I long to see you, and impart unto you some spiritual gift;" and I trust that ere long "through your prayers I shall be given unto you."

Yours in much affection,

C. H. S.

"This man receiveth sinners."--Luke 15:2.

IT WAS A SINGULAR GROUP which had gathered round our Saviour, when these words were uttered; for we are told by the evangelist--"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." The publicans--the very lowest grade, the public oppressors, scorned and hated by the meanest Jew--these, together with the worst of characters, the scum of the streets and the very riff-raff of the society of Jerusalem, came around this mighty preacher, Jesus Christ, in order to

listen to his words. On the outside of the throng there stood a few respectable people, who in those days were called Pharisees and Scribes--men who were highly esteemed in the synagogues as rulers, and governors, and teachers. These looked with scorn upon the Preacher; and watched him with invidious eyes, to find some fault. If they could find none in him personally, yet they could easily find it in his congregation; his deportment towards them shocked their false notion of propriety, and when they observed that he was affable with the very worst of characters, that he spoke loving words to the most fallen of mankind, they said of him what they intended for a disgrace, albeit it was highly to his honour: "This man receiveth sinners." I believe that our Saviour could not have wished to have had a sentence uttered concerning him, more evidently true or more thoroughly consistent with his sacred commission. It is the exact portrait of his character; the hand of a master seems to have limned him to the very life. He is the man who "receiveth sinners." Many a true word has been spoken in jest, and many a true word has been spoken in slander. Men have said sometimes in jest, "There goes a saint;" but it has been true. They have said, "There goes one of your chosen ones, one of your elect," they meant it as a slander, but the doctrine they scandalized was to the person who received it a comfort; it was his glory and his honour. Now the Scribes and Pharisees wished to slander Christ; but in so doing they outstripped their intentions, and bestowed upon him a title of renown. "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

This evening I shall divide my observations to you into three parts. First, the doctrine, that Christ receiveth sinners, which is a doctrine of holy writ. Secondly, the encouragement it affords the sinner; and thirdly, the exhortation naturally springing from it, to the same character.

I. First, then, THE DOCTRINE. The doctrine is, not that Christ receiveth everybody, but that he "receiveth sinners." By that term we, in common parlance, understand everybody. It is in the present day quite fashionable for everybody to lie against what he believes, and to say he is a sinner, even when he believes himself to be a very respectable, well-to-do man, and does not conceive that he ever did anything very amiss in his life. It is a sort of orthodox confession for men to make, when they say that they are sinners; though they might just as well use one formula as another, or repeat words in a foreign tongue; for they mean no deep and heartfelt contrition. They have no true apprehension that they are sinners at all. These Scribes and Pharisees did virtually assert, that they were not sinners; they marked out the Publicans and the harlots, and the worthless, and they said, "These are sinners, we are not." "Very well," said Christ, "I endorse the distinction you have made. In your own opinion, you are not sinners; well, you shall stand exempt for the time from being called sinners--I endorse your distinction. But I beg to inform you, that I came to save those very persons who, in their own estimation and in yours, are reckoned to be sinners." It is my belief that the doctrine of the text is this--that Christ receives not the self-righteous, not the good, not the whole-hearted, not those who dream that they do not need a Saviour; but the broken in spirit, the contrite in heart--those who are ready to confess that they have broken God's laws, and have merited his displeasure. These and these alone, Christ came to save; and I reassert the subject of last Sabbath evening--that Jesus has died for such, and for none other; that he has shed his blood for those who are ready to confess their sins, and who do seek mercy through the open veins of his wounded body, but for none other did he designedly offer up himself upon the cross.

Now, let us remark, beloved, that there is a very wise distinction on the part of God, that he hath been pleased thus to choose and call sinners to repentance, and not others. For this reason, none but these ever do come to him. There has never been such a miracle as a self-righteous man coming to Christ for mercy; none but those who want a Saviour ever did come. It stands to reason, that when men do not consider themselves in need of a Saviour, they never will approach his throne; and surely it is satisfactory enough for all purposes, that Christ should say he receiveth sinners, seeing that sinners are the only persons who will ever come to him for mercy, and therefore it would be useless for him to say that he would receive any but those who most assuredly will come.

And mark, again, none but those can come; no man can come to Christ until he truly knows himself to be a sinner. The self-righteous man cannot come to Christ; for what is implied in coming to Christ? Repentance, trust in his mercy, and the denial of all confidence in one's self. Now, a self-righteous man cannot repent, and yet be self-righteous. He conceives that he has no sin; why, then, should he repent? Tell him to come to Christ with humble penitence, and he exclaims--"Ay! you insult my dignity. Why should I approach to God? Wherein have I sinned? My knee shall not bend to seek for pardon, wherein I have not offended; this lip shall not seek forgiveness when I do not believe myself to have transgressed against God; I shall not ask for mercy." The self-righteous man cannot come to God; for his coming to God implies that he ceases to be self-righteous. Nor can a self-righteous man put his trust in Christ; why should he? Shall I trust in a Christ whom I do not require? It I be self-righteous, I need no Christ to save me in my own opinion. How, then, can I come with such a confession as this,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,"

when I have got my hands full. How can I say, "Wash me," when I believe myself white? How can I say "Heal me," when I think that I never was sick? How can I cry, "Give me freedom, give me liberty," when I believe I never was a slave, and "never in bondage to any man?" It is only the man who knows his slavery by reason of the bondage of sin, and the man who knows himself to be sick even unto death by reason of the sense of guilt: it is only the man who feels he cannot save himself, who can with faith rely upon the Saviour. Nor can the self-righteous man renounce himself, and lay hold of Christ; because in the renunciation of himself he would at once become the very character whom Christ says he will receive. He would then put himself in the place of the sinner, when he cast away his own righteousness. Why, sirs, coming to Christ implies the taking off the polluted robe of our own righteousness, and putting on Christ's. How can I do that, if I wittingly wrap my own garment about me? and if in order to come to Christ I must forsake my own refuge and all my own hope, how can I do it, if I believe my hope to be good, and my refuge to be secure; and if I suppose that already I am clothed sufficiently to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb? Nay, beloved, it is the sinner, and the sinner only, who can come to Christ; the self-righteous man cannot do it; it is quite out of his way--he would not do it if he could. His very self-righteousness fetters his foot, so that he cannot come; palsies his arm, so that he cannot take hold of Christ; and blinds his eye, so that be cannot see the Saviour.

Yet another reason: if these people, who are not sinners, would come to Christ, Christ would get no glory from them. When the physician openeth his door for those who are sick, let me go there full of health; he can win no honour from me, because he cannot exert his skill upon me. The

benevolent man may distribute all his wealth to the poor; but let some one go to him who has abundance, and he shall win no esteem from him for feeding the hungry, or for clothing the naked; since the applicant is neither hungry nor naked. If Jesus Christ proclaims that he giveth his grace unto all who come for it, surely it is sufficient, seeing that none will or can come for it, but those whose pressing necessities prompt them. Ay! sufficient; it is quite sufficient for his honour. A great sinner brings great glory to Christ when he is saved. A man who is no sinner, if he could attain to heaven would glorify himself, but he would not glorify Christ. The man who has no stains may plunge into the fountain; but he cannot magnify its cleansing power for he hath no stains to wash away. He that hath no guilt can never magnify the word "forgiveness." It is the sinner then, and the sinner only, who can glorify Christ; and hence "this man receiveth sinners," but it is not said that he receiveth any else. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." This is the doctrine of the text.

But allow us just to amplify that word: "this man receiveth sinners." Now, by that we understand that he receives sinners to all the benefits which he has purchased for them. If there be a fountain, he receives sinners to wash them in it; if there be medicine for the soul, he receives sinners to heal their diseases; if there be a house for the sick, an hospital, a lazar-house for the dying, he receives such into that retreat of mercy. All that he hath of love, all that he hath of mercy, all that he hath of atonement, all that he hath of sanctification, all that he bath of righteousness--to all these he receives the sinner. Yea, more; not content with taking him to his house, he receives him to his heart. He takes the black and filthy sinner, and having washed him--"There," he says, "thou art my beloved; my desire is towards thee." And to consummate the whole, at last he

receives the saints to heaven. Saints, I said, but I meant those who were sinners, for none can be saints truly, but those who once were sinners, and have been washed in the blood of Christ, and made white through the sacrifice of the lamb.

Observe it then, beloved, that in receiving sinners we mean the whole of salvation; and this word in my text, "Christ receiveth sinners," graspeth in the whole of the covenant. He receives them to the joys of paradise, to the bliss of the beatified, to the songs of the glorified, to an eternity of happiness for ever. "This man receiveth sinners;" and I dwell with special emphasis on this point,--he receives none else. He will have none else to be saved but those who know themselves to be sinners. Full, free salvation is preached to every sinner in the universe; but I have no salvation to preach to those who will not acknowledge themselves to be sinners. To them I must preach the law, telling them that their righteousness is but as filthy rags, that their goodness shall pass away as the spider's web, and shall be broken in pieces, even as the egg of the ostrich is broken by the foot of the horse. "This man receiveth sinners," and receiveth none else.

II. Now, then, THE ENCOURAGEMENT. If this man receiveth sinners, poor sin-sick sinner, what a sweet word this is for thee! Sure, then, he will not reject thee. Come, let me encourage thee this night to come to my Master, to receive his great atonement, and to be clothed with all his righteousness. Mark: those whom I address, are the bona fide, real, actual sinners; not the complimentary sinners; not those who say they are sinners by way of pacifying, as they suppose, the religionists of the day; but I speak to those who feel their lost, ruined, hopeless condition. All these are now frankly and freely invited to come to Jesus Christ, and to be saved by him. Come, poor sinner, come. Come, because he has said he will receive you; I know your fears; we

all felt them once, when we were coming to Christ. I know thou sayest in thy heart, "He will reject me. If I present my prayer, he will not hear me; if I cry unto him, yet peradventure the heavens will he as brass; I have been so great a sinner, that he will never take me into his house to dwell with him." Poor sinner! say not so; he hath published the decree. It is enough between man and man usually, if we count our fellow creatures honest, to obtain a promise. Sinner! is this not enough between thyself and the Son of God? He has said, "Him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." Durst thou not venture on that promise? Wilt thou not go to sea in a ship as staunch as this; he hath said it? It has been often and again the only comfort of the saints; on this they have lived, on this they have died: he hath said it. What! dost thou think Christ will lie unto thee? Would he tell thee he will receive thee, and yet not do so? Would he say, "My fatlings are killed, come ye to the supper," and yet shut the door in your face? No, if be has said he will cast out none that come to him; rest assured he cannot, he will not cast you out. Come, then, try his love on this ground, that he has said it.

Come, and fear not, because remember, if thou feelest thyself to be a sinner, that feeling is God's gift; and therefore thou mayest very safely come to one who has already done so much to draw thee. A stranger calls at my house, he asks for alms, and he tells me at first very plainly, that he never saw me before, that he has no claim upon my generosity, but he throws himself entirely upon any benevolent feeling that I may chance to have in my breast. But if I had done anything for him before, he might say, supposing I were a rich man, "Sir, you have done so much for me, I think you will not give me up at last; I believe you will not let me starve, after so much love." Poor sinner! if thou feelest thy need of a Saviour, Christ made thee feel it; if thou hast a

wish to come after Christ, Christ gave thee that wish; if thou hast any desire after God, God gave thee that desire; if thou canst sigh after Christ, Christ made thee sigh; if thou canst weep after Christ, Christ made thee weep. Ay, if thou canst only wish for him with the strong wish of one that fears he never can find, yet hopes he may--if thou canst but hope for him, he has given thee that hope. And oh! wilt not thou come to him? Thou hast some of the king's bounties about thee now; come and plead what he hath done, there is no suit that can ever fail with God, when ye plead this. Tell him his past mercies urge you to try him in the future. Down on your knees, sinner, down on your knees; tell him this--"Lord, I thank thee that I know myself to be a sinner; thou hast taught me that; I bless thee that I do not wrap up my sin, that I know it, that I feel it; that it is ever before me. Lord, wouldst thou make me see my sin, and not let me see my Saviour? What! wilt thou open the wound, and put in the lancet, and yet not heal me? What, Lord! hast thou said, I kill?' And hast thou not said in the same breath, I make alive.' Hast thou killed me, and wilt thou not make me alive?" Plead that, poor sinner, and thou wilt find it true, that "this man receiveth sinners."

Doth not this suffice thee? Then here is another reason. I am sure "this man receiveth sinners," because he has received many, many, before you. See, there is Mercy's door; mark how many have been to it; you can almost hear the knocks upon the door now, like echoes of the past. You may remember how many way-worn travellers have called there for rest, how many famished souls have applied there for bread. Go, knock at Mercy's door, and ask the porter this question, "Was there ever one applied to the door that was refused?" I can assure you of the answer: "No, not one."

"No sinner was ever empty sent back,

Who came seeking mercy for Jesus's sake."

And shalt thou be the first? Dost thou think God will forfeit his good name, by turning thee away? Mercy's gate has been open night and day, ever since man sinned; dost thou think it will be shut in thy face for the first time? Nay, man, go and try it; and if thou findest it is, come back and say, "Thou hast not read the Bible as thou oughtest to have done;" or else say thou hast found one promise there which has not been fulfilled--for he said, "Him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." I do not believe there ever was in this world one who was suffered by God to say that he sought mercy of him sincerely, and did not find it. Nay more, I believe that such a being never shall exist, but whosoever cometh unto Christ shall most assuredly find mercy. What greater encouragement do you want? Do you want a salvation for those that will not come to be saved? Do you want blood sprinkled on those that will not come to Christ? You must want it, then; I will not preach it to you. I find it not in God's Word, and therefore I dare not.

And now, sinner, I have yet another plea to urge with thee why thou shouldst believe that Christ will receive all sinners who come to him. It is this, that he calls all such. Now if Christ calls us and bids us come, we may be sure he will not turn us away when we do come. Once on a time a blind man sat by the wayside begging. He heard--for he could not see--he heard the trampling of the many feet that were passing by him. He asked what all this meant: they said that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. Loudly did he cry, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!" The ear of mercy was apparently deaf, and the Saviour walked on and heeded not the prayer. The poor man sat still then, but cried aloud, though he did not move. Yet when the Saviour said, "Come hither," ah! then he did not delay an instant. They said, "Arise, he calleth thee;" and, pushing them all aside, he made his way through the

crowd, and offered the prayer, "Lord, let me receive my sight." Well, then, thou who feelest thyself to be lost and ruined, arise and speak; he calleth for thee. Convinced sinner, Christ says, "Come;" and that thou mayest be sure he says it, let us quote that Scripture again, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Thou art called, man; then come. If Her Majesty were riding by, thou mightest scarcely presume to speak to her; but if thy name were called, and by her own lips, wouldst thou not go to her carriage, and what she had to say to thee wouldst not thou listen to? Now, the King of heaven says, "Come." Yes, the same lips that will one day say, "Come, ye blessed," say this night, "Come, ye poor distressed sinners, come to me, and I will save you." There is not a distressed soul in this hall, if his distress be the work of God's Holy Spirit, that shall not find salvation in the wounds of Christ. Believe then, sinner, believe in Jesus, that he is able to save even thee unto the very uttermost.

And now just one point more, to commend this encouragement to you. Indeed, poor souls, I know when ye are under a sense of sin it is very hard to believe. We sometimes say, "Only believe;" but believing is just the hardest thing in the world when sin lies heavy on your shoulders. We say, "Sinner, only trust in Christ." Ah, ye do not know what a great "only" that is. It is a work so great, that no man can do it unaided by God; for faith is the gift of God, and he gives it only to his children. But if anything can call faith into exercise, it is this last thing I shall mention. Sinner, remember that Christ is willing to receive thee, for he came all the way from heaven to seek thee and find thee out in thy wanderings, and to save thee and rescue thee from thy miseries; he hath given proof of his hearty interest in thy welfare, in that he hath shed his very heart's blood to redeem thy soul from death and hell. If he had wanted the companionship of saints,

he might have stopped in heaven, for there were many there. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were with him there in glory; but he wanted sinners. He had a thirst after perishing sinners. He wanted to make them trophies of his grace. He wanted black souls, to wash them white. He wanted dead souls, to make them alive. His benevolence wanted objects on which to exert itself; and therefore

"Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste he fled,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead."

Oh, sinner, look there, and see that cross. Mark yonder man upon it!

"See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

Dost thou note that eye? Canst thou see languid pity for thy soul floating in it? Dost thou mark that side? It is opened that thou mayest hide thy sins therein. See those drops of crimson blood; every drop is trickling down for thee. Hearest thou that death-shriek, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" That shriek in all its deep-toned solemnity is for thee. Yes, for thee, if thou art a sinner; if thou dost this night say unto God, "Lord, I know I have offended thee; have mercy upon me for Jesus' sake." If now, taught by the Spirit, thou art led to abhor thyself in dust and ashes, because thou hast sinned, verily, before God--I tell thee in his sight, as his servant, thou shalt be saved; for Jesus would not die for thee and yet let thee perish.

III. Now the last point is AN EXHORTATION. If it be true that Christ came only to save sinners, my beloved hearers, labour, strive, agonize, to get a sense in your souls of your own sinnership. One of the most

distressing things in the world is to feel yourself a sinner; but that is no reason why I should not exhort you to seek it, for while distressing, it is only the distress of the bitter medicine which will effectually work the cure. Do not seek to get high ideas of yourself. Seek to get a low opinion of yourself; do not try to deck yourself with ornaments; let it not be your endeavour to array yourself in gold and silver; do not seek to be made good in yourself, but seek to strip yourself; seek to humble yourself. Do not soar high, but sink low. Do not go up, but go down. Ask God to let thee see that thou art nothing at all. Ask him to bring thee to this, that thou mayest have nothing to say but

"I the chief of sinners am;"

and if God hear your prayer, very likely Satan will tell you that you cannot be saved because you are a sinner. But as Martin Luther said, "Once, when I was racked with pain and sin, Satan said, Luther, thou canst not be saved, for thou art a sinner. Nay,' said Martin Luther, I will cut thine head off with thine own sword. Thou sayest I am a sinner; I thank thee for it. Thou art a holy Satan,' (he says it in mockery no doubt,) when thou sayest I am a sinner. Well, then, Satan, Christ died for sinners, therefore he died for me. Ah,' said he, if thou canst but prove that to me, Satan, I will thank thee for it; and so far from groaning, I will begin to sing, for all we want is to know and feel that we are sinners." Let us feel that; let us know that, and we may receive this as an undoubted fact of revelation, that we have a right to come unto Christ, and to believe on him, and receive him as all our salvation, and all our desire. No doubt Conscience will come and stop you; but do not try to stop the mouth of Conscience, but tell Conscience you are much obliged to him for all that he says Oh, you have been a desperate fellow; you sinned when you were young; you have

sinned even until now. How many sermons have been wasted on you! How many Sabbaths you have broken! How many warnings you have despised! Oh, you are a desperate sinner.' Tell Conscience that you thank him, for the more you can prove yourself to be a sinner, not by outward acts, but in your inmost heart, the more you know yourself to be really guilty, the more reason have you to come to Christ and say, "Lord, I believe thou hast died for the guilty; I believe thou intendest to save the worthless. I Cast myself on thee; Lord, save me!" That does not suit some of you, does it? It is not the kind of doctrine that flatters man much. No; ye would like to be good people, and help Christ a little, ye like that theory which some ministers are always proclaiming. "God has done a great deal for you; you do the rest, and then you will be saved." That is a very popular kind of doctrine; you do one part, and God will do the other part; but that is not God's truth, it is only a delirious dream; God says, "I will do the whole; come and prostrate thyself at my feet; give up thy doings; let me undertake for thee; afterwards, I will make thee live to my glory. Only in order that thou mayest be holy, I desire thee to confess that thou art unholy; in order that thou mayest be sanctified, thou must confess that thou art as yet unsanctified. Oh, do that my hearers. Fall down before the Lord; cast yourselves down. Do not stand up with pride; but fall down before God in humility; tell him you are undone without his sovereign grace; tell him you have nothing, you are nothing, you never will be anything more than nothing, but that you know Christ does not want anything of you, for he will take you just as you are. Do not seek to come to Christ with anything, besides your sin; do not seek to come to Christ with your prayers for a recommendation; do not come to him even with professions of your faith; come to him with your sin, he will give you faith. If you stop away from Christ, and think that you will

have faith apart from him, you have made an error. It is Christ that saves us; we must come to Christ for all we want.

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
All in All in thee I find:
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind."

Jesus will do so and more also; but you must come as blind, you most come as sick, you must come as lost, or else you cannot and must not come at all.

Come then, to Jesus, I beseech you, whatever may up to this time have kept you away. Your doubts would keep you away, but say, "Stand back, Unbelief; Christ says he died for sinners: and I know I am a sinner."

"My faith will on that promise live,
Will on that promise die."

And there is one thing I want to say, before I have done. Do not stop away from Christ, when you know yourself to be a sinner, because you think you do not understand every point of theology. Very often I get young converts with me, and they say, "I do not understand this or that doctrine." Well, I am very glad, so far as I am able, to explain it to them. But sometimes I get, not young converts, but young convicts, those who are under Conviction of sin; and when I am trying to bring them to this, that if they are but sinners they may believe in Christ, they begin with this knotty point, and that knotty point--and they seem to imagine that they cannot be saved till they are thorough theologians. Now, if you expect to understand all theology before you put your faith in Christ, I can only tell you you never will; for live as long as ever you may, there will be some depths you cannot explore. There are certain unquestionable facts which you must hold; but there will always be some difficulties through which you will not be able to

see. The most favoured saint on earth does not understand everything; but you want to understand all things before you come to Christ. One man asks me how sin came into the world, and he will not come unto Christ till he knows that. Why, he will be lost beyond hope of recovery, if he waits till he knows it; for nobody will ever know it. I have no reason to believe that it is even revealed to those who are in heaven. Another wants to know how it is that men are bidden to come,--and yet we are taught in Scripture that no man can come,--and he must have that cleared up; just as if the poor man who had a withered arm, when Christ said, "Stretch out thine arm," had replied, "Lord, I have got a difficulty in my mind; I want to know how you can tell me to stretch out my arm when it is withered." Suppose when Christ had said to Lazarus, "Come forth," Lazarus could have said, "I have a difficulty in my mind; how can a dead man come forth?" Why, know this, vain man! when Christ says "Stretch out thine arm," he gives you power to stretch out your arm with the command, and the difficulty is solved in practice; though I believe it never will be solved in theory. If men want to have theology mapped out to them, as they would have a map of England; if they want to have every little village and every hedgerow in the gospel kingdom mapped out to them, they will not find it anywhere but in the Bible; and they will find it so mapped out there that the years of a Methuselah would not suffice to find out every little thing in it. We must come to Christ and learn, not learn and then come to Christ. "Ah! but," saith another, "that is not the ground of my misgivings; I do not perplex myself much about theological points; I have got a worse anxiety than that: I feel I am too bad to be saved." Well, I believe you are wrong then; that is all I can say in reply to you; for I will believe Christ before I will believe you. You say you are too bad to be saved; Christ says, "Him that cometh he will

in no wise cast out." Now, which shall be right? Christ saith he will receive the very worst; you say he will not. What then? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." But there is one matter of counsel I wish you would accept; I desire of God that he may bring you to come and try the Lord Jesus Christ, and see whether he will turn you away. What concern is it to me, that I am so often reproached for making my appeals to the worst of Sinners? It is said that I direct my ministry to drunkards, harlots, blasphemers, and sinners of the grosser sort. And what if the finger of scorn he pointed at me, or if I shall be accounted as a fool before the public; do you think I shall be deterred by their irony? Do you think I shall stand abashed at their ungenerous ridicule? Oh, no: like David, when he danced before the ark of the Lord, and Michal, Saul's daughter, jeered at him and taunted him as a shameless fellow, I shall only reply, if this be vile, I purpose to be more vile yet. While I see the foot-tracks of my Master before me, and while I see still more his gracious sanctions following my labours; while I behold his name magnified, his glory increased, and perishing souls saved, (as thanks be to God we have witness everyday;) while this gospel warrants me, while the Spirit of God moves me, and while signs following do multiply the seals of my commission,--who am I that I should stay myself for man, or resist the Holy Ghost for any flesh that breatheth? Oh, then, ye chief of sinners, ye vilest of the vile, ye who are the scum of the city, the refuse of the earth, the dregs of creation, whom no man seeketh after, ye whose characters are destroyed, and whose inmost souls are polluted, so black that no fuller on earth can whiten you, so debased that ye have sunk beyond the hope of any moralist to reclaim you! come ye--come ye to Christ. Come ye at his own invitation. Come, and you shall be surely received with a hearty welcome. My Master said that he received sinners. His enemies said it

of him, "This man receiveth sinners." In deed and in truth we know of a surety that he does receive sinners, the enemies themselves being witnesses. Come now, and yield the fullest credit to his word, his invitation, his promise. Do you object that it was only during a few days' grace in the time of his sojourn on earth that he received sinners? No, not so; it is confirmed by all subsequent experience. The apostles of Jesus echoed it after he had ascended into heaven, in terms as unqualified as he himself expressed it when on earth. Will ye not believe this: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief?" Ye despisers, go away and laugh at this; go away, and scorn the preached gospel if you will, but one day we shall meet each other, face to face, before our Maker, and it may, perhaps, go hard then with all those who have despised Christ, and laughed at his gracious words. Is there an infidel here who says he shall be well enough off if he shall die the death of annihilation, and shall not live in a future world? Well, my friend, suppose all men die like dogs, I shall be as well off as you are, and I think a little better off, even as to happiness and peace in this world. But if; (and mark you I do not put it so, because I doubt it)--if it be true that there is a world to come. I would not like to stand in your place in the next world. Be it so that there is a judgment-seat; let there be a hell--(I put it hypothetically, not because I have a doubt about it, but because you tell me you doubt it; though I do not think you really do)--if there be such a place, what will ye do then? Why, even now ye shake if a leaf falls in the night; ye are terrified if the cholera is in the street; ye are alarmed if ye are a little sick, and ye rush to the physician, and anyone can impose upon you with his physic, because you are afraid of death. What will you do in the swellings of Jordan, when

death gets hold on you? If a little pain affrights you now, what will you do when your body shall shake, and your knees shall knock together before your Maker? What wilt thou do, my hearer, when his burning eyes shall eat into thy very soul? What wilt thou do, when, amid ten thousand thunders, he shall say, "Depart, depart?" I cannot tell thee what thou wilt do; but I will tell thee one thing that thou durst not do; that is, thou durst not say, that I have not as simply as ever I could tried to preach the gospel to the very chief of sinners. Hear it again--"He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." To believe is to trust in Christ; to drop into those blessed arms that can catch the heaviest laden sinner that ever breathed; to fall flat on the promise; to let him do all for you, until he has quickened you, and enabled you to work out what he has before worked in you, "your own salvation;" and even this must be "with fear and trembling." God almighty grant, that some poor soul may he blessed to-night! You that are on shore, I do not expect to do you any good. If I have a rocket to send abroad into the sea, it is only the stranded vessel, the shipwrecked mariner that will rejoice at the rope. You that think yourselves safe, I have no necessity to preach to you; you are all so perilously good in your own sight, it is no use trying to make you better; you are all so awfully righteous, you can go on your way well enough, without warning from me. You must excuse me, therefore, if I have nothing to say to you except this, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" and allow me to turn myself to another class of people, the vilest of the vile. I should not care if I gained the cognomen of the preacher to the basest and the vilest; I should not blush to be reviled like Rowland Hill, as the preacher to the lowest orders; for they want the gospel as much as any creatures under heaven; and if nobody will preach it to them, God helping me, I will endeavour

to preach it to them in words that they can understand. And if genteel people do not like preaching in that style, they have the option of leaving it. If they want to hear men preach in intellectual strains, above the capacity of common sinners, let them go and hear them; I must content myself with following my Lord, who "made himself of no reputation,"--to go after out-of-the-way sinners, in an out-of-the-way fashion. I would sooner do violence to pulpit decorum, and break through pulpit decency, than not break through hard hearts. I count that sort of preaching to be the right sort, that does reach the heart somehow or other, and I am not particular how I do it. I confess, if I could not preach in one way, I would in another; if nobody would come to hear me in a black coat, they should be attracted by my wearing a red one. Somehow or other, I would make them hear the gospel if I could; and I would labour so to preach, that the meanest understanding should be able to get hold of this one fact: "This man receiveth sinners," God bless you all, for Christ's sake!

Chapter 55

God's Barriers Against Man's Sin

A Sermon

(No. 220)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 16th, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

BELOVED FRIENDS AND KINDRED IN CHRIST,

The days seem like weeks and the weeks seem like months since I went up to the house of the Lord. My heart and my flesh are crying out for the assembly of the saints. Oh how I long to hear once more the solemn shout of the festal throng who with the voice of joy and praise keep holy day!

I am slowly rallying. My great struggle now is with weakness. I feel as if my frail bark had weathered a heavy storm which has made every timber creak. Do not attribute this illness to my having laboured too hard for my Master. For his dear sake, I would that I may yet be able to labour more. Such toils as might be hardly noticed in the ramp for the service of one's country, would excite astonishment in the church for the service of our God.

And now, I entreat you for love's sake to continue in prayer for me. When ye find access to God, remember me. Mind it is not by the words of your mouth, nor yet by the cravings of your heart, but it is by the precious blood of Christ ye must draw nigh to God. And when ye find his sweet presence and are bedewed with his holy anointing, then pour out your souls before him, and make mention of me in your supplications.

Yours to love and serve in the Gospel,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Clapham, Tuesday Evening, 26th October, 1858.

"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone."--Jeremiah 5:22-23.

THE MAJESTY OF God, as displayed in creation and providence, ought to stir up our hearts in adoring wonder and melt them down in willing obedience to his commands. The Almighty power of Jehovah, so clearly manifest in the works if his hands, should constrain us, his creatures, to fear his name and prostrate ourselves in humble reverence before his throne. When we know that the sea, however tempestuous, is entirely submissive to the behests of God; that when he saith, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further," it dares not encroach--"the pride of its waves is stayed." When we know that God bridles the tempest, though "nature rocks beneath his tread," and curbs the boisterous storm--he ought to be feared--verily, he is a God before whom it is no dishonour for us to bow ourselves in the very dust. The contemplation of the marvellous works which he doth upon "the great and wide sea," where he tosseth the waves to and fro, and yet keepeth them in their ordained courses, should draw forth our devoutest emotions, and I could almost say, inspire us with homage. Great art thou, O Lord God; greatly art thou to be praised; let the world which thou hast made, and all that therein is, declare thy glory! I can scarcely conceive a heart so callous that it feels no awe, or a human mind so dull and destitute of understanding, as fairly to view the tokens of God's omnipotent power, and then turn aside without some sense of the fitness of obedience. One might think the impression would be spontaneous in every breast, and if

not, only let reason do her office, and by slower process every mind should yet be convinced. Let your eyes behold the stars; God alone can tell their numbers, yet he calls them all by names; by him they are marshalled in their spheres, and travel through the aerial universe just as he gives them charge; they are all his servants, who with cheerful haste perform the bidding of their Lord. You see how the stormy wind and tempest like slaves obey his will; and you know that the great pulse of ocean throbs and vibrates with its ebb and flow entirely under his control. Have these great things of God, these wondrous works of his, no lesson to teach us? Do they not while declaring his glory reveal our duty? Our poets, both the sacred and the uninspired, have feigned consciousness to those inanimate agents that they might the more truthfully represent their honourable service. But if because we are rational and intelligent beings, we withhold our allegiance from our rightful Sovereign, then our privileges are a curse, and our glory is a shame. Alas, then the instincts of men very often guide them to act by impulse more wisely than they commonly do by a settled conviction. Where is the man that will not bend the knee in time of tempest? Where is the man that does not acknowledge God when he hears the terrible voice of his deep-toned thunder, and sees with alarm the shafts of his lightning fly abroad, cleaving the thick darkness of the atmosphere? In times of plague, famine, and pestilence, men are prone to take refuge in religion--they will make confession, like Pharaoh, when he said, "I have sinned this time: the lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked;" but like him, when "the rain, and the hail, and the thunders have ceased," when the plagues are removed, then they sin yet more, and their hearts are hardened. Hence their sin becomes exceeding sinful, since they sin against truths which even nature itself teaches us are most just. We might learn, even without

the written oracles of Scripture, that we ought to obey God, if our foolish hearts were not so darkened; thus unbelief of the Almighty Creator is a crime of the first magnitude. If it were a petty Sovereign against whom ye rebelled, it might be pardonable; if he were a man like yourselves, ye might expect that your faults would easily find forgiveness; but since he is the God who reigns alone where clouds and darkness are round about him, the God to whom all nature is obedient, and whose high behests are obeyed both in heaven and in hell, it becomes a crime, the terrible character of which words cannot pourtray, that you should ever sin against a God so marvellously great. The greatness of God enhances the greatness of our sin. I believe this is one lesson which the prophet intended to teach us by the text. He asks us in the name of God, or rather, God asks us through him--"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?"

But while it is a lesson, I do not think it is the lesson of the text. There is something else which we are to learn from it. God here contrasts the obedience of the strong, the mighty the untamed sea, with the rebellious character of his own people. "The sea," saith he, "obeys me; it never breaks its boundary; it never leapeth from its channel; it obeys me in all its movements. But man, poor puny man, the little creature whom I could crush as the moth, will not be obedient to me. The sea obeys me from shore to shore, without reluctance, and its ebbing floods, as they retire from its bed, each of them says to me, in the voices of the pebbles, O Lord, we are obedient to thee, for thou art our master.' But my people," says God, "are a revolting and a rebellious people; they go astray from me." And is it not, my brethren, a marvellous thing, that the whole earth is obedient to God, save man? Even the mighty Leviathan, who maketh the deep to be hoary, sinneth not against God, but his course is ordered according to his Almighty

Master's decree. Stars, those wondrous masses of light, are easily directed by the very wish of God; clouds, though they seem erratic in their movement, have God for their pilot; "he maketh the clouds his chariot;" and the winds, though they seem restive beyond control, yet do they blow, or cease to blow just as God willeth. In heaven, on earth, even in the lower regions, I had almost said, we could scarcely find such a disobedience as that which is practised by man; at least, in heaven, there is a cheerful obedience; and in hell there is constrained submission to God, while on earth man makes the base exception, he is continually revolting and rebelling against his Maker. Still there is another thought in the text, and this I shall endeavour to dilate upon. Let us read it again. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?"--now here is the pith of the matter--"which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they soar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone." "The sea," says God, "is not only obedient, but it is rendered obedient by the restraint merely of sand." It is not the rock of adamant that restrains the sea one half so easily as just that little belt of sand and shingle which preserves the dry land from the inundations of the ocean. "The sea obeys me, and has for its only check the sand; and yet," says he, "my people, though they have restraints the strongest that reason could imagine, are a revolting and a rebellious people, and scarcely can my commands, my promises, my love, my judgment, my providence or my word restrain them from sin."

That is the point we shall dwell upon this morning. The sea is easily restrained by a belt of sand; but we, notwithstanding all the

restraints of God, are a people bent on revolting from him.

The doctrine of the text, seems to me to be this--that without supernatural means God can make all creatures obedient save man; but man is so disobedient in his heart, that only some supernatural agency can make him obedient to God, while the simple agency of sand can restrain the sea, without any stupendous effort of divine power more than he ordinarily puts out in nature: he can not thus make man obedient to his will.

Now, my brethren, let us look back into history, and see if it has not been so. What has been a greater problem, if we may so speak concerning the Divine mind, than that of restraining men from sin? How many restraints God has put upon man! Adam is in the garden, pure and holy; he has restraints that one would think strong enough to prevent his committing a sin so contemptible and apparently unprofitable as that by which he fell. He is to have the whole garden in perpetuity, if he will not eat of that tree of life; his God will walk with him, and make him his friend; moreover, in the cool of the day, he shall hold converse with angels, and with the Lord, the Master of angels; and yet he dares eat of that holy fruit which God had set forth not to be touched by man. Then he must die. One would think it was enough, to promise reward for obedience, and punishment for sin; but no, the check fails. Man, left to his own free will, touches the fruit, and he falls. Man cannot be restrained, even in his purity, so easily as the mighty sea. Since that time, mark what God has done by way of restraint. The world has become corrupt it is altogether covered with iniquity. Forth comes a prophet. Enoch prophesies of the coming of the Lord, declaring that he sees him coming with ten thousand of his saints to judge the world. That world goes on, as profane and unheeding as before. Another prophet is raised up, and cries, "Yet a little while, and this earth shall be

drowned in a flood of water." Do men cease from sin? No; profligacy, crime, iniquities of the vilest class, are as prevalent as before. Man rushes on to his destruction; the deluge comes and destroys all but a favoured few. The new family goes out to people the earth: will not the world now be clean and holy? Wait a little, and ye shall see. One of these men will do a deed which shall render him a curse for ever, and his son Canaan shall in after years inherit his father's curse. Not long after that you see Sodom and Gomorrah devoured with fire which God rains out of heaven. But what of this? What though in later years Pharaoh and his chariots are drowned in the Red sea? What though Sennacherib and his hosts perish at midnight by the blast of an archangel? What though the world reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, being drunken with the wine of God's wrath? What though the earth be scarred and burned by war? What though it be deluged with floods? What though it be oppressed with famines, pestilences, and diseases? She still goes on in the same manner; at this hour the world is a sinful, rebellious world, and until God shall work a work in our day, such as we shall scarce believe, though a man tell it to us, the world shall never be pure and holy. The sea is restrained by sand; we admire the beautiful poetic fact; but man, being naturally more ungovernable than the storm and more impetuous than the ocean, is not to be tamed; he will not bend his neck to the Lord, nor will he be obedient to the God of the whole earth.

"But what of this fact?"--you say--"we know it is true; we do not doubt it." Stay awhile; I am now coming to deal with your hearts and consciences; and may the Holy Spirit help me in doing so! I shall divide, as God would divide them,--saints and sinners.

First of all, ye saints, I have a word to say to you. I want you to look at this as a doctrine not more evident in the history of mankind

at large, than abundantly verified in your own case. Come, now, I want to ask of you this morning, whether it cannot be said of you truly--"The sea is bound by sand; but I am one of those people who are bent on revolting from God, neither can any of his restraints keep me from sin." Let us review, for a few moments, the various restraints which God has put upon his people to keep them from sins which, nevertheless, are altogether ineffectual, without the accompanying power of irresistible grace.

First, then, remember there is a restraint of gratitude which, to the lowly regenerated heart, must necessarily form a very strong motive to obedience. I can conceive of nothing that ought so much to prompt me to obedience as the thought that I owe so much to God. O heir of heaven! thou canst look back to eternity and see thy name in life's fair book set down; thou canst sing of electing love; thou dost believe that a covenant was made with Christ in thy behalf, and that thy salvation was made secure in that moment when the hands of the Eternal Son grasped the stylus and signed his name as the representative of all the elect. Thou believest that on Calvary thy sins were all atoned for; thou hast in thy soul the conviction that thy sins, past, present, and to come, were all numbered on the scape-goat's head of old, and carried away for ever; thou believest that neither death nor hell can ever divide thee from thy Saviour's breast; thou knowest that there is laid up for thee a crown of life which fadeth not away, and thine expectant soul anticipates that with branches of palms in thine hands, with crowns of gold on thine head, and streets of gold beneath thy feet, thou shalt be happy for ever. Thou believest thyself to be one of the favoured of heaven, a special object of divine solicitation; thou thinkest that all things work together for thy good, yea, thou art persuaded that everything in providence has a special regard to thee, and to thy

favoured brethren. I ask thee, O saint, is not this a bond strong enough to keep thee from sin? If it were not for the desperate unstableness of thy heart, wouldst thou not be restrained from sin by this? Is not thy sin exceeding sinful, because it is sin against electing love, against redeeming peace, against all-surpassing mercy, against matchless affection, against shoreless grace, against spotless love? Ah! sin has reached its climax, when it dares to sin against such love as this. O Christian! thine affection to thy Lord and Master should restrain thee from iniquity. And is it not a fearful proof of the terrible character of thine heart, of thine heart even now, for still thou hast evil remaining in it, that all the ties of gratitude are still incapable of keeping thee from unholiness. The sins of yesterday rise to thy memory now. Oh! look back on them. Do they not tell thee that thou dost sin most ungratefully? O saint! didst thou not yesterday use thy Master's name in vain, and not thy Master's only, but thy Father's name? Hadst thou not yesterday an unbelieving heart? Wast thou not petulant when girded with favours that ought to make a living man unwilling to complain? Wast thou not, when God hath forgiven thee ten thousand talents, angry with thy neighbour, who owed thee a hundred pence? Ah Christian! thou art not yet free from sin, nor wilt thou be, until thou hast washed thy garments in death's black stream, and then thou shalt be holy, as holy as the glorified and pure and spotless, even as the angels around the throne, but not till then. I ask thee, O saint, viewing thy sins as sins against love and mercy, against covenant promises, covenant oaths, covenant engagements, ay, and covenant fulfilments, is not thy sin a desperate thing, and art not thou thyself a rebellious and revolting being, seeing that thou canst not be restrained by such a barrier of adamant as thy soul acknowledges?

Next notice, that the saint has not only this barrier against sin, but many others. He has the whole of God's Word given him by way of warning; its pages he is accustomed to read; he reads there, that if he break the statutes and keep not the commandments of the Lord, his Father will visit his transgressions with a rod, and his iniquity with stripes. He has before him in God's Word abundant examples. He finds a David going with broken bones to his grave after his sin; he finds a Samson shorn of his locks, and with his eyes put out; he sees proof upon proof that sin will find a man out; that the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Abundant warnings there are for the child of God, not of saints who have perished, for we have none such on record in Scripture, and none ever shall finally perish--but we have many warnings of great and grievous damages sustained by God's own children when they have sailed out of their proper course. And yet, O Christian, against all warning and against all precept thou darest to sin. Oh! art thou not a rebellious creature, and mayest thou not this morning humble thyself at the thought of the greatness of thine iniquity?

Again: the saint sins against his own experience, When he looks back upon his past life he finds that sin has always been a loss to him; he has never found any profit, but has always lost by it. He remembers such and such a transgression; it appeared sweet to him at the time, but oh! it made his Master withdraw his presence and hide his face. The saint can look back on the time when sin hung like a mill-stone round his neck, and he felt the terrible flame of remorse burning in his soul, and knew how evil a thing and bitter it is to sin against God.

And yet the saint sins. Now, if the unconverted man sins, he does not sin against his own experience, for he has not had that true heartfelt experience that renders sin exceeding sinful. But every time thou

sinnest, O grey-headed saint, thou sinnest with a vengeance, for thou hast had all through thy life so much proof of what sin has been to thee. Thou hast not been deceived about it, for thou hast felt its bitterness in thy bowels: and when thou sippest the accursed draught thou art infatuated indeed, because thou sinnest against experience. Ay, and the youngest of the saints, have you not been made to taste the bitterness of sin? I know you have, if you are saints! and will you go and dip your fingers in the nauseous cup? Will you put the poisoned goblet to your lips again? Yes, you will; but because you do so in the teeth of your experience, it ought to make you weep, that you should be such desperate rebels against such a loving God, who has put not merely a barrier of sand, but a barrier of tried steel to keep in your lusts, and yet they will break forth; verily ye are a rebellious and revolting people.

Then again, God guards all his children with providence, in order to keep them from sin. I could tell you, even from the little experience I have had of spiritual things, many cases in which I feel I have been kept from sin by Divine providence. There have been seasons when the strong hand of sin has appeared for a while to get the mastery over us, and we have been dragged along by some strong inherent lust, which we were prone to practise before our regeneracy. We were intoxicated with the lust, we remember how pleasurable it was to us in the days of our iniquity, how we revelled in it, till we were on a sudden dragged to the very edge of the precipice, and we looked down; our brain reeled, we could not stand; and do we not remember how just then some striking providence came in our way, and saved us, or else we should have been excommunicated from the church for violating the rules of propriety. Ah! strange things happen to some of us; strange things have happened to some of you. It was only a providence which on some sad and solemn

occasion, to which you never look back without regret, saved you from sin which would have been a scab on your character. Bless God for that! But remember, notwithstanding the girdlings of his providence, how many times you have offended; and let the frequency of your sin remind you that you must indeed be a rebellious creature. Though he has afflicted you, you have sinned; though he has given you chastisement, you have sinned; though he has put you in the furnace. yet the dross has not departed from you. Oh! how corrupt your hearts are, and how prone you are still to wander, notwithstanding all the barriers God has given you to encompass you!

Yet, once more let me remind you, beloved, that the ordinances of God's house are all intended to be checks to sin. He girds us by the worship of the sanctuary; he girds us by the remembrance of our holy baptism; and all else that is connected with Christianity is intended to check us from sin. And great are the effects which these produce; yet all are insufficient, without the preserving grace of God, given to us day by day. Let us think, beloved, too, that God has given to us a tender conscience, more tender than the conscience of worldly men, because he has given us living consciences, whereas theirs are often seared and dead. And yet, against this living conscience, against the warnings of the Spirit, against precept, against promise, against experience, against the honour of God, and against the gratitude they owe him, the saints of God have dared to sin, and they must confess before him that they are rebellious, and have revolted from him. Bow down your heads with shame while ye consider your ways, and then lift up your hearts, Christians, in adoring love, that he has kept you when your feet were making haste to hell, where you would have gone, but for his preserving grace. Shall not this long suffering of your God, this tender compassion, be your theme every day--

"While life, and thought, and being last,

Or immortality endures?"

Will you not pray, that God should not cast you away, nor take his Holy Spirit from you, though you are a rebellious creature, and though you have revolted against him?

This is for the saints; and now may the Spirit help me, while I strive to apply it to sinners! Sinner, I have solemn things to say to thee this morning; lend me for a few minutes thy very closest attention; I will speak to thee as though this were the last message I should ever deliver in thine ear. I have asked my God, that I may so speak to thee, O sinner, that if I win not thy heart I may at least be free from thy blood; and that if I am not able to convince thee of thy sin, I may at any rate make thee without excuse in that day "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Come, then, sinner; in the first place, I bid thee consider thy guilt. Thou hast heard what I have said. The mighty ocean is kept in obedience by God, and restrained within its channel by simple sand; and thou, a pitiful worm, the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, thou art a rebel against God. The sea obeys him; thou dost not. Consider, I beseech thee, how many restraints God has put on thee: he has not checked thy lusts with sand but with beetling cliffs; and yet thou hast burst through every bound in the violence of thy transgressions. Perhaps he has checked thy soul by the remembrance of thy guilt. Thou hast this morning felt thyself a despiser of God; or if not a despiser, thou art a mere hearer, and hast no part nor lot in this matter. Dost thou not remember thy sins in the face of thy mother's counsels and thy father's strong admonitions? Do they never check thee? Dost thou never think thou seest a mother's tears coming after thee? Hast thou never heard a father's prayer for thee? When thou hast been spending thy nights in

dissipation, and hast gone home late to thy bed, hast thou never thought thou hast seen thy father's spirit at thy bed side, offering one more prayer for an Absalom, his son, or for an Ishmael, his rebellious child? Consider what thou hast learned, child! Baptized with a mother's tears, almost immersed in them; thou wast early taught to know something of God; when thou didst go from thy mother's knees, thou wentest to those of a pious teacher; thou wast trained in a Sabbath school, or at any rate thou wast taught to read the Bible. Thou knowest the threatenings of God; it is no new tale to thee, when I warn thee that sinners must be condemned; it is no new story when I tell thee that saints shall wear the starry crown; thou knowest all that.

Consider, then, how great is thy guilt; thou hast sinned against light and knowledge; thou art not the Hottentot sinner, who sins in darkness, but thou art a sinner before high heaven, in the full light of day; thou hast not sinned ignorantly, thou hast done it when thou knewest better; and when thou comest to he lost, thou shalt have an additional doom, because thou didst know thy duty, but thou didst it not. I charge that home upon thee, I charge it solemnly upon thy conscience; is it true, or is it not? Some of you have had other things. Don't you remember, some little time ago, when sickness was rife, you were stretched on your bed? One night you will never forget; sickness had got strong hold of you, and the strong man bowed himself. Do you not remember what a sight you had then of the regions of the damned; not with your eyes, but with your conscience? You thought you heard their shrieks; you thought you would be amongst them yourself soon. Methinks I see you; you turned your face to the wall, and you cried, "O God, if thou wilt save my life, I will give myself to thee!" Perhaps it was an accident; thou didst fear that death was very near; the terrors of death laid hold of thee, and thou didst cry, "Oh! God, let me but reach

home in safety, and my bended knees and my tears pouring in torrents, shall prove that I am sincere in the vow I make." But didst thou perform that vow? Nay, thou hast sinned against God; thy broken vows have gone before thee to judgment. Dost thou think it a little thing to make a promise to thy fellow creature and break it? It may be so in thine estimation, but not so in that of honest men. But dost thou think it a little thing to promise to thy Maker, and to break thy promise? There is no light penalty for sinning against the Almighty God; it will cost thee thy soul, man, and thy soul's blood for ever, if thou goest on in this fashion. Vow and pay, or if thou payest not, vow not; for God shall visit those vows upon thee, in the day when he maketh inquisition for blood, and destroyeth thy soul. Thou hast been guarded thus; remember that thou hast had extraordinary deliverances, the disease did not kill thee; thy broken bones were healed; thou didst not die; when the jaws of death were uplifted, they did not close upon thee: here thou art still. Thy life is spared.

Oh! my dear hearers, some of you are the worst; you have regularly sat in these pews--God is my witness, how earnestly I have longed for you all in the bowels of Christ. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God to you. If I had been a time-server, and kept back part of the truth, much more honour would I have received from men than I have received; but I have cleared my conscience, I trust, from your blood. How many times have I seen men and women cry, the hot tears falling down their cheeks in quick succession? and expected that I should have seen a change in some of your lives. But how many of you there are, who have gone on sinning against warnings, which, I am sure, though they may have been excelled in eloquence, have never been exceeded in heartiness! Do you think it a little thing to sin against God's ambassador? It is no little sin: every time we sin against the

warnings we have received, we sin so much the more heinously. But there are some--I had hope for you, but ye have gone back to the ways of perdition; I have cried, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" But I have been obliged to go to my Master with that exclamation, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Woe unto thee, Bethsaida; it were better for thee that thou hadst been Tyre and Sidon than that thou shouldst have been left in the midst of privileges, if thou shouldst perish at last! Woe unto you, hearers of New Park Street! Woe unto you that listen not to the voice of the minister here! If ye perish beneath our warnings, ye shall perish in a horrible manner! Woe unto thee, Capernaum! thou art exalted unto heaven, but thou shalt be cast down to hell." Woe unto thee, young woman! thou hast had a pious mother, and thou hast had many warnings. Woe unto thee, young man! thou hast been a profligate youth; thou hast been brought to this house of prayer from thine infancy, and thou art sitting there even now; often does thy conscience prick thee; often thy heart hast told thee that thou art wrong; and yet thou art still unchanged! Woe unto thee! Woe unto thee! And yet will I cry unto my God, that he would avert that woe and pardon thee; that he would not let thee die, but bring thee unto himself, lest now ye perish in your sins. Ye sinners! God has a controversy with you; he tames the sea, but ye will not be tamed; nothing but his marvellous grace exerted in you will ever check you in your lusts. You have sinned against warnings and reproofs, against providences, mercies, and judgments, and still ye sin.

Oh! my hearers, when you sin, you do not sin so cheaply as others; for when you sin, you sin in the very teeth of hell. There is not a man or woman in this place, I am sure, who, when he or she sins, does not know that hell is the inevitable consequence! Sirs, ye do not sin in the

dark. When God shall give you the wages of your iniquity, you shall not be able to say, "O God, I did not know this would be the pay for my labour." When thou didst sow tares, thou couldst not expect that thou shouldst reap wheat; thou knowest "that they who sow carnal things, shall reap carnal things;" thou art sowing to the flesh, but not with the hope that thou wilt reap salvation; for thou knowest that "he who soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Sinner, it is a dreadful thing to sin, when God puts hell before thee! What! sin when he has given out his threatening? Sin! while Sinai is thundering, while hell is blazing? Ay, that is to sin indeed. But how many of you, may dear hearers, have sinned like this. I would to God, that he would turn this house into a Bochim, that you might weep over your guilt. It is the hardest thing in the world to make men believe their guilt. If we could once get them to do that, we should find that Christ would reveal to them his salvation. I cannot with my poor voice and my weak utterance, even bring you to think that it is Christ Jesus in the ministry of his Spirit who can give you a true and real sense of your sin. Hath he done so? Hath he blessed my words to any of you? Do any of you feel your sins? Do any of you know that you are rebellious? Do you say, from this time forth you will mend your ways? Sirs, let me tell you, you cannot do that. Are you better than the mightiest of men? The best of men are but men at the best, and they are convinced that they cannot tame their own turbulent passions. God saith that the sea can be tamed with sand; but the heart of man cannot be restrained, it is still revolting. Dost thou think thou canst do that, which God saith is impossible? Dost thou suppose thyself stronger than God Almighty? What! canst thou change thine own heart, when God declares that we must he born again from above, or else we cannot see the kingdom of heaven? Others have tried to do it, but they cannot. I beseech thee, do not try

to do it with thine own strength. I am glad thou knowest thy guilt; but O do not increase that guilt, by seeking to wash it out in the foul stream of thine own resolutions. Go and tell God that thou knowest thy sin, and confess it before him, and ask him to create in thee a clean heart, and renew in thee a right spirit. Tell him thou knowest that thou art rebellious, and thou art sure that thou always wilt be, unless he change thy heart; and I beseech thee, rest not satisfied until thou hast a new heart. My hearer, be not content with Baptism; be not content with the Lord's Supper; be not content with shutting up your shop on Sunday; be not content with leaving off drunkenness; be not content with giving up swearing. Remember, you may do all that, and be damned. It is a new heart and a right spirit you want; begin with that, and when you have that, all the rest will come right. Bethink thee, my hearer; thou mayest varnish and gild thyself, but thou canst never change thyself. Thou mayest moralise, but thou canst never spiritualise thy heart. But just bethink thee. Thou art this morning lost; and just think of this,--thou canst do nothing whatever to save thyself. Let that thought rise in thy soul, and lay thee very low; and when thou goest to God, cry, "O Lord, do what I cannot do; save me, O my God, for thy mercy's sake."

My dear hearers, have I spoken harshly to you, or wilt ye rather take it in love? Ye who have sinned thus terribly against God, do ye feel it? Well, I have no grace to offer to thee, I have no Christ to offer to thee, but I have Christ to preach to thee. Oh! what shall I say? This:--you are a sinner. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." Art thou a sinner? Then he came to save thee. Oh! joyful sound. I am ready to leap in the pulpit for very joy, to have this to preach to thee. I can clap my hands with ecstacy of heart, that

I am allowed again to tell thee--"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Let me tell you that when he came into this world he was nailed to the cross, and that there he expired in desperate griefs and agony; and there he shrieked, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There the blood ran from his hands and feet, and because he suffered he is able to forgive. Sinner, dost thou believe that? Thou art black; dost thou believe, in the face of thy blackness, that Christ's blood can make thee white? What sayest thou, sinner? God has convinced thee of thy sin; art thou willing to be saved in God's way this morning? If thou art willing, thou shalt be saved. It is written,--"Whosoever will, let him come." Art thou thirsty this morning? come hither and drink. Art thou hungry? come and eat. Art thou dying? come and live. My Master bids me tell you, all you who feel your sins, that you are forgiven; all you who know your transgressions, he bids me tell you this:--" I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions, for my name's sake." Hast thou been an adulterer, hast thou been a whore-monger, a thief, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, a swearer? I find no exception in this proclamation;--"Whosoever will, let him come." I find no exception in this;--"Him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." Dost thou know thy guilt? then I do not ask thee what thy guilt is. Though thou wert the vilest creature, again, I tell thee, if thou knowest thy guilt, Christ will forgive thee. Believe it, and thou art saved.

And now will ye go away and forget all this? Some of you have wept this morning. No wonder; the wonder is that we do not all weep, until we find ourselves saved! You will go away to-morrow to your farms and to your merchandize, to your shops, and to your offices; and the impression that may have been produced on you this Sabbath morning will

pass away like the morning cloud. My hearers, I would not weep, though you should call me all the names you can think of, but I wilt weep because you will not weep for yourselves. Sinners, why will ye be damned? Is it a pleasant thing to revolt in the flames of hell? Sirs, what profit is there in your death! What! is it an honorable thing to rebel against God? Is it an honor to stand and be the scorn of God's universe? Dost thou say thou shalt not die; yet thou wilt put it off a little while? Sinner, thou wilt never have a more convenient season; if to-day is inconvenient, to-morrow will be more so. Put it off to-day, wipe away the tears from your eyes, and the day may come when you would give a million worlds for a tear, but you shall not be able to get one. Many a man has had a soft heart; it has passed away, and in after years he has said, "Oh, that I could but shed a tear!" O God! make thy word like a hammer this morning, that it may break the rocky heart in pieces! Ye who know your sins, as God's ambassador, I beseech you, "be ye reconciled unto God." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Remember, once lost, ye are lost for ever; but if ye are once saved, ye are certainly saved for ever. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," said Paul of old; Jesus himself hath said "He that believeth and is haptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." I will not finish with a curse. "He that believeth shall be saved." God give you all an interest in that eternal blessing, for the Lord Jesus' sake!

This sermon was originally printed

together with a pastoral letter from C. H. S.

Comfort Proclaimed

A Sermon

(No. 221)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, September 21, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."--Isaiah 40:1.

WHAT A SWEET TITLE: "My people!" What a cheering revelation: "Your God!" How much of meaning is couched in those two words, "My people!" Here is speciality. The whole world is God's; the heaven, even the heaven of heavens are the Lord's and he reigneth among the children of men. But he saith of a certain number, "My people." Of those whom he hath chosen, whom he hath purchased to himself, he saith what he saith not of others. While nations and kindreds are passed by as being simply nations, he says of them "My people." In this word there is the idea of proprietorship to teach us that we are the property of God. In some special manner the "Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." All the nations upon earth are his; he taketh up the isles as a very little thing; the whole world is in his power; yet are his people, his chosen, favoured people, more especially his possesion; for he has done more for them than others; he has bought them with his blood; he has brought them nigh to himself; he has set his great heart upon them; he has loved them with an everlasting love, a love which many waters cannot quench, and which the revolutions of time shall never suffice in the least degree to diminish. "My people!" O my

hearers, can you by faith put yourselves in that number who believe that God says of them, "My people?" Can you look up to heaven to-night, and say, "My Lord, and my God: mine by that sweet relationship which entitles me to call thee Father; mine by that hallowed fellowship which I delight to hold with thee when thou art pleased to manifest thyself unto me as thou dost not unto the world?" Canst thou, beloved, put thine hand into thine heart and find there the indentures of thy salvation? Canst thou read thy title writ in precious blood? Canst thou by humble faith lay hold of Jesus's garments, and say, "My Christ?" If thou canst, then God saith of thee, "My people;" for if God be your God, and Christ your Christ, the Lord has a special, peculiar favour to you; you are the object of his choice, and you shall be accepted, at last, in his beloved Son. How careful God is of his people; those of whom he says, "My people;" mark, how anxious he is concerning them, not only for their life, but for their comfort. He does not say, "strengthen ye, strengthen ye my people;" he does not say to the angel, "protect my people;" he does not say to the heavens, "drop down manna to feed my people;"--all that and more also his tender regard secures to them; but on this occasion, to show us that he is not only regardful of our interests, but also of our superfluities, he says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." He would not only have us his living people, his preserved people, but he would have us be his happy people too. He likes his people to be fed, but what is more, he likes to give them "wines on the lees well refined," to make glad their hearts. He will not only give them bread, but he will give them honey too; he will not simply give them milk, but he will give them wine and milk, and all the sweet things which their hearts can desire. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" it is the Father's yearning heart, careful even for the little things of his people. "Comfort ye, comfort ye,"--that one with a

tearful eye; "Comfort ye, comfort ye,"--you child of mine with an aching heart "Comfort ye,"--that poor bemoaning one; "Comfort ye, comfort ye--my people, saith your God."

Now to night we shall notice the parties to whom the command is addressed; secondly, the reason for it; and thirdly, the means for carrying it out.

I. First, then, TO WHOM IS THIS COMMAND ADDRESSED? You know, beloved, the Holy Spirit is the great Comforter, and he it is who alone can solace the saints if their hearts be really cheered; but he uses instruments to relieve his children in their distress and to lift op their hearts from desperation. To whom, then, is this command addressed? I believe it is addressed to angels and to men.

To angels, first of all, I believe this command is addressed: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." You often talk about the insinuations of the devil; I frequently hear you bemoaning yourselves because you have been attacked by Apollyon, and have had a hard struggle with Beelzebub; you have found it hard to resist his desperate thrusts which he made against you; and you are always talking about him. Allow me to remind you that there is another side of that question, for if evil spirits assault us, doubtless good spirits guard us; and if Satan can cast us down, doubtless it is true God giveth his angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways, and they shall bear us up in their hands lest at any time we dash our feet against a stone. It is my firm belief that angels are often employed by God to throw into the hearts of his people comforting thoughts. There are many sweet thoughts which we have by the way, when we sit down, and when we rise up, which we scarcely dare attribute immediately to the Holy Ghost, but which are still beautiful and calm, lovely, and fair, and consoling; and we attribute them to the ministry of angels. Angels came and ministered unto Jesus, and I doubt

not that they minister unto us. Few of us have enough belief in the existence of spirits. I like that saying of Milton's, "Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we sleep and when we wake." And if our minds were opened, if our ears were attentive, we might hold fellowship with spirits that flit through the air every moment. Around the death-bed of saints angels hover; by the side of every struggling warrior for Christ the angels stand. In the day of battle we hear in the air the neighing of their steeds. Hark! how softly do they ride to help the elect of God, while in the stern conflict for the right and for the truth, when they would have been cast down, some angel whispers, "Courage brother, courage, I would I could stand by thy side, shoulder to shoulder, and foot to foot, to fight the battle, but I must not; it is left for men. Courage then brother, because angels watch over thee!" It is a good wish of ours, when we say at eventide, "Peace be to thee beloved! good angels guard thee! may they spread their wings o'er thee and stand around thy bed!" But it is more than a wish, it is a reality. Do ye not know It is written "the angel of the Lord encampeth round them that fear him?" "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who are heirs of salvation?" This command then, comes to angels. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." Full oft the bright winged seraph flaps his wing to earth, to comfort some desponding heart. Full oft the cherub, ceasing for a moment his mighty song to go on errands of love, descends, as Gabriel did of old, to cheer the heart of many a struggling man and to stand by the side of those who are in conflict for God and for his truth. Ye angels, ye bright spirits, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

But on earth, this is more especially addressed to the Lord's ministers. He calls his ministers angels of the churches, albeit, they

should be a great deal more like angels than they are. Ministers are bound to comfort God's people. I am sure, however, they cannot do it, unless they preach the good old doctrines of truth. Except they preach grace and gracious doctrine, I can not see how they are to console the minds of the Lord's family. Were I to adopt a lax theology which teaches that God's children may fall away, that although redeemed they may yet be lost, that they may be effectually called, and yet slide back to perdition--I want to know how I could carry out this command? I should say, "Brethren, God has told me to comfort you; that is what I have to preach; you must get what comfort you can out of it, for I really cannot find much." I have often marvelled how the Arminian can comfort himself, wherewith he can light a fire to warm his own heart! What doctrine hath he? He believes he is a child of God to-day, and he is taught to believe he is a child of the devil to-morrow. He is now, he says, in the covenant, but then that covenant is such an uncertain thing that it may at any time be broken down, and he may die beneath its ruins; he knows himself to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, yet he is taught that that will not be sufficient without the concurrence of some good thoughts, good actions, or certainly by some good grace, some faith of his own. He is led to believe that his standing depends upon his own keeping near to God, instead of remembering that his keeping near to God must be by a sweet attraction that proceeds from God himself. Whence then comfort is to be procured I cannot tell. Happy I am I have no such gospel as that to preach. Let me preach the old gospel of Chrysostom, the old gospel of Augustine, the old gospel of Athanasius; and above all the old gospel of Jesus Christ, the originator of it; for there I can find something to comfort the child of God, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." It is our duty to reprove, to exhort, to invite, but it is equally our duty to console. The

minister should ask of God the Spirit, that he may be filled with his influence as a comforter; that when he ascends his pulpit on the Sabbath morning, his poor hard working people, who have been toiling, fretting with care and anxiety all the week, may say, "Here comes our minister; he is sure to have his mouth filled with good things; as soon as he opens his lips he will utter some great and glorious promise from God's Word. He has little to say himself, but he will be sure to tell us some good old truths with some fresh unction, and we shall go away refreshed." Oh! ye sons of toil, some of you understand this. With weary feet ye come to God's house; but oh how gladly do ye sing there, and how sweetly does your singing harmonize with your hearts! and when you have heard the Word you go away and say, "Would God it were Sunday all the week! Oh! that I might sit and ever hear the words of God! Oh! that I might sit and ever drink in such comforts, so should I be satisfied as with marrow and fatness!" But sometimes you come up, and there is a flogging for you just when there needs to be consolation; or you get some dry hard metaphysical subject that has not any nourishment for your souls in it, and you go away half starved. You hear some fine discourse with rounded periods, and people say, "Oh! such an oration! never was English so beautifully spoken by Hall or Chalmers. How admirably it was delivered!" But alas! alas! what of the dish, the porcelain, the knife, the plate, the splendid damask cloth, the vase of flowers--where is the food? There is none there. You have got the garnishings and you ought to be thankful, and hold your ministers in esteem, even it they withhold from you your necessary bread! But the child of God wont like that; he says "I am weary of such things, away with these garnishings, give it me in plain rough Saxon if you will, but give me the gospel! Cut it up in any fashion you like, but do give me something to feed upon." The language may be rough, and the style

homely, but the heir of heaven says, "There was comfort ye my people' in it; and that was what I wanted. Its style, humanly speaking, may not have exactly suited my taste, but it has fed my soul, and that will suffice me."

But, my friends, do not support your ministers as an excuse for the discharge of your own duties; many do so. They think when they have subscribed towards the support of the ministry, it is enough; imagining, as our Roman Catholic friends do, that the priest is to do everything, and the people nothing; but that is very wrong. When God said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," he spake to all his people to comfort one another. And who is there here that knows the Lord and has tasted of his grace who cannot comfort his brethren? There is my strong friend who is on the mount feasting on dying love; he is the subject of rhapsodies and high excitement; his soul is like the chariot of Amminadib; it is on fire with his Master's presence; he is living near to God and drinking in fulness of joy. Oh! my brother, go and tell out a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what sorrow there is upon the earth. When thou art happy, remember there is sure to be some one else sad. When thy cup runneth over, find out an empty cup to catch the drops that overflow. When thy soul is full of joy, go, if thou canst, and find a mourner and let him hear thy song, or sit down by his side and tell him how glad thou art, and mayhap his poor heart may be warmed by thy sweet cheering words. But art thou weak? Art thou sad thyself? Then go to him who is the great Comforter and ask him to relieve thy distresses, and after that go out thyself and comfort others. There are none so good to comfort others as those who once were comfortless. If I were an orphan now, and needed a helper, I would seek one who had been an orphan in his youth, that he might sympathize with me. Were I houseless and poor, I would not go to the man who has rolled

in wealth from earliest youth, but I would seek out the man who, like myself, has trodden with bare feet the cold pavement of the street at midnight; I would seek out the man who, penniless and poor, has begged his way from town to town, and then, by God's providence, has worked himself up; for I could believe that such an one would have a heart to sympathize with me. Go, thou poor tried one, go thou weather-beaten soul if thou canst, and call to thy mate, who is just out at sea with thee, and tell him to be of good cheer. Thou who art in the valley of the shadow of death, sing, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;" and mayhap some brother far behind thee will hear the song, and will take heart.

"Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us,
Foot-prints on the sands of time.
Foot-prints that, perhaps, another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, may take heart again."

Go, and when thou hast found any good, strive to perpetuate it by communicating it to others. When thy foot is on the rock, show others how to put their feet there. When thou art glad, tell others how thou wast made glad, and the same cordial which cheered thee may cheer them likewise. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

Now why do we not enjoy this a little more? I believe one reason is because we are most of us rather too proud to tread in our Master's footsteps. We like not to say with him, "I am not come to be ministered unto, but to minister." "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" is a sublime admonition, but never surely intended for the meagre sympathy of

fashion,--for a lady who can ride in her carriage, and send her card up, when she calls to inquire for a friend, who is sick; but were I to press home the duty, and tell her that "my people" includes the poorest of God's flock, the weakest and the meanest, she would think me a rude and vulgar young man, unacquainted with the etiquette of genteel society. Comfort the poor!--why should she? "The lower classes expect a great deal too much of the upper, I shall not demean myself by stooping to them." This kind of feeling many professing Christians have; they talk with a fine lisp, they deem it enough to say, "Poor creature, I pity your case, I am sorry for you!" But the heir of heaven reads, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." There is a poor man in the streets who has just come begging a crust at your door, and you can see by what he says, that there is something of God's grace in his heart; then comfort him. There is another up the creaking staircase in that back alley; you never went up there, you might be afraid to go; but if you hear of a child of God there do not shrink back. God's diamonds may be often found amidst heaps of rags and tatters, in the very outskirts of the city, the abodes of haggard poverty; so go after them. Whensoever you hear of a child of God, go and find him out; for this command, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," never ought to be put aside by our pride. Why, you go to your churches and chapels, sometimes, and sit in your pews, without even a thought of speaking to your neighbours. Some men will go to a chapel seven years, and scarcely know the name of the next seat-holder. Is that right? Many will sit at the Lord's table too, and not speak to each other. But that is not the fashion of communion as I understand it: it is not the fashion of the gospel either. When I was but a youth, the smallest boy almost that ever joined a church, I remember I thought that everybody believed what he said, and when I heard the minister say brother, I thought I must be his brother, for I

was admitted into the church. I once sat next to a gentleman in a pew, and we received the bread and wine together; he called me "Brother," and as I thought he meant it, I afterwards acted upon it. I had no friend in the town of Cambridge, where I was; and one day when walking out, I saw this same gentleman, and I said to myself, "Well now, he called me brother; I know he is a great deal better off than I am, but I don't care for that; I will go and speak to him." So I went and said "How do you do, brother?" "I have not the pleasure of knowing you," was his reply. I said "I sat next to you at the Lord's table last Sabbath day, sir, and you called me brother' when you passed the cup to me, and I was sure you meant it." "There now," said he, "it is worth while seeing some one who believes a little with sincerity in these times; come in with me." And we have been the nearest and dearest bosom friends ever since, just because he saw I took him at his word, that he meant what he said. But now-a days profession has become a pretence and a sham; people sit down at the church together, as though they were brethren, the minister calls you brethren, but he wont speak to you, or own yon as such; his people are his brethren, no doubt, but their it is in such a mysterious sense, that you will have to read some German theologian in order to comprehend it. That person is "your very dear brother," or "your very dear sister," but if you are in distress, go to them and see if they will assist you. I do not believe in such a religion as that. I would have those who profess to be brethren, believe that "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," applies to every member of Christ's church, and that they all ought to carry it out to the utmost of their abilities.

II. Secondly, WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THIS COMMAND? Why does God say "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people!"

The first reason is because God loves to see his people look happy. The

Roman Catholic supposes that God is pleased with a man if he whips himself, walks barefooted for many miles, and torments his body. I am certain if I were to see anyone do that, I should say "Poor soul, give him a pair of shoes; do take that whip from him, I cannot bear to see him so." And as I believe that God is infinitely more benevolent than I am, I cannot suppose that he would take pleasure in seeing blood run down a man's back, or blisters rising on his feet. If a man would please God, he had better make himself as happy as he can. When I am by the sea-side, and the tide is coming in, I see what appears to be a little fringe, looking almost like a mist; and I ask a fisherman what it is. He tells me there is no mist there; and that what I see are all little shrimps dancing in ecstasy, throwing themselves in convulsions and contortions of delight. I think within myself, "Does God make those creatures happy, and did he make me to be miserable? Can it ever be a religious thing to be unhappy?" No; true religion is in harmony with the whole world; it is in harmony with the sun and moon and stars; and the sun shines and the stars twinkle; it is in harmony with all the world; and the world has flowers in it and leaping hills, and carolling birds; it has joys in it; so I believe religion was meant to have joys in it; and I hold it to be an irreligious thing to go moping miserably through God's creation. You cannot help it sometimes, just as sins will overtake you, but happiness is a very virtue. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works," which means not so much eating and drinking, as the living with a joyous countenance, and walking before God, believing in his love, and rejoicing in his grace.

Again, "Comfort ye, Comfort ye my people;" because uncomfortable Christians often dishonour religion. Look at my friend who is come here to-night with such a sorrowful countenance. Yesterday, he had a new

servant in his house, and when she went down into the kitchen, she said to her fellow-servant, "Is not our master a pious man ?" "Yes, surely." "I thought so because he looks so miserable." Now that is a disgrace to religion. Whenever a Christian man sinks under affliction; when he does not seek grace from God to battle manfully with his sea of troubles; when he does not ask his Father to give him a great weight of consolation whereby he shall be able to endure in the evil day, we may say he does dishonour to the high, and mighty, and noble principles of Christianity, which are fitted to bear a man up in times of the very deepest affliction. It is the boast of the gospel that it lifts men above trouble; it is one of the glories of our Christianity, that it makes us say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." But when the Christian gets sad and miserable, run to him, brother; wipe that tear from his eye, tell him to cheer up, or at least if he is sad, not to let the world see it; if he fasts, let him anoint his head, and wash his face, that he appear not unto men to fast. Let his garments be always white, and let his head lack no oil; let him be happy; for so he giveth credit to religion.

Again, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" because a Christian in an uncomfortable state cannot work for God much. Break a poor man's heart and let him come on this platform with a grieved and agonizing spirit; and oh! what a want of power there will be in him! He wants all his time for his own sighs and groans, and will have none to spend upon God's people. We have seen broken-hearted ministers who have sadly lamented that when in trouble, they have found themselves unable to declare God's truth as they could wish. It is when the mind is happy,

that it can be laborious. Nothing hurts the man whilst he can keep all right with heaven, and feel it so; whilst he can say that God is his own God, he can work night and day, and scarcely feel fatigued. But take away his comforts and his joys, and then one day's labour distracts his nerves and shatters all his mind. Then comfort God's people, because bruised reeds give little music, and the smoking flax makes little fire. "Comfort ye, comfort ye" the saints, for they will work ten times better when their minds have once been made comfortable. Again; "Comfort ye" God's people, because ye profess to love them. You call that poor aged cripple, loitering home to-night, leaning on her crutch, your sister; do you know that she will go to bed to-night supperless? Only once has she tasted food to-day, and that was dry bread; do you know that? and is she your sister? Let your heart speak: would you allow your sister to eat dry bread once a day, and have nothing else? No; out of love to her as your relation, you would go and comfort her. There is another poor brother who will pass you on the road home, not poor in bodily things, but poor in soul, distressed in spirits. Don't do as that person has just done--he has quickened his pace, because he says that old man makes him miserable, and it makes him melancholy to talk with him. No; just go to him and say, "Brother, I hear you are in the valley of Baca; well, it is written, they that pass through the valley of Baca make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools." Join yourself to him, for it is written, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." "No, sir," you say, "I intend to go to-night with one or two very good people, and we shall enjoy ourselves together, and be very glad to-night." Yes, but if they be glad you cannot comfort them, so go and seek out some broken-hearted one if thou canst, some poor, sad, mourning one, and say, "The Lord hath appeared to thee of old, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.'

God's mercies have not failed and, therefore, we are not consumed." Go and cheer him. What! are there no families near you where the head has lately been removed by death? Have you no bereaved friends? have you no poor in your streets, no distressed, no desponding ones? If you have not, then yonder Scripture might be rent out of the Bible, for it would be useless; but because I am sure you have such, I bid you, in God Almighty's name, to go and seek out the needy, the distressed, and the poor, and send them portions of meat. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

III. In the last place. God never gives his children a duty to do without giving them THE MEANS TO DO IT; he never bids them make bricks without straw, and when he tells us to comfort God's people, we may be certain there are many means whereby they may be comforted. Let me just hint at those things in the everlasting gospel which have a tendency to comfort the saints. What, child of God! Art thou at a loss for a topic to comfort the aching heart? Hark thee, then; go tell of the ancient things of former days; whisper in the mourner's ear electing grace, and redeeming mercy, and dying love. When thou findest a troubled one, tell him of the covenant, in all things ordered well, signed, sealed, and ratified; tell him what the Lord hath done in former days, how he cut Rahab and wounded the dragon; tell him the wondrous story of God's dealings with his people. Tell him that God who divided the Red sea can make a highway for his people through the deep waters of affliction; that he who appeared in the burning bush which was not consumed, will support him in the furnace of tribulation. Tell him of the marvellous things which God has wrought for his chosen people: surely there is enough there to comfort him. Tell him that God watcheth the furnace as the goldsmith the refining pot."

Thy days of trial then,

Are all ordained by heaven;

If he appoint the number ten,'

You ne'er shall have eleven."

If that does not suffice, tell him of his present mercies; tell him that he has much left, though much is gone. Tell him there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" tell him that now he is accepted in the beloved; tell him that he is now adopted, and that his standing is safe. Tell him that Jesus is above, wearing the breast-plate, or pleading his cause. Tell him that though earth's pillars shake, God is a refuge for us; tell the mourner that the everlasting God faileth not, neither is weary. Let present facts suffice thee to cheer him.

But if this is not enough, tell him of the future; whisper to him that there is a heaven with pearly gates and golden streets; tell him that

"A few more rolling suns at most,

Will land him on fair Canaan's coast."

and therefore he may well bear his sorrows. Tell him that Christ is coming, and that his sign is in the heavens, his advent is near, he will soon appear to judge the earth with equity, and his people in righteousness. And if that suffice not, tell him all about that God who lived and died. Take him to Calvary; picture to him the bleeding hands, and side, and feet; tell him of the thorn-crowned King of grief; tell him of the mighty Monarch of woe and blood, who wore the scarlet of mockery which was yet the purple of the empire of grief; tell him that he himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. And if I have not said enough, go to thy Bible, read its pages, bend thy knee and ask for guidance, and then tell him some great and precious promise, that so thou mayest accomplish thy mission, and comfort one of God's people.

I have but a few words to say to some, who I grieve to think want no

comfort. They want something else before they can be comforted. Some of my hearers are not God's people; they have never believed in Christ, nor fled to him for refuge. Now I will tell you briefly and plainly the way of salvation. Sinner! know that thou art in God's sight guilty, that God is just and that he will punish thee, for thy sins. Hark thee, then: there is only one way by which thou canst escape, and it is this: Christ must be thy substitute. Either thou must die, or Christ must die for thee. Thy only refuge is faith in Jesus Christ, whereby thou shalt be assured that Christ did really and actually shed his blood for thee. And if you are able to believe that Christ died for you, I know it will cause you to hate sin, to seek for Christ, and to love and serve him world without end. May God bless us all, forgive us our sins, and accept our souls for Jesus's sake!

Chapter 57

This letter was written to accompany the publication of sermon 221 in

the New Park Street Pulpit series--"Comfort Proclaimed."

A Pastoral Letter

I AM a prisoner still. Weakness has succeeded pain, and languor of mind is the distressing result of this prostration of my physical powers. It is the Lord's doing. In some sense I might say with Paul, "I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ." But ah! my bonds are more easy and less honourable to wear than his. Instead of a dungeon, my lot is cast in an abode of comfort. I am not restrained from my accustomed ministry by a chain forged by man, but by the silken cord of God's providence: no rough jailor, but loving relatives and friends attend upon me in these tedious hours of my bondage. I beseech you therefore, my beloved, let your many prayers to God on my behalf be each and all mingled with thanksgiving. Gratitude should ever be used in devotion, like salt of old was in sacrifice, "without prescribing how much."

And now, though unable to stand in the pulpit, I will endeavour to give you a short address,--or rather, I will attempt to express the kindlings of my heart in a few broken sentences.

And first, to you my well-beloved and trusty brethren and sisters in Christ, and in the family tie of church fellowship; to you I tender my fondest regards, my sincerest thanks, my sweetest love. I feel refreshed by your sympathy, and my heart is overwhelmed at the estimation in which you hold me. It brings the hot blush to my cheek, and well it may. Tenderly as a husband thinks of the doting affection of his wife, as a father receives the fond homage of his children, as a brother when he is held in honour by all the family circle--so

tenderly, and even more tenderly, I remember your care of me. The tone of your supplications during my affliction has been to me beyond measure grateful. I rejoice that ye have with humble submission kissed the rod; not impatiently asking my recovery, but meekly acquiescing in the providence of our heavenly Father, craving most of all that the lord would sanctify the pains of your pastor, and guard with his own watchful eye the flock. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord."

Yet again, in the still chamber of retirement, I anxiously remember some who would have been ere this baptised on a profession of their faith, and received into membership of the church, had not my health been thus impaired. Be not fretful concerning this delay: accept it as an ordained trial of your patience. If a farmer has a field of corn severed by the sickle from its native earth, but not yet housed in the garner, is he not concerned lest he suffer loss? How much more, as a minister of Christ, am I concerned for you--the converts God hath given me. Oh, beloved! be stedfast. Commit not the great sin. Beware lest Satan take advantage of you--for we are not ignorant of his devices. Draw not back. It is written in the law, "No devoted thing that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord." The Israelite might not retract the beast that he dedicated from his fold for an offering--far less the Christian, when he hath resolved so yield up his heart, his life, his soul to Jesus. I speak not thus to grieve you. Think not that my jealousy bodes a suspicion, but rather that it betokens my love. "We are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." "My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not."

To those who have worshipped during the past two years in the Surrey

Music Hall,--the preacher's greetings and his love. Ye have heard how the Prophet Samuel set up a stone and called the name of it EBEN-EZER, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." That stone marked the place where the Lord gave the children of Israel a great victory over the Philistines: but it likewise marked the "very place where, twenty years before, the Israelites were defeated, and the Ark of God was taken." Let us rejoice, O my people, with trembling. Two years ago that Hall was the scene of such discomfiture, such dire calamity and death, as we hardly dare to think of. Sure that was the night of my heart's bitterest anguish. "Howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing." For ninety-nine successive Lord's days was I enabled to supply the pulpit; no congregation could have been more evenly sustained; never were sermons more widely echoed. God has owned these services to the quickening of many souls, to the establishing of many in our most holy faith, and by them through his goodness hath the Blessed Spirit stirred up many of my brethren in the ministry to a righteous emulation. "According to this time it shall be said, What hath God wrought!" Ah, sirs! if ye knew in what fear we begun, and with what anxiety we have continued--if ye knew the unrequited exertions of those beloved brethren, whose names are unknown to fame, but whose good offices were essential to keep the place open--if ye knew, once more, how many a time your minister has prostrated himself as a broken-hearted sinner before God to renew his first vows of unreserved self-dedication--if ye knew these things, ye would not be backward in that ascription of praise never more meet to flow forth in liquid strains with weeping eyes--"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." My beloved brethren, "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Yet I have other friends. They are scattered far and wide throughout this country, and the sister isles. To you let me drop a word. Ye have received me kindly. Faster friendships were never surely made in fewer hours than I have cemented with some of you. Ye are of my kith and kin. I will take you to record that my God hath graciously proportioned my strength to my days, while I have been among you "in labours more abundant." When I have laboured most for his glory, I have feasted most on the provisions of his grace. And blessed be God, when ofttimes called to visit a people heretofore unknown to me, he hath given me the key of David, to unlock the secret springs of your heart; nay rather, he holdeth the key in his own hand; he openeth and no man can shut. Keep, beloved, the word of his patience, and he will keep you from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Finally, my brethren, I am cheered and comforted beyond measure by the joyous hope that on the coming Sabbath I shall again appear among you. This prospect is as oil to my bones, and although I cannot hope to fulfil my ministry with my wonted vigour, yet to attempt to address you will be as a rich medicine--as a tonic to my fluttering heart.

Brethren, pray for us.

Yours in covenant,

November 2nd, 1858.

Chapter 58

The Christian's Heaviness and Rejoicing

A Sermon

(No. 222)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 7th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."--1 Peter 1:6.

THIS VERSE TO A WORLDLY MAN looks amazingly like a contradiction; and even to a Christian man, when he understands it best, it will still be a paradox. "Ye greatly rejoice," and yet "ye are in heaviness." Is that possible? Can there be in the same heart great rejoicing, and yet a temporary heaviness? Most assuredly. This paradox has been known and felt by many of the Lord's children, and it is far from being the greatest paradox of the Christian life. Men who live within themselves, and mark their own feelings as Christians, will often stand and wonder at themselves. Of all riddles, the greatest riddle is a Christian man. As to his pedigree, what a riddle he is! He is a child of the first Adam, "an heir of wrath, even as others." He is a child of the second Adam: he was born free; there is therefore now no condemnation unto him. He is a riddle in his own existence. "As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed." He is a riddle as to the component parts of his own spiritual frame. He finds that which makes him akin to the devil--depravity, corruption, binding him still to the earth, and causing him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am;" and yet he finds that he has within himself that which exalts him, not merely to the rank of an angel, but higher still--a something which raises him up

together, and makes him "sit together with Christ Jesus in heavenly places." He finds that he has that within him which must ripen into heaven, and yet that about him which would inevitably ripen into hell, if grace did not forbid. What wonder, then, beloved, if the Christian man be a paradox himself, that his condition should be a paradox too? Why marvel ye, when ye see a creature corrupt and yet purified, mortal and yet immortal, fallen but yet exalted far above principalities and powers--why marvel ye, that ye should find that creature also possessed of mingled experience, greatly rejoicing, and yet at the same time, "in heaviness through manifold temptations."

I would have you this morning, look first of all at the Christian's heaviness: he is "in heaviness through manifold temptations;" and then, in the next place, at the Christian's great rejoicing.

I. In the first place, HIS HEAVINESS. This is one of the most unfortunate texts in the Bible. I have heard it quoted ten thousand times for my own comfort, but I never understood it till a day or two ago. On referring to most of the commentaries in my possession, I cannot find that they have a right idea of the meaning of this text. You will notice that your friends often say to you when you are in trouble, "There is a needs be for this affliction;" there is a needs be, say they, "for all these trials and troubles that befall you." That is a very correct and scriptural sentiment; but that sentiment is not in the text at all. And yet, whenever this text is quoted in my hearing, this is what I am always told, or what I conceive I am always told to be the meaning,--that the great temptations, the great trials which befal us, have a needs be for them. But it does not say so here: it says something better; not only that there is a needs be for our temptations, but that there is a needs be for our heaviness under the temptation. Now, let me show you the difference. There is a man of God,

full of faith--strong; he is about to do his Master's work, and he does it. God is with him, and gives him great success. The enemy begins to slander him; all manner of evil is spoken against him falsely for Christ's name sake. You say, there is a needs be for that, and you are quite correct: but look at the man. How gallantly he behaves himself! He lifts his head above his accusers, and unmoved amidst them all, he stands like a rock in the midst of a roaring tempest, never moved from the firm basis on which it rests. The scene changes, and instead of calamity, perhaps he is called to endure absolute persecution, as in apostolic times. We imagine the man driven out from house and home, separated from all his kindred, made to wander in the pathless snows of the mountains; and what a brave and mighty man he appears, when you see him enduring all this! His spirits never sink. "All this can I do," says he, "and I can greatly rejoice in it, for Christ's name's sake; for I can practice the text which says, Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy;'" and you will tell that man there is a needs be for his persecution; he says, "Yes, I know it, and I fear not all I have to endure; I am not cowed by it." At last imagine the man taken before the Inquisition and condemned to die. You still comfort him with the fact, that there is a needs be that he shall die--that the blood of the martyrs must be the seed of the church--that the world can never be overcome by Christ's gospel, except through the sufferings and death of his followers--that Christ stooped to conquer, and the church must do the same--that through death and blood must be the road to the church's victory. And what a noble sight it is, to see that man going to the stake, and kissing it--looking upon his iron chains with as much esteem as if they had been chains of gold. Now tell him there is a needs be for all this, and he will thank you for the promise; and you admire the man; you wonder at him. Ah! but there is another class of persons that

get no such honour as this. There is another sort of Christians for whom this promise really was intended, who do not get the comfort of it. I do admire the man I have pictured to you: may God long preserve such men in the midst of the church; I would stimulate every one of you to imitate him. Seek for great faith and great love to your Master, that you may be able to endure, being "stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." But remember, that this text has not in it comfort for such persons; there are other texts for them; this text has been perverted for such a use as that. This is meant for another and a feebler grade of Christians, who are often overlooked and sometimes despised.

I was lying upon my couch during this last week, and my spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for--but a very slight thing will move me to tears just now--and a kind friend was telling me of some poor old soul living near, who was suffering very great pain, and yet she was full of joy and rejoicing. I was so distressed by the hearing of that story, and felt so ashamed of myself, that I did not know what to do; wondering why I should be in such a state as this; while this poor woman, who had a terrible cancer, and was in the most frightful agony, could nevertheless "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." And in a moment this text flashed upon my mind, with its real meaning. I am sure it is its real meaning. Read it over and over again, and you will see I am not wrong. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness." It does not say, "Though now for a season ye are suffering pain, though now for a season you are poor; but you are in heaviness;'" your spirits are taken away from you; you are made to weep; you cannot bear your pain; you are brought to the very dust of death, and wish that you might die. Your faith itself seems as if it would fail you.

That is the thing for which there is a needs be. That is what my text declares, that there is an absolute needs be that sometimes the Christian should not endure his sufferings with a gallant and a joyous heart; there is a needs be that sometimes his spirits should sink within him, and that he should become even as a little child smitten beneath the hand of God. Ah! beloved, we sometimes talk about the rod, but it is one thing to see the rod, and it is another thing to feel it; and many a time have we said within ourselves, "If I did not feel so low spirited as I now do, I should not mind this affliction;" and what is that but saying, "If I did not feel the rod I should not mind it?" It is just how you feel, that is, after all, the pith and marrow of your affliction. It is that breaking down of the spirit, that pulling down of the strong man, that is the very fester of the soreness of God's scourging--"the blueness of the wound, whereby the soul is made better." I think this one idea has been enough to be food for me many a day; and there may be some child of God here to whom it may bring some slight portion of comfort. We will yet again dwell upon it. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

And here let me for a moment or two try to explain why it is that there is an absolute needs be, not merely for temptations and troubles, but likewise for our being in heaviness under them.

In the first place, if we were not in heaviness during our troubles we should not be like our Covenant Head--Christ Jesus. It is a rule of the kingdom that all the members must be like the head. They are to be like the head in that day when he shall appear. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." But we must be like the head also in his humiliation, or else we cannot be like him in his glory. Now, you will observe that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ very often passed

through much of trouble, without any heaviness. When he said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head," I observe no heaviness. I do not think he sighed over that. And when athirst he sat upon the well, and said, "Give me to drink," there was no heaviness in all his thirst. I believe that through the first years of his ministry, although he might have suffered some heaviness, he usually passed over his troubles like a ship floating over the waves of the sea. But you will remember that at last the waves of swelling grief came into the vessel; at last the Saviour himself, though full of patience, was obliged to say "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" and one of the evangelists tells us that the Saviour "began to be very heavy." What means that, but that his spirits began to sink? There is a more terrible meaning yet, which I cannot enter into this morning; but still I may say that the surface meaning of it is that all his spirits sank within him. He had no longer his wonted courage, and though he had strength to say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done;" still the weakness did prevail, when he said, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me." The Saviour passed through the brook, but he "drank of the brook by the way;" and we who pass through the brook of suffering must drink of it too. He had to bear the burden, not with his shoulders omnipotent, but with shoulders that were bending to the earth beneath a load. And you and I must not always expect a giant faith that can remove mountains: sometimes even to us the grasshopper must be a burden, that we may in all things be like unto our head.

Yet again; if the Christian did not sometimes suffer heaviness he would begin to grow too proud, and think too much of himself, and become too great in his own esteem. Those of us who are of elastic spirit, and who in our health are full of everything that can make life happy, are too

apt to forget the Most High God. Lest we should be satisfied from ourselves, and forget that all our own springs must be in him, the Lord sometimes seems to sap the springs of life, to drain the heart of all its spirits, and to leave us without soul or strength for mirth, so that the noise of tabret and of viol would be unto us as but the funeral dirge, without joy or gladness. Then it is that we discover what we are made of, and out of the depths we cry unto God, humbled by our adversities.

Another reason for this discipline is, I think, that in heaviness we often learn lessons that we never could attain elsewhere. Do you know that God has beauties for every part of the world; and he has beauties for every place of experience? There are views to be seen from the tops of the Alps that you can never see elsewhere. Ay, but there are beauties to be seen in the depths of the dell that ye could never see on the tops of the mountains; there are glories to be seen on Pisgah, wondrous sights to be beheld when by faith we stand on Tabor; but there are also beauties to be seen in our Gethsemanes, and some marvellously sweet flowers are to be culled by the edge of the dens of the leopards. Men will never become great in divinity until they become great in suffering. "Ah!" said Luther, "affliction is the best book in my library;" and let me add, the best leaf in the book of affliction is that blackest of all the leaves, the leaf called heaviness, when the spirit sinks within us, and we cannot endure as we could wish.

And yet again; this heaviness is of essential use to a Christian, if he would do good to others. Ah! there are a great many Christian people that I was going to say I should like to see afflicted--but I will not say so much as that; I should like to see them heavy in spirit; if it were the Lord's will that they should be bowed down greatly, I would not express a word of regret; for a little more sympathy would do them

good; a little more power to sympathize would be a precious boon to them, and even if it were purchased by a short journey through a burning, fiery furnace, they might not rue the day afterwards in which they had been called to pass through the flame. There are none so tender as those who have been skinned themselves. Those who have been in the chamber of affliction know how to comfort those who are there. Do not believe that any man will become a physician unless he walks the hospitals; and I am sure that no one will become a divine, or become a comforter, unless he lies in the hospital as well as walks through it, and has to suffer himself. God cannot make ministers--and I speak with reverence of his Holy Name--he cannot make a Barnabas except in the fire. It is there, and there alone, that he can make his sons of consolation; he may make his sons of thunder anywhere; but his sons of consolation he must make in the fire, and there alone. Who shall speak to those whose hearts are broken, who shall bind up their wounds, but those whose hearts have been broken also, and whose wounds have long run with the sore of grief? "If need be," then, "ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

I think I have said enough about this heaviness, except that I must add it is but for a season. A little time, a few hours, a few days, a few months at most, it shall all have passed away; and then comes the "eternal weight of glory, wherein ye greatly rejoice."

II. And now to the second part of the text. Here we have something far more joyous and comfortable than the first. "WHEREIN YE GREATLY REJOICE." And can a Christian greatly rejoice while he is in heaviness? Yes, most assuredly he can. Mariners tell us that there are some parts of the sea where there is a strong current upon the surface going one way, but that down in the depths there is a strong current running the other way. Two seas do not meet and interfere with one another; but one

stream of water on the surface is running in one direction, and another below in an opposite direction. Now, the Christian is like that. On the surface there is a stream of heaviness rolling with dark waves; but down in the depths there is a strong under-current of great rejoicing that is always flowing there. Do you ask me what is the cause of this great rejoicing? The apostle tells us, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice." What does he mean? You must refer to his own writings, and then you will see. He is writing "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus," and so forth. The first thing that he say's to them is, that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God;" "wherein we greatly rejoice." Ah! even when the Christian is most "in heaviness through manifold temptations," what a mercy it is that he can know that he is still elect of God! Any man who is assured that God has "chosen him from before the foundation of the world," may well say, "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Let me be lying upon a bed of sickness, and just revel in that one thought. Before God made the heavens and the earth, and laid the pillars of the firmament in their golden sockets, he set his love upon me; upon the breast of the great high priest he wrote my name, and in his everlasting book it stands, never to be erased--"elect according to the foreknowledge of God." Why, this may make a man's soul leap within him, and all the heaviness that the infirmities of the flesh may lay upon him shall he but as nothing; for this tremendous current of his overflowing joy shall sweep away the mill-dam of his grief. Bursting and overleaping every obstacle, it shall overflood all his sorrows till they are drowned and covered up, and shall not be mentioned any more for ever. "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Come, thou Christian! thou art depressed and cast down. Think for a moment. Thou art chosen of God and precious. Let the bell of election ring in thine ear--that ancient Sabbath bell of the covenant; and let thy name be

heard in its notes and say, I beseech thee, say, "Doth not this make thee greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, thou art in heaviness through manifold temptations?"

Again, you will see another reason. The apostle says that we are "elect through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,"--"wherein we greatly rejoice." Is the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ girt about my loins, to be my beauty and my glorious dress; and is the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon me, to take away all my guilt and all my sin and shall I not in this greatly rejoice? What shall there be in all the depressions of spirits that can possibly come upon me that shall make me break my harp, even though I should for a moment hang it upon the willows? Do I not expect that yet again my songs shall mount to heaven; and even now through the thick darkness do not the sparks of my joy appear, when I remember that I have still upon me the blood of Jesus, and still about me the glorious righteousness of the Messiah?

But the great and cheering comfort of the apostle is, that we are elect unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And here, brethren, is the grand comfort of the Christian. When the child of God is sore-stricken and much depressed, the sweet hope, that living or dying, there is an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven for him, may indeed make him greatly rejoice. He is drawing near the gates of death, and his spirit is in heaviness, for he has to leave behind him all his family and all that life holds dear. Besides, his sickness brings upon him naturally a depression of spirit. But you sit by his bedside, and you begin to talk to him of the

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Arrayed in living green."

You tell him of Canaan on the other side the Jordan--of the land that floweth with milk and honey--of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and of all the glories which God hath prepared for them that love him; and you see his dull leaden eye light up with seraphic brightness, he shakes off his heaviness, and he begins to sing,

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye,
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie"

This makes him greatly rejoice; and if to that you add that possibly before he has passed the gates of death his Master may appear--if you tell him that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming in the clouds of heaven, and though we have not seen him yet believing in him we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, expecting the second advent--if he has grace to believe in that sublime doctrine, he will be ready to clap his hands upon his bed of weariness and cry, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly! come quickly!"

And in drawing to a close, I may notice, there is one more doctrine that will always cheer a Christian, and I think that this perhaps is the one chiefly intended here in the text. Look at the end of the 15th verse; "Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" This perhaps will be one of the greatest cordials to a Christian in heaviness, that he is not kept by his own power, but by the power of God, and that he is not left in his own keeping, but he is kept by the Most High. Ah! what should you and I do in the day when darkness gathers round our faith, if we had to keep ourselves! I can never understand what an Arminian does, when he gets into sickness, sorrow, and affliction; from what well he draws his comfort, I know not; but I know whence I draw mine. It is this. "When

flesh and heart faileth, God is the strength of my life, and my portion for ever." "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." But take away that doctrine of the Saviour's keeping his people, and where is my hope? What is there in the gospel worth my preaching, or worth your receiving? I know that he hath said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." What, Lord, but suppose they should grow faint--that they should begin to murmur in their affliction. Shall they not perish then? No, they shall never perish. But suppose the pain should grow so hot that their faith should fail: shall they not perish then? No, "they shall not perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But suppose their sense should seem to wander, and some should try to pervert them from the faith: shall they not be perverted? No; "they shall never perish," But suppose in some hour of their extremity hell and the world and their own fears should all beset them, and they should have no power to stand--no power whatever to resist the fierce onslaughts of the enemy, shall they not perish then? No, they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed," and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Ah! this is the doctrine, the cheering assurance "wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if needs be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

One word before I send you away. There are some of you here to whom this precious passage has not a word to say. Our heaviness, O worldling, "our heaviness is but for a season." Your heaviness is to come; and it shall be a heaviness intolerable, because hopelessly everlasting. Our temptations, though they be manifold, are but light afflictions and are but for a moment," and they "work out for us a far

more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" but your joys that you now have are evanescent as a bubble, and they are passing away, and they are working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of misery. I beseech you, look at this matter. Search and see whether all be right with your spirits--whether it be well for you to venture into an eternal state as you are; and may God give you grace, that you may feel your need of a Saviour, that you may seek Christ, lay hold upon him, and so may come into a gracious state, wherein ye shall greatly rejoice, even though for a season, if needs be, ye should be in heaviness through manifold temptations!

Chapter 59

The Evil and Its Remedy

A Sermon

(No. 223)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 14th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great."--Ezekiel 9:9.

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."--1 John 1:7.

ISHALL HAVE two texts this morning--the evil and its remedy. "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great;" and "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

We can learn nothing of the gospel, except by feeling its truths--no one truth of the gospel is ever truly known and really learned, until we have tested and tried and proved it, and its power has been exercised upon us. I have heard of a naturalist, who thought himself exceedingly wise with regard to the natural history of birds, and yet he had learned all he knew in his study, and had never so much as seen a bird either flying through the air or sitting upon its perch. He was but a fool although he thought himself exceeding wise. And there are some men who like him think themselves great theologians; they might even pretend to take a doctor's degree in divinity; and yet, if we came to the root of the matter, and asked them whether they ever saw or felt any of these things of which they talked, they would have to say, "No; I know these things in the letter, but not in the spirit; I understand them as a matter of theory, but not as things of my own consciousness

and experience." Be assured, that as the naturalist who was merely the student of other men's observations knew nothing, so the man who pretends to religion, but has never entered into the depths and power of its doctrines, or felt the influence of them upon his heart, knows nothing whatever, and all the knowledge he pretendeth to is but varnished ignorance. There are some sciences that may be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the heart.

I have made use of this remark as the preface to my sermon, because I think it will be forced from each of our hearts before we have done, if the two truths which I shall consider this morning, shall come at all home to us with power. The first truth is the greatness of our sin. No man can know the greatness of sin till he has felt it, for there is no measuring-rod for sin, except its condemnation in our own conscience, when the law of God speaks to us with a terror that may be felt. And as for the richness of the blood of Christ and its ability to wash us, of that also we can know nothing till we have ourselves been washed, and have ourselves proved that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God hath cleansed us from all sin.

I. I shall begin, then, with the first doctrine as it is contained in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the ninth verse,--"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great." There are two great lessons which every man must learn, and learn by experience, before he can be a Christian. First, he must learn that sin is an exceeding great and evil thing; and he must learn also that the blood of Christ is an exceedingly precious thing, and is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto it. The former lesson we have before us. O may God, by his infinite spirit, by his great wisdom, teach it to some of us who never knew it before!

Some men imagine that the gospel was devised, in some way or other, to soften down the harshness of God towards sin. Ah! how mistaken the idea! There is no more harsh condemnation of sin anywhere than in the gospel. Ye shall go to Sinai, and ye shall there hear its thunders rolling; ye shall behold the flashing of its terrible lightnings, till, like Moses, ye shall exceedingly fear and quake, and come away declaring that sin must be a terrible thing, otherwise, the Holy One had never come upon Mount Paran with all these terrors round about him. But after that ye shall go to Calvary; there ye shall see no lightnings, and ye shall hear no thunders, but instead thereof, ye shall hear the groans of an expiring God, and ye shall behold the contortions and agonies of one who bore

"All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare."

And then ye shall say, "Now, though I never fear nor quake, yet I know how exceedingly great a thing sin must be, since such a sacrifice was required to make an atonement for it. Oh! sinners; if ye come to the gospel, imagining that there ye shall find an apology for your sin, ye have indeed mistaken your way. Moses charges you with sin, and tells you that you are without excuse; but as for the gospel, it rends away from you every shadow of a covering; it leaves you without a cloak for your sin; it tells you that you have sinned wilfully against the Most High God--that ye have not an apology that ye can possibly make for all the iniquities that ye have committed against him; and so far in any way from smoothing over your sin, and telling you that you are a weak creature and, therefore could not help your sin, it charges upon you the very weakness of your nature, and makes that itself the most damning sin of all. If ye seek apologies, better look even into the face of Moses, when it is clothed with all the majesty of the terrors

of the law, than into the face of the gospel, for that is more terrible by far to him who seeks to cloak his sin.

Nor does the gospel in any way whatever give man a hope that the claims of the law will be in any way loosened. Some imagine that under the old dispensation God demanded great things of man--that he did bind upon man heavy burdens that were grievous to he borne--and they suppose that Christ came into the world to put upon the shoulders of men a lighter law, something which it would be more easy for them to obey--a law which they can more readily keep, or which if they break, would not come upon them with such terrible threatenings. Ah, not so. The gospel came not into the world to soften down the law. Till heaven and earth shall pass away, not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail. What God hath said to the sinner in the law, he saith to the sinner in the gospel. If he declareth that "the soul that sinneth it shall die," the testimony of the gospel is not contrary to she testimony of the law. If he declares that whosoever breaketh the sacred law shall most assuredly be punished, the gospel also demands blood for blood, and eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, and doth not relax a solitary jot or tittle of its demands, but is as severe and as terribly just as even the law itself.

Do you reply to this, that Christ has certainly softened down the law? I reply, that ye know not, then, the mission of Christ. What said he himself? The Lord hath said in the law "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" hath Christ softened the law? No. Saith he, "I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." That is no softening of the law. It is, as it were, the grinding of the edge of the terrible sword of Divine justice, to make it sharper far than it seemed before. Christ hath not put out the furnace; he rather seemeth to heat it seven times hotter. Before Christ came sin seemed unto me to be but little; but

when he came sin became exceeding sinful, and all its dread heinousness started out before the light.

But, says one, surely the gospel does in some degree remove the greatness of our sin. Does it not soften the punishment of sin? Ah! no. Ye shall appeal to Moses; let him ascend the pulpit and preach to you. He says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and his sermon is dread and terrible. He sits down. And now comes Jesus Christ, the man of a loving countenance. What says he with regard to the punishment of sin? Ah! sirs, there was never such a preacher of the fires of hell as Christ was. Our Lord Jesus Christ was all love, but he was all honesty too. "Never man spake like that man," when he came to speak of the punishment of the lost. What other prophet was the author of such dread expressions as these?--"He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"--"These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" or these--"Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." Stand at the feet of Jesus when he tells you of the punishment of sin, and the effect of iniquity, and you may tremble there far more than you would have done if Moses had been the preacher, and if Sinai had been in the background to conclude the sermon. No, brethren, the gospel of Christ in no sense whatever helps to make sin less. The proclamation of Christ to-day by his minister is the same as the utterence of Ezekiel of old--"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great."

And now let us endeavour to deal with hearts and consciences a moment. My brethren, there are some here who have never felt this truth. There are many of you who start back affrighted from it. You will go home and represent me as one who delights to dwell on certain dark and terrible things that I suppose to be true--you say within yourselves, "I cannot, I will not, receive that doctrine of sin; I know I am a frail weak

creature; I have made a great many mistakes in my life--that I will admit; but still such is my nature, and I therefore could not help it; I am not going to be arraigned before a pulpit and condemned as the chief of criminals; I may be a sinner--I confess I am with all the rest of mankind--but as to my sin being anything so great as that man attempts to describe, I do not believe it; I reject the doctrine." And thinkest thou, my friend, that I am surprised at thy doing so? I know thee who thou art; it is because as yet the grace of God has never touched thy soul that therefore thou sayest this. And here comes the proof of the doctrine with which I started. Thou dost not know this truth, because thou hast never felt it; but if thou hadst felt it, as every true-born child of God has felt it, thou wouldst say, "The man cannot describe its terrors as they are; they must be felt before they can be known, and when felt they are not to be expressed in all their fulness of terror."

But come, let me reason with you for a moment. Your sin is great, although you think it small. Remember, brother, I am not about to make out that thy sin is greater than mine. I speak to thee, and I speak to myself also, thy sin is great. Follow me in these few thoughts and perhaps thou wilt better understand it. How great a thing is one sin, when according to the Word of God one sin could suffice to damn the soul. One sin, remember, destroyed the whole human race. Adam did but take of the forbidden fruit, and that one sin blasted Eden, and made all of us inheritors of the curse, and caused the earth to bring forth thorns and thistles, even unto this day. But it may be said could one sin destroy the soul? Is it possible that one solitary sin could open the gates of hell, and then close them upon the guilty soul for ever, and that God should refuse his mercy, and shut out that soul for ever from the presence of his face? Yes, if I believe my Bible, I must

believe that. Oh, how great must my sins be if this is the terrible effect of one transgression. Sin cannot be the little thing that my pride has helped me to imagine it to be. It must be an awful thing if but one sin could ruin my soul for ever.

Think again my friend, for a moment what an imprudent and impertinent thing sin is. Behold! there is one God who filleth all in all, and he is the Infinite Creator. He makes me, and I am nothing more in his sight than an animated grain of dust; and I that animated grain of dust, with a mere ephemeral existence, have the impertinence and imprudence to set up my will against his will! I dare to proclaim war against the Infinite Majesty of heaven. It is a thing so audacious, so infernally full of pride, that one need not marvel that even a sin in the little eye of man, should, when it is looked upon by the conscience in the light of heaven, appear to be great indeed.

But think again, how great does your sin, and mine seem, if we will but think of the ingratitude which has marked it. The Lord our God has fed us from our youth up to this day: he has put the breath into our nostrils, and has held our souls in life; he has clothed the earth with mercies and he has permitted us to walk across these fair fields; and he has given us bread to eat and raiment to put on, and mercies so precious that their full value can never be known until they are taken from us; and yet you and I have persevered in breaking all his laws wilfully and wantonly: we have gone contrary to his will; it has been sufficient for us to know that a thing has been God's will, and we have at once run contrary thereunto. Oh, if we set our secret sins in the light of his mercy, if our transgressions are set side by side with his favours, we must each of us say, our sins indeed are exceeding great!

Mark, I am not now addressing myself solely and wholly to those whom the word itself condemns of great sin. We of course do not hesitate for

a moment to speak of the drunkard, the whoremonger, the adulterer, and the thief, as being great sinners; we should not spare to say that their iniquity is exceeding great, for it exceeds even the bounds of man's morality, and the laws of our civil government. But I am speaking this day to you who have been the most moral, to you whose outward carriage is everything that could be desired, to you who have kept the Sabbath, to you who have frequented God's house, and outwardly worshipped. Your sins and mine are exceeding great. They seem but little to the outward eye--but if we came to dig into the bowels thereof and see their iniquity, their hideous blackness, we most say of them they are exceeding great.

And again, I repeat it, this is a doctrine that no man can rightly know and receive until he has felt it. My hearer, hast thou ever felt this doctrine to be true--"my sin is exceeding great?" Sickness is a terrible thing, more especially when it is accompanied with pain, when the poor body is racked to an extreme, so that the spirit fails within us, and we are dried up like a potsherd; but I bear witness in this place this morning, that sickness however agonizing, is nothing like the discovery of the evil of sin. I had rather pass through seven years of the most wearisome pain, and the most languishing sickness, than I would ever again pass through the terrible discovery of the terrors of sin. There be some of you who will understand what I mean; for brother, you have felt the same. Once on a time, you were playing with your lusts, and dallying with your sin, and it pleased God to open your eyes to see that sin is exceeding sinful. You remember the horror of that state, it seemed as if all hideous things were gathered into one dread and awful spectacle. You had before loved your iniquities, but now you loathed them--and you loathed yourselves; before, you had thought that your transgressions might easily be got rid of, they were matters that

might be speedily washed out by repentance, or purged away by amendment of your life; but now sin seemed an alarming thing, and that you should have committed all this iniquity; life seemed to you a curse, and death, if it had not been for that dreary something after death, would have been to you the highest blessing, if you could have escaped the lashings of your conscience, which seemed to be perpetually whipping you with whips of burning wire. Some of you, perhaps, passed through but a little of this. God was graciously pleased to give you deliverance in a few hours; but you must confess that those hours were hours into which it seemed as if years of misery had been compressed. It was my sad lot for three or four years, to feel the greatness of my sin without a discovery of the greatness of God's mercy. I had to walk through this world with more than a world upon my shoulders, and sustain a grief that so far exceeds all other griefs, as a mountain exceeds a mole hill; and I often wonder to this day how it was, that my hand was kept from rending my own body into pieces through the terrible agony which I felt, when I discovered the greatness of my transgression. Yet, I had not been a greater sinner than any one of you here present, openly and publicly, but heart sins were laid bare, sins of lip and tongue were discovered, and then I knew--oh, that I may never have to learn over again in such a dreadful school this terrible lesson--"The iniquity of Judah and of Israel is exceeding great." This is the first part of the discourse.

II. "Well," cries one, turning on his heel, "there is very little comfort in that. It is enough to drive one to despair, if not to madness itself." Ah friend! such is the very design of this text. If I may have the pleasure of driving you to despair, if it be a despair of your self-righteousness and a despair of saving your own soul, I shall be thrice happy.

We turn therefore from that terrible text to the second one,--the first of John, the first chapter, and the seventh verse;--"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." There lies the blackness; here stands the Lord Jesus Christ. What will he do with it? Will he go and speak to it, and say, "This is no great evil; this blackness is but a little spot?" Oh! no; he looks at it, and he says, "This is terrible blackness, darkness that may be felt; this is an exceeding great evil." Will he cover it up then? Will he weave a mantle of excuse and then wrap it round about the iniquity? Ah! no; whatever covering there may have been he lifts it off; and he declares that when the Spirit of truth is come he will convince the world of sin, and lay the sinner's conscience bare and probe the wound to the bottom. What then will he do? He will do a far better thing than make an excuse or than to pretend in any way to speak lightly of it. He will cleanse it all away, remove it entirely by the power and meritorious virtue of his own blood, which is able to save unto the uttermost. The gospel does not consist in making a man's sin appear little. The way Christians get their peace is not by seeing their sins shrivelled and shrinking until they seem small to them. But on the contrary; they, first of all, see their sins expanding, and then, after that, they obtain their peace by seeing those sins entirely swept away,--far as the east is from the west.

Now, carrying in mind the remarks I made upon the first text, I call your attention for a few moments to the greatness and beauty of the second one. Note here, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from ALL sin." Dwell on the word "all" for a moment. Our sins are great; every sin is great; but there are some that in our apprehension seem to be greater than others. There are crimes that the lip of modesty could not mention. I might go far in this pulpit this morning

in describing the degradation of human nature in the sins which it has invented. It is amazing how the ingenuity of man seems to have exhausted itself in inventing fresh crimes. Surely there is not the possibility of the invention of a new sin. But if there be, ere long man will invent it, for man seemeth exceedingly cunning, and full of wisdom in the discovery of means of destroying himself and the endeavour to injure his Maker. But there are some sins that show a diabolical extent of degraded ingenuity--some sins of which it were a shame to speak, of which it were disgraceful to think. But note here: "The blood of Jesus Christ eleanseth from all sin." There may be some sins of which a man cannot speak, but there is no sin which the blood of Christ cannot wash away. Blasphemy, however profane, lust, however bestial; covetousness, however far it may have gone into theft and rapine; breach of the commandments of God, however much of riot it may have run, all this may be pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ. In all the long list of human sins, though that be long as time, there standeth but one sin that is unpardonable, and that one no sinner has committed if he feels within himself a longing for mercy, for that sin once committed, the soul becomes hardened, dead, and seared, and never desireth afterwards to find peace with God. I therefore declare to thee, O trembling sinner, that however great thine iniquity may be, whatever sin thou mayest have committed in all the list of guilt, however far thou mayest have exceeded all thy fellow-creatures, though thou mayest have distanced the Pauls and Magdalens and every one of the most heinous culprits in the black race of sin, yet the blood of Christ is able now to wash thy sin away. Mark! I speak not lightly of thy sin, it is exceeding great; but I speak still more loftily of the blood of Christ. Great as are thy sins, the blood of Christ is greater still. Thy sins are like great mountains,

but the blood of Christ is like Noah's flood; twenty cubits upwards shall this blood prevail, and the top of the mountains of thy sin shall be covered.

Just take the word "all" in another sense, not only as taking in all sorts of sin, but as comprehending the great aggregate mass of sin. Come here sinner, thou with the grey head. What are we to understand in thy case by this word all? Bring hither the tremendous load of the sins of thy youth. Those sins are still in thy bones, and thy tottering knees sometimes testify against the iniquities of thy early youth; but all these sins Christ can remove. Now bring hither the sins of thy riper manhood, thy transgressions in the family, thy failures in business, all the mistakes and all the errors thou hast committed in the thoughts of thy heart. Bring them all here; and then add the iniquities of thy frail and trembling age. What a mass is there here! what a mass of sin! Stir up that putrid mass, but put thy finger to thy nostrils first, for thou canst not bear the stench thereof if thou art a man with a living and quickened conscience. Couldst thou bear to read thine own diary if thou hadst written there all thy acts? No; for though thou be the purest of mankind, thy thoughts if they could have been recorded, would now if thou couldst read them, make thee startle and wonder that thou art demon enough to have had such imaginations within thy soul. But put them all there, and all these sins the blood of Christ can wash away.

Nay, more than that. Come hither ye thousands who are gathered together this morning to listen to the Word of God; what is the aggregate of your guilt? Hither ye have come, men of every grade and class, and women of every age and order; what is the mass of all your united guilt? Could ye put it so that mortal observation could comprehend the whole within its ken, it were as a mountain with a base, broad as

eternity, and a summit lofty almost as the throne of the great archangel. But, remember, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. Let but the blood be applied to our consciences and all our guilt is removed, and cast away for ever--all--none left, not one solitary stain remaining--all gone, like Israel's enemies--all drowned in the Red Sea, so that there was not one of them left, all swept away, not so much as the remembrance of them remaining. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Yet, once more, in the praise of this blood we must notice one further feature. There be some of you here who are saying, "Ah! that shall be my hope when I come to die, that in the last hour of my extremity the blood of Christ will take my sins away; it is now my comfort to think that the blood of Christ shall wash, and purge, and purify the transgressions of life." But, mark! my text saith not so; it does not say the blood of Christ shall cleanse--that were a truth--but it says something greater than that--it says, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth"--cleanseth now. And is it possible that now a man may be forgiven? Can a harlot now have all her sins blotted out of the book of God? And can she know it? Can the thief this day have all his transgressions cast into the sea; and can he know it? Can I, the chief of sinners, this day be cleansed from all my sins, and know it? Can I know that I stand accepted before the throne of God, a holy creature because washed from every sin? Yes, tell it the wide world over, that the blood of Christ can not only wash you in the last dying article, but can wash you now. And let it be known, moreover, that to this there are a thousand witnesses, who, rising in this very place from their seats, could sing--

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of my Saviour's precious blood,

With divine assurance knowing,

He has made my peace with God"

What would you not give to have all your sins blotted out now? Would you not give yourself away to become the servant of God for ever, if now your sins should be washed away? Ah, then, say not in your hearts, "What shall I do to obtain this mercy?" Imagine not there is any difficulty in your way. Suppose not there is some hard thing to be done before you can come to Christ to be washed, O beloved! to the man that knows himself to be guilty, there is not one barrier between himself and Christ. Come, soul, this moment come to him that hung upon the cross of Calvary! come now and be washed.

But what meanest thou by coming? I mean this: come thou and put thy trust in Christ, and thou shalt be saved. What is meant by believing in Christ? Some say, that "to believe in Christ is to believe that Christ died for me." That is not a satisfactory definition of faith. An Arminian believes that Christ died for everybody. He must, therefore, necessarily believe that Christ died for him. His believing that will not save him, for he will still remain an unconverted man and yet believe that. To believe in Christ is to trust him. The way I believe in Christ, and I know not how to speak of it, except as I feel it myself, is simply this: I know it is written that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." I do firmly believe that those he came to save he will save. The only question I ask myself is, "Can I put myself among that number whom he has declared he came to save?" Am I a sinner? Not one that utters the word in a complimentary sense, but do I feel the deep compunction in my inmost soul? do I stand and feel convicted, guilty, and condemned? I do; I know I do. Whatever I may not be, one thing I know I am--a sinner, guilty, consciously guilty, and often miserable on account of that guilt. Well, then, the Scripture

says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

"And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Thus, at his footstool, bow the knee,
And Israel's God thy peace shall be,"

Let me put my entire trust in the bloody sacrifice which he offered upon my behalf. No dependence will I have in my playings, my doings, my feelings, my weepings, my preachings, my thinkings, my Bible readings, nor all that. I would desire to have good works, and yet in my good works I will not put a shadow of trust.

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

And if there be any power in Christ to save I am saved; if there be an everlasting arm extended by Christ, and if that Saviour who hung there was "God over all, blessed for ever," and if his blood is still exhibited before the throne of God as the sacrifice for sin, then perish I cannot, till the throne of God shall break, and till the pillars of God's justice shall crumble.

Now, sinner what then hast thou to do this morning? If thou feelest thy guilt to be great, cast thyself entirely upon this sacrifice by blood. "But no," says one, "I have not felt enough." Thy feelings are not Christ. "No, but I have not prayed enough." Thy prayers are not Christ, and thy prayers cannot save thee. "No, but I have not repented enough." Thy repentance may destroy thee, if thou puttest that in the place of Christ. All that thou hast, I repeat this morning, is this--dost thou feel thyself to be a lost, ruined, guilty sinner? Then simply cast thyself on the fact that Christ is able to save sinners and rest there. What! do you say you cannot do it? Oh may God enable you, may he give

you faith, sink or swim, to cast yourself on that. "Well! but," you say, "I may not; being such a sinner?" You may; and God never yet rejected a sinner that sought salvation by Jesus. Such a thing never happened, though the sinner sometimes thought it had. Come, the crumb is under the table; though thou be but a dog come and pick it up; it is a privilege even for the dog to take it; and mercy that is great to thee, is but a crumb to him that gives it freely--come and take it. Christ will not reject thee. And if thou be the chief of sinners that ever lived, only simply trust thyself upon him, and perish thou canst not, if God be God, and if this Bible be the book of his truth. The Lord now help each one of us to come afresh to Christ, and to his name be glory.

Chapter 60

Samson Conquered

A Sermon

(No. 224)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 21st, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"And she said, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house."--Judges 16:20-21.

SAMSON IS, IN MANY RESPECTS, one of the most remarkable men whose history is recorded in the pages of inspiration. He enjoyed a singular privilege only accorded to one other person in the Old Testament. His birth was foretold to his parents by an angel. Isaac was promised to Abraham and Sarah by angels whom they entertained unawares; but save Isaac, Samson was the only one whose birth was foretold by an angelic messenger before the opening of the gospel dispensation. Before his birth he was dedicated to God, and set apart as a Nazarite. Now, a Nazarite was a person who was entirely consecrated to God, and in token of his consecration he drank no wine; and allowed his hair to grow, untouched by the razor. Samson, you may therefore understand, was entirely consecrated to God, and when any saw him, they would say, "That man is God's man, a Nazarite, set apart." God endowed Samson with supernatural strength, a strength which never could have been the result of mere thews and sinews. It was not the fashioning of Samson's

body that made him strong; it was not the arm, or the fist with which he smote the Philistines; it was a miracle that dwelt within him, a continued going forth of the omnipotence of God, which made him mightier than thousands of his enemies. Samson appears very early to have discovered in himself this great strength, for "the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan." He judged Israel for thirty years, and gloriously did he deliver them. What a noble being he must have been! See him, when he steps into the vineyard for a moment from his parents. A lion that has been crouching there springs upon him, but he meets him all unarmed, receives him upon his brawny arms and rends him like a kid. See him afterwards, when his countrymen have bound him and taken him down from the top of the rock, and delivered him up to the thousands of the Philistines. He has scarcely come near them, when, without a weapon, with his own foot, he begins to spurn them; and seeing there the jaw-bone of an ass, he takes that ignoble weapon, and sweeps away the men that had helmets about their heads and were girded with greaves of brass. Nor did his vigour fail him in his later life, for he died in the very prime of his days. One of his greatest exploits was performed at this very season. He is entrapped in the city of Gaza. He remains there till midnight; so confident is he in his strength that he is in no hurry to depart, and instead of assailing the guard, and making them draw the bolts, he wrenches up the two posts, and takes away the gate, bar and all, and, carries his mighty burden for miles to the top of a hill that is before Hebron. Every way it must have been a great thing to see this man, especially if one had him for a friend. Had one been his foe, the more distant the sight the better, for none could escape from him but those who fled; but to have him for a friend and to stand with him in the day of battle, was to feel that you had an army in a single man, and had in

one frame that which would strike thousands with terror. Samson, however, though he had great physical strength, had but little mental force, and even less spiritual power. His whole life is a scene of miracles and follies. He had but little grace, and was easily overcome by temptation. He is enticed and led astray. Often corrected; still he sins again. At last he falls into the hands of Delilah. She is bribed with an enormous sum, and she endeavours to get from him the secret of his strength. He foolishly toys with the danger, and plays with his own destruction. At last goaded by her importunity, he lets out the secret which he ought to have confided to no one but himself. The secret of his strength lay in his locks. Not that his hair made him strong; but that his hair was the symbol of his consecration, and was the pledge of God's favour to him. While his hair was untouched he was a consecrated man; as soon as that was cut away, he was no longer perfectly consecrated, and then his strength departed from him. His hair is cut away; the locks that covered him once are taken from him, and there he stands a shaveling, weak as other men. Now the Philistines begin to oppress him, and his eyes are burned out with hot iron. How are the mighty fallen! How are the great ones taken in the net! Samson, the great hero of Israel, is seen with a shuffling gait walking towards Gaza. A shuffling gait, I said, because he had just received blindness, which was a new thing to him, therefore, he had not as yet learned to walk as well as those who, having been blind for years, at last learn to set their feet firmly upon the earth. With his feet bound together with brazen fetters--an unusual mode of binding a prisoner, but adopted in this case because Samson was supposed to be still so strong, that any other kind of fetter would have been insufficient--you see him walking along in the midst of a small escort towards Gaza. And now he comes to the very city out of which he had walked in all his pride with

the gates and bolts upon his shoulders; and the little children come out, the lower orders of the people come round about him, and point at him--"Samson, the great hero, hath fallen! let us make sport of him!" What a spectacle! The hot sun is beating upon his bare head, which had once been protected by those luxuriant locks. Look at the escort who guard him, a mere handful of men, how they would have fled before him in his brighter days; but now a child might overcome him. They take him to a place where an ass is grinding at the mill, and Samson must do the same ignoble work. Why, he must be the sport and jest of every passer by, and of every fool who shall step in to see this great wonder--the destroyer of the Philistines made to toil at the mill. Ah, what a fall was there, my brethren! We might indeed stand and weep over poor blind Samson. That he should have lost his eyes was terrible; that he should have lost his strength was worse; but that he should have lost the favour of God for awhile; that he should become the sport of God's enemies, was the worst of all. Over this indeed we might weep.

Now, why have I narrated this story? Why should I direct your attention to Samson? For this reason. Every child of God is a consecrated man. His consecration is not typified by any outward symbol; we are not commanded to let our hair grow for ever, nor to abstain from meats or drinks. The Christian is a consecrated man, but his consecration is unseen by his fellows, except in the outward deeds which are the result thereof.

And now I want to speak to you, my dear friends, as consecrated men, as Nazarites, and I think I shall find a lesson for you in the history of Samson. My first point shall be the strength of the consecrated, for they are strong men; secondly, the secret of their strength; thirdly, the danger to which they are exposed; and fourthly, the disgrace which will come upon them if they fall into this danger.

I. First, THE STRENGTH OF THE CONSECRATED MAN. Do you know that the strongest man in all the world is a consecrated man? Even though he may consecrate himself to a wrong object, yet if it be a thorough consecration, he will have strength--strength for evil, it may be, but still strength. In the old Roman wars with Pyrrhus, you remember an ancient story of self-devotion. There was an oracle which said that victory would attend that army whose leader should give himself up to death. Decius the Roman Consul, knowing this, rushed into the thickest of the battle, that his army might overcome by his dying. The prodigies of valour which he performed are proofs of the power of consecration. The Romans at that time seemed to be every man a hero, because every man was a consecrated man. They went to battle with this thought--"I will conquer or die; the name of Rome is written on my heart; for my country I am prepared to live, or for that to shed my blood." And no enemies could ever stand against them. If a Roman fell there were no wounds in his back, but all in his breast. His face, even in cold death, was like the face of a lion, and when looked upon it was of terrible aspect. They were men consecrated to their country; they were ambitious to make the name of Rome the noblest word in human language; and consequently the Roman became a giant. And to this day let a man get a purpose within him, I care not what his purpose is, and let his whole soul be absorbed by it, and what will he not do? You that are "everything by turns and nothing long," that have nothing to live for, soulless carcases that walk this earth and waste its air, what can you do? Why nothing. But the man who knows what he is at, and has his mark, speeds to it "Like an arrow from a bow shot by an archer strong." Nought can turn him aside from his design. How much more is this true if I limit the description to that which is peculiar to the Christian--consecration to God! Oh! what strength that man has who is

dedicated to God! Is there such an one here? I know there is. I know that there be many who have consecrated themselves to the Lord God of Israel in the secret of their chamber; and who can say in their hearts,

"Tis done; the great transaction's done
I am my Lord's, and he is mine.
He drew me, and I followed on,
Glad to obey the voice divine."

Now, the man that can say that, and is thoroughly consecrated to God; be he who he may or what he may, he is a strong man, and will work marvels.

Need I tell you of the wonders that have been done by consecrated men? You have read the stories of olden times, when our religion was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. Did you never hear how consecrated men and women endured unheard-of pangs and agonies? Have you not read how they were cast to the lions, how they were sawn in sunder, how they languished in prisons, or met with the swifter death of the sword? Have you not heard how they wandered about in sheeps' skins and goats' skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy? Have you not heard how they defied tyrants to their face, how, when they were threatened, they dared most boldly to laugh at all the threats of the foe--how at the stake they clapped their hands in the fire, and sang psalms of triumph when men, worse than fiends, were jeering at their miseries? How was this? What made women stronger than men, and men stronger than angels? Why this,--they were consecrated to God. They felt that every pang which rent their heart was giving glory to God, that all the pains they endured in their bodies were but the marks of the Lord Jesus, whereby they were proven to be wholly dedicated unto him. Nor in this alone has the power of the consecrated ones been proved. Have you never heard how the sanctified ones have

done wonders? Read the stories of those who counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might honour their Lord and Master by preaching his Word, by telling forth the gospel in foreign lands. Have you not heard how men have left their kindred and their friends, and all that life held dear--have crossed the stormy sea, and have gone into the lands of the heathen, where men were devouring one another? Have you not known how they have put their foot upon that country, and have seen the ship that conveyed them there fading away in the distance, and yet without a fear have dwelt amongst the wild savages of the woods, have walked into the midst of them, and told them the simple story of the God that loved and died for man? You must know how those men have conquered, how those, who seemed to be fiercer than lions, have crouched before them, have listened to their words, and have been converted by the majesty of the gospel which they preached. What made these men heroes? What enabled them to rend themselves away from all their kith and kin, and banish themselves into the land of the stranger? It was because they were consecrated, thoroughly consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ. What is there in the world which the consecrated man cannot do? Tempt him; offer him gold and silver; carry him to the mountain top, and show him all the kingdoms of the world, and tell him he shall have all these if he will bow down and worship the god of this world. What saith the consecrated man? "Get thee behind me, Satan; I have more than all this which thou dost offer me; this world is mine, and worlds to come; I despise the temptation; I will not bow before thee." Let men threaten a consecrated man, what does he say? "I fear God, and, therefore, I cannot fear you; if it be right in your sight to obey man rather than God, judge ye; but, as for me, I will serve none but God." You may, perhaps, have seen in your life a consecrated man. Is he a public character? What cannot he do? He

preaches the gospel, and at once a thousand enemies assail him; they attack him on every side; some for this thing, and some for that; his very virtues are distorted into vices, and his slightest faults are magnified into the greatest crimes. He has scarce a friend; the very ministers of the gospel shun him; he is reckoned to be so strange that every one must avoid him. What does he do? Within the chamber of his own heart he holds conference with his God, and asks himself this question--am I right? Conscience gives the verdict,--yes, and the Spirit bears witness with his spirit that conscience is impartial. "Then," says he, "come fair, come foul, if I am right,--neither to the right hand nor to the left will I turn." Perhaps he feels in secret what he will not express in public. He feels the pang of desertion, obloquy, and rebuke; he cries--

"If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If thou'lt remember me."

As for himself in public, none can tell that he careth for any of these things; for he can say with Paul--"None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me that I may win Christ and finish my course with joy." What cannot a consecrated man do? I do believe if he had the whole world against him, he would prove more than a match for them all. He would say--"Heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass, have I slain my thousand men." I care not how violent may be his foe; nor how great may be the advantage which that foe may get on him: though the lion may have crouched for the spring, and may be leaping upon him, yet will he rend him as a kid, for he is more than a conqueror through him that loved him. He is alone such, who is wholly consecrated unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But," says some one, "can we be consecrated to Christ? I thought that was for ministers only." Oh, no, my brethren; all God's children must be consecrated men. What are you? Are you engaged in business? If you are what you profess to be, your business must be consecrated to God. Perhaps you have no family whatever, and you are engaged in trade, and are saving some considerable sum a-year; let me tell you the example of a man thoroughly consecrated to God. There lives in Bristol, (name unknown), a man whose income is large; and what does he do with it? He labours in business continually that this income may come to him, but of it, every farthing every year is expended in the Lord's cause except that which he requires for the necessaries of life. He makes his necessities as few as possible, that he may have the more to give away. He is God's man in his business. I do not exhort you to do the same. You may be in a different position; but a man who has a family, and is in business, should be able to say--"Now, I make so much from my business; my family must be provided for--but I seek not to amass riches. I will make money for God and I will spend it in his cause. Did I not say, when I joined the church--

"All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be for ever thine;
Whate'er my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign."

And if I said it, I meant it." I do not understand some Christian people who sing that hymn, and then pinch, screw, and nip anything when it comes to God's cause. If I sing that, I mean it. I would not sing it unless I did. If I join the church, I understand that I give myself and all that I have up to that church; I would not make a lying profession; I would not make an avowal of a consecration which I did not mean. If I have said, "I am Christ's;" by his grace I will be Christ's. Brethren,

you in business may be as much consecrated to Christ as the minister in his pulpit; you may make your ordinary transactions in life a solemn service of God. Many a man has disgraced a cassock, and many another has consecrated a smockfrock: many a man has defiled his pulpit cushions, and many another has made a cobbler's lapstone holiness unto the Lord. Happy the man who is consecrated unto the Lord; where'er he is, he is a consecrated man, and he shall do wonders.

It has often been remarked that in this age we are all little men. A hundred years ago, or more, if we had gone through the churches, we might have readily found a number of ministers of great note. But now we are all little men, the drivelling sons of nobodies; our names shall never be remembered, for we do nothing to deserve it. There is scarce a man alive now upon this earth; there are plenty to be found who call themselves men, but they are the husks of men, the life has gone from them, the precious kernel seems to have departed. The littleness of Christians of this age results from the littleness of their consecration to Christ. The age of John Owen was the day of great preachers; but let me tell you, that that was the age of great consecration. Those great preachers whose names we remember, were men who counted nothing their own: they were driven out from their benefices, because they could not conform to the Established Church, and they gave up all they had willingly to the Lord. They were hunted from place to place; the disgraceful five-mile act would not permit them to come within five miles of any market town; they wandered here and there to preach the gospel to a few poor sheep, being fully given up to their Lord. Those were foul times; but they promised they would walk the road fair or foul, and they did walk it knee deep in mud; and they would have walked it if it had been knee deep in blood too. They became great men; and if we were, as they were, wholly given up to

God--if we could say of ourselves, "From the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, there is not a drop of blood that is not wholly God's; all my time, all my talents, everything I have is God's"--if we could say that, we should be strong like Samson, for the consecrated must be strong.

II. Now, in the second place, THE SECRET OF THEIR STRENGTH. What makes the consecrated man strong? Ah! beloved; there is no strength in man of himself. Samson without his God was but a poor fool indeed. The secret of Samson's strength was this--as long as he was consecrated he should be strong; so long as he was thoroughly devoted to his God, and had no object but to serve God, (and that was to be indicated by the growing of his hair) so long, and no longer, would God be with him to help him. And now you see, dear friends, that if you have any strength to serve God, the secret of your strength lies in the same place. What strength have you save in God? Ah! I have heard some men talk as if the strength of free will, of human nature, was sufficient to carry men to heaven. Free will has carried many souls to hell, but never a soul to heaven yet. No strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. No man can come to Christ except the Father that hath sent Christ doth draw him. If, then, the first act of Christian life is beyond all human strength, how much more are those higher steps far beyond any one of us? Do we not utter a certain truth when we say in the words of Scripture, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." I think every one who has a really quickened soul will sooner or later be made to feel this. Ay! I question whether a man can be converted a day without finding out his own weakness. It is but a little space before the child finds that he can stand alone so long as God his Father takes him by the arms and

teaches him to go, but that if his Father's hand be taken away he has no power to stand, but down he falls at once. See Samson without his God, going out against a thousand men. Would they not laugh at him? and with scarcely time to express his terror, he would flee, or be rent in pieces. Imagine him without his God, locked up in Gaza, the gates fast closed. He goes out into the streets to escape; but how can he clear a passage? He is caught like a wild bull in a net; he may go round and round the walls, but where shall be his deliverance? Without his God he is but as other men. The secret of his strength lies in his consecration, and in the strength which is its result. Remember, then, the secret of your strength. Never think that you have any power of your own; rely wholly upon the God of Israel; and remember that the channel through which that strength must come to you must be your entire consecration to God.

III. In the third place, What is THE PECULIAR DANGER OF A CONSECRATED MAN? His danger is that his locks may be shorn, that is to say, that his consecration may be broken. As long as he is consecrated he is strong; break that, he is weak as water. Now there are a thousand razors with which the devil can shave off the locks of a consecrated man without his knowing it. Samson is sound asleep; so clever is the barber that he even lulls him to sleep as his fingers move across the pate, the fool's pate, which he is making bare. The devil is cleverer far than even the skilful barber; he can shave the believer's locks while he scarcely knows it. Shall I tell you with what razors he can accomplish this work? Sometimes he takes the sharp razor of pride, and when the Christian falls asleep and is not vigilant, he comes with it and begins to run his fingers upon the Christian's locks, and says, "What a fine fellow you are! What wonders you have done! Didn't you rend that lion finely? Wasn't it a great feat to smite those

Philistines hip and thigh? Ah you will be talked-of as long as time endures for carrying those gates of Gaza away. You need not be afraid of anybody." And so on goes the razor, lock after lock falling off, and Samson knows it not. He is just thinking within himself, "How brave am I! How great am I!" Thus works the razor of pride--cut, cut, cut away--and he wakes up to find himself bald, and all his strength gone. Have you never had that razor upon your head? I confess I have on mine. Have you never, after you have been able to endure afflictions, heard a voice saying to you, "How patient you were!" After you have cast aside some temptation, and have been able to keep to the unswerving course of integrity, has not Satan said to you, "That is a fine thing you have done; that was bravely done." And all the while you little knew that it was the cunning hand of the evil one taking away your locks with the sharp razor of pride. For mark, pride is a breach of our consecration. As soon as I begin to get proud of what I do, or what I am, what am I proud of? Why, there is in that pride the act of taking away from God his glory. For I promised that God should have all the glory, and is not that part of my consecration? and I am taking it to myself. I have broken my consecration; my locks are gone, and I become weak. Mark this, Christian--God will never give thee strength to glorify thyself with. God will give thee a crown, but not to put on thine own head. As sure as ever a Christian begins to write his feats, and his triumphs upon his own escutcheon, and take to himself the glory, God will lay him level with the dust.

Another razor he also uses is self-sufficiency. "Ah," saith the devil as he is shaving away your locks, "You have done a very great deal. You see they bound you with green withes, and you snapped them in sunder, they merely smelt the fire and they burst. Then they took new ropes to bind you; ah! you overcame even them; for you snapped the ropes in

sunder as if they had been a thread. Then they weaved the seven locks of your head, but you walked away with loon, and web too, beam and all. You can do anything, don't be afraid: you have strength enough to do anything; you can accomplish any feat you set your will upon." How softly the devil will do all that; how will he be rubbing the poll while the razor is moving softly along and the locks are dropping off, and he is treading them in the dust. "You have done all this, and you can do anything else." Every drop of grace distils from heaven. O my brethren, what have we that we have not received? Let us not imagine that we can create might wherewith to gird ourselves. "All my springs are in thee." The moment we begin to think that it is our own arm that has gotten us the victory, it will be all over with us--our locks of strength shall be taken away, and the glory shall depart from us. So, you see, self-sufficiency, as well as pride, may be the razor with which the enemy may shave away our strength.

There is yet another, and a more palpable danger still. When a consecrated man begins to change his purpose in life and live for himself--that razor shaves clean indeed. There is a minister; when he first began his ministry he could say, "God is my witness I have but one object, that I may free my skirts from the blood of every one of my hearers, that I may preach the gospel faithfully and honour my Master." In a little time, tempted by Satan, he changes his tone and talks like this, "I must keep my congregation up. If I preach such hard doctrine, they won't come. Did not one of the newspapers criticise me, and did not some of my people go away from me because of it? I must mind what I am at. I must keep this thing going. I must look out a little sharper, and prone my speech down. I must adopt a little gentler style, or preach a new-fashioned doctrine; for I must keep my popularity up. What is to become of me if I go down? People will say, Up like a rocket,

down like the stick;' and then shall all my enemies laugh." Ah, when once a man begins to care so much as a snap of the finger about the world, it is all over with him. If he can go to his pulpit, and say, "I have got a message to deliver; and whether they will hear or whether they will not hear, I will deliver it as God puts it into my mouth; I will not change the dot of an i, or the cross of a t for the biggest man that lives, or to bring in the mightiest congregation that ever sat at minister's feet"--that man is mighty. He does not let human judgments move him, and he will move the world. But let him turn aside, and think about his congregation, and how that shall be kept up; ah Samson! how are thy locks shorn? What canst thou do now? That false Delilah has destroyed thee--thine eyes are put out, thy comfort is taken away, and thy future ministry shall be like the grinding of an ass around the continually revolving mill; thou shalt have no rest or peace ever afterwards. Or let him turn aside another way. Suppose he should say, "I must get preferment, or wealth, I must look well to myself, I must see my nest feathered, that must he the object of my life." I am not now speaking of the ministry merely, but of all the consecrated; and as sure as ever we begin to make self the primary object of our existence our locks are shorn. "Now," says the Lord, "I gave that man strength, but not to use it for himself. Then I put him into a high position, but not that he might clothe himself about with glory; I put him there that he might look to my cause, to my interests; and if he does not do that first, down he shall go." You remember Queen Esther: she is exalted from being a simple humble maiden, to become the wife of the great monarch--Ahasuerus. Well, Haman gets a decree against her nation, that it shall be destroyed. Poor Mordecai comes to Esther, and says, "You must go in to the king and speak to him." "Well," says she, "but if I do I shall die." "Ah," says he, "If thou altogether

holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther was not made Queen Esther that she might make herself glorious, but that she might be in a position to save the Jews; and now if she prefers herself before her country then it is all over with her--Vashti's fate shall be as nothing compared with her destruction.

And so, if you live in this world, and God prospers you, you get perhaps into some position, and you say, "Here I am; I will look out for myself; I have been serving the church before, but now I will look to myself a little." "Come, come," says human nature; "you must look after your family," (which means, you must look after yourself). Very well, do it sir, as your main object, and you are a ruined man. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these shall be added to you." If you keep your eye single, your whole body shall be full of light. Though you seemed as if you had shut out half the light by having that single eye, yet your body shall be full of light. But begin to have two masters, and two objects to serve, and you shall serve neither; you shall neither prosper for this world, nor for that which is to come. Oh, Christian, above all things take care of thy consecration. Ever feel that thou art wholly given up to God, and to God alone.

IV. And now, lastly, there is THE CHRISTIAN'S DISGRACE. His locks are cut off. I have seen him, young as I am, and you with grey hairs upon your brows have seen him oftener than I; I have seen him in the ministry. He spake like an angel of God; many there were that regarded him, and did hang upon his lips; he seemed to be sound in doctrine and earnest in manner. I have seen him turn aside; it was but a little

thing,--some slight deviation from the ancient orthodoxy of his fathers, some slight violation of the law of his church. I have seen him, till he has given up doctrine after doctrine, until, at last, the very place wherein he preached has become a bye-word and a proverb; and the man is pointed out by the grey-headed sire to his child as a man who is to be looked upon with suspicion; who, if he lectures, is to be heard with caution; and if he preaches, is not to be listened to at all. Have you not seen him? What disgrace was there! What a fall! The man who came out in the camps of Dan, and seemed to be moved by the Spirit of the Lord, has become the slave of error. He has gone into the very camps of the enemy, and there he is now, grinding in the mill for the Philistine, whom he ought to have been striking with his arm. Now there are two ways of accounting for this. Such a man is either a thorough hypocrite or a fallen believer. Sometimes, people say of persons who turn aside to sin, "There now; look, there is a Christian fallen,--a child of God fallen." It is something like the vulgar, when at night they see a bright light in the sky, and say, "Ah, there is a star fallen." It was not a star; the stars are all right. Take a telescope; they are every one there. The Great Bear has not lost a star out of it's tail; and if you look, there is the belt of Orion all safe, and the dagger has not dropped out of it. What is it, then? We do not know exactly what it is. Perhaps it may be a few gases up there for a little while, that have burst, and that is all; or some wandering substance cast down,--and quite time that it should be. But the stars are all right. So, depend upon it, the children of God are always safe. Now these men who have turned aside and broken their consecration vow, are pointed at as a disgrace to themselves and dishonour to the church. And you who are members of Christ's church, you have seen men who stood in your ranks as firm soldiers of the cross, and you have noticed them

go out, from us, "because they were not of us," or like poor Samson, you have seen them go to their graves with the eyes of their comfort put out, with the feet of their usefulness bound with brazen fetters, and with the strength of their arms entirely departed from them. Now, do any of you wish to be backsliders? Do you wish to betray the holy profession of your religion? My brethren, is there one among you who this day makes a profession of love to Christ, who desires to be an apostate? Is there one of you who desires like Samson to have his eyes put out, and to be made to grind in the mill? Would you, like David, commit a great sin, and go with broken bones to the grave? would you, like Lot, be drunken, and fall into lust? No, I know what you say, "Lord, let my path be like the eagle's flight; let me fly upwards to the sun, and never stay and never turn aside. Oh, give me grace that I may serve thee, like Caleb, with a perfect heart, and that from the beginning even to the end of my days, my course may be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Ay, I know what is your desire. How, then, shall it be accomplished? Look well to your consecration; see that it is sincere; see that you mean it, and then look up to the Holy Spirit, after you have looked to your consecration, and beg of him to give you daily grace; for as day-by-day the manna fell, so must you receive daily food from on high. And, remember, it is not by any grace you have in you, but by the grace that is in Christ, and that must be given to you hour by hour, that you are to stand, and having done all, to be crowned at last as a faithful one, who has endured unto the end. I ask your prayers that I may be kept faithful to my Lord; and on the other hand, I will offer my earnest prayers, that you may serve him while he lends you breath, that when your voice is lost in death, you may throughout a never ending immortality, praise him in louder and sweeter strains.

And as for you that have not given yourselves to God, and are not consecrated to him, I can only speak to you as to Philistines, and warn you, that the day shall come when Israel shall be avenged upon the Philistines. You may be one day assembled upon the roof of your pleasures, enjoying yourselves in health and strength; but there is a Samson--called Death, who shall pull down the pillars of your tabernacle, and you must fall and be destroyed--and great shall be the ruin. May God give you grace that you may be consecrated to Christ; so that living or dying, you may rejoice in him, and may share with him the glory of his Father.

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