SPURGEON'S SERMONS VOLUME 54: 1908

by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon's influential sermon collection on faith, grace, and spiritual living.

52 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 54: 1908

Chapter 1

Danger. Safety. Gratitude.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 8, 1874.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Jude 1:24,25.

WE may derive much evil or much good from the falls of others. We may derive much evil from their falls if we follow their bad example, or if our pride suggests to us that we are better than they are. It is an evil thing for a man to look upon his fallen brother and then to say, in the spirit of the Pharisee, "God, I thank You that I am not such a sinner as that man is." This kind of spirit would make it very probable that we should yet become even worse than the poor fallen one.

But, on the other hand, much good may come to us through the falls of others if the moment we see or hear of the falling of our brethren, we reflect that we would have done the same if we had not been upheld by God--that all the evil that has come out of them might also have come out of us, for it is in every one of us by nature. Unless God's restraining hand shall prevent its being displayed, it will be displayed in our life as well as in theirs! Every wreck ought to be a beacon. One man's fall should be another's warning. Do you see your brother's foot trip against a stone? Then take care how you go along that way. Do you see him yield to temptation? Then mind that your ears

are closed against that which fascinated him and turned him aside from the right path. Wherein you see that he failed in anything, set a double guard upon yourselfjust there--and ask God to give you Grace to keep you with special keeping in that particular point which was his weakness and which may, unknown to yourself, be also your own!

I am led to make these remarks because the Epistle of Jude describes certain gross offenders. The Apostle says a good deal about persons who were in the Church, but were evidently not of it and who, therefore, were the Church's weakness and dishonor--spots in her solemn feasts, clouds without water, trees without fruit--"raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." Now, if the reflection from that description should be, in the case of any of us, "We are superior persons to them and are not at all likely to fall into such a condition as this," the consideration of their condition would have had a very unhappy influence upon ourselves. But if we use this Epistle in the right way, as Jude means us to do, and begin to look at our own weakness and to dread our own failure--and then close all, as he does, with a doxology to Him who is able to keep us from falling where others have fallen, and to present us faultless when others will be condemned, and to bring us to exceeding joy while they will be banished to the place where they will have to endure exceeding misery--surely we ought to give honor, praise and glory "to the only wise God our Savior." And this will be a blessed way of extracting good out of the failings and falls of others.

This is my objective in speaking to you upon this text. And I am going to talk to you very simply upon three things--first, our danger. Secondly, our safety. And, thirdly, our gratitude.

I. The first thing we are to consider is OUR DANGER. We are in danger of falling--not only some of us, but all of us! Not merely the weak,

but also the strong. Not the young only, but the old and the middle-aged. All are in danger of falling into sin and so bringing dishonor upon our profession, sorrow to our souls and disgrace upon the name of Christ, whom we profess to love and serve!

That we are in danger should strike us very clearly because we have seen others fall into sin. I scarcely dare to recall all that I have seen during my observation of the professing Church of Christ. Though I think I have been peculiarly favored as a pastor, there are sore places in my soul--bleeding wounds that will never be healed this side of Heaven that have been caused by the backsliding of men with whom I took sweet counsel and in whose company I used to walk to the House of God. I have known some who have preached the Gospel, and preached it with power, live to depart from it altogether. I have known others who have served at the Lord's Table who have discharged the duties of the deaconship or the eldership with considerable diligence, who have afterwards given way to their evil passions. I have thought some of them to be among the holiest of men. While they have been praying, I have been lifted up in devotion to the very gates of Heaven! And if anyone had said to me that they would one day fall into gross sin, I could not have believed it. I would sooner have believed it to be possible of myself. When I have heard of their fall, it has struck me with a sharp pang and when it has been my sad duty to enquire into the matter--and I have been compelled to be convinced of the truthfulness of the accusation brought against them--I have been staggered to think how far a man may go in profession and yet not possess the Grace of God in truth and how like a Christian a man may be--and yet not really be a child of God. And how he may have many resemblances to the Grace of God and yet may not have that Grace in his soul indeed and of a truth.

"Howl, fir tree, for the cedar is fallen," is a cry that may still be

heard! Those who seemed stronger than we are have fallen, so why may not we? No, shall we not fall unless Sovereign Grace shall prevent that dread calamity? Our Lord's disciples, who sat at the table with Him, when they were told that one of them would betray their Master, each one enquired, "Lord, is it I?" That was a very proper question. There was not one who asked, "Lord, is it Judas?" Probably no one of them even suspected him--and it may be that the worst hypocrite in this assembly is the one upon whom there does not rest at this moment a single shade of suspicion! He has learned to play his part so well that his true character has not yet been discovered. One of these days the 30 pieces of silver will prove too attractive to him--and then he will sell his Master. Will that traitor be you, dear Friend, or will it be me? Surely, if this has been the case with others, it must be a matter for our own serious consideration, seeing that we also are as liable to be tempted as they were--and as liable to yield to the temptation. John Newton was right when he wrote--

" When any turn from Zion's way
(Alas, what numbers do)!
I think I hear my Savior say,
' Will you forsake Me too?
Ah, Lord! With such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like they at last"

Beside that, not only have others fallen, but we ourselves, although in a great measure kept by Divine Grace, have not been faultless. If all men knew all about us that might be known, we would hardly be able to look them in the face! Someone is said to have once wished that he had a window in his heart so that everybody could look in and see all that

was there. But if he had such a window, he would need to have blinds on it and he would probably keep them down for the most part, for who would like his neighbor to read the thoughts of his heart even for a single hour? Have there not been times with you, my Brothers, honorable men, Christians of good standing in the Church, when your feet had almost gone, your steps had well near slipped? And Sisters in Christ, preserved as you have been in the faith of Jesus and enabled to honorably maintain your Christian character, have there not been times when temptation has been very strong upon you and when you have half consented to the sin that has been suggested to you? I know if you are flesh and blood like the rest of us, you must confess that it has been so with you.

So, then, we have this double warning--what we have seen in others and what we have felt in ourselves. Besides, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, ought we not to realize the danger of our falling when we consider the world we live in, the flesh we live in and the tempter who is continually tempting us?The road we have to tread is often so slippery that we have need not only to watch our feet, but also to pray, "O Lord, hold me up and I shall be safe." There are also many who watch for our halting--and some who do more than that, for they set traps for us. And if they could but catch us in them, how rejoiced they would be! If we do not fall, it is not because they have not tried to make us fall, but because God has upheld us by His Grace. If we know ourselves at all, we must have come to the conclusion that apart from the Grace

of God, we are a mass of sin and corruption--and capable of anything that is evil. I do not wonder that John Bradford said, as he saw men taken to be hanged at Tyburn, "There goes John Bradford but for the Grace of God." There is powder enough in all our hearts to blow our

character to pieces if God does not keep the devil's sparks away, or quench them in a mighty stream of Grace before they can do us mischief! Utter weakness are you, O Man, and many and mighty foes are seeking your destruction! You need an infinite Friend to keep you in safety against all the machinations of your adversaries!

We constantly need to cry to God to keep us from falling, remembering what a dreadful thing it would be for us to fall. We know that a true child of God cannot fall fatally or finally, but we also know that some who profess to be the people of God, do fall foully, fatally and finally--and that others who are really the people of God have fallen to their own great grief and to their Lord's dishonor. O my dear Sister, what sorrow there would be in the hearts of those who know you if you were to turn aside! And how the enemy would blaspheme and how would those who are weak in the faith be staggered if you were to be permitted to disgrace your Christian profession! And my dear Brother, you who are of venerable years, looked up to and respected by many--what grief would fill your own heart when the Lord brought you to penitence for your guilt--if you were allowed to fall into sin and, meanwhile, how much mischief you would have done to the Church of God and to souls seeking the Savior! Pray very specially for those of us who stand in prominent positions, for it is not easy to keep a clear head when one is upon the top of a pinnacle. And when you have prayed for us, pray also for yourselves. God can keep men in safety on the tops of pinnacles if He puts them there. But the men in the valley will fall if they think they can securely keep themselves.

I remember talking once to a lady who assured me again and again that she prayed daily for me that I might be kept humble. I told her that I would pray the same prayer for her. And when she said, "Oh, I am never tempted to be proud," I replied, "Well, dear Friend--I am afraid you

are already very far gone in that direction, or else you would not talk as you do." We can easily perceive the danger in which others are--and if we do, we ought to pray for them--but let us not forget our own peril, for the greatest danger does not lie in the position we are called to occupy, but in our relying upon our own strength--and not upon our God--

"Lord, through the desert drear and wide,
Our erring footsteps need a Guide.
Keep us, oh keep us near Your side.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall!
We have no fear that You should lose
One whom eternal love could choose,
But we would never this Grace abuse.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall!
Lord, we are blind, and halt, and lame,
We have no stronghold but Your name--
Great is our fear to bring it shame.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall!
Lord, evermore Your face we seek--
Tempted we are, and poor, and weak.
Keep us with lowly hearts, and meek.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall!
All Your good work in us complete,
And seat us daily at Your feet.
Your love, Your words, your name, how sweet!
Let us not fill. Let us not fall!" There are dangers that are peculiar to every position. To those who live a very quiet life, there is the danger of the rust and the moth. And to those who live an active life, there is the danger of being cumbered with much service. You who are

young are certainly in danger from impetuous companions, and yet it is remarkable that among the offenders, even against morality, mentioned in Scripture, we do not read of many who were young! David falls not into such foul sin until he is advanced in years, as if to show us that it is not age that gives strength to resist evil. Age brings experience,

but unless Grace comes with the experience, it gets to be like the manna in the wilderness which bred worms and stank when men tried to feed upon it after its proper time. We are all safe while we are in God's hands, but we are, none of us, safe in our own keeping! And every position that we may occupy has its own peculiar perils. Do not be in haste to get away from a job in which you are tempted, for you will be tempted in every job and, possibly, the temptation which assails you in your present circumstances may be less powerful for evil than the one to which you would be exposed if you were to change your place. Many a man of God has leaped out of the frying pan into the fire. I have even known some who have thought that they were going to get into a port where they would never again suffer from storms--and they have gone out of their proper course in order to get into that port. And there the most dreadful hurricane they ever knew has come upon them! Always be afraid of not being afraid--and be always in fear when you feel that you are perfectly safe. When you realize your danger and fly to the Lord to guard you, then you are safe. But when you begin to think, "All is right with me, nothing will make me fall now," you are not very far off a bad fall in which you may suffer serious hurt. May God keep you, my dear Brothers and Sisters. May He preserve each one of us till we see His face in Glory at the last!

Did you notice that the text indicates what a joy it will be to be kept from falling? Jude says, "Christ is able to keep you from falling, and

to present you faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy'" It will indeed be exceeding joy to be kept from falling and to be presented faultless at the end. I have often prayed that I might be able to say what George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, said just before he died. His words were these, "I am clear. I am clear. I am clear." He felt that he had faithfully discharged his ministry and spoken all that the Spirit of God had taught him. And if I may say what he did--that I am clear of the blood of all men when I lay down my body and my charge--I will not ask anything more. And if each professing Christian here shall be clear at the last, and be able to say, with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," you will have exceeding joy! I do not think so much of the harps of gold and the streets that shine with dazzling splendor, and the other descriptions of the glories of Heaven, as of this--

"May I but safely reach my Home, My God, my Heaven, my All.!'

May I get where I shall never again sin and where I shall not even be tempted to sin! May I get where flesh and sense shall no more destroy the sacred pleasures of my soul! It will be exceeding joy, even to dancing and leaping of spirit, as the Greek has it, if we may but be presented faultless at the last, having been kept by Sovereign Grace even to the end! This must suffice concerning our danger.

II. Now secondly, I am to speak upon OUR SAFETY. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling...to the only wise God our Savior." Our safety lies in our Savior--"God our Savior." Just think of that great Truth of God for a moment. When we first came to Christ, we rejoiced that He was a Savior--a sinner's Savior. All our hope and comfort lay in the fact that God had appointed Him to be our Savior. Well now, Beloved, in looking forward to the temptations that will assail you in your future life, keep your eye on your Savior! You did not have Him to

be a Savior for a time, to cleanse you from sin and then to leave you to fall back into sin! When you took Him to be your Savior, I hope you took Him for all your life and for eternity. That is how He took you--He espoused you unto Himself in an everlasting wedlock and, therefore, He would have you depend as much upon Him for sanctification as for justification--rely as much upon Him to keep you from sin as to keep you from Hell! And trust as much to Him to enable you to overcome your present temptation as you trusted to Him at the first to overcome your fear of condemnation. Christ is your Savior from beginning to end, so always regard Him in that light. And as your Savior, let it be very comforting to you to reflect that He is Divine--"The only wise God our Savior." He who has undertaken to save you is no mere man and no angel-- He is nothing less than the Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient God! Your peril can be averted by His Omnipotent might. The hidden dangers in your pathway all lie unveiled to His all-seeing eyes. You are safe, not because you can see and avoid the dangers that beset you, nor yet because you are strong and can conquer your adversaries, but because your Savior is God and, therefore, you shall be saved, continuously saved, perfectly saved and presented as a saved one at the last!

Observe how Jude puts this precious Truth--"Unto Him that is able to keep you from falling." Why does the Apostle lay such stress upon the ability of Christ? You know that our faith sometimes fails us concerning Christ's ability and sometimes concerning His willingness to save us. One came to Christ and said, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." And another said to Him "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Now, in this matter to which Jude is referring, I suppose that we should not have had any doubt about God's willingness because it must

be the will of the thrice-holy God to keep His people from falling! If any question did arise, it would be concerning God's power--not concerning His willingness.

And here let me remark that this is a very wonderful power. The power to create a world, the power to divide the rocks, the power to shake the mountains or set them on a blaze is a very inferior power compared with that which is able to keep us from falling because God has been pleased to make us free agents--and He never deprives us of our free agency. Yet, without the destruction of a quality which is necessary to our responsible manhood, God is nevertheless able to keep us from falling. Of course He could keep us from falling into certain sins by shutting us up in a prison, or by depriving us in some other way of the power to commit those sins. But He does not keep us in that way. He leaves us as free agents with every faculty and propensity that we had before. Yet, by some mysterious, Omnipotent working of His Holy Spirit--which we can no more understand than we can the blowing of the wind--He does keep His people from falling. If He turned them at once into angels, so that they never had a desire to sin again, that would be a simple process. But He lets them remain men and, as I know from my own experience, men with the same passions as before and with the same possibilities of sinning as before! And yet, by a Divine working which is nothing less than a continuous miracle, He keeps them from falling again into the sins in which they once indulged! And everyone who knows by experience the power of God to keep a child of His from falling, must and will magnify the name of the Lord, even as Jude does in this doxology!

Observe, too, that the Apostle puts God's wisdom side by side with His ability--"to the only wise God our Savior." You know that it needs great wisdom in a parent to keep his child from evil, but it needs far

greater wisdom for God to keep men and women, whom He treats as men and women, and not as logs, or bricks, or stones, from falling into sin.

And, oh, what Divine Wisdom there is in the dispositions of Providence and in the manifold workings of the Holy Spirit in using saints to protect saints, and even in using sinners to warn saints, in using holy pleasures to allure saints to good and using evils to drive saints from evil! What you and I owe to God's rod we shall never know till we get to Heaven! The love there is in every twig of it and in every smart and bruise that it makes, we shall never fully estimate until our faculties are enlarged beyond the narrow bounds of this finite state. It is the tender mercy of God that keeps some of you poor--and makes others of you so frequently depressed in spirit. It is God's loving kindness which prevents you from prospering in your endeavors and which makes you cry out in the bitterness of your spirit, "All these things are against me." God wounds us that He may heal us! He kills us that He may quicken us! He lays us low and digs out our very foundations that He may build us up to be fair temples in which He may abide forever!

So our safety is assured by the fact that we have a God who is able and is as wise as He is able to keep us from falling.

And then we have something more than mere safety, for the text adds, "and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." We have this word, "present," several times in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the saints in Rome, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." He also wrote to the Christians in Corinth concerning his desire to present them "as a chaste virgin to Christ." To the Ephesians he wrote that "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it...that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having

spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." And here Jude writes concerning Christ presenting His people "faultless before the presence of His glory"--not presenting them unfallen, but "faultless." I suppose there are some Brothers and Sisters who have grown so familiar with the idea of their own perfection that they can quite understand what it is to feel perfect. But I am so familiar with the sense of my own imperfections that it takes me a long while to grasp the fact that I shall one day be "without fault before the Throne of God." I can sit down, sometimes, with an aching head and believe that it will wear a crown, by-and-by. I can look at these hands and believe that I shall one day wave a palm-branch of victory. I can and do fully expect to wear the white robe and to sing the everlasting song in Glory. But it will be more than all this to be absolutely perfect--with never a risk of a hasty temper rising, or the fear of men checking one's lips from saying what is right! There will be no undue haste and, at the same time, there will be no sloth! There will be no preponderance of any Grace so as to cause it to grow into a fault and no deficiency in any point of character. To be faultless before men is a great thing. To be faultless before the devil so that even he cannot find any fault in us, is greatly to be desired. But the most wonderful thing of all must be to be presented by Christ "faultless before the presence of His glory." That is where the light is brightest and no speck of sin is to be seen! The saints shall be so perfectly purified by the Omnipotent Grace of God the Holy Spirit that even the Lord, Himself, in whose sight the heavens are not pure and who charges His angels with folly, shall look upon His redeemed people and declare that they are faultless, holy and unblameable and unreprovable in His sight! Oh, blessed portion, glorious hope! This is something that is worth struggling for!

So, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us fight more valiantly than

ever against our sins and corruptions! Armed with the two-edged sword of the Spirit, we shall win the day! He who is able to keep us from falling will not be satisfied with acting on the defensive for us and protecting us from our enemies, but He will enable us to carry the war into the enemy's country and we shall be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us"! And we shall have this resplendent character at last, that we shall be "without fault before the Throne of God."

III. The last thing upon which I have to speak is OUR GRATITUDE. I must speak upon it briefly, but I hope you will think and act upon it at great length. Yes, throughout your whole lives, and I shall do the same. The Apostle says, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be Glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."

So, then, the text winds up with the thought that to God must be all the praise. It is well to know on whose head we are to put the crown. If we could save ourselves, we might praise ourselves. But I trust that we are, none of us, so foolish as to imaging that we can do anything to save ourselves! I have heard of a vessel that was once in a storm--not a very severe one--but a gentleman on board thought it was and went about among the sailors and passengers finding fault with the captain's management of the vessel and saying that he was sure the ship would go to pieces, and that all on board would go to the bottom of the sea. He did so much mischief by his foolish talking that, at last, the captain said to him, "We must rely upon every man doing his duty. Will you go and hold that rope over there?" He went at once and there he stood like a martyr and held the rope until the storm had abated--and then he began congratulating himself upon the eminent part that he had played in saving the ship in that terrible storm! When he got too proud, the

captain said to him, "I only gave you that bit of rope to hold, to keep you quiet. Your holding it was of no other use whatever."

Then the gentleman saw what a fool he had been! And when a man thinks he has done something towards his own salvation, if he could only know the truth of the matter, he would soon see what a fool he is. He was a far more sensible man who said that he was saved because Christ did His part and he did all the rest. Somebody asked him, "But what was 'the rest' that you did?" and he replied, "Why, Christ did it all and I only stood in His way and hindered Him all I could." That is about all that we shall ever do in the matter of our soul's salvation. It must rest with Christ alone, and our wisdom is to commit ourselves to Him who is able to meet all the necessities of our case and to conduct us safely to our journey's end. But since, from the first to the last, salvation is of the Lord--

"Then give all the Glory to His holy name,
For to Him all the Glory belongs." Whenever you hear anybody praising some good minister whom God has blessed to him, join in his praises as one Brother should do concerning another, but then add, "We have had enough of that strain, dear Friend! "So now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." And if anybody should ever praise you for any spiritual help you may have given, always pass on the praise to Him that is able to keep you from falling, for He deserves it all. Give to Him, in the very highest degree that is possible, glory and majesty, dominion and power--the highest praise of which your thankful heart is capable and the deepest devotion to which your grateful spirit can attain! How much better we will praise God one day than we can ever do while we are in this body! Good old John Berridge, speaking of the saints above singing in Heaven, says--

"O happy saints, who dwell in light,

And walk with Jesus, clothed in white!

Safe landed on that peaceful shore,

Where pilgrims meet to part no more.

Released from sin, and toil, and grief

Death was their gate to endless life!

An opened cage to let them fly

And build their happy nest on high!

And now they range the heavenly plains,

And sing their hymns in melting strains.

And now their souls begin to prove

The heights and depths of Jesus' love.

Ah, Lord! With tardy steps I creep,

And sometimes sing, and sometimes weep.

Yet strip me of this house of clay,

And I will sing as loud as they!" And so it shall be with us, yet we shall always feel as if our loftiest praises could not rise to the height of His great love wherewith He has loved us. I remember saying in a sermon, one night, "When I get to Heaven, I will sing more loudly than anybody else, for I shall owe the most to Sovereign Grace." At the close of the service, a good old Sister said to me, "You made a mistake in your sermon tonight." "What was that?" I asked. "Why, you said that you would sing the loudest in Heaven, but you will not, for I shall, for I shall owe more to Grace than you will." I soon found that all the 30 other Christians there were of the same opinion as that dear old soul--that each one of them would owe more to the Grace of God than all the rest! And surely, that will be the only contention among the birds of paradise--who shall sing the most sweetly to the praise of their adorable Lord!

But the text seems to me to say that while we are to give God the praise, and to give Him, only, the praise, and to give Him the best praise that we can, we are to give that praise to Him now. Jude says, "Nowand ever." What? Are we to praise the Lord now for keeping us to the end? Will it not do if we praise Him when the end comes and we have been kept to the end? Will it not do if we praise Him when we are presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy? But can you not believe God's promise that He will keep you to the end--and bless His name for it even now? Many a time you have expressed your gratitude to a friend when he has said, "I will do so-and-so for you." You were sure that he would do what he said--his promise was enough for you! And as the Lord has promised to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, surely you can say--

"And a 'new song' is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set!
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet!
I have a heritage of joy,
That yet I must not see--
The hand that bled to make it mine,
Is keeping it for me."

Now I close by saying that this praise is to be perpetual---"both now and ever. Amen." We may begin now, but we must always keep on, as long as we live, praising Him who is able to keep us from falling. What? Keep on praising Him? Yes, even when the deep waters are all around you, still praise Him. And if they grow deeper, yet still praise Him. Let this be your soul's resolve--

"Ill praise my Maker with my breath, And when my voice is lost in

death, Praise shall employ my nobler powers: My days of praise shall never be past, While life and thought and being last, Or immortality endures."

If I can send the children of God away from this service praising Him, good will have been done. But I wish that those who are not God's people would feel a great longing after these good things! Some of you young people are just now starting in life. You have an excellent character and you hope you may be enabled to preserve it to the end. Let me just tell you of something that was a great help in bringing me to Christ. I knew a young man, a little older than myself, who was often held up to me as model. And he certainly was a model in many respects. But I saw him go wrong, sadly wrong. And then I thought within myself, "I may do just as he has done." And when I heard it said that the Lord would keep His people right to the end--that Christ had said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand," I must confess that the Doctrine of the Final Preservation of the Saints was a bait that my soul could not resist! I thought it was a sort of life insurance--an insurance of my character, an insurance of my soul, an insurance of my eternal destiny. I knew that I could not keep myself, but if Christ promised to keep me, then I would be safe forever--and I longed and prayed to find Christ because I knew that if I found Him, He would not give me a temporary and trumpery salvation, such as some preach, but eternal life which could never be lost--the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever, for no one and nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Dear young people, do you not feel the same kind of drawing that I felt then? Do you not wish that you were Christ's, that you might be kept

through life honorable and consistent? May His gracious Spirit lead you to trust yourself to Jesus this very moment! Then you willbe safe and saved forever! Yes, and you old people, too, and all of you, whatever your age may be, rely upon Jesus! Make Him your sole confidence and then He will keep you to the end! When my dear old grandfather was dying, one of my uncles said to him, "Dr. Watts said--

"Firm as the earth Your Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust,"'-- but the aged saint said, "That won't do for me now. 'Firm as the earth.' Why, the earth is slipping away from me! I need something firmer than the earth now. I like the doctor best, my boy, when he says--

"'Firm as His Throne, His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What T ve committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour.'"

"Sovereign Grace," he said, "is my trust now! God's promise standing firm as God's Throne, and my faith linked to it. There is the safety of my spirit." And so he passed away. It is a grand thing to feel that God's Throne might sooner fail than that a saint can perish, for His Throne, itself, is established in righteousness! And He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness--faithful and just, not merely merciful and gracious! And His very faithfulness and justice require that He should keep the soul that has obeyed His will and committed itself to the Redeemer's hands. May the Lord thus save us all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Chapter 2

Looking for One Thing and Finding Another

(No. 3075)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the donkeys of KKish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to Saul, his son, Take now one of the servants with you, and arise, go seek the donkeys...And as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, set not your mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire ofIsrael?Is it not on you, and on all your fathers house?" 1 Samuel 9:3,20.

SAUL went out to seek his father's donkeys. He failed in the search, but he found a crown. He met with the Prophet Samuel, who anointed him king over God's people, Israel, and this was far better than finding the obstinate colts. Let us consider this amazing incident. Perhaps, though it treats of donkeys, it may yield us some royal thoughts.

I. Our first remark shall be--OBSERVE HOW THE HAND OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE CAUSES LITTLE THINGS TO LEAD ON TO GREAT MATTERS.

This man Saul must be placed in the way of the Prophet Samuel. How shall a meeting be brought about? Poor beasts of burden shall be the intermediate means! The donkeys go astray and Saul's father bids him take a servant and go seek them. In the course of their wanderings, the animals might have gone North, South, East or West--for who shall account for the wild will of runaway donkeys? But so it happened, as men say, that they strayed, or were thought to have strayed, in such a direction that, by-and-by, Saul found himself near to Ramah, where Samuel, the Prophet, was ready to anoint him. On how small an incident

the greatest results may hinge! The pivots of history are microscopic. Hence, it is most important for us to learn that the smallest trifles are as much arranged by the God of Providence as the most startling events. He who counts the stars has also numbered the hairs of our heads. Our lives and deaths are predestined, but so, also, are our sitting down and our rising up. Had we but sufficiently powerful perceptive faculties, we would see God's hand as clearly in each stone of our pathway as in the revolution of the earth. In watching our own lives, we may plainly see that on many occasions the merest grain has turned the scale. Whereas there seemed to be but a hair's-breadth between one course of action and another, yet that hair's-breadth has sufficed to direct the current of our life! "He," says Flavel, "who will observe Providences shall never be long without a Providence to observe." Providence may be seen as the finger of God, not merely in those events which shake nations and are duly emblazoned on the pages of history, but in little incidents of common life--yes, in the motion of a grain of dust, the trembling of a dewdrop, the flight of a swallow or the leaping of a fish!

II. But that is not the consideration to which we now invite you. Our drift is this--as Saul went out to find donkeys, but found a crown, so,

IN THE MATTER OF GRACE, MANY A MAN HAS RECEIVED WHAT HE LOOKED NOT FOR.

That is a remarkable text in Isaiah--"I am found of them that sought Me not." Sometimes the Sovereign Grace of God is pleased to light on persons who had no thought about it--who were, to all appearance, quite unprepared for it--no, even opposed to its Divine operations. These persons have stumbled on the treasures hid in the field when they were only thinking of their plow. They have met Jesus at the well when they only purposed to fill their water pots. They have heard glad tidings of

the Savior when they were only caring for their flocks.

On ground not furrowed the rain of Heaven has fallen. Grace has come unasked. We have emblems of this in the Scriptures, in the miracles which were worked by our Lord and His Apostles. There was a young man dead, carried out to be buried, and around his bier were his weeping mother and relatives. Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, was entering in at the gate of the city, but we do not read that any of the mourners sought a miracle at His hands. They had not the faith to expect that He would raise the dead. The young man, being dead, was far beyond the possibility of seeking help for

himself from the miracle-working hand of Jesus. But Jesus interposed and commanded the bearers to stand still--they did so and then, unsought and unasked, Jesus said, "Young man, I say unto you, Arise," and he arose to be delivered to his mother! Many a young man has been in like plight--he has been dead in trespasses and sins, but Christ's interposition has not been sought by him. He has not trembled at his low position. He has not even understood it, being utterly dead and, therefore, insensible of his ruined state! The Redeemer has sovereignly interposed. The Holy Spirit has poured light into the darkened conscience. The man has received Grace and has lived a new and spiritual life--a life for which he had never sought!

Of a like character was the miracle of casting out devils from the two demoniacs among the Gergesenes, in which case the unhappy men were moved by the evil spirits to entreat the Savior to leave them alone.

Such, also, were the miracles of restoring the man with the withered hand, the feeding of the multitudes and the healing of the ear of Malchus. Here, swift-footed mercy outran the cry of misery!

Take another case from Apostolic times. A poor beggar, extremely lame, hobbled one morning up to the Beautiful Gate of the Temple and there

took his daily place and began his incessant cry for a little charitable aid for a poor paralyzed man. Peter and John came up to the Temple to pray. Doubtless he looked upon them, but it never entered into his heart to ask them to heal him. He asked for alms. Drop a few Roman pennies into his palm and he would be content with the gift. But Peter and John gave to him what he had not sought for. They bade him, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk--and up he leaped, delivered from his infirmity, without having expected such a deliverance!

These emblems can be interpreted by kindred facts of Divine Grace. Christ has often met with individuals and saved them when they have not been seeking Him. Matthew was not seeking Jesus when the Lord bade him leave the table at which he was receiving custom and follow Him. The case of Zacchaeus was similar--he came in the way of Christ's preaching, but his motive was purely one of curiosity, "he sought to see Jesus, who He was." He was curious to know what kind of a Man this was who had set all Judaea on a stir. Who was this that made Herod tremble, was reputed to have raised the dead and was known to have healed all manner of diseases? Zacchaeus, the rich publican, is a lover of sights--and he must see Jesus! But there is a difficulty--he is too short--he cannot look over the heads of the crowd! Yonder is a sycamore tree and he will, for once, imitate the boys and climb! Mark how carefully he conceals himself among the thick branches, for he would not have his rich neighbors discover him in such a position. But Christ's eyes detected the little man and, standing beneath that tree--unasked, unsought, unexpected--Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at your house." And soon these gracious words were spoken by Christ, also, "This day is salvation come to this house."

Deeds of Grace have been worked in this Tabernacle after the same fashion. Men and women have come here out of curiosity--a curiosity created by some unfounded story or malicious slander of prejudiced minds. And yet Jesus Christ has called them and they have become both His disciples and our warm-hearted friends! Some of the most unlikely recruits have been our most valuable soldiers. They began with aversion and ended with enthusiasm. They came to scoff, but remained to pray! These seats could tell many an incident of the "romance of Grace" more wonderful than the marvels of fiction!

No, Brothers and Sisters, such is the surprising Grace of God, that He has not only been pleased to save men who did not expect it, but He has even condescended to interpose for the salvation of men who were fighting against His Grace and violently opposing His cause. Read yon story which will never lose its charm, of which the hero is one Saul of Tarsus! What a singular subject for converting Grace! He had resolved to hound the saints to death. He would exterminate them if he could. His blood boiled against the followers of Jesus--he could not speak of them calmly--he was mad with rage. Hear him rave at them! "What? Will these men oppose the traditions of the fathers and of the Pharisees? If they are allowed to multiply, there will be no respect paid to our holy men or their weighty sentences!" He will persecute them out of existence, not only in Jerusalem, but in Damascus! Yet, in a few days, this hater of the Gospel was touched by the Gospel's power--and never did Christendom gain a braver champion! Nothing could dampen his fervor or quench his zeal! Persecuted, beaten with rods, ship wreaked thrice--nothing could stop him from serving his Lord! What a complete reversing of the engine and yet it was gaining at express speed! When he was most at enmity against Christ, then was his turning point! As though some strong hand had suddenly seized by the bridle a horse that

had broken loose and was about to leap down a precipice, and had thrown it back on its haunches and delivered it at the last moment from the destruction on which it was impetuously rushing, so Christ interposed and saved the rebel of Tarsus from being his own destroyer!

Another case arrives before us most vividly. It is that of the jailor at Philippi. He did not look like seeking the Savior and being converted. He received Paul and Silas and made their feet fast in the stocks--a piece of superfluous brutality. They could not have escaped from the inner prison and it was needless to lay them by the heels. No doubt he wished to please his masters and felt a contempt for the Apostles. The jailors in those days had usually been soldiers--and camp life among the Romans was indeed rough--his nature evidently furnished very flinty soil for the Gospel to grow in. But an earthquake comes. The prison quakes. It is a mysterious earthquake, for the prison doors are lifted from their hinges and the prisoners' fetters are unbound! The jailor trembles and, to make short work of the story, he believes in Jesus! He is baptized with all his believing household. He invites the Apostles to his table, entertains them and becomes one of the first members of the Church of God at Philippi! What cannot the Gospel do when it comes in its power? And where may it not come? May it not, at this moment, visit another prison and save another jailor, though his thoughts are far otherwise? We have ourselves met with similar cases. Many old stories are current which we do not doubt are true. There is one of a man who never would attend a place of worship until he was induced to go to hear the singing. He would listen to the tunes, he said, but he would have "none of your canting preaching." He would put his fingers in his ears. He takes that wicked precaution and effectually blocks up Ear-Gate for a while. But the gate is stormed by a little adversary, for a fly settles on his nose--he must brush it off

and, as he takes out his finger to do so, the preacher says, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." The man listens! The Word of God pierces his soul and he is converted!

I remember quite well, and the subject of the story is most probably present in this congregation, that a very singular conversion was worked at New Park Street Chapel. A man who had been accustomed to go to a gin palace to fetch in gin for his Sunday evening's drinking, saw a crowd round the door of the chapel. He looked in and forced his way to the top of the gallery stairs. Just then, I looked in the direction in which he stood--I do not know why I did so, but I remarked that there might be a man in the gallery who had come in there with no very good motive, for even then he had a gin-bottle in his pocket. The singularity of the expression struck the man and being startled because the preacher so exactly described him, he listened attentively to the warnings which followed. The Word reached his heart--the Grace of God met with him--he became converted and today he is walking humbly in the fear of God!

These cases are not at all uncommon. They were not unusual in the days of Whitefield and Wesley. They tell us, in their Journals, of persons who came with stones in their pockets to throw at the Methodists, but whose enmity was slain by a stone from the sling of the Son of David. Others came to create disturbances, but a disturbance was created in their hearts which could never be quelled till they came to Jesus Christ and found peace in Him! The history of the Church of God is studded with the remarkable conversions of persons who did not wish to be converted, were not looking for Grace and were even opposed to it! And yet, by the interposing arm of Eternal Mercy, were struck down and transformed into earnest and devoted followers of the Lamb!

III. That fact being established, we may now range our thoughts around

the question. WHAT SHALL WE SAY ABOUT IT?

What shall we say about these acts of Sovereign Preventing Grace? Why, first, we will say, behold the freeness of the Grace of God. It is like the dew that comes on the earth which stays not for man, neither waits for the sons of men. It is like the sunbeam shining into the hovel and finding its way through grimy windowpanes, more calculated to shut it out than to admit it! It is like the wind which whistles among the ropes, whether the mariners desire it or not. God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy! He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion--not because of any goodness in the sinner, or because of any preparedness in the creature--but simply because He wills it, He visits men with salvation! He is so able to work salvation that He waits not for any contributory arm, but when the creature is most dead and most corrupt--then comes in the quickening Grace of God and gets to itself all the Glory of salvation!

If every convert were brought in through the usual means of Grace, we would come to regard conversion as a necessary result from certain fixed causes--and attribute some mystic virtue to the outward means. But when God is pleased to distribute the blessing entirely apart from these, then He shows that He can do without means as well as with means--that nothing is too mighty a work for Him, that His arm is not shortened at all so that He needs to use an instrument to make up the length of it--neither has He lost any strength so as to be forced to appeal to us to make up the deficiency! If it were God's will, He could, by a word, convert a nation! If so He chose--He is such a master of human hearts that as readily as the corn waves in the breath of the summer's wind, so could He make all hearts bow before the mysterious impulses of His Holy Spirit! Why He does it not, we know not. That is among His secrets. But when He works in a marked and decided way beyond

all expectation, He does but give us a proof of how He is able to work as He wills among the armies of Heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world! Oh, the richness, the freeness, the power of the Grace of God! The richness of it, that it comes to those who sought it not! The freeness of it, that it waits not for preparation on man's part! The power of it, that it makes the unwilling willing when the appointed hour has come! Brothers and Sisters, let us heartily join together in adoring this Grace of God which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life in as many as it pleases the Lord our God to call!

What shall we say further about this? We will gather this consoling inference from it--if the Lord is thus found of those that seek Him not, how much more surely will He be found of those who seek Him! If He has been known to give sight to those who did not ask for it, how much more will He bestow it upon those who cry, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" If he saved Saul who hated Him, much more will He listen to him that cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." If He called careless, curious Zacchaeus, much more will He speak to you, my anxious, earnest Hearers who are saying, "Oh that He would speak to me!" If a man opens his door and voluntarily calls to a passing beggar, and says, "Here, poor man, here is relief for you," why, then, the man who begs importunately will not be sent away unhelped--will he?

If I were in the case of the seeker, I should be mightily encouraged by the subject before us. I would say, "Does Jesus thus call those who were not hungering and thirsting and does He bring them to the Gospel feast? Then, when I, a poor hungry thirsty sinner, come wringing my hands and saying, 'Oh, that He would give me to drink of the Water of Life. Oh, that He would let me feed on the blessings of His Grace,' surely He will receive me!" Be cheered, you humble penitents, the Lord's heart is too large to permit Him to send you away empty! Be

encouraged, at this moment, to breathe the silent prayer, "O God, the Lord and Giver of Grace, give Your Grace to us who seek it now!" Why, dear Heart, you already have Grace, or you would not seek it, for Grace must first come to you to make you seek Grace! Be thankful, for salvation has come to your house! Dead men do not long for life. In the marble limbs of the corpse there is no struggling after life, no pangs of desire for health. God has looked on you in love--look you to Jesus and live!

What else shall we say about this Doctrine? There is one other thing we will say about it--from this time forward we will never despair of anybody. If the Lord Jesus Christ called Saul of Tarsus when he was foaming at the mouth with wrath, there are none among the wicked who are beyond the reach of hopeful prayer! Your boy breaks your heart, dear Mother. You have wept over him many years. He is far away, now, and the last you heard of him wounded your soul. And Unbelief said, "Do not pray for him again." Ah! That is the devil's counsel! He is no good messenger who bids a mother cease praying for her child while that child is out of Hell! Have faith in the Divine Power and pray for your boy! Who knows what the Lord may yet make of him?

There is one living in your parish, a swearer, and everything that is bad. You did once think of asking him to come and hear the Gospel, but you said, "It is of no use--he will be sure to turn it into ridicule."

How do you know? It is the very boast of Grace that it shines into the unlikeliest hearts! God's electing love has, in many cases, selected great fools and great sinners. At least I know that God's people think themselves such. I have said never despair of your child, and I will put it to you again--if you have friends who are infidel, or persecuting, or profane, yet, as long as you live and they live, it is your business to labor for their conversion and to weep and pray for

them! O Brothers and Sisters, if the lives of some of us before conversion had been known, good men might have denied the possibility of our salvation! If all the secrets of our hearts had been written, some would have said, "This is a hopeless case." But mercy saved us and, therefore, it can save anybody Never say of any place, "It is such a den of iniquity I can do no good there." Never say, "That workshop is so profane I could not speak of religion there." Oh, you do not know--you do not know! With God at your back, if it were possible to save the damned in Hell, you might go and preach there and win trophies for Christ! Never think any too bad or too vile, but labor on, for God can work wonders in every case.

IV. We will close when we have noticed, with great brevity, WHAT WE OUGHT NOT TO SAY ABOUT THESE THINGS.

We have told you what we should say about these remarkable conversions--we should behold the freeness and sovereignty of the Grace of God. We should be encouraged to seek it for ourselves and we should hope for the conversion of others. But now, what ought we notto say? One thing we ought not to say is this--'Then I shall sit still and perhaps the Grace of God will come to me. I shall not seek, nor pray, nor desire, for if I am quite unconcerned, Grace may yet visit me." Now, my dear Hearer, if you make such an excuse as that for your spiritual indolence, you will find the covering too thin to conceal your nakedness! You know better. A man suddenly stumbles upon wealth, by a windfall or a speculation. Do you therefore say, "I shall not keep my shop open. I shall leave business. I shall not go to work again, for Robinson has found a thousand pounds. I shall stay at home and perhaps I shall do the same"? No, you know that all the examples in the world of sudden wealth only go to prove

the rule that he who would gain riches must find them in the appointed way. So, all the examples of these remarkable interpositions of God only go to prove the rule that he who would have mercy must seek it. "Seek you the Lord while He may be found," is the fixed rule--and though God comes to some who seek Him not, yet the rule still holds good.

Do you not know that all the while you remain impenitent, your soul is under condemnation? Some men have run this awful risk and yet have escaped--is that any reason why you should? I have heard of a man who took poison, but so rapid was the action of a surgeon in the neighborhood that by means of a stomach pump the man's life was preserved. Is that a reason why you, too, should swallow poison? Because Providence has preserved some while they were running on in sin, is that a reason why you should continue to rebel against God? I have heard a story of an English sailor in a foreign port when the foreigners were manning the yards and performing their maneuvers in honor of a royal personage. Our countryman, in order to show what an Englishman could do, climbed to the top of the mast and stood there on his head! On a sudden the ship lurched and he fell! But, by a happy Providence, he caught a rope as he fell and descended safely to the deck. "There," he said, "you fellows see if you could tumble down like that." Are you surprised that no one accepted the challenge? Who but a fool would have thought it worth his while to imitate the example? Because here and there a man who runs solemn risks is, by the interposition of Divine Grace, saved from the consequences of his folly, is that a reason why you should run those hazards yourselves? God does thus interpose, nobody can doubt it. But still, His Sovereign rule is, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found," and His Gospel cries daily, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Trust the merits of Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, for our Gospel is not, "Sit still and wait for Divine interpositions," but, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

Moreover, we should never say, " Why use means for saving others? God can do His own work." Brethren, a man is always in a vicious state of heart when he speaks so! He knows he talks nonsense and he only does so as an excuse for his indolence and to quiet his conscience. We are to labor to win souls, for men are brought to God by instrumentality!

Where God has appeared to save without any means, if you could have the whole matter before you, you would find that means were used. For instance, take Saul's conversion. You will ask, "What means were used in his case?" We do not know, but possibly the dying martyr Stephen, when he prayed for his enemies, may have been the secondary cause of the young man's call by Divine Grace. At any rate, he was included in Stephen's intercession--and that prayer went up to God for Saul--and was prevalent with Heaven. And then, look again--after Saul had been arrested from above, Ananias must come in to open his eyes. So that, even in that case, there was the instrumentality of prayer before and the instrumentality of instruction afterwards.

So it may be with many an one who has been suddenly converted. There was a mother, perhaps, in Heaven, who had prayed for the man 40 years before, for prayer will keep and be fragrant many a year! And let me say that if neither father nor mother ever prayed for that conversion, perhaps a grandfather did, for prayer has power for hundreds of years! And a great-grandfather's prayers may be the instrumentality of the conversion of his great-grandchildren! There is no end to the efficacy of prayer. Good Dr. Rippon often used, in the pulpit, to pour out his soul in prayer that God would bless the Church of which he was the

pastor--and the members at the Tabernacle have been the inheritors of the blessings brought down by his intercession! Pray on, then. Your prayers may not be answered for the next five centuries. Those prayers of yours may be lying by till Christ comes, but they will avail in some way!

So that you see when we think there is no instrumentality, there really is an instrumentality if we could but see it. These remarkable cases must never be used as a reason why we are not to do all that we can to bring sinners to Christ! God's work, in such instances, instead of discouraging us, should stimulate action on our part. Because God works, are we to be still? No, but because God works, let us be workers together with Him that, through us, directly or indirectly, His purposes may be fulfilled. Suppose, now, it were known that the events of a certain battle would depend entirely on the skill of the general? The two armies are equally balanced and everything must depend upon the tact of the commander. Would the soldiers, therefore, conclude that they needed not to load, or fire, or draw a sword because everything depended on the commander? No, but the commander works and his soldiers work together with him. So is it with us. Everything depends on God but we are His instruments. We are His servants and because He is at our back, let us go forward with courage and zeal. The results are certain, God being our Helper. I charge you, my Brothers and Sisters, to take heart from the fact that God works great wonders! Go to your classes, or wherever else you may be laboring, singing cheerfully the song of hope and offering the prayer of full assurance. When we feel that we must have souls saved, souls will be saved! For my part, I cannot be happy unless sinners are led to Jesus. We must have it! The Holy Spirit will not let us rest without it! We shall have it--and God shall have the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 SAMUEL 9:1-25; 10:1-8.

1 Samuel 9:1, 2. Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and handsome: and there was not among the children of Israel a more handsome person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. Here we have the pedigree of the great king of Israel, Saul, the son of Kish. He was descended from a noble tribe, though not a very large one, and he appears to have been endowed with a very notable personal appearance. "There was not among the children of Israel a more handsome person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." And to the Israelites of that day, who had got away from looking up to God and to the more valuable accomplishments of the mind and the heart, the striking personal appearance of Saul would be a great attraction and recommendation.

3, 4. And the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with you, and arise, go seek the donkeys. And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not. He was diligent in his father's service, even though that service meant a fruitless journey in search of some stray donkeys. As he was then faithfully discharging the duties of his station in life, he was the man who was likely to rise to some higher position. He was the son of "a mighty man of power" or substance, and yet so simple were the manners of the time that he was sent, with one of the servants, to look for the lost donkeys. And he appears to have started at once to carry

out the commission which had been entrusted to him. Learn from Saul's obedience, dear young people, to never despise any duty which falls to your lot in the ordinary avocations of daily life--you will be preparing yourselves for some higher position by doing well what you are called to do now.

5. And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the donkeys, and take thought for us.There was evidently in Saul, at that time, a great considerateness of spirit. He wished to save his father from having any painful anxiety concerning his son and his servant, for Saul put both together when he said, "us." It is most desirable that young men in the present day should have a tender regard for those to whom they owe their being, and who have done so much for them in the years of their tender infancy--and that all young people should be careful never needlessly to give their parents one anxious thought on their account.

6. And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God and he is an honorable man; all that he says comes surely to pass: now let us go there; perhaps he can show us our way that we should go. In this case, as in so many others, the servant seems to have had more Divine Grace than his young master had, for the name of Samuel the Prophet was not unknown to him and he knew where the "man of God" lived. And he told Saul a good deal about him and gave him some good advice as to what they should do. In any case where the servant, but not the master, knows the Lord, it is well, when occasion offers, and it can be done prudently and discreetly, for the servant to speak up and give a good word for the cause of God and truth.

7. Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not

a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?He says nothing about any money that he may have had in his own pocket, and again his servant has to lead the way.

8, 9. And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver; that will I give to the man of God to tell us our way. (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spoke, Come, and let us go to the Seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer). He was a man who looked further ahead than others could, for, under Divine Inspiration, he could see into the future.

10. Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. Saul was willing to be liberal at his servant's expense, and to let him give "the fourth part of a shekel of silver" to the Prophet for him. And we have known some other folk who have been very generous in giving away the money of other people rather than their own!

10-12. So they went unto the city where the man of God was. And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the Seer here? And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came today to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people today in the high place. These young maidens were evidently well informed--they knew where the man of God was, they knew what he was going to do and they knew the time of the sacrifice or feast. Let us hope that they not only knew all this, but that they entered into the true spirit of it.

13-19. As soon as you come into the city, you shall straightway find him, before he goes up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he comes because he does bless the sacrifice; and afterwards those who are invited will eat Now therefore, get you up; for about this time you shall find him. And they went up into the city:

and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out toward them, to go up to the high place. Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be captain over My people Israel, that he may save My people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon My people, because their cry is come unto Me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spoke to you of, this same shall reign over My people. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray you, where the Seer's house is. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the Seer. Saul evidently did not know Samuel, and it appears from this fact that he was not a gracious, religious man. He had the charm of a fine outward appearance and he probably had many of the domestic virtues, but he was not one who lived in the fear ofGod.

19-21. Go up before me unto the high place, for you shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let you go, and will tell you all that is in your heart. And as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, set not your mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you, and on all your father's house? And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why, then, do you speak so to me?There was a very becoming modesty about him. He was really surprised and startled that such an honor should be in store for him. He had many natural virtues but, alas, the Grace of God was not upon him.

22-24. And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlor, and made them sit in the chief place among them that were invited, which were about thirtypersons. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said unto you, Set it by

you. And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul The right shoulder of the animal that was offered in sacrifice was part of the priest's portion, and this shoulder Samuel now ordered the cook to set before Saul as he sat in the place of honor!

24, 25. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! Set it before you, and eat; for unto this time has it been kept for you since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day. And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house. For quietness and seclusion, Samuel took the young man upstairs to the flat roof of the house and they walked to and fro, in the cool of the evening, talking about the high destiny to which Saul was called, and Samuel doubtless giving him valuable instructions concerning his new and important duties.

1 Samuel 10:1, 2. And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to

the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send you away. And Saul arose, and they went out, both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand you still a while, that I may show you the Word of God [See Sermon #1547, Volume 26--samuel

AND THE YOUNG MAN SAUL.] Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, is it not because the LORD has anointed you to be captain over His inheritance? When you are departed from me today. He gave Saul some signs by which he could confirm the truth of all that he had spoken to him--"When you are departed from me today."

2. Then you shall find two men by Rachels sepulcher in the border of

Benjamin at Zelzah. It was well for Samuel to send Saul, with brilliant prospects opening before him, to the sepulcher of the mother of his tribe. Oh, that we were all wise enough to think often of our last hours! Communion with the grave might even help us to communion with Heaven. Samuel said to Saul, "You shall find two men by Rachel's sepulcher."

2, 3. And they willsay unto you, The donkeys which you went to seek are found: andlo, your fatherhas left the care of the donkeys, and sorrow for you, saying, what shall I do for my son? Then shall you go on forward from there and you shall come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet you three men going up to God at Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine. Going to offer to God a meat offering and a thank offering. How could Samuel have known all this if God had not anointed his eyes and made him a Seer who could see what others saw not?

4. And they will salute you, and give you two loaves of bread; which you shall receive of their hand. "You shall take from them your first tribute as a king. They shall give you two loaves of bread, to teach you to avoid all luxury, and not to be a king who delights in delicate and dainty fare. You shall fare as the people do."

5, 6. After that you shall come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when you are come there to the city, that you shall meet a company of Prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they shall prophesy: and the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you shall prophesy with them. "You shall speak with enthusiasm about God. Moved with a holy passion you shall speak like a man inspired."

6. And shall be turned into another man. Note that Samuel did not say

to Saul, "You shall be turned into a new man," for that is what he never was. He become, for awhile, anotherman--a different man from what he had been before--but he never became a gracious man.

7, 8. Andlet it be, when these signs are come unto you, thatyou do as occasion servesyou; for Godis with you. And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto you, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shall you tarry, till I come to you, and show you what you shall do.

Chapter 3

The Cause and Effect of Heart Trouble

(No. 3076)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Let not your heart be troubled, neither Jet it be afraid." John 14:27.

THERE appeared to be great cause for their heart to be troubled and abundant reason for being afraid, for their Lord was about to be taken from them. What would a few timid disciples be able to do without their Master? He had always been their Teacher, Friend and Guide. When they had been assailed by adversaries, He had always espoused their cause and routed their enemies. They were safe enough as long as He was with them, but what would they be without Him? And, alas, He was going away to die! He was about to be dragged away like a common felon, falsely accused by bribed witnesses and then put to the cruel and shameful death of the Cross. Would not the ignominious death of the Captain be followed by the destruction of the army and the disastrous close of the holy war? The disciples might well be seriously afraid when they knew that their great adversary was very powerful, exceedingly cunning and desperately determined to crush out the new kingdom. It must have sounded somewhat strange in their ears that the Savior should say to them, "Do not be troubled about it, and do not be afraid."

I am sure that the tone of voice which He used would prevent them from imagining that He was mocking them. Sometimes when a man is in very great trouble, it sounds almost like mockery to say to him, "Let not your heart be troubled." "How can I help it?" he says. "How can I be

otherwise than troubled under such a trial as this? You tell me not to be afraid, but if you were in a similar position, wouldn't you be afraid?" And we are half inclined not to repeat the exhortation, lest we should seem to be exulting over the weakness of the desponding. But we must not forget that Jesus Christ was, Himself, in trouble at that time--and yet He was perfectly calm. He was about to bear the brunt of the storm, yet He was not afraid and, therefore, being a fellow sufferer with His disciples in the trouble and being Himself the perfect pattern of sublime patience and dauntless courage, He could most properly say to them, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And, moreover, there would be such a charm about the way in which He would say it, and such a gracious influence would go with every syllable, that the most cowardly among them must have been strengthened--and the most desponding would endeavor to shake off his fears. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, apply to every troubled soul here, our Savior's words of exhortation which form our text, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

I. And, first, dear Friends, let me remind you that if we are troubled and fearful, THERE IS VERY OFTEN AN EVIL CAUSE AT THE BOTTOM OF IT. "An evil cause?" asks one. Yes, an evil cause. Permit me to use a paradox and say that it is not trouble that troubles a man so much as something else that is the secret of the trouble. I have seen many in sore trouble who, nevertheless, have not been troubled. They have been tried, but their heart has not even been wounded in the trial. The more their troubles have come upon them, the higher have they risen in Divine Grace. As their afflictions have abounded, so have their joys abounded through Christ Jesus! Do not tell me that sickness naturally depresses, for I have seen many under various forms of sickness who have been able to sing cheerily upon their beds and to praise God amid

the fires! Do not tell me that poverty puts an end to a Christian's joy, for it is not so. The golden oil that feeds the lamp of the Christian's joy is not drawn from the wells of earth--it comes from quite another source. The Christian's joy does not spring from what he possesses, nor his sorrow from what he lacks. As his exaltation does not come from the world, so neither does his depression, if he lives near to God. So it is not trouble that troubles saints--it is something far worse than that. Let us see if we can discover what the evil cause of it may be.

With some, it is an unhumbledheart. I am afraid that there are many Christians in great trouble who are so proud that they will not admit that God has a right to deal with them as He is dealing. They think that there ought to be some more lenient dispensations of Providence for them. They imagine themselves to be the kind of persons upon whom the sun should always shine, who ought to walk in silver slippers and whose path should be always smooth. And if it is not so, they fancy that God is dealing harshly with them--that He is not kind to them--and they doubt His love. You may tell them that the martyrs suffered far more than they do. You may point them to many of their fellow Christians who are in much worse circumstances than they are, but that will not reconcile them to their own trials. The fact is, there is a self-love about them which has exaggerated itself beyond all due proportions into a sinful self-esteem! And this proud, vainglorious idea of what they ought to have and ought to be, rebels against the Sovereignty of God and refuses to submit to the will of the Most High! Remember that our sorrows usually spring out of ourselves and that when self is conquered, sorrow is, to a great extent, banished from the human heart. We may have a rebellious spirit concerning the Providence of God in many ways. I have heard of one whose husband had died and she

was wearing mourning for him many years after his death. She refused to be comforted until a member of the Society of Friends said to her very pointedly, "Woman, have you not forgiven God yet?" and the remark struck home to her. There are some who actually quarrel with God over the loss of husband, or wife, or child, or parent, or friend. Now, in such a quarrel as that, one or the other must bend--and it is certain that God cannot! He has done what was right and He had a right to do what He pleased. It is the unhumbled heart which sets up its judgment in opposition to God's judgment and dares to think that God has been unkind or even unjust. It is this wicked pride which is at the root of some of the worst sorrows which have embittered the lot of mankind! O my dear Friend, shall not God do as He wills with you and with yours? God gives, so shall He not take? Will you receive good at the hands of the Lord and will you not receive what you think to be evil? Are you so different in disposition from Job that you cannot and will not say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord"? Then I must remind you that the Holy Spirit will never begin to comfort you until this unhumbled spirit of yours is subdued! You must get rid of this rebellion against the Most High, or else your heart must continue to be troubled--

"Mortals, be dumb! What creature dares Dispute His awful will? Ask no account of His affairs But tremble and be still."

If it is God who has done it, no question can be raised concerning it. If it is God who has done it, no doubt as to the rightness of it can arise in the mind of any intelligent Believer. Brothers and Sisters, if we could see what God sees, we would feel that the heaviest trouble we have ever had was the thing that we would choose above all other things! You probably sometimes think that the course of Divine Providence is very mysterious, but were you as well informed concerning

all the circumstances as the Lord is, you would say, "That is the course I, myself, would have chosen." I do not doubt that when Believers get to Heaven and look back upon their pathway on earth, and recall God's dealings with them, they will admire the amazing loving kindness and unerring wisdom of God in arranging all that they have passed through--and that they will feel that they would not have anything altered, but have had it all just as it has happened.

In many others, perhaps in the majority, the cause of heart trouble lies in mistrust of God. This is especially true in reference to being afraid. They are afraid that their present trials will crush them, or that some future trial will cause their destruction. But, Brothers and Sisters, you need not be afraid because of the greatness of your trial, for you must be well aware that others have had greater trials and yet have survived them! Nor need you be afraid because of the severity of your present distress, for you have been in equal distress before and yet have been delivered out of it! The real secret of your being troubled and afraid lies in the fact that you doubt your God. Either you do not think that He is equal to the emergency, or else you conceive that He has forgotten you, or is angry with you, or that His mercy is clean gone and that He will be favorable to you no more.

In any case, you are dishonoring Him by doubting Him. I know that it is the notion of some people that a state of doubting is really a high state of perfection. I heard, the other day, of a man of whom I was told that he had walked in holiness and godliness for many years, yet he had never uttered an expression which could lead anyone to think that he really believed himself to be saved. He did not dare to say that lest he should be guilty of presumption. As I listened to the story, I could not help asking, "How long has he lived in this state?" "Forty years," was the answer. "Well then," I replied, "he has been

living for these forty years in grievous sin, for there is no sin which so dishonors God as does the sin of unbelief. And for a professor of religion to continue, year after year, in such a state as that until it becomes chronic is indeed terrible." Yet, as I said just now, there are some persons who think it right to continue in such a state as this. I do not wonder that their hearts are troubled! Beloved, if you believe in your God, you know that He will bring you through your present trouble and all future trials as well. If you truly love Him, you know that all things are working together for your good. Therefore, let not your heart be troubled! No, it cannot be, for your faith will drive out your fear--your confidence in God will keep your heart from being troubled.

The third evil cause of trouble of heart in some is, I fear, covetousness. I believe in calling things by their right names. I have known persons who have possessed quite enough to guarantee to them according to all human probabilities that they would never lack food and raiment as long as they live--yet they were troubled. Why? Well they were losing some of their money. But why did that trouble them? It was because they had not obeyed that injunction of the Apostle, "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content." I have known persons who have had so much money that if they had lived to be as old as Methuselah, they would probably have had plenty--yet, when some small loss happened to them, you would suppose that they were so poor that they must go to the workhouse! Although they had abundance left, they were afraid because of their covetousness. A man may be covetous of his own things as well as of the things of other people. He may covet his own goods by grasping them, holding them and making them his god--and when the Master comes to take away some of the goods which He has lent to him as His steward--he is troubled and afraid and cannot endure the

loss of that which he has learned to love too well! It is very difficult for man to have much money running through his hands without some of it sticking. It is very sticky stuff--and when it once sticks to the hands, they are not clean in the sight of the Lord! Unless a man is able to use money without abusing it, accepting it as a talent lent to him and not as a treasure given to him--it will very soon happen that the more money he has, the more troubles he will have. Just in proportion as our substance is increased, our daily cares will be increased. And on that very soil which we most covet will grow the thorns and thistles which will make our bed uneasy by night and our deathbed hard to lie on when we come to die! So beware of covetousness, Brothers and Sisters, for otherwise you will very soon fall into trouble and fear.

Suppose, my Friend, you have more wealth than another man possesses? Then you owe to God more gratitude than that other man does! Besides, if you have more to carry than another man has, probably you also have more care than that other man has--and what is there in that to make you proud? Would even a donkey that has to carry a double load be proud because its burden was twice as heavy as that of another donkey? No, it would not be so stupid! The man who has one stick when he starts on his journey has all that he needs. Shall another man who carries 20 sticks boast over him when only one of them will be any use to him? He that has a sufficiency should be satisfied with it, but he that has more than a sufficiency has no cause to be proud concerning it. If you have more than others have, you have a greater trust and a greater charge than others have--therefore be humbler than others are and wait upon God more than others do. You have a full cup to carry, so you need a steady hand and must beware of having an unsteady head. Ask God to keep you meek and lowly as your worldly circumstances rise, for so you will

rise with your circumstances. But if you are exalted and puffed up because God prospers you, you will come down even though your circumstances go up! It is poor prosperity when a man becomes outwardly richer, but inwardly poorer--when he has more gold, but less Grace--when he has more land, but less love to God. May God in His mercy preserve us all from such "prosperity" as that, and also preserve us from the pride which so often accompanies such prosperity! Remember what Paul was Inspired to write to the Corinthians--"Who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? Now if you received it, why do you glory as if you had not received it?"

I am afraid there are some professors who are troubled and afraid through an unequally bad cause, namely, envy. Alas, some good men have fallen into this gross sin! The Psalmist was envious when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. And he said, "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the daylong I have been plagued, and chastened every morning." It seemed as if he had the rough side of the road although he feared his God, while the wicked had the smooth path. Yes, and the poor Christians is very apt to get into a similar state of mind and to say, "How is it that I have to pine in poverty while God' s enemies are pampered in luxury? Why should I have to go hungry and in rags, while Dives, yonder, is clothed in purple and fine linen and fares sumptuously every day?" If any of you have felt like this, the best way to cure you of your daily trouble must be to get you no longer to look with the green eyes of jealousy upon the good things that others have, but to feel that God has a right to give where He pleases. And if He chooses to give an abundance of husks to the swine, you who are His children should be the last to envy them!

I think I have, at least once before, quoted in your hearing an illustration used by William Huntington with reference to those who live by faith, depending upon the daily bounty of God. He says, "Their case is something like that of a daughter whose father does not give her a large dowry when she is married, but who gives her what is called in the country, a hand-basket portion. That is to say, one day he will send down to her house a ham. Another time a basket of eggs. Sometimes a sack of flour. But every week something or other is sent to her from her old home, 'with father's love,' and by these continued tokens of love, the daughter probably gets more than if she had received her portion in a lump sum. And she gets her father's love sent with it every time." It is possible that if the Lord gave to His people all at once, everything that they would need this side of Heaven, they might afterwards think that He had forgotten them, or they might forget Him! But His daily gifts, bestowed in answer to their prayers--and each one coming with their Father's love stamped upon it, will keep Him constantly in their remembrance! In this way we shall have many loving reminders that He does not forget us--and oft-renewed assurances that He changes not and will also not suffer His children to lack any good thing. Let then the fact that God gives us all that we have, sweeten it all and make us satisfied even if that all is sometimes only a scanty supply.

In other cases I am afraid that anger is the cause of heart trouble and fear. Some people--I will not say some Christians, because where anger abides in the heart, it is very questionable whether the life of God can exist there at the same time! But some professors have grown angry, possibly without reason. And because they could not work their will upon the person who had offended them, they have never been at rest--and they have really done themselves serious injury through

cherishing such an evil spirit! It is a desperately bad case when a professor of religion begins to feel as Haman did when Mordecai would not bow down to him. It was nothing to Haman that he was the greatest favorite of King Ahasuerus as long as Mordecai at the gate would not cringe before him. You also know how he purposed to rid himself of his enemy and how he was hanged on the very gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. His sad end ought to be a warning to all who are at all like he was in spirit. I implore you, Beloved, to love one another! And if at any time you have been grieved and vexed by others, forgive them. A forgiving spirit is a ready way to please. Your hearts must be troubled if you have in them any vestige of malice, or anger, or enmity, or unkindness toward anybody. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." And if any can have God's peace to the full in their hearts, it is those who are fully at peace with their fellow men. Search and see, therefore, whether your trouble of heart may not have been caused by something of that sort.

Alas, I must also mention another evil cause of heart trouble and fear. It is that which is displayed by persons of a very fretful disposition, peevish, self-willed, and very exacting of other people. Some of them are good people, too, when they are in their right minds and in a right humor! But when they happen to be in their fits, the best place to be in regard to them is as far off as possible! This kind of disposition may sometimes spring from constitutional peculiarities, or it may be the result of sickness and, therefore, we ought to be very patient with such people. But if any of us are at all afflicted in that way, we ought not to expect too much patience from other people, neither ought we to try their patience more than we can help. It should be our determination, in the name and strength of God, to fight against the propensity to be troubled, vexed, cross and murmuring--for all of us

know what a disagreeable thing it is. I do not wonder that God is angry with murmurers--and it is not very surprising if we also get vexed with them. Suppose you help a poor man again and again, yet he never shows the slightest gratitude, but always has more complaints and murmurs more each time he comes to you? It will give you no pleasure to have further contact with him. Let us all take care not to fall into that state of mind--a child of God should not be like that. Certainly he is not like his Master if he is, for you never read of Jesus Christ murmuring or fretting and being peevish. You never heard anyone who really knew Him say that Jesus Christ was one of those exacting people whom nobody could please. Why, on the contrary, He was one of those whom you could scarcely displease! And even when wicked men nailed Him to the tree, He prayed for them, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." [See Sermons # 897, Volume 15--THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS; #2263, Volume 38--CHRIST'S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS and #3068, Volume 53--UNKNOWN DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS.] "Let not your heart be troubled," for the probability is that if you look below the trouble, you will find that there is underneath it some evil thing which is the real cause of the trouble. Therefore, O you children of God, in whom dwells the Spirit of God, strive against it!

II. Now, in the second place, and briefly--if we are God's children, we ought not to have our heart troubled and afraid because THERE IS REALLY NO GOOD REASON IN ALL THE WORLD FOR SUCH TROUBLE AND FEAR. Remember, first of all, that you are forgiven. Nothing ought to be a cause of trouble to a man whose sins are forgiven. There is a poor man, at this moment, lying in prison in the condemned cell. Suppose that you were able to go to him and say, "Here is a free pardon for you." If, after that, you were to say to him, "You will have to work hard all your life. You will have to live in a poor cottage," I am sure that he

would say, "I don't care what work I do, nor where I live, so long as I am pardoned! If I do but escape the gallows, you may do anything else that you like with me." So, dear Friend, you are forgiven, you are a child of God, you are an heir of Heaven and you can never be cast into Hell! Cannot you also say, "Well, then, you may do what you will with me, so long as I am pardoned"? When a man's sins are forgiven, what cause can he have to complain? Rather would we say with the Psalmist, "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." And therefore let each one of us say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies." Then next, there is no cause for you Christians to be troubled, for your best interests are perfectly safe. You have not lost your spiritual birthright and you will never lose it! Being children of God, you are children of God forever! You have not lost your redemption--you were bought with a price and you are free forever. You have not lost your union to Christ. You are still one with Him and because He lives, you shall also live. You have not lost your hopes of Heaven. You have not lost your interest in the eternal joys. You have not lost the justifying righteousness of Christ, nor the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. All these precious things and many more are yours--therefore you have no cause to be troubled or fearful. If you were going home after this service and you were carrying a very large sum of money in your pocket--and if, when you reached your destination, you put your hand in your pocket and found that you had lost your handkerchief. And if you put your hand in your pocket, again, and found that the bag of gold was all right, you would surely not trouble about the loss of your handkerchief! Your money being safe--the loss of which

would have been your ruin--you would be so delighted that you would not mind about your trivial loss. Suppose we heard of great shipwreck and that among those who were rescued was a man who, as soon as he was brought ashore, set up a great lament because he had lost his hat? Everybody would laugh at him for being so foolish--and that is very much like the trouble of a child of God who sits down and frets and worries over insignificant trifles while his immortal interests are all safe! His soul is safe. God is His, Heaven is His. He has not lost any of his real treasures. Therefore let him give heed to the Master's words to His first disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Remember, too, O children of God, that the troubles you are now enduring have not come to you by chance--they were laid upon you by the gracious hand of the all-wise Jehovah who is your loving Father and Friend--

"To His Church, His joy and treasure, Every trial works for good-- They are dealt in weight and measure, Yet how little understood. Not in anger,
But from His dear covenant love."

Well then, if God sends you your trials, why are you troubled and afraid because of them?

Recollect, too, that your present trials are working for your eternal good, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Do you not
know that your troubles have already been blessed to you? Were you ever so spiritually enriched as you have been in times of storm and in hours of pain? Have you not often thought, when you grew well again, that you would like to go back to the bed of suffering, that you might grow in

Grace as you did when you were there? So, as your trials have thus enriched you, why should you be troubled and afraid because of them? Then, beside this, all the troubles of the children of God will work out to God's Glory. The poet was right when he represented God, Himself, as saying of His people--

"From all their afflictions My Glory shall spring,
And the deeper their sorrows, the louder they'll sing." Will you not, therefore, be glad to be troubled, seeing that thus God is being glorified in you?

Remember, too, that your trials will soon be over and then there will begin the bliss of Heaven which will never, never end. So the Christian pilgrim can sing--

" The road may be rough, but it cannot be long.
And I'll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song." What if the shallows of the night fall grimly around you and the cold blast chills you to your bones? 'Tis but a little sleep and then morning breaks, and the sun rises in the land where--

"Everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers-- and you shall be where no night winds can ever come, or darkness ever again oppress your happy spirits! Therefore, comfort yourselves and comfort one another with these cheering thoughts.

III. Lastly, Believers ought not to be troubled or afraid because, as such a spirit comes from evil and there is no just cause or reason for it, SO IT GENERALLY LEADS TO EVIL.

It leads to evil to yourself It is a very mischievous thing for a child of God to be constantly troubled and afraid. It makes him selfish--he gets to looking for comfort for himself. It makes him weak, faint, fretful and so leads him to yet further rebellion and murmuring against

the Lord. God seems to attach very great importance to His people being happy. You know Isaiah was Inspired to write, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says our God." And David was moved to say, "Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart." And again, "Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yes, let them exceedingly rejoice." While Paul writes to the saints at Philippi, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." "The oil ofjoy" is to the soul what oil is to the body--it gives suppleness and helps to make us strong--

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

He would not have them do so for their own sakes. Genuine Christians may have two Heavens if they will--a Heaven below, and a Heaven above--we may drink of both the upper and the nether springs if God's Grace shall enable us to believe in God and to believe also in Jesus Christ. So let not trouble be your trouble, for it is an evil thing for yourself.

Further, do not let it be your trouble because it leads to evil to your fellow Christians. They see your mournful face and they are very apt to catch the infection. Some of you remember dear old Mr. Dransfield, our beloved elder who has gone to Heaven. Whenever he used to come into this building, it was like the shining of the sun! On a Lord's-Day morning when he came into the vestry, if it was a heavy, foggy morning, he would say to me, "Well, my dear Pastor, the morning is not very bright, but we can be very happy in our souls even on such a morning as this is. The fog cannot get into our hearts, blessed be God!" And then he would be sure to tell me some cheering thing that had happened during the week--some soul had been converted--or something that would help to gladden us all before we began the service. I have heard of

deacons who have always been sure, on the Sabbath morning, to tell the minister any unpleasant thing that had happened during the week--so as to depress his spirit in order that they might feel duly miserable under his ministry during the rest of the morning. Never do that, Brothers and Sisters, but be bright and cheerful for the sake of your fellow Christians. I always think there is quite enough misery in the world without my making any more. There are more than enough wild beasts to howl in this wide wilderness, so I need not do any howling. Let us be among the people of whom it is written, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them." As God's great caravan of saints goes traveling through the Sahara of this world, let them make the clarion of holy joy ring out triumphant notes till the desert itself shall "rejoice even with joy and singing."

Make it to be so, Beloved. Here is Mr. Ready-to-Halt coming along on his crutches. Smile at him and bid him welcome. Here is Miss Much-Afraid. Do not go to her with the story of the dragons and the giants, but tell her about the great King of the way and about the Celestial City that you have seen from the top of Mount Clear! And if you find anyone who is giving way to despondency so much that he scarcely thinks that he can be a child of God at all, let the very light of your countenance tell him that there is no real reason for a Believer's distress of mind and lead him to expect that even hewill find precious promises in the Word which shall enable him to rejoice in the Lord! I think that many Christians have scandalized the Lord's name and cause before the ungodly. Many professors make it appear that there is not much difference between the Church and the world--but I believe that there is sufficient power in true religion to lift a Christian right up above the world and to make him live in such a serene atmosphere that, notwithstanding all the briars and troubles that may

come upon him, he will be able to say, as David did when he fled from Saul, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early."

Moreover, this being troubled and afraid does much mischief among sinners. They hear that we are the children of God, that we have found Grace and favor in the sight of the Lord and they watch to see what sort of people we are. If they see us prosper and see that we are happy, then they say, "Yes, we also are happy when we prosper." If they see us at services and meetings and find us rejoicing, they say, "Yes, of course, that is a sort of religious dissipation and they are happy." They watch till they catch us on the sickbed--and then when pain is sharp upon us, if they see us patient, they say, "There is something in religion after all." They wait till we are poor, or till we are bereaved--and then if we are calm under losses and crosses--and still praise the Lord, they say "Ah! There is something real in it." They watch when we come to die and if they can hear us sing some sweet song in the midst of the river, and can witness a calm hallowed peace resting upon us in the last solemn hour, they whisper to one another, "There is something real and true here. There is a supernatural power that makes these men able to die as we could not die." Thus they are often led by the Spirit of God to seek Grace for themselves--that they also may be saved!

Patient Christians and joyful Christians are better preachers in the homes where they live than we can ever be from our pulpits! And happy Christians who at all times, and under all circumstances, wear a cheerful aspect, greatly recommend the Gospel to others. You know that if you saw a man-servant who looked very thin and lean, and as he went about, he seemed to be always wringing his hands in misery and sighing,

you would say, "That poor fellow must have a hard time of it. He has got a bad master, you may depend upon it. I should think he has small wages and very short commons. He lives in the house, doesn't he? There's very little to be had there, I am sure." You hear that the gentleman needs another servant and as you read the advertisement, you say, "That won't suit me, the poor wretch he already has is such a woe-begone creature that I don't wish to be as he is." How different it is in other households! A bright, cheerful man-servant says, "I have, been with my master for many years and the longer I live with him, the better I like him. He is the best master I ever heard or read of. I used to serve another man, but he treated me so shamefully that I ran away from him. But ever since I have been in this house I cannot tell you how happy I have been. I like my master's service, I like his other servants, I like his wages, I like everything about him! And I shall be very glad to see you in the same happy service." "Oh!" you would say, "That place will do well for me if the master will but have me." You know that there are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar--and there are more souls brought to Christ by happy Christians than there ever will be by all the dreadful gloom and solemnity which some people find it necessary to put on! I say that because I suspect that some of it is not genuine. There are some who think that it is right to look as if true religion were the summit of misery, but it is not so. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," lest you should bring up a bad report and make people think that the land which flows with milk and honey is not a good land, but a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof.

To close in a sentence or two--if you are always troubled and afraid, you will bring dishonor upon the name of God and you will make the ways of religion to be evilly spoken of. Let it not be so, O mourning

Christian! Ask the Lord to help you to put away the ashes and to take the oil of joy instead of mourning, and the garment of praise in place of the spirit of heaviness--

"Sing, though sense and carnal reason Gladly would stop the joyful song!
Sing, and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue!
Sing, for you shall Heaven inherit,
Sing, and never the song have done--
Sing to Father, Son, and Spirit,
One in Three, and Three in One!" My one regret, in preaching this sermon is that I cannot address it to you all. There are some unconverted persons here who are troubled. I hope you will be still more troubled! I cannot say to you, "Do not be afraid," for you ought to be even more afraid than you are and you have everything to make you afraid. But though you are troubled and afraid, remember that there is a Savior and that this Savior may be yours--for whoever believes in Him shall have his sins forgiven and shall be delivered from the wrath to come. If you believe in Him with all your heart, then my text may be addressed to you--but not till then. May God lead you so to believe and then we will say to you, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Amen.

Chapter 4

Death--a Sleep

(No. 3077)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

[On January 31, 1892, the Beloved preacher, "after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep." That verse was the text of the Sermon (#2243, Volume 38) published on the day of his funeral, to which Mrs. Spurgeon gave the title, "HIS OWN FUNERAL SERMON"]

THERE may be some few extraordinary cases "where ignorance is bliss" and where "'tis folly to be wise." But for the most part, ignorance is the mother of misery--and if we had more knowledge, we would find it a tower of strength against many fears and alarms which beget sadness and sorrows in dark untutored minds. True it is that the utmost diligence of the student cannot shield his body or his mind from fatigue and distress. In guarding against one class of ills, we may become exposed to another--as Solomon testifies that "much study is a weariness of the flesh," and again, "in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increases knowledge, increases sorrow." Still, let it be remembered that "wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense"--in the increase of either we may augment our cares, yet in the increase of both we think there is a remunerative profit!

But I would commend to you a wisdom which springs not up from earth,

but comes down from Heaven. He that is rich towards God knows that "the blessing of the Lord, it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it." And he that is made wise unto salvation, has received that wisdom which "gives life to them that have it." If we had more celestial wisdom, I believe we would have more of heavenly joy and less of carnal sorrow. Many a Doctrine of the Gospel becomes the means of sadness and misery to the heart simply because it is not understood. Ignorance of the Bible often troubles men's hearts and consciences--and prevents them from finding that peace of God which a little more knowledge of it would be sure to give them. And I am certain that ignorance or forgetfulness of many of the exceedingly great and precious promises of God and of the marvelous things He has engaged to do for His people, often causes our eyes to flow with tears and our hearts to be overwhelmed with suffering. The more a Christian knows of his religion, the better for his peace and for his happiness! The Apostle says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren." He knew that was an ill condition and we may well shun it. Depend upon this--the more thoroughly you understand the Gospel, the more you will find that the Gospel blesses you and makes you happy! Each word that Eternal Wisdom speaks is pure. Give heed, then, to the sure word of Scripture and so shall you journey as with chart in hand, escaping a thousand dangers to which benighted travelers are exposed--and enjoying a thousand delights which they cannot discern! But alas for those who walk in darkness! They have nothing to cheer or enliven, but everything to frighten and terrify them.

Leaving this preliminary point, for I trust you seek to avoid all ignorance and ask God to lead you into the knowledge of all Truth of God, I proceed now to the special application of my text, as the Holy Spirit has designed to place a lamp in the sepulcher where darkness was

known to hold an undisputed sway. And here we have, first, an affecting metaphor--a metaphor for death--"those who are asleep." Secondly, there is a solemn distinction. There are some that die without hope and there are others for whom we sorrow not as for them that are without hope. And then, thirdly, there is a very gentle exhortation--not to sorrow for those who sleep in Jesus, "even as others which have no hope."

I. So, in the first place, here is A MOST AFFECTING SIMILE--"those who are asleep."

Scripture continually uses the term, "sleep," to express death. Our Savior did. He said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps." And so well, with such an evident and appropriate truthfulness, did He describe death as being a sleep, that His disciples mistook the sense of His words and said, "Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well." But Jesus spoke not of the transient sleep of the weary, but of the deep slumber of death. And very frequently, even in the Old Testament, you find it said that certain persons "slept with their fathers, and were buried in a sepulcher." Nor did they count that sleep a hopeless end of life, but as David said, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness"--they expected to awake from that slumber into which they believed death did cast their bodies. In the New Testament the same emblem is continually used. And it is very pleasant to remember that in the old catacombs of Rome, where the bodies of many saints were buried, it is continually found inscribed on their graves, "She sleeps." "He sleeps in Jesus." "He shall wake up one day" and similar epitaphs which mark the firm belief of Christians that sleep was a very fine and beautiful pictureof death!

Allow me to guard against an evil supposition that may spring up here. When death is called a sleep, it is not because the soul sleeps--that, we are told by Holy Scripture, rises at once to Heaven. The soul of the

saint is found at once before the Throne of God. It is the bodywhich is said to sleep. The soul sleeps not! Absent from the body, it is present with the Lord. It stretches its wings and flies away up to yonder realm of joy! And there, reveling in delight, bathing itself in bliss, it finds a rest from the turmoil of earth infinitely better than any rest in sleep. It is the body, then, that sleeps, and the body only. I will try and tell you why we think the metaphor is used for the sleep of the body.

In the first place, because sleep is a suspension of the faculties, but not a destruction of the body. When we see anyone naturally asleep, we believe that body will wake up again. We do not suppose that those eyes will be sealed up in perpetual darkness, that those bones and that flesh will lie dormant, never more to feel the consciousness of being, or stir with the impulse of life. No, we expect to see the functions of life resumed, the eyelids open to admit the cheering rays of light and the limbs to become again exercised with activity. So, when we bury our dead in their graves, we are taught to believe that they are asleep. Our faith, (which is warranted by the Word of God), discerns in the corruption of death a suspension of the powers of the body rather than an annihilation of the matter itself. The earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved, but it cannot be destroyed. Though the bones are scattered to the four winds of Heaven, yet at the call of the Lord God, they shall come together again, bone to bone. Though the eyes are first glazed and then devoured from their sockets, they shall be surely restored--that each saint in his own flesh may see God! In this confidence we deposit the body of each departed saint in the grave as in a bed. We doubt not that God will guard the dust of the precious sons and daughters of Zion. We believe that in the Resurrection there shall be a perfect identity of the body. You may call it

unphilosophical if you please, but you cannot show me that it is unbiblical! Science cannot demonstrate it, you say. But then science cannot disprove it. Reason stands abashed while Revelation lifts her trumpet-tongue and exclaims, "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible."

Look not, then, on the corpse of your Brother or your Sister in Christ, Beloved, to take an eternal farewell. Say rather, "When I stretch myself on my couch at night, I hope to wake at the first call of the busy morn. But I not only hope, I am sure that this sleeping heir of immortality shall awake from the sound slumbers of his sepulchral repose at the dawn of the heavenly Bridegroom's appearing." "Ah," says one, "'twas but an hour or two ago I was in the closed chamber where my little baby is laid out. I lifted the coffin lid and looked at its dear little placid face, and I can quite believe what you say--death is a sleep--it seemed just like it." "No," says another, "it was only yesterday that I was in a London graveyard, appalled with the sight of skulls and bare, disjointed bones, and I can never look upon death in the way you represent." Now then, my Friends, mark this well, for I can give one reply to you both--it is not by the exercise of your sense, but by the exercise of your faith that you are to get this blessed hope! You might bitterly gaze on the face of the dead long enough before you would catch a symptom of returning life. You might grope about in the dark damp vault long enough before a ray of light would show you an avenue by which the captives can be liberated from their gloomy cells. No, no! You must visit the tomb of Jesus! You must go and "see the place where the Lord lay"--then you will soon perceive how the stone is rolled away and how to rise again is made possible and

certain, too!

Moreover, the term, "sleep," is beautifully used to express the quiet of the body. It rests from labor. Look on the sleeper. He has been weary. He has toiled all day long, but there is no weariness now. He breathes softly. Sometimes a dream may disturb him, but he is not weary--he is resting in the unconsciousness of slumber. It is often pleasing to look

upon the face of a weary sleeper. Have you ever passed along a country lane and there, by the roadside, seen the harvestman as he is resting awhile from his toils, lying down upon the bank? What a heavy sleep he has and what a blessed smile there is on his countenance while he is enjoying that rest! Such is the natural sleep of the body, from which comes the metaphor of my text. And is not this sleep of death a resting after toil? The poor limbs are weary. They are now stretched in the grave and covered over with the green sod, that they may not hear the noise above their heads nor be disturbed by the busy din. They are put in their quiet abodes, down deep there in the earth, that none may alarm them. And now let the cannon roar over their tomb, let the thunder shake the sky, let the lightning flash--no sight nor sound can startle them, or cause them dreams! In such still chambers of retirement, their troubles are now over. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest." The body has gone through its battle. The warrior sleeps, the conqueror rests. His brow shall soon be decked with laurels--the very brow which now slumbers in the tomb awhile shall yet rise again to wear the crown of everlasting life! But now it rests awhile till the preparations are complete for the triumphant entry into the Kingdom of God when Christ shall come to receive body and soul into their everlasting resting place!

Note again, sleep is used as a figure for death to show us the entire

unconcern which the dead feel concerning anything which is going on below. The sleeper knows nothing of what is going on. The thief may be in the house, but he knows it not. There is a storm, but he slumbers and knows no terror. There may happen a thousand accidents abroad, or even in the chamber where he rests, but as long as sleep can hold him fast, he shall be entirely unconcerned about them and shall not notice them! And such, Beloved, is the case with the dead. Their bodies, at least, are entirely free from concern. Empires may totter, kingdoms fall and mighty revolutions shake the world, but none of these things will--

"Ever make their hearts ache, or Break the spell of their profound repose." There may be a falling away, a backsliding in the Church, but the minster in the grave knows it not. The tongue of Wickliffe shall not move with stern rebuke. The eyes of Knox shall not flash with indignation. Yes, and each bodily organ through which the mind was known to reveal itself is now closed. "So man lies down and rises not: till the heavens are no more they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

There is a yet sweeter view of this metaphor which I will now point out to you. Sleep, you know, is a means of refreshment by the recruiting of our exhausted strength to fit us for a fresh exercise of our faculties when we awake. Such, too, is death. The sleep of death is requisite as a preparation for Heaven, so far as the body is concerned. The soul must be prepared by a blessed change worked upon it in this time-state. But the body awaits its full redemption until the Resurrection. Though I may not follow the metaphor in the process by which the change is worked, I can believe it will quite hold good in the result. The refreshing of the body is of course gradually brought about during the hours of sleep, just as changes are successively going on in the grain

of wheat that falls into the ground and dies. The awaking of the one and the sprouting of the other, in health and vigor, result from causes that take place in the interval. But I am not prepared to say that it is exactly so with the sleeping dust of man's earthly tabernacle. The greedy worm that devours it, the general corruption that preys upon it and the foul earth with which it mingles may consume that which is corruptible. But these can have no power to refine the nature, or to produce the glorious likeness to be borne by the saints. You must always guard against straining a figure, especially when, by doing so, you would make it contradict the plain didactic teachings of the Scriptures. We do not look down into the grave as if it were a refining pot to purify our nature, or a bath in which the garments of mortality are to be cleansed--we look upward to Heaven, from whence the Savior shall come--"our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Once more, there is a very precious word in connection with this sleep which we must not overlook. At the 14th verse it says that they "sleep in Jesus." Sweet thought! This teaches us that death does not dissolve the union which subsists between the Believer and Christ. When the body dies, it does not cease to be a part of Christ! "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" said the Apostle to those who were still living in the world. And now, as to those whose earthly course is done, our departed friends "sleep in Jesus"--they are as much in Christ now as they were when upon earth! And their bodies, which were precious to the Lord and preserved as the apple of His eye, are as precious to Him now as they ever were! It was once their delight to have communion with Jesus in His death and Resurrection, as knowing themselves one with Him when He died and rose again. And not less surely did Jesus

hold fellowship with them in their death, making Himself known to them when they endured their last struggle. How often have we seen the eyes brighten up with an almost supernatural brilliance just before they were closed on all beneath the skies! How often have we seen the hand raised with the parting expression of triumph, and then laid motionless by the side! How often has the Presence of the Beloved sustained the frail tenement of the expiring Christian till he has defied death "to quench his immortality, or shake his trust in God!"

And mark how the saints in Jesus, when their bodies sleep in peace, have perpetual fellowship with Him--yes, better fellowship than we can enjoy! We have but the transitory glimpse of His face--they gaze upon it every moment. We see Him "through a glass, darkly." They behold Him "face to face." We sip of the brook by the way--they plunge into the very ocean of unbounded love! We look up, sometimes, and see our Father smile. Look whenever they may, His face is always full of smiles for them. We get some drops of comfort, but they get the honeycomb itself. They have their cup filled with new wine, running over with perennial, unalloyed delights. They are full of peace and joy forever. They "sleep in Jesus!"

Beloved, such a description of death makes us wish to sleep too! O Lord, let us go to sleep with the departed! O happy hour when a clod of the valley shall be our pillow! Though it is so hard, we shall not be affected by it. Happy hour, when earth shall be our bed! Cold shall be the clay, but we shall not know it--we shall slumber and we shall rest. The worm shall hold carnival within our bones and corruption shall riot over our frame, but we shall not feel it. Corruption can but feed on the corruptible--mortality can but prey upon the mortal.

Oh, let me rest! Come, night, and let me slumber! Come, my last hour! Let me bow myself upon the bed! Come, Death, oh, come lightly to my

couch! Yes, strike if you will, but your stroke is the loving touch that makes my body slumber! Happy, happy, they who die in the Lord!

II. Now, secondly, here is A SOLEMN DISTINCTION.

All men die, but all men die not alike. There are two sorts of death. I speak not now of the inferior animals--of them we never read in Scripture that they sleep--I speak of MAN, concerning whom it is certain that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." There is the death of the righteous, which is peaceful, happy and joyous beyond expression! In its future consequences there is, moreover, the death of the wicked, sad in itself, but doleful, indeed, in its inevitable results throughout a dread eternity! Come, then, Beloved, let us consider this distinction.

There are some, we must infer from this text, for whom we can sorrow as those for whom we have no hope. While there are others for whom we are told we may not thus sorrow--concerning their death we have every hope and every joy.

Turning for a moment to the heathen nations, we do not wonder that there is a great deal of grief expressed at their funerals, that they hire women who pluck their hair, make hideous noises and distress their bodies with all kinds of unnatural contortions in order to express the utmost agony--while the relatives and friends cover themselves with sackcloth and ashes and spend their time in weeping and wailing and lamentations. We do not wonder that such customs should prevail and be handed down among those who have no knowledge of a resurrection! They suppose that when the body is consigned to the tomb, they shall never see it again, so we do not marvel that they should cry--

" Weep for the dead, and bewail her! Weep for the dead, and bewail her! She is gone; she is gone! We shall see her no more-- Weep for the dead, and bewail her!" You see, there is no hope in their case to mitigate

their woe. But in a nominally Christian land, although we are persuaded that all men will have a resurrection, yet how many die of whom we have no hope! I mean to say, we have, in the first place, no hope of ever meeting them again. We frequently sing in our Sunday school--our little children sing--

"Oh, that will be joyful, Joyful, joyful!
When we meet to part no more!'

But there is another side to that Truth of God--

"Oh, that will be doleful, Doleful, doleful!
When we part to meet no more!'

When our wicked friends die, if we are righteous, we must remember that we shall never meet them again. We may behold them, but it will be a hideous sight. We may see them as Lazarus saw the rich man in Hell. We may behold them with the great gulf fixed between us--but remember that the last shake of the hand with an ungodly relative is an everlasting farewell! That last whisper of sympathy on the dying bed is indeed final--we shall never address them with another soft word of comfort, never again shall we call them friends--we are parted then, forever. Death, like some mighty earthquake, shakes two hearts apart which seemed to be indissolubly united--and a great gulf of fire and wrath shall separate them. One in Heaven and the other in Hell--they shall never meet again--there is no hope of it.

Some of you we could not bear to lose, yet, if you fall asleep, we shall with holy assurance consign you to your grave and say, "Lord, we thank You that it has pleased You to take to Yourself our beloved Brother." Yet, alas, there are many here--oh, we pray God that they may not die, for we know we should never see them again in peace, and joy, and happiness! There are some of you, now within the reach of my voice--judge you of whom I speak--concerning whom, if you were now to

depart, we might say, as David did, "O my son, my son, Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son!" If you were now to depart, we might indeed take up a very bitter cry. We might ask the owl and the bittern, with their dismal hoots, to assist our lamentations. We would have need to weep for you, not because your bodies were dead, but because your souls were cast away into unutterable torment! O Sirs, if some of you were to die, it would be your mother's grief, for she would bitterly reflect that you were gnashing your teeth in fell despair! She would recollect that you were beyond the reach of prayer, cast away from all hope and from all refuge--that she could never see you again--her destiny to be forever with her Lord in Heaven, but your doom to be forever shut out!

Young men and women, yes, and all of you who have had pious friends who have gone before, should you not like to meet them before the eternal Throne? Can you bear the dread thought that you are separated from some of them forever because you are not the Lord's children, neither do you seek the things that belong to your peace? I think you wish to meet them there, do you not? But you never shall unless you tread the steps they trod, and walk the road they loved. If your hearts are not towards Jesus. If your souls are not given to Him, how can you? For if your way is not the same, your end must differ. You shall not meet at the goal of Heaven unless you meet at the wicket gate on earth, enter in by the strait gate and go along the strait and narrow road! Oh, if some of you were about to die, your minister would have to go to your bedside and say, "Adieu, I shall never see you again." And were you to look up, and say, "what, Sir--no more?" He might answer, "I have seen you many a time in God's House. We have sung together, we have prayed together, we have worshipped together in the same sanctuary. But it is all over now. I shall never see you again!" "What, never, Minister? Never hear your

voice again?" "No, never! Unless you are in Christ now, farewell forever!" O poor Soul, what a sorrowful thing to shake hands forever, to bid good-bye forever--one to descend to endless flames and the other to mount to realms of everlasting bliss! We may, indeed, sorrow for them, if we have no hope of ever meeting them again.

But we would not grieve so much about not meeting them again if we knew that they were happy, even though we should never see them. But, then, for those who die without Christ, we sorrow because we have no hope that they have any happiness. Or even if they were now in misery and we might cherish the thought that they would one day escape, we could not then sorrow for them as those that have no hope. But, alas, we recollect that our lost friends are lost forever! We recollect that there is no shadow of a hope for them! When the iron gate of Hell is once closed upon them, it shall never be unbarred to give them free exit! When once shut up within those walls of sweltering flame which girdle the fiery gulf, there is no possibility of flight! We recollect that they have, "forever," stamped upon their chains--"forever" carved in deep lines of despair upon their hearts! It is the Hell of Hell that everything there lasts forever! Here, time wears away our griefs and blunts the keen edge of sorrow, but there, time never mitigates the woe. Here, the sympathy of loving kindred, in the midst of sickness or suffering, can alleviate our pain, but there, the mutual upbraiding and reproaches of fellow sinners give fresh stings to torment too dreadful to be endured! Here, too, when Nature's last palliative shall fail, to die may be a happy release--a man can count the weary hours till death shall give him rest. But, oh, remember, there is no death in Hell!

Death, which is a monster on earth, would be an angel in Hell! But the terrible reality is this, "Their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

Must we go one step further? It is terrible work to deliver these warnings, but it would be still more terrible to hide any Truth of God, however bitter. When we have uttered a pitiful lament for heathen nations and when we have spoken with deeper emotion of the profane, the profligate, and the despisers of God, we have not finished. These have not the semblance of peace in their own breasts. But alas, alas, there are many who die in the delusion of a false peace! What avails it that they uttered pious sentiments with their lips if their hearts were not changed? What though they received "the bread and wine" in nature's extremity? Will the sacramental opiate serve them instead of the inward witness of reconciliation to God? Oh, hear this, you that are at ease! Listen, all you whose religion stands in outward forms-- "Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning." I confess to you that the metaphor which charms me in the one case appalls me in the other, so great is the distinction among the sleepers! Look at the man who has sought to be justified by the works of the Law, or in some way perverted the Gospel of Christ. With a fatal lull of conscience he nestles down securely. "As when a hungry man dreams and, behold, he eats; but he awakes and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreams and behold, he drinks; but he awakes and, behold, he is faint and his soul has appetite." He sleeps the deep sleep of death, prepared, as he supposes, to meet the Judge. When he awakes, the spell shall be dissolved. The terrible sentence, "Depart," awaits him! O Beloved, I tremble to think that a man may go up with jaunty step to the threshold of Heaven only to be cast down to the nethermost pit! As you stand among the graves of your departed friends, I beseech you to examine yourselves! Only as you can say, "To me to live is Christ," have you a right to add, "and to die is gain."

But now there is the case of the Christian. Is it not matter for consolation and holy joy, with some of us, that concerning beloved friends of ours who now sleep quietly in their graves, we have not to sorrow as those who have no hope? The death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord! On their account we have cause rather to rejoice than to weep. And why? Because we hope that they are safely housed in Heaven. Yes, more--we have the firm persuasion that already their redeemed spirits have flown up to the eternal Throne! We believe that they are at this moment joining in the hallelujahs of Paradise, feasting on the fruits of the Tree of Life, and walking by the side of the river, the streams whereof make glad the heavenly city of our God! We know they are supremely blessed--we think of them as glorified spirits above who are "forever with the Lord."

We have that hope and then we have another hope concerning those--we hope that though we have buried them, they shall rise again! In the verse following our text it is written, "Those also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." We rejoice that not only do "they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them," but that after they have rested a little while, their bodies shall rise again! We know that their Redeemer lives and we are certain that He will, at the latter day, stand upon the earth and that they shall stand on the earth with Him! We rejoice that the dead in Christ shall rise first--that they shall come on that day when, "with clouds descending," "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them who believe." We look for a day when buried bodies shall be living frames once more! We expect that glazed eyes shall again be radiant with light! We believe that dumb lips shall yet sing, that deaf ears shall yet hear and that lame feet shall yet leap like the hart!

We are looking for the time when we shall meet the saints in their very

bodies and shall know them. It is our hope that they shall rise again and that we shall meet them and shall know them. I trust you all firmly believe that you will recognize your friends in Heaven. I consider the doctrine of the non-recognition of our friends in Heaven a marvelously absurd one! I cannot conceive how there can be any communion of saints in Heaven unless there is mutual recognition. We could not hold communion with unknown beings! If we knew not who they were, how could we be able to join their company? Moreover, we are told that we shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." I suppose we shall know those blessed Patriarchs when we sit down with them. And if we know them, there is but one step to the supposition that we shall know all the general assembly! Moreover, there will be but very little difficulty in discovering them because every seed has its own body by which we are taught that everybody, being different from any other body when sown, will, when it rises in a spiritual fashion, be in like manner different from any other. And although the spiritual body may have none of the lineaments upon its face like we have, and no marks as we have, because it will be far more glorious and splendid, yet it will have so much identity that we, being instructed, shall be able to say of it, "This is the body that sprang from such a seed," just as we recognize the different kinds of corn or flowers that spring from the different kinds of seed that are sown! Take away recognition and you have taken away, I think, one of the joys of Heaven. There seems to me a great deal of Heaven's sweetness in the little verse (to quote another of the children's hymns)--

"Teachers, too, shall meet above.

And our pastors whom we love Shall meet to part no more." III. And now, in the third place, we HAVE A GENTLE EXHORTATION.

The exhortation here is delicately hinted at--that the sorrow of

bereaved Christians for their Christian friends ought not to be at all like the sorrow of unconverted persons for their ungodly relatives. We are not forbidden to sorrow--"Jesus wept." The Gospel does not teach us to be stoics--we ought to weep, for it was intended that the rod should be felt, otherwise we could not "hear the rod, and who has appointed it." If we did not feel the stroke when our friends were taken away, we would prove ourselves worse than heathen men and publicans. God's Grace does not take away our sensibilities, it only refines them and, in some degree, restrains the violence of their expression. Still, there ought to be some difference between the sorrow of the righteous and the sorrow of the wicked.

First, there should be a difference in its vehemence. It may be natural to the unbridled passions of an ungodly man, who has lost his wife, to tear his hair, to throw himself upon the bed, to clutch the body, to declare it shall not be buried, to rave through the house cursing God and saying all manner of hard things of His dispensations. But that would not do for a Christian. He must not murmur. A Christian may stand and weep. He may kiss the dear cold hand for the last time and rain showers of tears on the lifeless body while "pity swells the tide of love." But God and His religion demand that he should say, after doing this, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He may weep--he ought to. He may sorrow--he ought to. He may wear the clothes of mourning--God forbid that we should ever believe in any religion which should proscribe our showing some outward signs of sorrow for our friends!--yet we may not, and we must not weep as others weep! We must not always carry the red and tearful eye. We must not always take with us the face that is downcast and distressed. If we do, the world will say of us that our conduct belies our profession and our feelings are at variance with our faith.

Again, there is another thing we must never allow to enter into our grief-- the least degree of repining. A wicked man, when he sorrows for those who are gone without hope, not infrequently murmurs against God. But it is far otherwise with the Christian! He meekly bows his head, and says, "Your will, O God, be done." The Christian must still acknowledge the same gracious hand of God, whether it is stretched forth to give or to take away. The language of his faith is, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; though He should take all away, yet will I not repine." I do not say that all Christians are able to maintain such a cheerful submission of spirit. I only say that they ought to and that such is the tendency of the Christian religion--had they more of the Spirit of God within their hearts, that would be their habitual disposition. We may sorrow, Beloved, but not with repining. There must be resignation mixed with the regret. There must be the yielding up, even with grateful acquiescence, that which God asks for--seeing we believe that He does but take what is His own.

And now, there is just one further observation. I believe that when the Christian sorrows, he ought to be as glad as he is sorrowful. Put your sadness in one scale and your gladness in the other scale--then see if the reasons for praise is not as weighty as the reasons for grief. Then you will say, "She is gone--here is a tear for her. She is in Heaven--here is a smile for her. Her body is with the worms. Weep, eyes. Her soul is with Jesus! Shout, lips! Yes, shout for joy! The cold sod has covered her, she is gone from my sight, she sleeps in the sad, sad grave--bring me the clothes of mourning. No, she is before the Throne of God and the Lamb--blessed forever! Lend me a harp and let me thank my God! She has joined the white-robed host on yonder blessed plains! O hearse and funeral, O shroud and garments of woe, you are most fitting for her! I have lost her and she, herself, with many a

pang and struggle, has passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but O joyous face! O songs of gladness! O shouts of rapture! You are equally becoming!--for when she passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, she feared no evil, for Your rod and Your staff did comfort her. Now, beyond the reach of death's alarms, she does bathe her soul in seas of bliss--she is with her Lord."

It is well to have a little singing as well as weeping at a funeral. It well becomes the burial of the saints. Angels never weep when saints die--they sing. You never heard a saint say, when he was dying, "There are angels in the room. Listen! You can hear them sobbing because I am dying." No, but we have often heard a saint say, "There are angels in the room and I can hear them singing." That is because angels are wiser than we are. We judge by the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears--but angels judge after another fashion. They "see and hear and know" the joys of the blessed and

therefore they have no tears--but they have songs for them, and they sing loudly when the Christian is carried Home, like a shock of corn fully ripe.

And now, Beloved, we shall soon all of us die. In a few more years I shall have a gravestone above my grave. Some of you, I hope, will say, "There lies our minister who once gathered us together in the House of God and led us to the Mercy Seat and joined in our song. There lies one who was often despised and rejected of men, but whom God did nevertheless bless to the salvation of our souls and sealed His testimony in our hearts and consciences by the operation of the Holy Spirit." Perhaps some of you will visit my tomb and will bring a few flowers to scatter on it, in glad and grateful remembrance of the happy hours we spent together. It is quite as probable that your tombs will be built as soon as mine. Ah, dear Friends! Shall we write on your

tombstones, "She sleeps in Jesus"? "He rests in the bosom of his Master"? Or will we have to speak the honest truth, "He has gone to his own place"? Which shall it be? Ask yourselves, each one of you, where will your soul be? Shall it mount up there--

"Where our best friends, our kindred, dwell, Where God our Savior reigns."

Or--

"Shall devils plunge you down to Hell, In infinite despair?"

You can ascertain which it will be! You can tell it by this--Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love the Lord Jesus? Do you stand on Christ, the solid Rock? Have you built your hope of Heaven on Him alone? Have you, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself at His Mercy Seat, looking to His blood and righteousness, to be saved by them and by them alone? If so, fear not to die--you shall be safe, whenever the summons comes to you! But if not, tremble, tremble! You may die tomorrow--you must die one day. It will be a sad thing to die as to be lost beyond recovery. May God Almighty grant that we may be all saved at last, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Chapter 5

God-Guided Men

(No. 3078)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"I conferred not with flesh and blood." Galatians 1:16.

THE conversion of Paul is one of the evidences of the truth of our holy religion. So far as this life was concerned, he had nothing to gain, but everything to lose by becoming a Christian. From being a great Rabbi he came to be the companion of poor fishermen who themselves were the followers of One who was poorer even than they! It is clear that he was no fanatic and not at all likely to be carried away by any sudden impulse. He was clear-headed, thoughtful, logical and his conversion must have been worked by some very extraordinary power--there must have been, to him at least, overwhelming evidence of the truth of what he believed and of that form of faith to which he devoted his whole after life.

In addition to supplying us with valuable evidence of the truth of Christianity, Paul has left to us a most remarkable example of its force in his own person. Never was there a man more fully possessed with the Spirit of Christ than he was. He was no feeble saint with just enough Grace to enable him to go limping into Heaven--he was a spiritual athlete, wrestling with the powers of darkness, running with endurance the race set before him and "filled with all the fullness of God." He was one who was indeed "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." He threw himself, with all his natural zeal, into the

cause of Christ--that natural zeal being so sanctified by the Spirit of God as to make him a mighty and valiant servant of the Lord. I pray that we, also, Beloved, may be what Paul was. I will not even deny his bonds! He did so when he said to king Agrippa, "I would to God that not only you, but also all that hear me this day were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." But we might be willing even to wear his bonds if we might but have such a character as his fully developed within us!

Paul--being converted through Christ appearing to him out of Heaven, and speaking personally to him, being deeply repentant for the past and believing fully in Jesus as his Lord and Savior--had no sooner been baptized than he struck out at once an independent path for himself. He did not need to receive any commission from men, for he had received his commission direct from Heaven and, therefore, "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."

In our text Paul says, "I conferred not with flesh and blood." He did not consult with good men as to what he ought to do! Why should he? Why should he ask them to countersign his commission when he had Christ's name at the bottom of it? He did not consult his relatives, for he knew very well what they would say. They would think him ten thousand fools in one to throw up all his prospects of advancement to become the follower of what they thought to be the meanest of all superstitions.

He did not consult even with his own flesh and blood, with himself. As I have already reminded you, he had everything to lose and nothing to gain by becoming a Christian--but he willingly descended from being a student of Gamaliel and a member of the Sanhedrim, to earn his living as a tentmaker and to be a simple itinerant preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He descended from comparative ease and luxury to poverty and stern toil-- from safety and peace to bitter persecution! And at

last to death by martyrdom. And while knowing that he could never be a gainer as to temporal things, he nevertheless calmly and deliberately gave himself up to be the bondservant of that Christ who had spoken to him out of Heaven and called him into His service.

I want to show you, first, that faith needs no warrant for its action but the command of God. If it gets that, it need not consult with flesh and blood. I shall try to show you, in the second place, the range of application of this principle to ourselves practically. And then I shall show you, in the last place, that the principle is a grand one and commends itself to our best judgment

I. First, FAITH NEEDS NO WARRANT FOR ITS ACTION BUT THE COMMAND OF GOD. Believers have no need to consult with flesh and blood. I may refer you in illustration of this Truth of God to good men in all ages. There is Noah, for instance. He is commanded by God to build an ark of gopher wood--an ark large enough to hold himself and his family and some of all beasts, birds and creeping things that were upon the face of the earth! Was it not an absurd idea to build so huge an ark upon dry land? Yet Noah did not consult with any of the people who were then living--we read, "Thus did Noah: according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

Then, think of Abraham. He was commanded by God to leave his country, his kindred and his father's house and to go unto a land that God would show him." And we read, "So Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken unto him." Further on--in his life there was that very memorable occasion when God commanded him to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham did not consult with Sarah. He knew the mother's feelings far too well to wish to lacerate them, and she might have said, "No, my Husband, such a deed as that must not be done." So he did

not ask her, but he rose up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, prepared the wood and set out on the three days' journey to the place of which God had told him. He did not even consult Isaac, who was, apparently, thus to die. And when Isaac said to him, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" his father replied, almost choking, I think, as he said it--"My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." He consulted not with his own flesh and blood, else had the father been too strong for the Believer, but as God had commanded him to offer his son as a sacrifice, he unsheathed the knife to slay his beloved Isaac--a glorious instance of what faith can dare to do without asking the advice or the approval of men!

Remember, too, how Moses obeyed the Divine command to lead Israel out of the house of bondage. He certainly did not consult with his own flesh and blood, for the riches of Egypt were at his feet! Perhaps Pharaoh's throne would have been occupied by him before long had he not counted "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," and he gave up glittering prospects to go forth into the wilderness with the despised people of God.

Remember David, too. He had those who wished to give him counsel, when he twice stood over his sleeping foe, the despot Saul. On the second occasion Abishai said to David, "Let me smite him, I pray you, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time." But David said to him, "Destroy him not; for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?" He knew right well that it is not for good men to do ill actions, even though they think the best results might follow from them. So he consulted not with flesh and blood and he would not let the son of Zerniah lead him into sin. Think too, of Daniel. When the royal edict was signed that

none should ask a petition of anyone except King Darius for thirty days, did he confer with flesh and blood as to what he should do under the circumstances? Did he consult with himself or with others as to how he might satisfy his conscience and yet, at the same time, save his life? Not he--he went into his house, where his windows were open towards Jerusalem, and there he prayed to God three times a day, as he had done aforetime, although the lions' den awaited him! And think, also, of those three brave young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When Nebuchadnezzar told them that they must worship his golden image or be cast into the burning fiery furnace, they replied, "We are not careful to answer you in this matter." Their only care was to do as God bade them--regardless of all consequences! They did not consult with flesh and blood, but obeyed the command of their God!

This has been faith's rule all through the ages. It was the rule of the martyrs in the old days of the Roman persecution. They knew that they might be put to death in the Coliseum--"butchered to make a Roman holiday"--yet, knowing that, they dared to confess that they were Christians. This was the glory of our Protestant ancestors in the days of Queen Mary. They went joyfully to Smithfield to be burnt for the sake of Christ and, as one of the pastors significantly said, "the young people went to see the others burn--and to learn the way when it should come to their turn." They did learn the way, too, to stand there, not consulting with flesh and blood, but being ready to be burned to ashes rather than worship the beast, or receive his mark on their foreheads! This is still the spirit that animates true faith.

God's command is her sufficient warrant. She consults not with flesh and blood.

I would have you also remember that if we do ask for something over and above God's plain command, we are virtually casting the command,

itself, behind our backs. God tells you to do a certain thing, but you say that you must
first consult your advisers and friends. Then has it come to this--that a mortal man is to tell you whether you are to obey God or not? That would be making man your god and rejecting the living and true God! Suppose that in such a consultation you should be advised not to do the right thing? And if you should obey that advice, would you be relieved of your responsibility? Certainly not! It would still rest upon you. To you comes the Divine command and it is for you to obey it, whether you are advised by others to do so or not. Even to ask for such advice is to trifle with the authority of God. To hesitate to do right because of self-interest is rebellion against God. Suppose you say, "That is plainly my duty but it would involve me in a loss"? Well, then, which shall it be--will you suffer the loss or will you commit the sin? If you choose to commit the sin, you do distinctly make your own gain to be your god, for that which has the highest place in your soul is, after all, your god. What right have you to ask, "Will such a course pay me? Will it answer my purpose? What will be the good of it to me"? Such questions contain the very essence of rebellion against the Most High! What if you are no gainer by obeying your God? He who bids you do it is your Maker and Preserver! What if you should lose everything through obeying Him? Would it not be better to lose the whole world than to lose your own soul, for what will you give in exchange for your soul? The very thought of weighing self-interest against the authority of God should be revolting to all right-minded men!

Further, to consult with flesh and blood is diametrically opposed to the Character of Christ Flesh and blood, in the person of Peter, rebuked Him when He talked of suffering and being killed. But the Lord said to him, "Get you behind Me, Satan: you are an offense unto Me, for

you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men."

When Jesus said to His disciples, on one occasion, "Let us go into Judaea again," they said to Him, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone You; and go You there again?" Yet bravely did He go where He felt that He had a commission to go. His life was one of self-denial and self-sacrifice--His rule was not, "spare yourself," but this was His rule, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." He knew that without the sacrifice of Himself, He could not glorify God. So, if you would be like your Master, you must not be making provision for the flesh to gratify the ease and the lusts thereof--but you must be willing, like He, to suffer! Like He you must be willing to be reproached--and like He, even to die, if so it must be for the Glory of God!

I have generally found that when men do consult with flesh and blood, the consultation usually leads to the neglect of duty and the forsaking of the Lord. Had Paul conferred with flesh and blood he would probably never have been an Apostle. I pray that you, Beloved, may have the Grace to say, "My Master's command is my only Law. My Master bids me do such-and-such--this is my reason if men say that I play the fool by doing it, if they charge me with throwing prudence to the winds--and even if they thrust me into prison and lead me forth to death. Sooner let the sun refuse to shine at the Almighty's bidding! Sooner let the earth refuse to revolve upon her axis, or any longer to traverse her orbit! Sooner let all Nature revolt against the laws of its Maker, than ever a man of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, should dare to refuse to obey Him, let Him command whatever He may."

There I leave the grand and searching principle that faith needs no warrant for its action but the command of God!

II. Now secondly, I am going to show you THE RANGE OF ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION TO OURSELVES.

I judge that, first of all, it applies to all our known duties. I am not now speaking to unconverted people--I am speaking to you who profess to be converted. You say that you are saved and that you do not trust in your own works. That is well. I have preached to you the Scriptural Doctrine of Salvation by Grace, but now I am going to give you a practical principle that is inseparably associated with that Doctrine. It is this--It is the duty of every Christian to forsake every known sin, whatever it may be, and, in doing so, he is notto consult with flesh and blood. Many professors say, "This course is wrong, judging by the Scriptural standard. But then, society has long tolerated it. No, it has even decreed it to be right." But will society judge you at the Last Great Day? If you are cast into Hell as a deceitful professor, will society fetch you out of the bottomless pit? If you are found at last outside the gates of Heaven, will society recompense you for your eternal loss? What have you, O man of God, to do with society? Christians are to come out from among the ungodly to daily take up their cross and follow Christ--to go outside the camp, bearing His reproach. The friend of the world is the enemy of Christ. What have you to do with doing as the world does?

The same principle applies to the duty of consecration to Christ. Every Christian should live for Christ alone. All that we are and have belongs to Christ. Even Paul wrote, "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Well then, do not consult with flesh and blood to find out how far other Christians obey that command, for the pulse of the professing Christian is in a sickly state at this time and Christianity is sadly adulterated. But what have I to do with what my

fellow Christians do? If they are not what they should be, is not that a reason why I should be the more consecrated to Christ? If I see others put into the scales of the sanctuary and found wanting, is that a reason why I, too, should be found wanting? I charge you people of God who are here present to try how near you can get to complete consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ! Never say, "I am as good as my minister." You had need be much better than I am! Never say, "I am as good as such-and-such a Christian." O Sirs, if you compare yourselves among yourselves, you are not wise! The only model for Christians is Christ Himself!

This principle of not consulting flesh and blood also applies to our service for Christ. We have known ministers whose "call" to a place always depended upon the size of the salary. We have heard of others whose work for Christ depends upon whether it is to be done in respectable society and whether it is a tolerably light and easy task. If they find that it is Ragged School work, or if they will have to labor among very poor people and get no credit for it, they do not care for that kind of service--and if it involves a great deal of toil, they do not feel that they could manage it. The real difficulty is that it is not pleasing to flesh and blood! O soldiers of the Cross, has it come to this, that you must have an easy place, or you will not fight for your King? Soldiers of the Queen do not wait to ask whether it will be hot or cold in the lands to which they are ordered to go--but away they go at the royal command. And so it must be with Christians! We must not be such featherbed soldiers that we can only go where we shall be easy and comfortable. No, but in the name of Him who bought us with His blood, let us ask, "Is this my proper sphere of service for Christ? Then I will occupy it, by His Grace, cost what it may."

Perhaps I am addressing some Brother or Sister here who says, "I feel

that I am called to service for Christ, but I am going to consult my friends to see whether they are with me or not." That will probably put an end to your service before it begins! Nothing good will be done by a man who will not attempt it until everybody thinks it is wise. If God has called you to any work for Him, go at it at once with all your might, for if you stop to consult even good people, it is very likely that they have not the faith that you have--or if they have, they will frankly tell you that they are not judges of your call. I cannot decide whether it is a call from God to you--you must yourself be the judge as to that. And if you feel that God has called you to any work, go and do it!

"Oh, but Christian people throw cold water over my plans!" Yes, that is a common practice, but it ought not to stop you from doing the Lord's work! Remember how David's brother, Eliab, said to him, "I know your pride and the naughtiness of your heart; for you are come down that you might see the battle"? I have always admired the modesty of David's reply, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" He had been sent down to the camp by his father and he had a further justification, a little later, when he stood before Saul with the giant's gory head in his hand! If God bids you do any work for Him, go and do it in His strength without consulting with flesh and blood. Many a noble purpose has been strangled by a committee! Many a glorious project that might have been the means of carrying the Gospel to the utmost ends of the earth has been crushed by timid counselors who said that it was not practicable! Whereas, had it been attempted, God would have worked with the worker and great would have been the result. So go, O man of God, to the work He has called you to do--and consult not with flesh and blood!

In the next place, this principle applies to all necessary sacrifices.

There are sacrifices which we must make for Christ and His cause. For instance, there are persons who, if they are converted to God, must make sacrifices in their business. There are here tonight one or two men who used to be publicans. But when they became converted, they took the very first opportunity of getting out of that business, although it meant a considerable sacrifice. They have cheerfully borne the loss and they are now sitting here with clear consciences as they could not have been if they had not done what they believed to be right. There are others here who used to get a living by their Sunday trade, but they willingly gave it up for Christ's sake when they became His. I do not think they have ever got back as much money as they gave up, but they have great peace of mind and they feel perfect satisfaction at the loss because they believe it to be right. Every Christian is bound to act thus, not considering for a moment the profit or loss of the matter. As God is God, He is to be served at all costs!

Sometimes, however, the following of Christ involves the loss of more than money--the loss of friendships. There are separations still made in the world because of devotion to Christ. Ungodly parents drive away from them their converted children. Close friendships have been snapped and situations of influence and usefulness have had to be given up for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. "What am I to do?" asks one who is threatened with grievous loss if he will not give up Christ. Be willing to let father and mother, or husband or wife and all else go rather than let Him go upon whom your eternal interest depends! Remember that He said, "If any man comes to Me and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters; yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple." Some persons feel that if they become followers of Christ, they will lose prestige and position--and that is more than they can endure. There have been

some who, when they had joined this Church, have henceforth had the cold shoulder in the aristocratic circles to which they belonged. And they have come to me and said, "Our former friends no longer call upon us, nor ask us to their houses." And I have replied, "Thank God! Then you will be out of the way of the temptation to which you might be exposed from their idle chat." They have said, by-and-by, that it was even so and that it was well. But at the first it was hard to bear.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, always do what is right! Whatever may come of it, be out-and-out for Christ. Verily I say unto you--there is no man who shall be a loser by Christ at the last! Great shall be his gain who, for Christ's sake, can give up even all that he has!

I want you to further notice that this principle also applies to the confession of your faith, i f you have been converted to Christ. Very often some of those who really do believe in Jesus neglect to avow their faith in the Lord's appointed way. Nothing is more plainly taught in the New Testament than that it is the duty of every Believer in Christ to be baptized. It is the duty of every Christian, having first given himself to Christ, afterwards to give himself to Christ's Church, according to the will of God. Now, my dear Friend, do your Master's will and consult not with flesh and blood!

Do not consult with yourself about this matter, for if you do, Self will say, "Why need you go through that trouble? You will bring a great deal of unnecessary notice upon yourself if you do. And perhaps you will not be able to hold out to the end--you may fall into sin and bring disgrace upon the name of Christ!" Self will reason in this way, but what have you to do with such reasoning? Is it not your bounden duty to do as your Master bids you? If soldiers, in the day of battle, are commanded to charge the enemy at the point of the bayonet, they must not stop to consider the danger of such a course, or to ask why

their commander gave such an order. And so it must be with all the soldiers of King Jesus! And so surely it will be with every true Christian. Are you a Christian and does your Lord bid you confess your faith in Him? Then come forward and say, "According to His will, I with confess with my mouth, because with my heart I have believed in His name." Possibly someone says, "If I were to do that, I should grieve my parents." Do not needlessly grieve anybody, but if it is necessary for Christ's sake, grieve everybody--and grieve yourselfmost that they should be grieved because you do what is right!

Another says, "My position would become very uncomfortable if I were to be baptized." Then find your comfort in the Presence of Christ with you in uncomfortable circumstances! "But," says one, "I don't see how I could be baptized at present." Is it your duty? Then remember that the Apostle says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." When I preached in the country, before I came to London, I used to have a hearer who professed to have been a Christian for many years. Whenever I spoke to him about joining the Church, he always said, "He that believes shall not make haste," to which I replied, "Well, if you come at once, you certainly will not have made haste." Then I tried to explain to him that the haste referred to there was the haste of fear and cowardice. And I said that a much more appropriate text was this one, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your commandments." "Well," says one, "I don't wish to put off joining the Church. At the same time, I cannot quite give up the world." Then, do not join the Church! We do not want in the Church those whose hearts are still in the world, so injurious both to the world and to the Church are those who try to join the two together! If you are Christ's, you must give up the world--but why should you hesitate about doing that? What is there in the world but vanity and vexation of spirit? You will find Christ to

be infinitely preferable to the world, for in Him you will have--

"Solid joys and lasting treasure."

III. I see that my time has gone, but I need not dwell upon the last point-- that THIS PRINCIPLE COMMENDS ITSELF TO OUR BEST JUDGMENT.

It is the judgment we exercise upon others. We do not like to see half-and-half people, do we? And if we see people who are willing to suffer for their principles, we respect and honor them. Well then, let us so act that others may be able, in their inmost hearts, to respect and honor us!

This principle will commend itself to us when we come to die. I never heard of a Nonconformist father, when he was dying, saying to his son, "My Boy, you know that I was a Dissenter and I lost my farm for that reason. I advise you to go to the State church and get into the good books of the parson and the squire." I never heard of a Christian, when dying, saying to his wife, "My Dear, the shutting up of our shop on the Sabbath has meant a great loss to us and I have all the less to leave you--and I regret now that we were so unwise." No, no! I never heard and never dreamed of hearing of anyone saying such a thing as that! I never heard a dying Christian say, "I gave too much to the Lord's cause. I worked too hard in Christ's service. I did not really exercise sufficient prudence and look out for myself as I ought to have done." Oh, no! Their regrets always are all the other way! Those who have denied themselves most always wish that they had done more, given more and been privileged to even suffermore for Christ's sake!

And finally, this will be our judgment at the Last Great Day. We shall account that to have followed Christ and to have suffered loss for Christ was the right thing--but for anyone to have gotten off cheaply through consulting with flesh and blood will then seem to us to have

been the meanest thing that was ever heard of--treason against the King of Love, treachery against the Christ who died! Those who have been faithful to Christ on earth shall share His Glory in Heaven and dwell with Him there forever and ever! So, if you believe in Him, come out boldly and confess that you do.

If you love not the Lord Jesus Christ, take heed that He should come against you with His rod of iron and utterly destroy you. May He, by His gracious Spirit, give to all of us faith in Him and loyalty to Him for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 14.

Verse 1. Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.\See Sermons #730, Volume 13--let not your HEART BE TROUBLED; #1741, Volume 29--"LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED" and #3076, Volume 54--THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF HEART TROUBLE-- the Sermon to which this Exposition belongs.] Here is a troubled company of disciples, very much cast down, so their Divine Master, full of infinite tenderness, talks to them in this gentle manner, "Let not your heart be troubled." He does not like to see them troubled, for when they are, He is also troubled. Our Lord here prescribes faith as the only remedy for heart trouble. If you, poor troubled soul, can believe, you will leave off fretting. Twice our Lord uses the word, "believe." He seems to say to His disciples, "Take another dose of faith--it will take away from you this faintness of heart from which you are suffering. 'You believe in God, believe also in Me.'" And then He seeks to make them forget their heart trouble by talking most sweetly to them about His Father and His Father's dwelling place. It is a great thing to divert the mind, when it is troubled, from that which bores into it and threatens to destroy it.

2. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would

have told you. "You have all My heart, so I have no secrets from you. 'If it were not so, I would have told you.' Even in going away from you, I am going away for your good."

2. I go to prepare a place for you [See Sermon #2751, Volume 47--"A PREPARED PLACE FOR A PREPARED PEOPLE"] "I am all yours, and always yours, and everywhere yours--and I am doing everything for you."

3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself "I will not send an angel to fetch you, but I will Myself come for you. If you die, I will come for you in that way. But if you live on until my Second Advent, 'I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.'"

3. That where I am, there you may be also. "So do not be troubled because I am going away from you. I am going first in order that you may follow afterwards. I am going as the Pioneer into that blessed state where you shall dwell with Me forever! So do not be troubled at My departure." How tenderly and lovingly this is all put!

4. And where I go, you know, and the way you know. "I am not going to take a leap into the dark--you know where I am going, and you also know the road along which I am going." Ah, but sometimes sorrow forgets what it knows and thus creates a cloud of unnecessary ignorance which darkens and increases the sorrow!

5. Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where You go; and how can we know the way?It was a pity that Thomas had such a thought as this in his mind, but as it was there, it is a great mercy that he told his Lord of it.

Sometimes to put your trouble down in black and white is a quick way to get rid of it--but to bring it to your Lord in prayer is a still better plan!

6. Jesus said unto him, Iam the way, the truth, and the life: no man

comes unto the Father, but byMe. [See Sermons #245,Volume 5--THE WAY TO GOD and #942, Volume 16--THE WAY.] How impossible it is to fully describe our Lord in human language! He is going away, yet He is, Himself, the way! And He is, Himself, the beginning and the end--He is everything to His people--"the way, the truth, and the life." We are obliged to have mixed metaphors when we talk of Christ, for He is the mixture of everything that is delightful and precious. All over glorious is our Lord--there is no way of setting Him forth to the full in our poor halting speech.

7. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also: and from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him.It cheers the children of God to talk to them about their Father, and about their Father's house, so that is what the Elder Brother did in His great kindness to His disciples--He talked to them about their Father and His Heaven.

8-10. Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; then how can you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Christ and the Father are indissolubly One. Even when He was here in His humiliation, He was not separated from His Father except in that dread hour when He was bearing His people's sins upon the Cross. Now He is visibly One with His Father on the Throne of Glory!

11, 12. Believe Me that Iam in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works 'sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also. "I am going away from you; but be not dismayed, for I shall not take away My power from you--that will remain with you."

12, And greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. "My very absence will let loose a greater power than you could have experienced while I was here! You will need more power when I am gone from you, and you shall have more. Therefore, 'let not your heart be troubled.' Besides, you will still be able to pray, and prayer will bring you greater blessings than any that I ever gave you."

13, 14. And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it. Every word in this address of Christ was full of comfort to His disciples.

15, 16. If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever. There was the One who would enable the disciples to meet every trial--

that other Comforter [See Sermons #4, Volume 1--THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT; #5, Volume 1--THE COMFORTER; #1074, Volume 18--THE PARACLETE and #2074, Volume 35--INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.] whom Christ promised to them! Their trouble was that their Lord was going away from them. That other Comforter made amends for that and He will make amends to you, Believer, for every form of trial to which you may be exposed. Is it bodily weakness? Is it the infirmity of old age? Is it depression of spirit? Is it losses and crosses at home? Is it crooked things that cannot be made straight? Well, Christ's promise still stands good, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever."

7. Even the Spirit of Truth: whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him."You are on familiar terms with Him. You are intimate with Him. You know Him."

17-20. For He dwells with you, andshall be in you. I will not leave you

comfortless. I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees
Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also. At
that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in
you. These are the three wonderful mysteries of the union between God,
and Christ, and His people--"I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in
you."
21, 22. He that has My commandments andkeeps them, he it is that loves
Me: andhe that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love
him, and will manifest Myself to him. Judas said unto Him, not
Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and
not unto the world? "Perhaps if You did manifest Yourself to the world,
the world would bow down before You and worship You." But Christ's plan
was to manifest Himself to the inner circle of His own chosen ones.
23-27. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, he will
keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him,
and make our abode with him. He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings:
and the word
which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me. These
things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the
Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My
name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your
remembrance, whatever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, My
peace I give unto
you. [See Sermons #247, Volume 5--THE BEST OF MASTERS and #300, Volume
6--SPIRITUAL PEACE.] He had given them peace while He was with them.
His Divine Presence had been their continual comfort. But now, although
He was going away from them, He would leave His peace behind Him as the
most precious legacy that He could bequeath to them--"Peace I leave
with you, My peace I give unto you."

27, 28. Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice--. "I know that you do love Me, but if you really acted as if you loved Me, you would rejoice."

28, Because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. The Lord Jesus, though equal with the Father, had voluntarily laid aside His Glory and taken the form and place of a Man, making Himself of no reputation, so His disciples ought to have rejoiced that He was going back to His primitive Glory!

29, 30. AndnowIhave toldyou, before it comes topass, that when it is comes topass, you might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for theprince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. Still Christ would have enough to do to meet that arch-enemy and to endure all that would come upon Him during that dread encounter.

31. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

Chapter 6

A Searching Question

(No. 3079)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 29, 1865.

"To whom do you belong?" 1 Samuel 30:13.

This question was addressed by David to a young man of Egypt who was servant to an Amalekite. He had fallen sick and his master, being in a hurry, had left him to perish alone in the field and had gone his way. Had the master taken his servant with him and nursed him, his own life might have been preserved, but God avenged this poor servant, who had been so neglected, by making him the means of revealing to David where his master was--and David's sharp and swift sword soon overtook him and his brother plunderers.

At the very outset we learn from this question that we cannot have servants, or children, or friends without being compromised by them. If we have servants, people will be sure to ask them the question, "To whom do you belong?" Should they bear a bad character, or show a bad training, or seem to be so wretched that they betoken a pinching, grasping, grinding, cruel, tyrannical master, people will soon be able to read our characters in our servants' faces! They will draw their own conclusion as to what the master is from what the servants are. It is more especially fair to do so in the case of a man's children. Some children are very pert, willful, ill-mannered. Were anyone to ask whether there was a rod kept in the house they came from, he might be very speedily answered, "No." And if you pressed the question, "To whom

do those children belong?" it would soon be found that they belonged to some self-indulgent parents who were too fond of themselves to take the trouble to correct their children. You can generally read a man's character in his boy's face and in his boy's conduct and conversation. We should remember this and see that we send our children forth not needing to be ashamed that they should tell to whom they belong! The same is the case with regard to Church members. Any member whom we receive into this Church may compromise all the rest. If any one member is found in bad or suspicious company, the question is sure to be asked, "To whom do you belong?" Instead of laying down his delinquencies at his own door as being inconsistent, men are quite sure to put them at our door. The minister is generally the horse that is saddled with his people's sins. He would willingly bear them on his own heart in deep humiliation before God if he knew that his people also would bear them in penitence before God. Let every Church member remember that he imperils the honor of the whole Church by his inconsistency--and it may be said of him, "That man sinned not alone." This, however, is not my main point tonight. I am going to aim at something which directly affects our eternal position and standing before God. I shall first open up the question in a different sense from that in which it was asked by David. Then, secondly, I will try to guide you in your response. And when I have done that, I will give a few words of good advice to those who have individually and respectively to furnish the answer.

I. First, then, "TO WHOM DO YOU BELONG?"

This is a question of universal pertinence. We may put it to any man most fairly because there is an owner both of the Church and of the world. As for the Church, we are Christ's. "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price." The Church is Christ's body, "the

fullness of Him that fills all in all." And the world, too, is not without its owner. We read of one whose name is "the prince of this world"--"the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." While some men are the children of God, are all other men to be regarded as orphans? Oh, no! Christ says to them, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." There are no unowned men! We are, every one of us, either ranked under the banner of Prince Immanuel, to serve Him and fight His battles, or else beneath the Black Prince, Satan--enrolled to do evil and to perish in our sins! It is a very proper question, then, to ask of every man and woman, "To whom do you belong?"

The question, too, is one which can be answered, because a man must belong either to one owner or the other. It is no use troubling people with questions which are too mysterious to be answered, but this is plain and pointed. You either belong to God or else you belong to His enemy. You are either bought with Jesus' precious blood or else you are still a bond slave of Satan. Which are you? If it were possible to dwell in an intermediate state, this might be a puzzling enquiry, but there are no neutralities in religion. There is no such thing as being in the valley while the two hosts are on either side on the mountains. You are either this day standing shoulder to shoulder with Prince Immanuel's warriors, or else, when the muster roll of the army on the opposite side is read, you are most certainly numbered there. All attempts to serve God and the world must end in bitter failure. Mark Antony yoked two lions together and drove them through the streets of Rome--but no man shall ever yoke together the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the Pit. No man ever tries to walk on two sides of the road at the same time unless he is intoxicated--and it argues

gross intoxication of mind and spirit when a man attempts to serve both God and mammon--to win eternal life, and yet to live like the spiritually dead! This is a question which you cananswer, my Brothers and Sisters. Now do not play with your eternal interests and say, "Well, I am sure I don't know." You do know. Do not put it off with quibbles! Do not say you will make the enquiry by-and-by. You know right now whether you are a child of God or not! Or else if you are half-afraid that you are not the Lord's, and you are saying--

"'Tis a point I long to know"--

then you will never be happy until you do know--and you will not be able, I think, to give sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till, in answer to my question, "To whom do you belong?" you can say, "I belong to Christ. He has bought me with His blood and I am His in life and shall be His in death--and His throughout eternity."

This is a question of a very practical character. We are sometimes told that we preach upon subjects which do not concern the ordinary race of men. Secularism comes and tells us that we are dealing with another life, when we ought to be teaching people what is proper to be done in thislife. Yes, but that is a mistake, for there is nothing more practical for daily life than true religion--and this question is one of the practical ones which true religion suggests! Remember, dear Friends, to whomever you belong, you are quite sure to serve your master. If you belong to Satan, I know that you will do Satan's work. Perhaps you will do it in his uniform and there is some sort of honesty in that. Perhaps you will curse, and swear, drink and so on--that is serving Satan in Satan's uniform. But it is just possible that you will do Satan's work in Christ's uniform! You may wear the cross on your arm and yet, for all that, there may be a devil in your heart, like some of the old inns we have read of which had the sign of an angel outside,

but they served the devil within. Doubtless there are many men of this sort nowadays. If you are Satan's, you will serve Satan. But if you are Christ's, you will serve Christ. You surely will, for it is written of all Christ's servants. "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." Christ's servants serve Him. Is it not written, "His servants shall serve Him"? Your whole life on earth will be affected by your answer to the question, "To whom do you belong?"

But then remember what a weight hangs upon this question with regard to your eternal interest. It will all depend, at the last, as to whether you shall enter Heaven or Hell, on this question, "To whom do you belong?" If you belong to Christ, this shall be your reception, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But if you do not belong to Christ, what will be the fate of the best of you? You will knock at the gate with the piteous cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" And what will be the answer? "I know you not." If you had belonged to Christ, He would have known His own property. But in that day He will disown you, and tell you, "You are not Mine; depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

"Eternal weal or endless woe" hangs, then, on this question, "To whom do you belong?" Harps of gold, songs of celestial harmony, crowns of eternal glory are yours if you belong to Christ! But oh, if you are not Christ's and you live and die without an interest in Him, then groans, cries, awful despair, looks of burning wrath and piercings of almighty vengeance must be your everlasting doom! To sail forever across a sea of anguish and neither founder nor reach a port. To climb forever the

burning mountain of despair and neither sit still, nor perish, nor yet reach the summit! Forever climbing knee-deep in grief and agony and yet never, never finding an end to it all is your eternal reward! Be careful, then, that you answer this question very solemnly as in the sight of God, for on this--

"Slender thread,
Hang everlasting things."

I am not afraid that you will not eventually answer the question. I am afraid, however, that you will say, "It does not matter just now." It will matter very soon. How soon do men come to their graves? Full many of them stumble on them unawares! I saw a man the other day in as good bodily health as I think I ever saw any man to be. And soon after it was said to me, "Do you remember So-and-So?" "Yes." "He is dead!" I drew my breath. Dead? Why the man looked as if he would certainly live for another twenty, or thirty, or forty years. Dead? Can it really be so? And then I met the next day with another who said, "You know Mrs. So-and-So's husband?" "Yes." "He is dead." Sometimes I begin to wonder that I find anybody alive! At the head of such a vast congregation as this, there are so many journeys to the tomb for me to make that I feel, perhaps, more than any of you, that I live in a dying world! Standing with my foot once or twice a week on the edge of the grave and saying, "Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes," over so many of my fellow mortals, I dare not look upon you as living men, but only as men who are soon to die! Would God that I could add of all of you, that I look upon you as men and women who are going to the land of the living where they never die!

This question will press hard upon you, dear Friends, when you have to go upstairs to undress for your last sleep. It will press hard upon you when they wipe the clammy sweat from your brow and death begins to

glaze your eyes. It will press hard upon you, Sinner, when the death rattle is in your throat and you have the gloomy answer in your soul, "I fear that I am not Christ's, but am without God and without hope." But O, Christian, what a solace it will yield you, at the last, to be able to feel, when the eventide has come and you are about to sleep the last great slumber, "I am Christ's! And I go to rest upon His bosom till the trumpet of the archangel shall startle my slumbering ashes and shall bid them rise in the image of my dear Redeemer! I am Christ's! And though I die, yet shall I live. I am Christ's! And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God!"

II. Secondly, with great brevity, I WILL TRY AND HELP YOU IN MAKING A RESPONSE.

It will go a great way towards it, dear Friends, if you will tell me where you were born. ' 'Where I was born?" asks one, "are you desirous to know how old I am?" Well, I do mean that though perhaps in a different sense from what you put upon my enquiry. You were all born once and it matters nothing where you were born that time, or very little indeed. But were you ever born a second time? You do not know? What? Do you not know that you were ever privileged with a new birth! Were you born a second time, you would know it! A man cannot have spiritual life in him and yet be unconscious of it. He may sometimes doubt, but there are other times when he knows and feels the operation of new faculties. Were you ever born twice? Recollect that every man who is only born once will have to die twice--but the man who is born twice will only have to die once--and even that once dying will be no moribund experience, for it will only be the gate into eternal life! To be born twice is to escape the second death, but to be born only once is to fall into the second death forever. Are you born-again? If so, you are Christ's.

"But," says one, "what is it to be born-again? Is it to have a few drops of water sprinkled on my forehead by a priest? Or is it to be immersed in floods of water?" These regenerate not the soul. It is to have a new nature put into you by the Holy Spirit according to God's own Covenant promise, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." This it is to be born-again! And if you are not born-again, however moral or good you may be, you do not belong to Christ--you belong to Satan--and with him you have your part.

It will help you, again, to answer this question if you will first answer another, What company do you keep?' do not mean to ask whether you associate with the immoral. Of course if you do that, that settles the point at once. You who associate with persons of immoral lives should recollect that you will be bound up with this company--and as you have been with thieves, drunkards and harlots here, you will go with them where they go--and be bound up with them in bundles to be burned. But I mean, where is your chosen company? It is very hard for some people to get the company they would wish to have. Some of you are placed in positions in life where you are obliged to associate very much with the ungodly, but I will put the question so as not to hurt your mind, "When you can pick your company, where do you go?" It is written, in the Acts of the Apostles, "And being let go, they went to their own company." Now, when you are let go and can go where you like, where do you go? I was sitting lately by the bedside of a poor woman who was very ill. We

had been talking of the things of God. And among other evidences which she was mentioning as to her reason for believing that she was going to Heaven before long, she said, "I never could bear the company of the wicked and I do not think that God will send me, in the next life, where I never would go in this life. I have always loved to be with His

people and though I have been the vilest of them all, yet still I love to bow with them in prayer and to join with them in holy song. I have had my happiest times when I have been with the people of God and I think He will not take me away from the people I have associated with in my lifetime." If you belong to Satan, you know you will go with your fellow servants. But if you belong to Christ, you will look out for those who wear Christ's uniform and you will go with them. The old proverb says that "Birds of a feather flock together."

There is a story told in the old legends, of a holy young man who once went to the theater but the devil went into the theater that night--the devil does go there occasionally--and he took this young man off with him! A certain holy man, to whom this young man belonged, went to the devil and he said, "You have taken away one of my disciples. He belongs to me. He is a very excellent young man and you have no business with him!" "Ah!" said the devil, "but I found him on my premises and I took him." I think the devil was right for once! Let those who would be accounted Christians and yet occasionally associate with the world in its doubtful pleasures, think of that story and keep off the devil's premises! You will be sure to be known by your company! A young man who had begun to associate with bad companions told his father he did not know that he could get any hurt by doing so. The father stooped down and, taking the tongs in his hands, picked up a black coal and told his son to hold it. The son said he would rather not. "It is not hot," said the father, "it won't burn you." "No," replied the son, "but if it won't burn me, it will blacken me." So you who wish to have an exemplary character before God and before men, remember that if ill company does not burn you to your hurt, it is sure to blacken you by damaging your reputation! However, as I said before, we can tell you by your company. Dead fish float down the stream, but live fish swim

against it. Do you swim against the stream? Have you learned to go against the current? Do you strive to get up, up towards the great Source of everything that is good and true or do you float along the stream of pleasure with the mass of the world? Then you may readily know to which side you belong.

You may judge, again, by this, What is your dialect? I suppose a person well up in the dialects of the various counties would very soon discover that I came from Essex. At any rate, if I meet a West-country man, or a brother from the Midland counties and especially one from Yorkshire, I know within a little time whereabouts he came from by his particular twang. There is a dialect about people by which you can tell them. Not that you can always tell a man's character in five minutes, but give him time--let him talk his heart out and especially let him get a little cross, or a little excited--and you will very soon find him out by the words he uses. What is your dialect? Is it anything that is impure, loose, low? Or do you desire to speak as Christ spoke, so that your conversation may be seasoned with salt and may minister edification to your hearers." It is a very bad sign when a man professes to be religious, yet lets an oath out now and then--when he comes to a place of worship regularly and yet says some very nasty, ugly words sometimes. I am afraid there is death in that pot! If the Lord does not cure you in the mouth, depend upon it, He has not cured you down deep in the heart. There is a common saying about a man being "good at bottom," but I do not believe in it, for if a man is not good on the top, you may depend upon it that he is not good at bottom! If you went to Covent Garden Market and wanted to buy some fruit, and you found it rotten at the top of the basket, you would not believe the salesman if he said, "My dear Sir, it is very good at bottom." "No," you would say, "excuse me, but you always put the best on the top." So,

when a man's talk is not what it should be--and his conduct and conversation are contrary to those of a Christian--you may rest assured that he does not belong to Christ, for they who are Christ's have had their hearts washed and He who has washed their hearts will be quite sure to wash their mouths.

Another thing by which you may judge to whom you belong is, What have you learned to do? Servants will learn something from the masters to whom they are apprenticed. If you have been an apprentice to the devil, I have no doubt that you have learned his trade--you will be an enemy to God--you will be a despiser of Divine things. But if you have been with Christ, it will be said of you as it was of Peter and John, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." They had something of His boldness, His meekness, His gentleness, His holiness, His courage, His affection, His disinterestedness, His honesty and, in their measure, they had His virtues. If you have been looking into the glass of God's Word and have not, in some degree, been conformed to the image of Christ, tremble for yourselves! Christ saves sinners, but He does not save them in their sins, but from their sins! And when Christ once gets His hands upon a man, He

casts out the devils that once dwelt in him and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, being henceforth bound to do God's will and to walk according to God's Word!

If you tell me that you belong to Christ, I should like to ask a witness or two. Oh, it is so easy to get into a Christian Church and make a profession! The Lord knows that I have used my best diligence--and I can say the same of my Brothers, the elders--we use our best diligence to allow none to join this Church who are not sincere Believers. But, after all, what does our vigilance amount to? If you choose to be hypocrites, you can easily deceive such poor

creatures as we are! The best witnesses, I think, which you could bring as to your belonging to Christ would be witnesses of this kind--you can pray very nicely at the Prayer Meeting. You could preach a bit if you were asked. You seem such a good man when you come among God's people. But I would like to ask your wife about you. How does he behave to you, Ma'am? Because if this man does not make a good husband, he is no Christian, for Christianity makes a man the best of husbands, the best of sons, the best of fathers, the best of brothers, the best of servants! If you are a servant, I would like to ask your master about you. Servants who stand about lazily, propping up walls and then talk about being Christians, may talk a long while before their masters will believe them! Masters and mistresses, too, who are always in bad tempers and making much of little faults, and unkind to servants, may talk as long as they will about being like Jesus Christ, but their servants would need a microscope to see the likeness!

I would like to ask the man who professes to be a Christian, what the angels see him do. There is a little room upstairs, your closet of devotion, or perhaps you use your bedside for prayer. I would like to know how you behave there. It is not difficult for a man who never prays to make a fine boast of his religion. It is not enough for you to kneel down, but do you ever have any real dealings with God? Do you have real communion with Christ? Do you talk to Him as a man talks to his friends? Do you pour out your heart before Him? Oh, the heart-searching God knows how many there are who are fair trees outside, but are rotten within--how many there are who are but painted harlots! We sometimes read in the papers of certain people who can enamel faces, hide blotches and make them look beautiful. I wish there were none of this enameling in the Christian world, but I am afraid that there is a great deal of it. People get enamelled up to a certain

pitch of piety, but what you need is a religion that will stand the test of the hour of death, of the Day of Judgment and of the eyes of the all-searching and all-seeing God! And if you have not this, it matters not how delicately and daintily you may walk before men, nor how much you have been esteemed and respected--God will pull you down and give a dreadful answer to the question--"To whom do you belong?" Ah, this is a question for the preacher and it is one which he may well ask himself! There are many of you here, perhaps, who have been blessed under my word, who think that surely, surely, the preacher cannot be deceived. But ah, he knows what it is to search his own heart with an awful earnestness, lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway! My Brothers, you who are associates with me in as deacons and elders, I charge you before the living God, do not take your piety at second-hand. The oldest of you may well search yourselves, for your experience, after all, may be a lie. Unless you have closed with Christ and have really passed from death unto life, you will not enter into Heaven because of your office! And you members of this Church, I do pray you, on your knees ask the Master again and again to search your hearts and see if there is any wicked way in you and lead you in the way everlasting, for unless your heart is right with Him, you cannot answer this question, "To whom do you belong?" without a shudder and a fear!

III. I must soon close and as I have so little time left, I will only spend a few minutes in GIVING YOU SOME GOOD ADVICE.

To the Christian let me speak first. You belong to Christ, Christian. You say you do--you know you do. Well, then--what? Obey Him. If anybody else wants to be master over you, do not allow it, for you are Christ's. Let His Word be your law. Let His wish be your will.

You belong to Christ, then love Him. Let your heart embrace Him. Let

your lips sing of Him. Let your whole soul be filled with Him. You have been bought with His precious blood--remember the price of your redemption and do not give a cold heart in return for the warm heart's blood of your Redeemer.

You belong to Christ, then trust Him. Rest nowhere but on Him. Day by day sit beneath His Cross and view Him as your Savior.

You belong to Christ, then be decided for Him. Never halt, or raise a question about your allegiance to Him. You are Christ's, you are God's--then cling to Him. In the olden times, the inhabitants of the county of Durham would never

go to the wars with our kings because they claimed an immunity granted them by the bishop. They were called "holy workfolk." They had to attend to the cathedral. So let it be with you, Christian--never go into sin because you are one of the holy workfolk. You are engaged in Christ's work and you cannot, therefore, serve Satan. Keep close to Christ to whom you belong--so close to Him that you may grow up into His image and become like unto He whose you are and whom you serve!

To those who cannot say that they love Christ, I have a word of advice to give. It is clear that you belong to Satan. Friend, might I whisper a word in your ear? I would run away from my master if I were you!He is a bad master. He treats you shamefully. The joys he gives you are all rotten. They look very pretty, like the apples of Sodom, but when you have grasped them, they turn into a handful of ashes! After all, your days of pleasure have no real pleasure in them and your mirth is poor stuff, isn't it? You have spent your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not.

Recollect that one of these days Satan will desert you. I mean when you come to die. The pleasures which he gives you now will all fail you then. I will tell you what I saw, this afternoon, as I came here. I

daresay you will think it a very curious thing for me to mention. I saw half-a-dozen donkeys turned out on Clapham Common to feed, with the snow two or three inches deep, and I thought to myself, "I daresay the counter-mongers have been using these poor donkeys to do their work all morning, and this is all that they get for it at last." That is very much how the devil uses his servants--he works them as hard as ever he can while they are alive, and then he has nothing to give them when their life-work is done. How piteously did Hume's poor mother write to her son when she lay a-dying! She had, at one time, made a profession of religion, but had been induced by her son to give it up. And now she wrote to him and said, "Come and give me some of the consolations of your philosophy which you promised me." Poor Hume had no consolations for her in his philosophy--it was just like being turned out to feed on Clapham Common with all the snow fallen on it! It is a poor, dreary thing--there is nothing there for the soul to feed upon, try as long as it may.

Oh, think of what this master of yours will do for you when you come to stand in the Day of Judgment! He cannot plead for you--he will be a fellow sinner with you! He will be arraigned at the same bar to be punished as well as you! You may look to him, but if he can do anything, it will only be to laugh at you and increase your torment!

If I were you, I say again, I would run away from my master. I do not read that that poor man who was sent into the fields to feed swine ever gave his master any notice when he left him. His master "sent him into his fields to feed swine; and he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no man gave unto him." Then came the thought, "I will arise and go to my father," and away he went! And he did not stop to give his master three months' notice, or tell him he must get someone else! The fact is, it was such a bad place that he was

glad to get away from it directly--and he had such a bad master that he started off at once. I would to God that some sinner here would do the same tonight! Give your master no notice! He does not deserve any. Leave him! You have been sailing under the black flag all these years--thirty, forty, fifty, sixty--there is a gray-headed sinner yonder, 70 years sailing under that black flag! Down with it, Sir! Thank God it is not nailed to the mast! It will be when you die--if it is there then, it will be nailed there to fly there forever! But it is not nailed to the mast now. Down with it! Down with it! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would pull it down and put up the blood-red Cross in its place, that you might sail henceforth under the flag of Immanuel!

"Well," says one, "I would gladly change my master, but would Christ have me?" Try Him! Try Him as the prodigal son tried his father. Go and put your head on your Father's bosom and weep out such a confession as this--"I have sinned against Heaven, and before You, and am no more worthy to be called Your son." And before you have finished your confession, you will hear Him saying in your soul, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." God is far more ready to forgive you than you are to ask Him for pardon! Only acknowledge your sin, plead the blood of Jesus, put your trust in Him and my God, my Father, will delight to receive you! He will say, "This, My son, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found.

"He will be glad! His angels will rejoice and His saints will make melody!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 SAMUEL 30:1-25.

David had joined the army of the Philistines, but, as the Philistine lords suspected him, he was obliged to leave, so he went back to the little city of Ziklag, which King Achish had given him.

Verses 1, 2. And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to

Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire, and had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. They were roving bands of marauders and, no doubt, preserved the women alive to sell them for slaves, the main object of those robbers being gain.

3, 4. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. Weary with their marching, they had hoped to rest at home. But now that everything was gone, the strong men, who were not often moved to weeping, wept till they could weep no longer! The very sources of tears were dried up by the exceeding heat of their grief.

5, 6. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail, the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him. These rough men, who had not all joined him from the best of motives, now turned against him for having left the city defenseless.

6, Because the soul of all thepeople was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God [See Sermon #1606, Volume 27--ZIKLAG--OR, DAVID ENCOURAGING HIMSELF IN HIS GOD] Blessed faith that finds a secure shelter even amid the ashes of his burned home, and when even his own followers have turned against him!

7, 8. And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray you, bring me here the ephod. And Abiathar brought there the ephod to David. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And He answered him, Pursue: for you

shall surely overtake them, and without fail recover all The Hebrew runs, "Pursue, for overtaking you shall overtake, and recovering you shall recover." That is to say, the work shall be done perfectly--and so it was.

9-17. So David went, he and the six-hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred stayed behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters ofraisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom do you belong? And from where are you? And he said, Iam a young man ofEgypt, servant to an Amalekite; andmy master left me, because three days ago I fellsick. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongs to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire. And David said to him, Can you bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God that you will neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring you down to this company. And when he had brought him down, behold they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. It is noteworthy that the four hundred who escaped were equal in number to the whole of David's attacking force, so that, manifestly, God was with these valiant men,

or else they would have been completely outnumbered.

18-20. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor anything that they had taken to them: David recovered all And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drove before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil [See Sermon #2017, Volume 34--DAVID'S SPOIL] That which was over and above what had been taken from Ziklag was very properly appropriated by David. I thought, as I read that, "David recovered all," how truly it can be said that the greater Son of David has recovered all. All that was lost by sin, our glorious and victorious Captain has recovered! What, then, shall be His spoil?

It was foretold that "He shall divide the spoil with the strong." Let your hearts and mine, and all we are, and all we have, be yielded up to Him--and let us say of it all, "This is Jesus' spoil, and to Him be Glory evermore!"

21. AndDavidd came to thee two hundredmen, which were so faint that they couldnot followDavid, whom they had made also to stay at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. There are some fainting and sick folk detained at home--I pray our blessed Lord to salute every one of them wherever they are at this moment.

22, 23. Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those who went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that theymaylead them away, and depart Then saidDavid, You shallnot do so, my brethren. They were poor

brethren for David to have. They were brethren by race, but not brethren by Grace. Yet David was wise in speaking to them as he did. It is always well, when you are opposing people, to do it courteously. You can often prevail with soft words if you have strong arguments. David said, "You shall not do so, my brethren."

23-26. With that which the LORD hasgiven us, who haspreserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarries by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute

Chapter 7

Two Ancient Proverbs

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"The fear of man brings a snare; but whoever puts his trust in the LORRD shall be safe." Proverbs 29:25.

WE have two ancient Proverbs here. Each of them is true as a separate Proverb, but they are equally true when linked together. The independent proposition, that the fear of man brings a snare, is a Truth of God which experience has taught to many. The other proposition, that he that trusts in the Lord shall be safe, has been found most blessedly true by all those who have tested it. Then put the two propositions together--that the fear of man brings a snare, but trust in the Lord is the safe and certain way to avoid that snare--and this also is true.

I. We shall, first of all, consider for a little while the first of the two ancient Proverbs--"The fear of man brings a snare." That is ONE OF THE GREAT EVILS THAT WE HAVE TO AVOID.

What a common evil the fear of man is--the fear of losing human approbation, the fear of incurring human wrath. There are thousands of men who have no fear of God, who have great fear of man. They break the Laws of God without any fear of the consequences that must ensue, yet they are afraid to break the laws of man because they dread the punishment that might possibly follow. They are not afraid of Hell, yet they are afraid of an earthly prison! They dread not the arm of the

Almighty, yet they are afraid of an arm of flesh.

The fear of man has been thought by some persons to be a very good and salutary thing. Instead of bringing a snare, they think that it is the means of preventing much sin among mankind. Now I do not doubt that some are hindered by the fear of man from committing great crimes and open acts of wrong, but the utmost that the fear of man can do is to confer a very doubtful benefit. Try it in your own house among your own children. If your children are kept from wrongdoing only by the fear of you--if they only do that which they are bid to do because they are afraid to do otherwise-- you will have a very poor form of obedience. And you will have, at the same time, an abundant crop of deceit springing up, for when your child has done wrong, his fear of punishment will drive him to a lie and perhaps lead him from one lie to another. And lies may become so common with him that, at last, it shall be as natural to him to tell a lie as to speak the truth! And I think every parent must know that all the faults a child can commit, if put into the scale together, are not equal in criminality and in injury to his spiritual constitution as a lie. The power to tell a lie is one of the most hideous powers to which man can attain--and some children are kept in such a state of terror that they naturally learn to do it. It is supposed, too, that servants cannot be managed without being kept in a state of fear. Yet you all know what an eye-server is. If there is no right principle in servants, they are worth nothing. Those who will only work because the eye of the master or mistress is upon them, are of very little value. You only teach them habits of deceit if they live in constant fear of you. This experiment has been tried on a large scale. Laws have been made with severe penalties for their violation, yet men seemed as if they transgressed all the more. In prison, the sternest forms of discipline have been tried, yet the prisoner has come

out determined to sin again! There has been no beneficial change produced in him by fear.

I will not deny that the fear of man has its uses, but I must assert again that it is always a very doubtful good which fear brings to the human mind and heart. Love, my Brothers and Sisters, is the grand cure for the evil of human hearts, especially the love that comes from above! That pure and heavenly flame which is kindled only by the Holy Spirit burns up sin. But "fear has torment"--it does little else but plague and vex the soul.

Having said this much about any possible good that may come of fear, I now remark that according to the text, "the fear of man brings a snare." It has led many men into very great sins.

Look at Pilate. I mention him first because there was a peculiar atrocity about his sin. The pure and holy Jesus is brought before him and, after examining Him, he declares, "I find no fault in this Man." He sends Him to Herod and the result is that he says to Christ's accusers, "I have found no fault in this Man touching these things whereof you accuse Him: no, nor has Herod: for I sent you to him." Pilate's wife warns him that she has suffered much in a dream because of Christ, and she says, "Have nothing to do with that just Man." Pilate's own interviews with Christ impressed his mind and, therefore, he wanted to set the Savior free if he could. But though he was a Roman governor and placed in a high position of power, he was a poor slave to the people! He was vacillating. He knew what was the right course and he wanted to take it, but he feared the consequences. The Jews might appeal to Caesar and say that he had spared the life of one who pretended to be a king--and then he might lose his post. So this poor, timid, contemptible creature takes water and washes his hands--and says that he is innocent of the blood of this just Person--and the next

minute gives up the innocent Victim to be nailed on a cross! It was the fear of man that caused Pilate's name to become infamous in the history of the world and of the Church of God--and it will be infamous to all eternity. The fear of man led him to slay the Savior! Take care that it does not lead you to do something of the same kind.

Long before Pilate's day, there had been a king of Israel who lost his crown through the fear of man. God had chosen Saul to be head over his people, but when he was commanded by God to smite the Amalekites and to destroy all that they had, he spared King Agag and the best of the sheep and oxen, and all that was good because he "feared the people, and obeyed their voice." He was head and shoulders taller than his subjects, a man who, at other times acted as a despot and had his own way. Yet at this particular time he feared the people and so did that which God had commanded him not to do and, therefore, his kingdom was torn from him and given to one who was better than he.

"Yes," you say, "those two were bad men who fell into sin through fear of man." Yes, but I am sorry to say that I must also mention good men who did the same. Look at Aaron, the priest of the Lord, and companion of his brother, Moses! Aaron, who had spoken with God and was His representative to the people. Yet, when Moses was gone up into the mountain and the people came to Aaron and said, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him." Aaron bade them break off their golden earrings and bring them to him--and he, the priest of God, desecrated his sacred hands by making for the people a molten calf before which they might bow in worship! Ah, Aaron! Had you had the courage of your brother, you would not have fallen into that shameful sin!

Turning to the New Testament again, to give an example from it,

remember bold Peter and the words which he spoke so enthusiastically to his Lord, "I am ready to go with You, both into prison and to death. Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You." Yet see him a little later, warming himself in the high priest's palace and first one of the maidservants, and then others that stood by, said to him, "Surely you are one of them." And "he began to curse and to swear," to prove that he was no disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ! Ah, Peter, where is your courage now? Truly, "the fear of man brings a snare," even to the best of men! God save us from it and make us so brave that we shall never fear any man so as to do a wrong action!

Again, the fear of man brings a snare in this respect, it keeps many persons from conversion. Perhaps there are some such persons now present. Let me see if I can pick them out. You scarcely dare to go to the place where the Gospel is preached in a way in which God blesses it, because if you were to go there, and it were known, it would be a subject of jest in your family and would provoke remarks that you would not like. There are many who dare not go to the house where God pours out the blessing--they are such cowards that they dare not come to listen to those who preach Christ's Gospel with power. And others who do come and hear it, are afraid to receive the Truth to which they have listened again and again. The thought in such a person's mind is, "What would Father and Mother say if I were converted? Oh, what a time I would have of it! What would my fellow workmen say? I would have to run the gauntlet of the whole lot if they once knew that I had become a Christian." Another says, "I don't know how I would endure the persecution I would receive! My life would become intolerable if I were to become a child of God." So they never come to Jesus because the fear of man, which brings a snare, keeps them as the hopeless slaves of sin. But, young man, do you mean to be damned just to please somebody else?

Do you mean to fling away your immortal soul in order to escape the laughter of fools? Remember that they may laugh you into Hell, but they cannot laugh you out again! Let not the fear of man be the ruin of your soul! If, for the sake of pleasing men, you choose to forfeit some small trifle, it does not much matter, but when it comes to the forfeiting of Christ, the forfeiting of your soul, and the forfeiting of Heaven, I appeal to your own conscience to say if it is worthwhile to be eternally ruined for the sake of pleasing men, whoever they may be! Is it not better that even father, and mother, and brother, and sister, and every friend you have in the world should be against you, and that God should be yours--than that you should have all these as your friends and yet remain at enmity against the Most High?

I have no doubt that this same fear of man keeps a large number ofpersons who are converted, from making a public avowal of their faith And so it brings a snare to them. Nicodemus "at the first came to Jesus by night." And Joseph of Arimathaea was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews." I hope you will not try to shelter behind those two good men, for remember that as soon as Christ was put to death, when His cause was at the very worst, they came out boldly and proved their love of Him! And we do not read that they ever crept back, like snails into their shells. Having acknowledged Christ as their Lord and Master, I have no doubt that they continued to follow Him whatever the consequences may have been. So far as you are concerned, just now is the time to acknowledge Christ--especially now because skepticism and superstition, the two monstrous evils which threaten to devour true religion, are so rampant-- and it needs some moral courage to declare yourself upon the side of the simple Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now is the hour for a Christian to play the man for Christ, his Lord and Master! Yet there are many who are keeping in

the background because "the fear of man brings a snare" upon them. Where are you, dear Friend? I cannot come round to all those pews, otherwise I would stop, here and there, before some of you whom I know and before others whom I suspect, and whom I joyfully suspect, of loving my Master! I think you do, by the way you look when His name is extolled in your hearing. Yet you have not said so in the way He wishes. I charge you, by the love which you bear to Him, keep not back! Imagine that you see Him now before your eyes and that you hear Him say to you as He hangs upon the Cross, "I bore all this for you, and yet are you ashamed of Me? If you love Me, acknowledge Me in the midst of this wicked and perverse generation. Take up your cross and follow Me, whatever suffering or reproach it may involve."

The fear of man has brought a snare to some of the greatest Believers who have ever lived. And any child of God, whenever he fears the face of man, loses some of the dignity which appertains to that relationship. What a grand man Abraham was! Whenever I read his life, I look up to him with astonishment and wish I had such faith as would make me resemble him in that respect. He marches across the pages of history with such quiet stately dignity that kings and princes are dwarfed beside his great figure! How nobly did he say to the King of Sodom, "I will not take from you a thread, even to a shoelace, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich." But oh, how small did he look when he said to Abimelech, concerning his wife, "She is my sister." She was his sister, in a sense--there was some truth in what he said--but she was more than his sister--so he was uttering a lie for which he was rightly rebuked by the heathen prince!

You have, in David, another instance of how the fear of man can bring the mighty down. How brave he is as he goes out to slay Goliath, and how grandly he behaves when, twice, he spares the life of his sleeping

enemy! Yet see him there at Gath, when the servants of Achish frightened him so that he "feigned himself mad in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." The fear of man had brought down Israel's future monarch to drivel like a madman!

Equally sad is the case of Elijah, that grandest of men, as I may truly call him. You see him in his grandeur as he cries, "Take the Prophets of Baal! Let not one of them escape." And as he brings them down to the brook Kishon and slays them there! And then as he goes to the top of Carmel and prays till the rain descends upon the parched land. Yet, after the excitement is over, he is afraid of the woman, Jezebel--and the great Elijah shrinks down into the frightened man who runs away, and cries, "It is enough! Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." So you see that "the fear of man brings a snare" even to the best of men--it drags them down from their high places and hurls them into the dust. Therefore may God preserve us from it!

The fear of man keeps some Believers in very dubious positions. I have known some Believers remain where they knew they were not doing right and where, every day, they were dragging a heavy chain behind them because they had not the moral courage to come straight out for God. If any of you young people who love the Lord want to go the easiest way to Heaven--you know that all ways there are rough, but if you want to go the easiest way--take that which looks the hardest! Namely, be an out-and-out, thorough-going Christian! "But that will cost me much," says one. It will at first, but it will be the more easy for you afterwards. Whereas, if you begin by giving way to the world a little--trimming a little--you will have to give way and trim more and more. A Christian should be like a steamer that goes straight away to

the port it is intended to reach. But many professors are like sailing vessels, the motive power that controls them is outside of them, so they have to tack a good deal--and though they may ultimately get to their destination--there is a good deal of strange sailing to the right and to the left, and their voyage takes a very long while. I hope you, dear Friends, will go straight to your mark. "Trust in God, and do the right" and this will, after all, be the very smoothest path that you can follow!

Further, the fear of man hampers the usefulness of a great many. There are Brothers who ought to be preaching, but who are not because they are afraid of men. And some who ought to go and visit the poor, but they say that they cannot--the reason is that they are afraid of men! Why, I have known some who were even afraid to give away a tract-- they were as much alarmed as though they had to put their hand into a tiger's mouth! I have known some who were afraid to speak to their own children about their souls. Is it not strange that they can speak to other people's children about their souls better than they can to their own? It should not be so! In fact, there is nobody living who any one of us, if he is a Christian, has any right to be afraid of. We shall never do good to people if we are afraid of them. What would have become of the Church of God if the Apostles had been such timid, gentle Christians as some whom I know? They would not have gone out to preach in the streets--and as there were no chapels and churches, then--they would not have preached at all! As soon as Caesar promulgated an edict that they were not to meet on the first day of the week, they would have said, "Perhaps we had better not meet." When they heard that the crowds shouted in the amphitheatre, "Christians to the lions!" they would have said, "We must not expose ourselves to such a risk--we must think of our wives and families." And so they would have been cowards,

and soon there would have been no Christianity left in the world! Just imagine what would have happened if the Reformers had acted thus. Suppose Martin Luther had said, "I shall do as that old monk advised me when I consulted him. He said, 'Martin, go back to your cell and live there near to your God, and leave the Church and the world alone.'" If Luther had followed that advice, where would the blessed Reformation have been, and what preaching of the Gospel would there have been at this present moment?

I must not continue much longer upon this part of my subject, but I must say that to a minister of Christ the fear of man is one of the worst of snares. Jonah tried to escape from going to Nineveh because he was afraid of man. The Galatians could not bear the full light of the Gospel and, therefore, certain teachers among them tried to shut off some of its beams. And if a minister of Christ once begins to be afraid of his hearers, his tendency will be to withhold some Doctrine through fear of a wealthy subscriber, or to keep back some rebuke for fear that it should bear too hardly upon an influential person in his congregation. There is one sin which I believe I have never committed--I think that I have never been afraid of any of you and I hope, by the Grace of God, that I never shall be! If I dare not speak the Truth of God upon all points and dare not rebuke sin, what is the good of me to you? Yet I have heard sermons which seemed to me to have been made to the order of the congregation. But honest hearers want honest preaching and if they find that the preachers message comes home to them, they thank God that it is so. They say, "Is it not right that it should be so? If we err, should not the Word of God, which is quick and powerful, search us, try us and find our errors?" And the preacher, if he really preaches the Truth as it is in Jesus, must often deal out rebuke as well as encouragement. May God deliver all His ministers from

the fear of man everywhere--and the whole Church of Christ too!

At one time, the fear of man took this form--the geologists had discovered that Moses was mistaken and that God did not know how He had made the world! Many seemed to think that something dreadful had happened and they wondered how those objectors were to be answered. Soon after that, somebody discovered that God was mistaken about having made Adam and Eve, for they gradually developed from oysters or some smaller creatures still! Then again there was a great outcry, "Who is to answer these eminent philosophers?" O, Church of God, is every fool to have any answer at all? Stand fast by the Inspired Word and be not ensnared by the fear of man! We have seen scores of systems of philosophy come and go, and we shall probably see as many more before we die. Our business is to stand fast to the Truth of Revelation and let philosophies die as the frogs of Egypt died in the days of Moses--for die they will, and when fresh hordes come, they also will die, but the eternal Truth of the ever-blessed God will never die--it will live on in its own glorious immortality!

II. Now, in the second place, I want to show you that THE GREAT CURE FOR THIS EVIL IS TRUST IN GOD. "The fear of man brings a snare: but whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

I should have thought that Solomon would have said, "The fear of man brings a snare: but whoever fears the Lord shall be safe." That would have read very well and it would have been quite true. But it would not have expressed the special Truth of God that Solomon then had in mind. It is not fear, but faith, that is the cure for cowardice. Trust in the Lord and you can then cry, "Whom shall I fear?" for you will feel that you have the strength of the Almighty at your back. Trusting in God, we feel that we are one with God and so we are made strong. That strength breeds courage and enables us boldly to ask, "If God is for us, who can

be against us?" That courage leads us to count the cost of doing right and, after counting it, we feel that in God's strength we can endure that and a thousand times as much if necessary. And therefore we say, "Come what may, we will serve the Lord." And with the Holy Spirit resting upon us, we march boldly on to victory in His might. So that trust in God, by giving us God's strength and consequently courage and decision, lifts us up above the fear of man!

But the point of the text may be found in another direction, namely, that trusting in God, we become safe, not merely from fear, but from the consequences of defying fear. " 'Whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe." By trusting in the Lord and doing that which is right, he may be a great sufferer, but he shall be safe. He will not be so great a sufferer as he would be if he followed the opposite course. Suppose that his enemies carry their persecution to extremes? They can only kill the body and after that they have no more that they can do. But suppose he were to forfeit his faith? Then his body and soul would be cast into Hell which would be an infinitely greater and eternal loss! Never imagine that you can be a loser by trusting in God. Whatever risk there is in doing so, the risk of not trusting in Him is far greater-- and every sensible man will prefer the smaller risk. Besides, how often it happens that if a man trusts in God and acts according to his conscience, he is not a loser at all. Many have been gainers thereby, though that ought not to be an inducement. Many have said, "If we do what we feel is right, we shall lose everything" and yet, when they have dared to run that risk, they have lost nothing at all, for God has helped them in the emergency! But if they shouldlose by doing the right thing, let this assurance comfort them, "Whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe." It is much better to be safe than to be wealthy--and infinitely better to be safe for time and for

eternity than to have all the comforts of life about you, but to put your soul in jeopardy!

A Christian need never be afraid of anybody. If you are doing right, you have no cause to fear the greatest man who is serving the devil. Look at Bernard Palissy, the Huguenot potter who produced such wonderful works of art. One day the king of France said to him, "Bernard I am afraid I shall be compelled to give you up to the inquisitors to be burned if you will not change your religion." Bernard's reply was, "I pity your majesty." Only think of that--the potter pitied the king! So his majesty asked, "Why do you pity me, Bernard?" "Because," he answered, "you have said what your majesty and fifty thousand princes cannot make me say, I fear I shall be compelled!"' Why, Sirs, Palissy was the king and the king was not worthy to be the potter! A truly royal dignity dwelt in that potter's soul. Are any of you young men going to allow anybody to make you say, "I fear I shall be compelled to cease worshipping with the Dissenters?" Or, "I fear I shall be compelled to abstain from attending that little country Baptist Chapel?" Or, "I am afraid it might not be considered proper for me to make an open profession of religion in the town where I live?" If you talk like that, I can only say, "May the Lord have mercy on your miserable little soul and give you enough manhood and common honesty to confess what Christ has done for you!" If you really have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ and have had your sins forgiven, have been made an heir of Heaven and are on your way to a glorious immortality, surely you cannot act the part of a sneak like that! What? Are you who are to dwell among the angels, you for whom there is a mansion in the skies and a robe of righteousness and a crown of Glory--are you going to play the coward like that? Why, if you act thus, you ought to be drummed out of the regiment of the

Church militant, so how can you expect to be in the Church triumphant with such a miserable spirit as that? May the Lord help you to put your trust in Him, that you may be saved from all fear of man!

Now to close. The last sentence of the text is true as an independent proposition. "Whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe." I have not time to speak about this sentence, but I give it to you to put under your tongue as a sweet morsel as you go your way to your homes. It is not, "He that trusts in himself." It is not, "He that trusts in a priest." It is not, "He that performs good works and trusts in them," but, "whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe." The man who is trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus may not always be happy, but he is safe! He may not always be singing,

but he is safe! He may not always have the joy of full assurance, but he is safe! He may sometimes be distressed, but he is always safe! He may sometimes question his interest in Christ, but he is always safe!

I was astonished, the other day, to meet with an expression used by Cardinal Bellarmine, who was one of the greatest Jesuit controversialists. He closes a long argument about being saved by works with the following very remarkable sentences, which I will quote as accurately as I can--"Nevertheless, although the way of acceptance with God is by our own works, there is a danger that men may so trust in their own works as to grow proud, which would quite spoil their works and, therefore, upon the whole, it is safest for them to rely upon the blood and merits of Jesus Christ alone." Well done, Cardinal Bellarmine! "Upon the whole. "I mean to do that as long as I live and oh that everyone who has ever been deluded by the doctrines of the Church of Rome, would listen to the Cardinal's confession that, upon the whole it is safest to rest upon what Christ has done! Upon the whole i t is better to trust in the Savior than to trust in ourselves!

Upon the whole it is better to be washed in His blood than to think that we can make ourselves clean! The cardinal did not say all the truth, but I thank him for what he did say, though the truth is better put by Solomon in my text, "Whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe." He shall be safe if he is sick, if he is rich, if he is poor! He shall be safe when he dies, safe when he rises again, safe at the Day of Judgment, and safe throughout eternity! Oh, then, come all of you and trust in the Lord, for "whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe" forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PROVERBS27.

Verse 1. Boast not yourself of tomorrow; for you know not what a day may bring forth. Let us never boast of future days and years, or what we mean to do when we come to any age, or what shall be our position when we grow gray. Let us never boast of anything in the future, for we cannot tell what even a day may bring forth.

2. Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips. For he who praises himself writes himself down a fool in capital letters!

3. A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both. One might endure almost any sort of labor sooner than have to live with one who is perpetually and foolishly angry.

4. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?'Envy is a snake in the grass! Christians, beware of envy. You will, perhaps, be tempted to have it in your heart when you see another Christian more useful than you are, or when some Christian Brother seems to have more honor than you have. Ah, then cry to God against it! Never let this venomous reptile be spared for a single moment! The best of men will find envy creeping over them at times--it

may be envy of the wicked who are rich. We must seek to overcome that at once. And even envy of the best of men, what is it but covetousness and hatred and a breach of two Commandments? God save us from it!

5. Open rebuke is better than secret love. That I should love my fellow man is a good thing, but to have love enough to be able openly to rebuke his faults, is a very high proof of affection--and far better than secret love that is silent when it ought to speak. And yet, how many persons there are who are very angry with you if you give them an open rebuke? And how many there are who are foolish enough to prefer secret love to open rebuke, though they have Solomon's wisdom to teach them better? Our Lord Jesus Christ has a secret love to His people, yet He never spares them the open rebuke when He knows that it will be good for them.

6. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. Beware of the flattering world, Believer! Beware of the flattering devil and of the deceitfulness of the flesh. When things go smoothly with you, there may be the greatest danger. Whatever you do in times of storm, keep a good lookout when the sea is calm and the sky is clear.

7. The full soul loathes a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. "The full soul loathes" (even that luscious thing) "a honeycomb." No true preaching will go down with him who is full of himself, full of his own importance. Unless there shall be many of the flowers of rhetoric in the discourse, he will not listen to sound Doctrine. "But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Happy hunger is it when the soul hungers and thirsts after righteousness. Then there are no hyper-critical observations about the minister's delivery and no carping at words and phrases. It is spiritual food that the soul seeks--and if it can get

that, though it may not be to its taste in every respect-- there will be a sweetness in it that will make it like a honeycomb.

8, 9. As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so does the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel The Orientals were known to smear their faces and especially their hair, with ointment and perfume--and those who came near them were pleased with the scent. When you can get a little conversation, especially upon points that help towards godliness, with those of a like frame of mind with you--when you can have sweet communion and fellowship with the people of God--then it is that your hearts are rejoiced as with ointments and perfumes!

10. Your own friend, and your father's friend, forsake not Have but few friends, but stick closely to them. Above all, cleave closely to that "Friend that sticks closer than a brother." If He is your Friend, and your father's Friend, never forsake HIM. Forsake all the world for Him, but let not all the world induce you to forsake Him.

10. Neither go into your brother's house in the day of your calamity: for better is a neighbor that is near than a brother far off It is very sad that it should be so, but sometimes our nearest relatives are the farthest off, and those who ought to help us the most help us least. Many a man has had kindness shown to him by his neighbor who was but a stranger, when he has had little or no kindness from his own relatives. But there is one Brother into whose house we may always go. So near of kin He is to us, and so loving of heart, that He never thinks a hard thought of us but the more we ask of Him, the more delighted He is with us and is only grieved with us because we stint ourselves in our prayers.

11. My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that

reproaches me. A good son is his father's honor. If any say of such-and-such a man that he is a bad man, yet if his children walk orderly, he can answer the slander without speaking a word. Would a bad man have brought up his children in that way? Would they be walking in the fear of God if he had not walked in that way himself? So the sons of God ought to seek, by their consistency, to keep the name of their Father clear of reproach. The consistency of our conduct should be the best answer to the accusations of the infidel.

12, 13. A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger. He that takes surety is sure, but he that goes surety for another, and especially for a stranger, will smart for it, perhaps to the day of his death.

13, 14. And take a pledge of him for a strange woman. He that blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.There are some men who always use such sweet words--they are so fond of you that they are up early in the morning to give you their praise--and they continue all day pouring out their flattering unction. Such blessings as these are a curse! And the wise man will loathe these parasitical people who will see no faults, or pretend that they do not see any, but will always be extolling mere trifles as though they were the most sublime virtues. A sensible man is not to be overcome by this flattery!

15. A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. When there is a little leak in the roof and the rain keeps dropping through, it is very uncomfortable. But it is ten times more comfortable than it is to have to dwell with a contentious woman!

16. Whoever hides her hides the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which betrays itself That is to say, if a man puts sweet ointment

on his hand, the smell of it would soon be perceived. So, if a woman is of a contentious, angry, quarrelsome disposition, her contentiousness will be discovered--there is no hiding it.

17. Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance ofhis friend. Hence the usefulness of Christian association and hence, also, the evil of sinful company, for one sinner sharpens another to do mischief, just as one saint encourages another to righteousness.

18. 19. Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waits on his master shall be honored. As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man. If I look into water, I see the reflection of my own face, not another man's. And if I look into society, I shall probably see men like-minded with myself. How is it that a drunken man always finds other drunken men? How is it that lascivious men always have a bad opinion of the morality of other people? How is it that hypocrites always think other people hypocrites? Why, because they can see the reflection of their own faces! When a man tells me that there is no love in the Church of God, I know it is because he sees his own face and knows that there is no love in it. You will generally find that men measure other people's corn with their own bushels. They are sure to mete out to others according to their own measure--and they thus unconsciously betray themselves.

20, 21. Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. As the refining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise. Many a man who can bear adversity, cannot bear prosperity. The world's censures seldom do a Christian any harm, but it is the breath of applause that often gives us the scarlet fever of pride.

22. Though you should crush a fool in a mortar among wheat with a

pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him. No troubles, no afflictions can, of themselves, make a fool into a wise man. The sinner remains a sinner, after all Providential chastisements, unless Sovereign Grace interposes.

23. Be you diligent to know the state ofyour flocks, and look well to your herds. Be not slothful in business and, above all, let the Christian be diligent to know the state of his own heart.

24-27. For riches are not forever: and does the crown endure to every generation? The hay appears, and the tender grass shows itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for your clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And you shall have goat's milk enough for your food, for the food ofyour household, and for the maintenance for your maidens. Those who are diligent, generally prosper, and they who are diligent in spiritual things shall have all that their souls need. They shall be clothed with the robe of righteousness, they shall be well fed and shall be satisfied. May the wisdom of these Proverbs be given to us in daily life, that we may be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But above all, may heavenly wisdom be given to us in all spiritual things, to the praise of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Chapter 8

The Gracious Lips of Jesus

(No. 3081)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Grace is poured into Your lips." Psalm 45:2.

WHAT a never-ending theme there is in the name and Person of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! The poets of Scripture never mention His Person but they fall into rhapsodies at once! They never sing of His name, or of His glories, but at once they seem to be so enchanted by the spirit of poetry that they soar up with ecstasies of joy and their love scarcely knows how to find language to express itself. Love sometimes leaps over language among sensitive men-- and so it does more palpably in Sacred Scripture. Take, for instance, the Canticles. There, love has strained language to the uttermost in order to embody its vehement passion. Yes, so strained it, that some of us, not so filled with love to God, can scarcely appreciate its glowing utterance. Here, too, you see, the Psalmist, with harp in hand, no sooner begins to meditate on the Person of the Messiah, than he cries, "My heart bubbles up with a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the children of men: Grace is poured into Your lips."

We shall have no time for a preface, but must proceed at once to the discussion of our text. Grace is poured into the lips of Christ. Let us consider, first, the plenitude of this Grace. Secondly, the nature of this Grace. And thirdly, endeavor to show you in what offices Jesus

Christ proves that Grace is poured into His lips.

I. We commence with the word, "POURED," as suggesting THE PLENITUDE OF GRACE. "Grace is poured into Your lips."

Others among the children of men have had "Grace." Poets have spoken gracious words and Prophets of old have uttered wondrous sayings which were Divinely Inspired. So that it might be said that their doctrine "dropped" as the rain, and their speech "distilled" like the dew. Such imagery, however, is too faint to describe our Lord Jesus! Not merely did He speak as the dew, nor did His message simply drop as the small rain, it "POURED" from His lips! Whenever He spoke, a copious stream of gracious words flowed from Him like a very cataract of eloquence. Jesus Christ had not a little Grace, but it was "poured into" Him. Not a vial of oil on His head, but He had a cruse and a horn of oil emptied upon Him. Grace was poured into His lips!

I notice that Calvin translates this passage thus, "Grace is shed from Your lips." Not only did God give to His Son Grace on His lips, but the Son, whenever He speaks, whether He addresses the people in Doctrine and exhortation, or whether He pleads with His Father on their behalf--whenever His lips are open to speak to God for men, or from God to men, He always has "Grace shed from His lips." And when I turn to the Septuagint translation of this passage, I find that it has the idea of the very exhaustion of Grace, "Grace is poured from Your lips," as though emptied out till there is none left. Jesus Christ had Grace exhausted in His Person. In Him "dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." All Grace was given to Him. The very exhaustion of the inexhaustible store, as much as to say that God could give no more and that Jesus Christ, Himself, could not receive or possess more Grace. It was all poured into His Person--and when He speaks, He seems to exhaust Grace itself! Imagination's utmost stretch cannot conceive of anything

more gracious--and the contemplation of the most devoted Christian cannot think of any words more majestic in goodness, more tender in sympathy, more full of honey and more luscious in their sweetness than the gracious words that proceeded out of the lips of Jesus Christ!

"Grace is poured into Your lips." Ah, Christian, you may have some Grace on your lips, but you have not got it "poured" into them! You may have some Grace in your heart, but it is dropped there like small rain from Heaven--you

have not got it "poured" there! You may be ever so full of Grace, but Christ is more full than you are--and when you are ever so reducedin Grace, it is a consolation that with Him is plenteous Grace, plenty that knows no lack, for Grace is poured into His lips! Be not afraid to go to Him in every time of need, nor think that He will fail to comfort you. His comforts are not like water spilled on the earth that cannot be gathered up--they yield perpetual streams, for Grace is poured into His lips! He has no stinted supply, no short allowance to give you, but ask what you will, you shall have as much as your faith can desire and your heart can hold, for Grace is poured into His lips in the richest plenitude!

II. Not to speak further on this, let us pass on to consider THE KIND OF GRACE THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS WHICH IS THUS POURED INTO HIS LIPS AND SHED FORTH FROM HIS LIPS.

It is important to remark that Jesus Christ has what none of the sons of men ever had--He has inherent Grace. Adam, when he was created by God, had some inherent Grace which God gave him, yet not so much of God's Grace as to preserve the uprightness of his character. He had but the Grace of purity, as it could be displayed in the innocence of his intelligent nature. There must have been much Grace in the constitution of the man, seeing he was originally created in the likeness of God,

yet there could not have been perfect Grace in him, for he did not keep his first estate. But Jesus Christ had all the Grace that Adam had and all the Grace that any innocent man could have had, in the most sublime perfection! And that Divine Grace was always in Him. You and I have none of that intelligent Grace. We have heard men say that children are not born in sin, nor shaped in iniquity, but that they have inherent Grace--but we have never yet met with the man who has found so wonderful a child! At any rate, the children have been mightily spoiled in growing to maturity, for they have not given much proof of Grace afterwards. No, Beloved, we are naturally graceless, a seed of evildoers--all our inherent Grace was spoiled by Adam. However full the pitcher might have been originally, it has been emptied out by the Fall. Adam broke the earthen vessel and spilt every drop of its contents--and we have none left. But in Jesus there was no sin--He had inherent Grace in Himself.

And next, He had Grace which He derived from the constitution of His Person, being God as well as Man. The Manhood of Christ derived Grace from the Godhead of Christ. I do not doubt that His two Natures were united in such wonderful union that what the Man did, the God confirmed, and what the God willed, that the Man did. Nor did the Man Christ Jesus ever act without the God Christ Jesus. Nor did He ever speak without the God--the God within Him--the God whom He is as truly as He is Man. We speak but as men, save when the Spirit of God speaks through us. The greatest and mightiest of all Prophets have but spoken as Inspired men--but Jesus spoke as Man and God conjoined. "Grace"--this unutterably Divine Grace--His own Grace of Godhead was poured into His lips and shed forth from His lips.

But more. I conceive that the Lord Jesus Christ, when He spoke, had also, as well as His ministers, the assistance of God the Holy Spirit.

In fact, we are told that God gave not the Spirit unto Him by measure. It is a most remarkable fact and I believe it is put in Scripture on purpose to make us honor the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ as a Preacher--so far as we can judge from the Word of God--was not so successful in conversion as some of His followers have been. If you turn to the life of Paul, you will notice how many thousands were brought through His preaching to know the Lord. And if you read the account of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, you will see that three thousand were converted on that one day. You never hear of such an instance in the life of Christ. When He died, He left only about 500 disciples behind Him. The reason was this--Jesus said, "I will honor the Holy Spirit. I will let the world know that it is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord. And though I speak as never man spoke, and have more eloquence than mortal ever again can attain, yet I will, in My Sovereignty, restrain Myself from the exercise of that Spirit. The people's eyes shall be dull and they shall slumber--their hearts shall wax fat and they shall be gross. Then, in later years I will speak more through a humble fisherman than I did Myself. I will honor more the weakest instrument than I have done even Myself as a Preacher."

Yet Jesus Christ had the Spirit without measure, for every sentence of His was instinct with Divine energy. "The words," said Jesus, "that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life." Thus, you see, His words are not merely of the Spirit, but they are Spirit. It seems to me that as he that has seen Christ has seen the Father, so he that has heard Christ, has heard the Holy Spirit. Still, the fruits of His ministry, like the homage due to His Person, lay beyond the brief term of His sojourn on earth. He was rejected of His generation but afterwards "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the

Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." In like manner, His words, though not seemingly productive at the time, were so full of the Spirit's quickening power that they were afterwards the means of conversion to millions of millions beyond the capacity of mortals to count! All conversions under Peter, Paul and the other Apostles were by Jesus Christ. The words that He spoke in secret, they published far and wide. All conversions now are in His name and by His Word! "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." If an Apostle spoke of himself, his words fell to the ground, but what his Master told him to say was abundantly successful! Jesus Christ has the Spirit without measure and herein is another kind of Grace, of which it can be said, "Grace is poured into Your lips.

III. We have very hastily passed over these two divisions, that we may dilate on the third. We are now to consider THE VARIOUS OFFICES IN WHICH WE MAY DISCERN "GRACE" AS BEING "POURED INTO THE LIPS" OF CHRIST AND SHED AGAIN FROM HIS LIPS.

First, let us regard our Savior as the eternal Surety of the Covenant and we shall see that Grace was poured into His lips. When God the Father originally made the Covenant, it stood somewhat in this form, "My Son, You desire, and I also agree with You, to save a multitude that no man can number, whom I have elected in You. But, in order to their salvation, that I may be just, and yet the Justifier of them that believe, it is necessary that someone should be their Representative, to stand responsible for their obedience to My Laws, and their Substitute to suffer whatever penalties they incur. If You, My Son, will agree to bear their punishment and endure the penalty of their crimes, I on My part will agree that You shall see Your seed, shall prolong Your days, and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in

Your hands. If You are prepared to promise that You will bear the punishment of all the people whom You would save, I on my part am prepared to swear by Myself, because I can swear by no greater, that all for whom You shall atone shall Infallibly be delivered from death and Hell, and that all for whom You bear the punishment shall hence go free, nor shall My wrath rise against them, however great may be their sins." Jesus spoke the word and He said, "My Father! Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God."

Now, that was spoken in eternity, farther back than faith on eagle wings can soar and such Grace was poured into the lips of Christ when He made that simple declaration, that tens of thousands of saints entered Heaven simply on the ground of His solemn pledge! Such Grace was shed from the lips of Jesus that, from the days of Adam, when one transgression involved the race in ruin, down to the times when the Second Adam made reconciliation for iniquity, the saints all entered Heaven upon the faith of Christ's promise alone! Not one drop of blood had been shed, not one agony suffered--the contract was not performed, the stipulation not yet fulfilled, but the Surety's oath was quite enough--in the Father's ears there needed no other confirmation. His heart was satisfied. Yes, more--in that same moment when Jesus spoke that word in His Father's ear, all the saints were in Him justified and rendered complete--their salvation was secure! As soon as ever Jesus Christ said, "My Father, I will pay the penalty, they shall have My righteousness and I will have their sin," their acceptance was an eternal fact! He would never go back from His agreement, nor ever turn aside from His Covenant. This is the first aspect in which we behold Grace shed forth from Christ's lips.

Secondly, Grace is poured into His lips as the greatest of all Prophets

and Teachers. The Law was given by Moses and there was some Grace on his lips, for Moses, even when he preached the Law, preached the Gospel, privileged as he was to look steadfastly to the end of that which is abolished. When he taught the offering of the lamb, the bullock and the turtledove, there was Gospel couched in the Law itself, in the Law of Levitical ceremonies. But the beams that shone on the face of Moses were but beams of Grace, they were not "the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth." And when other Prophets rose at different periods of the first dispensation of the Law, they each had some measure of Grace. Whether we consider the heroic Elijah, or the plaintive Jeremiah, or Isaiah, that seraphic Seer who spoke more of Christ than all the rest, we find that each and all had some Grace in their lips. What they preached was gracious Doctrine and well worthy to be received, but who ever taught such Doctrines as those of Jesus? Where, among the writings of the Prophets and sages of antiquity, can we find such words as those which Jesus uttered? Who taught the people that they should love all men? Who taught the people such wondrous Doctrines as those which you find in all His sermons? Who could have been so great a Teacher? Who could so blessedly have prophesied to His people but Jesus Christ Himself? My Soul, contemplate Jesus as the only Rabbi of the Church! View Him as the only Lord and Master! Take your Doctrines and articles of faith from His lips, and His lips alone! Study His Word and make that alone your guide! Interpret all the rest by His light. When you have done so, you will say, "O Prophet of my salvation, You Teacher of Israel, verily Grace is poured into Your lips! No books afford me such instruction as Yours, no ministers address me in such words as my Shepherd speaks. No learning has in it such depths of wisdom as the wisdom of Christ!" More to be desired are His words than gold, yes, than much fine gold. Grace was

poured into His lips as the greatest of all Prophets!

Thirdly, Christ had Grace poured into His lips as the most eloquent of all preachers. One of the joys I anticipate in Heaven is to hear Christ speak to His people. I conceive that there was such a majesty about Jesus Christ when He spoke on earth, as not Demosthenes, Cicero, nor Pericles--nor all the orators of ancient or modern times could ever approach! He had a voice, I suppose, more sweet than even the music which came from the harps of angels! He had eyes expressive of sympathy with those whom He addressed. He had a heart which animated every feature of His Countenance. His was pathos which could break the stony heart. His was sublimity which could elevate the sensual mind. Each word of His was a pearl, each sentence was of pure gold. "Never man spoke like this Man." No poet, in his most rapt ecstasy, could have grasped such sublime thoughts as those the Savior delivered to His hearers and when, stooping from His flights, He condescends to speak in plain and simple words to His fellows, there is naked, ungarnished simplicity in the familiar discourse of Christ to which man cannot in the least approach! Jesus Christ was the greatest and the plainest of all preachers. We could put aside every other in comparison with Him. We have known men who could curb the restless multitude and hold them spellbound. Some of us have listened to some mighty man of God who chained our ears, held us fast, and constrained our attention all the while he spoke. Justice, sin, righteousness and judgment to come have absorbed us while they enlisted our sympathies. But had you heard the Savior, you would have heard more wondrous things than any mere man ever could have spoken!

I think if the wild winds could have heard Him, they would have ceased their blustering. If the waves could have listened to Him they would have hushed their tumult and the rough back of the ocean would have

been smoothed! If the stars could have heard Him, they would have stopped their hurried march. If the sun and moon had heard Him whose voice is more potent than that of Joshua, they would have stood still. If Creation could have heard Him, then charmed, it would have stopped its ceaseless motions and the wheels of the universe would have stood still, that all ears might listen, that all hearts might beat and that all eyes might glisten! And that so souls might be elevated while Jesus Christ spoke. It was fabled of Hercules that he had golden chains in his mouth with which he chained the ears of men. It is true of Jesus that He had golden chains in His mouth that chained men's ears and hearts too! He had no need to ask attention, for Grace was poured into His lips. Happy day! Happy day when I shall sit down at the feet of Jesus Christ and hear Him preach! O Beloved, what we shall then think of our poor preaching, I cannot tell! It is a mercy that Jesus Christ does not preach here now, for, after hearing Him, none of us would preach again, so ashamed would we be of ourselves. Sometimes, when we try to preach, and afterwards hear a more able minister, we feel so outdone that our preaching seems nothing--we hardly dare try again. It is a mercy there is a veil between us and Christ. We cannot hear Him preach, or else we should all vacate our pulpits! But in Heaven I hope to sit enchanted at His feet. And if He will speak for a million years, I would ask Him to speak yet another million! And if He will still speak, even then, for the sweet redundance of that Grace which is poured into His lips, my raptured soul would sit and love, and smile itself away in ecstasies of joy to hear my Savior speak!

Fourthly, Grace was poured into the lips of Christ as the faithfulPromiser. I look upon all the promises of God's Word as being the promises of Jesus as well as the promises of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. All the promises of God, we are told, are yes and Amen in

Christ Jesus, unto the Glory of God by us. And as the promises are all made in Him, so they are all spoken by Him. Now, will you not concur with me when I say that, verily, Grace is poured into His lips as the faithful Promiser? We have sometimes read His promises. We have heard them with our ears, and oh, what Grace there is in them! Take, for instance, that great honeycomb promise--"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." Turn to another--"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." "Fear not, you worm, Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Listen to such sweet words as these--"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." Beloved, you do not need that I tell you how precious these promises are! The best way to preach of the faithful

Promiser is to tell you some of His promises. I will not tell you what treasures there are in Christ's cabinet--I will break the door open and let you look at some more of the treasures for yourselves. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you." "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Is He not indeed full of Grace as the faithful Promiser? You, poor

Souls, who have been drinking from the wells of promise, well know His faithfulness and the Grace therein! You have come sick and weary oftentimes to this well and your strength has been renewed till you were like giants refreshed with new wine! Your spirits have been depressed and your souls have been melancholy, but when you have come here, you have tasted that wine which makes glad the heart of man! Oh, did ever man speak like this Man when He speaks as the faithful Promiser?

Fifthly, Grace is poured into His lips as the Wooer and the Winner of His people's hearts. O Beloved, Christ has hard work to win His people's love! He prepares His feast, the fatlings are killed, but those that are bidden will not come, so He says to His messengers, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be

filled." [See Sermon #227, Volume 5--COMPEL THEM TO COME IN] Yet what a hard matter it is to bring poor souls to be in love with Jesus! In vain does the minister dilate upon His charms! In vain does he try to paint His features as well as he can. We are poor daubers and we mar the beauty which we attempt to portray! Sinners say, "Is that Jesus? Then there is no beauty in Him that we should desire Him." And they turn away and hide their faces from Him. With tears streaming from our eyes, we seek "to find out acceptable words," and we use the best language our hearts can dictate, but we cannot win your souls! Sometimes we address you in rough words that we have borrowed from some ancient Boanerges. At other times, with smooth words such as a Chrysostom might approve-- yet they are alike in vain. But oh, when Jesus pleads His own cause, how sweetly does He plead it! Have you never watched the heart when Jesus Christ begins to woo it, when He opens the ear and says, "Poor soul, I love you and because I love you, I will tell you what you

are. You are cast out into the open field, you are lying in your blood; you are dead in trespasses and sins; yet I love you, will you not love Me?" "No," says the heart, "I will not." "But," says Jesus, "My love is deep as Hell, it is insatiable as the grave. I will be yours and you shall be Mine." And have you noted how soon the stubborn soul begins to yield and the hard rock begins to flow like Niobe's tears till, at last the heart says, "O Jesus! Love you? Yes I do, because You did first love me!"

Why is it that some here have not given their hearts to Jesus? Perhaps it is because Jesus has not revealed Himself to them in Person. But when He does, they cannot deny Him! I challenge any man or woman to hold his heart back when Jesus comes for it. When He displays Himself, when He takes the veil off our eyes and lets us look at His lovely face. When He shows us His wounded hands and His bleeding side, I think there is no heart but must be drawn forth to Him. Ah, Christian! Do you not remember the hour when He pleaded with you? He knocked at the door and you would not let Him in. But how sweetly did He tell you of your sinnership and with the next word made known to you your redemption! Then He told you of your death--and with the next word made you alive! Then He told you that you were powerless, and with the next word made you strong! Then He told you of your unbelief and with the next sentence gave you faith! Oh, is He not filled with Grace as He wins the hearts and affections of His people?!

Sixthly, Jesus Christ has His lips filled with Grace as the great consolation of Israel, the comfort of all His people. There is no comfort except that which comes from the Lord Jesus. At no brook can you slake the thirst of the soul but at that stream of Grace which flows from Christ and can never run dry. Let us rehearse His mighty acts. Let us go back over our life and see the various Ebenezers we

have raised to His Sovereign Grace and Mercy. Do you not remember how He appeared to you in the solitude of the wilderness and said to you, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love"? Do you not remember when, torn with the thorns and briars of this world, you were despairing and ready to die, how He came and touched you and said to you, "Live," when He bade you turn your eye upwards to Him--and you could then say, "Since Jesus is mine, I will fear nothing"? O you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, go again to the banqueting house where the Savior comforted you with flagons and fed you with apples, where He gave you the sweet fruits of the Kingdom of God and took of the clusters of Eshcol and squeezed them into your mouth! Do you not remember when He gave you something better than angels' food at the Lord's Table, or how He manifested Himself to you in the use of the means while you were waiting upon Him? And will you not say, "O Jesus, verily Grace was poured into Your lips"? Desponding soul, if Jesus speaks to you today, you will not be desponding any longer! There is such potency in the word, "Jesus," that I think it ought to be sung in all hospitals to charm away diseases! Wherever there are diseased hearts and troubled spirits, I would always go and sing, "Jesus!" When He draws near to comfort His people, midnight becomes noon and the thickest darkness becomes a blaze of meridian splendor, for Grace is poured into His lips!

Seventhly, Grace is poured into Christ's lips as the great Intercessor for His people before the Throne of God. Before Jesus ascended up on high and led captivity captive, as Toplady says, "With cries and tears He offered up His humble suit below." But now that Jesus Christ has gone up on high, "with authority," He pleads before His Father. It must have been wonderful to hear the prayers of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, but oh, if we might see our blessed Lord this morning

pleading in Heaven! He stands before His Father's Throne, points to His pierced side and shows His wounded hands. When our prayers rise to Heaven, they are broken prayers, but Jesus knows how to mend them. There are things in them that should not be there, so He corrects them and then He takes the amended edition of our prayers and says, "My Father, another petition I have come to lay before You." Says the Father, "From whom is it?" "From one of My people." And then Jesus Christ says, "Father, I will it must be done. Look, here is the price!" And He holds up His hands and shows His side. And then the Father says "My Son, it shall be done. Whatever You ask in prayer, for Your sake it shall be bestowed."

Do you see yonder poor man? His name is Peter. At no great distance is Satan, who wants to destroy his soul. He has a large sieve in which he desires to sift Peter. Can you imagine Satan presenting himself before the Lord, as in days of yore? He says, "O Lord, let me have Peter in my sieve, that I may sift him as wheat!" Down goes Jesus before the Throne and says, "My Father, I beseech You let not this grain of wheat fall to the ground." Satan goes and catches Peter and begins to sift him. The first time, he is a little frightened. The second time, he says, "Man, I know not what you say!" The third time, he says, "I know not the Man." And he begins to curse and swear. How terrible is that sifting! But Christ looks at him and out goes Peter--the prayer of Jesus availed for him, the look of Jesus prevailed with him! "He went out and wept bitterly" and his soul was saved. Oh, the mighty power of intercession! I do not think our prayers would ever be heard in Heaven if it were not for Jesus Christ. He is the great Mediator by whom our prayers must be presented.

Eighthly, Jesus Christ has Grace poured into His lips as the Counselor for His people. You may have seen a special pleader rise with a brief

in his hand. He shows the case against the prisoner to be a very bad one. Then witnesses are called. Afterwards another advocate gets up to plead the prisoner's cause--to rebut, if possible, the accusation, or to set forth extenuating circumstances in mitigation of punishment. Now, when we stand before the judgment bar of God, Satan will rise up--that old accuser of the brethren--and will gather together the evidences of our guilt and the reasons why we should be condemned. I think I hear him say that we were born in sin and shaped in iniquity and, therefore, we deserve to be lost! That we have a corrupt nature, that we had the sin of Adam laid to us. And then, with malicious spleen, he will allege that we transgressed at such-and-such a time when we were young--following up our career from youth to manhood and even down to hoar hairs--clenching all his arguments by an appeal to our unbelief, declaring that though we have professed to believe, we have doubted the promises and could not, therefore, be children of God! Well might we, as transgressors, tremble when, with a bad case, the grounds of judgment against us are so maliciously stated!

But there stands forth on our behalf The Wonderful, The Counselor! And He takes His brief in His hand and begins to plead. Hark what He says and see how all opinion is turned at once! "I confess," says He, "that every word is true that the accuser has uttered. My client pleads guilty to every charge, but I have a full pardon signed by God's own hand, purchased by My own blood." And stripping Himself, He shows His wounds and says "These people were given to Me of My Father before the foundation of the world! I bore their sins in My own body on the tree." And then, mounting to the highest point, He reaches the climax of Grace as He exclaims, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Can You, O God? Have You not justified them? I cannot, for I died for them." Then He sits down in triumph, saying, "Whom He justified, them

He also glorified. Nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God."

And now, lastly, Grace is poured into the lips of Jesus as the great Judge of all at last. That will be a gracious judgment which Jesus Christ shall dispense. It will be gracious because it will be at once merciful and just. Sinners, ungodly men and women, now in this House of Prayer, you have never heard the voice of Jesus and you have never known

what it is to confess that Grace was poured into His lips. But let me tell you, the time will come when you will be made to confess that Grace is poured into His lips. You will stand there and hear Him say to His own people, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." When you hear it, you will think within yourselves, "Never did such music break on our ears before. Oh what precious words!" Yes, but you will fall down and ask rocks to hide you, and mountains to cover you because the words were not spoken to you! You will tremble as, one by one, the faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ come before Him. He will say to one, "Verily, you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things." To another He will say, "You have fought a good fight, you have kept the faith, receive the crown laid up for you from the foundation of the world." You will then say, "Oh, what Grace was poured into His lips! How graciously He speaks!" And you, all the while, will feel that He is not speaking to you. You will stand there and know that your turn will never come when He shall speak gracious words to you. You will stand fixed to the spot petrified as you listen while you hear those matchless syllables. You laugh at the saints now--you will envy them then! You despise them now, but you will be ready to kiss the dust of their feet if you might but get into Heaven! You would not ask to

sit on a Throne with them, but to lie at their feet would be enough for you if you might but hear Christ say to you, "Come, you blessed." But, in a moment, instead of gracious words, my Hearers--I am not telling you a dream, but a reality--in a moment--O believe me, for God speaks it! Instead of words of Grace, there shall come words of terror and there shall be found no blessed place for you. These are the words--"Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." You would not wish to hear those gracious lips utter such a sentence as that to you. I am sure you are, none of you, anxious to make your bed in Hell and find your abode in damnation! But, my Hearers, I must warn you faithfully. There are some of you who, if you die as you are, will never go to Heaven. There are many of you, my regular attendants, and some of you who have just strayed in here this morning, who know and your heart confesses it, that you are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Christians, weep for them! Let your tears flow in rivers! It were sad if they were sick, but this is worse, for they are sick unto the second death! It were painful if they were condemned to die by the Law, but they are "condemned already." My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you now--start not--there are some sitting side by side with you in the pews who are condemned criminals! How would you feel this morning if, as you sat in your pew, there was a man beside you who was to be hanged tomorrow? You would say, "Oh, that God might bless the Word to that poor creature's soul! Oh, that God might send it into his heart, for he is a condemned man!" Do you not know that it is so? There is a saint of God and sitting by his side is a child of Hell! Here is an heir of Glory and immortality--and the neighbor who touched his arm this morning is dead in sins and condemned to die! What? Will you not weep and feel for them? Will your hearts be like stone and steel? Will you

let them perish without a sigh, without a prayer, without a tear? No!
We will pray for them, that God in His mercy may yet give them Grace to save them from the wrath to come!
Poor Sinners, do not despise my blessed Master, I beseech you! If you knew Him, you would love Him, I know! O poor wicked Sinner, you who feel self-condemned, conscience-stricken--have you no love to Jesus? Ah, if you did but know how much Jesus Christ loves you, you would love Him at once! I know a man who said he never was so struck by anything in all his life as when he heard that line--
"Jesus, Lover of my soul!"
"Oh," he said, "I did not recollect anything of the sermon, but only those words at the beginning of a hymn--
"Jesus, Lover of my soul!"
He went to a friend of mine and he said, "Do you think Jesus Christ is the 'Lover of mys oul?' If I thought He was, I think I could love Him at once." The friend said, "Ah, well, if you feel like that, Jesus is the Lover of your soul." O Beloved, what would you give if you might but call Jesus Christ your Lover and your Friend? If you could but know that He loved you? Do you sigh for an interest in His love? Ah, then He does love you, for you would not have wanted Him to love you if He had not set His heart upon you! Have you a desire for Jesus? Then Jesus has a thousand times as much desire for you! I tell you Christ is more pleased to save poor sinners than poor sinners are to be saved. The Shepherd is more ready to reclaim the lost sheep than the sheep is to be reclaimed. So let me tell you, poor Soul, that Jesus has no pleasure in the death of him that dies--but He has a pleasure deep as the sea, high as Heaven, wide as the East is from the West, and as unsearchable as His own Divinity, in saving souls! Only believe in His name, Sinner!
To you I preach, you actual, bona

fide sinner! You real sinner, to you I preach! Jesus Christ says, "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Do you Believe this? Will you put your trust in Him? Will you drop into His arms and let Him carry you? Will you fall flat upon the Rock of Ages and let that sustain you? If you do it now, this moment, you shall become in this happy moment a changed man or woman! You shall be no longer an heir of wrath, but a child of Grace! And your salvation shall become as inevitably secure as if you were even now among the glorified!

Chapter 9

"Here I Am!"

(No. 3082)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 19, 1874.

"The LORD called Samuel, and he answered, Here I am!" 1 Samuel 3:4.

SAMUEL was a model child. He was the son of a prayerful mother. Hannah is one of the most notable pietists mentioned in the Scriptures. She possessed a truly original mind, but she was yet more famous for her piety--a woman who knew how to take her griefs to the Mercy Seat and cast them upon her God. So Samuel came of good stock but, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and he would have been none the better for his godly parentage unless the Spirit of God had early in life renewed his heart. May our dear children all grow up as Samuel did. And that they may do so, may they in their early life be such children as Samuel was!

It is to be noticed how obedient Samuel was to his guardian who stood to him in the place of a parent. We do not read of any disobedience or discourtesy to Eli. On the contrary, we see that the greatest respect and attention were paid by the child to the aged man who had the care of him. There is nothing in a child more beautiful than obedience--and a young Christian should be careful to keep his proper place--and the more he knows what his privileges are in being a child of God, the better should he fulfill his duty as a child at home.

The child Samuel was consecrated to God from his earliest days. His mother gave him to the Lord and He, Himself, confirmed the

consecration. Happy is the child who is God's child and who can say as truly as Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ." Such Grace is seen even in children--may it be seen in all the children of all the families connected with this Church!

Samuel also had the great privilege of growing up amid holy services. He saw the daily sacrifices offered in the sanctuary and he was probably not absent from any of the means of Grace of that day. Parents do their children grievous wrong when they do not allow them to go with them to the House of Prayer. I have noticed, when the showers are falling, that you who try to keep a few pots of flowers in this smoky London, set them out to get the benefit of the rain. And you not only put out the large plants, but you put out the little ones, too, so that the precious drops may fall on them. Let your little children, like the little pots of flowers, be put under the gracious showers of the sanctuary and who knows how largely God my bless them? If children cannot understand all that is said, I think that where the preaching is what it should be, even a small child will remember something and perhaps understand it better, by-and-by.

Further, Samuel was a child who was not merely given up to God and brought up in God's House, but he was doing God's work. He could not offer sacrifices, but he could trim the lamps. He could not speak like Eli, but he could open the doors of the Lord's House and it was as necessary that somebody should open the doors as that somebody else should be inside when the doors were opened--ready to attend to the more important parts of the solemn service. Happy, happy child, whose earliest work is work for God, whose earliest hearing is hearing the voice of God, whose earliest breath is spent in the praise of God! God grant, of His infinite mercy, that our children may be such children, and He shall have the praise!

I am going to apply Samuel's little speech, "Here I am," specially to grown-up people, yet I am not going to exclude children from the application. When God called Samuel, he answered, "Here I am!" Now, first, what did this show? And secondly, what did it foretell?

I. I must devote the greater part of the time to the question, WHAT DID SAMUEL'S ANSWER, "HERE I AM,"

SHOW?

It showed, first, a hearing ear. God spoke and Samuel heard. Have you a hearing ear, dear Brother? Be grateful if you have, for all men have not that blessing. There are some who have an itching ear--and they come to a place of worship not to hear profit, but merely to judge, to criticize, to find fault, to draw comparisons between one speaker and another. If that is the case with you, dear Friend, may the Lord cure your ears of itching and open them to the Truth of God, for they are stopped up! John Bunyan speaks of Ear-Gate being stopped up with filth, and it is often so. Men cannot hear the voice of God because there is sin in the way--some darling sin--and they are not wise enough to realize that what they hear will be the means either of saving them or of damning them. Hearing true Gospel sermons is one of the most solemn occupations in which intelligent beings can be employed. Hearing ears are by no means common things--happy are you who have them. Samuel was asleep, yet he heard God's voice. I know some people who are awake, yet who have not heard it. They have been sitting here with their eyes wide open, yet they have seen nothing of the Truth--and with their ears open, too, yet the voice of God has never penetrated the secret chambers of their souls. How long some of you have been hearers only, and therefore not true hearers! How long have the ears of your heart been dull of hearing! You have heard my voice, but you have not heard God's voice. You have heard the voice of earnest teachers and

preachers, but as yet the voice of God has not reached your heart.
In Samuel's case, it was the first thing that God had spoken to him, yet he heard Him, but in your case, God has spoken to you many times, yet you have not heard His voice once. How many times has God spoken to some of you? Can you calculate how many Gospel sermons you have heard? I heard someone say, the other day, as she opened her Bible and looked at the texts which she had marked from which she had heard me preach these many years, "What a responsibility to have heard so many sermons from such texts as these!" And she said more which it is not for me to repeat, but I felt, "Yes, there is truth in that." If God has sent us to preach His Word, you may depend upon it that He will resent it if you do not hear the message that He sends to you through us. It will not merely be a rejection of the ambassador of Christ, but a rejection of the King who sent him to you! Therefore, I pray that God may give to each one of you a hearing ear.
I expect that the voice of God to Samuel was only a faint call. It was in the night watches and I suppose that the Lord spoke softly, "Samuel, Samuel." Yet Samuel heard at once. But the voice of God to some of you has been a loud one. He has spoken to you not only in loving exhortations, but with the voice of threats. You have had Christ set before you in the gentleness of His love, but you have also seen Him in the terror of His vengeance. You have heard concerning the wrath to come, the Pit without a bottom and the fire that never shall be quenched. I can say, with Paul, that "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." I have not kept back anything from you, however terrible His Truth was. These lips have never sought to make the penalty of sin appear lighter than Scripture makes it, nor to pare down the dread solemnities of eternity to please this evil generation. No, we have let Sinai speak with its pealing thunders as

well as Calvary with its gentle wooing and yet, alas, there are still some here who have not heard God's voice so as to heed it!

God has spoken to you through your conscience. He has made you shake in your beds and tremble as you walked about the streets. He has spoken to you through that dear child who once nestled in your bosom, but who was called away to Heaven. He has spoken through that beloved friend with whom you took sweet counsel, who was suddenly smitten with a death sickness and taken away from you. It might have been yourself--that funeral might have been your own--and then where would your soul have been? God has spoken to you by the fever that laid you low, the effects of which are still upon you. He has spoken to you through that "accident" from which you only escaped, as it were, by the skin of your teeth! Again and again has God spoken to you so that both your ears have tingled, but there it ended! The avenue from your ears to your heart has still been blocked up by the devil and his angels--and by your sin. And as yet you have not answered the Divine call and said, "Here I am!" If you were deaf, you might be excused for not hearing. But you have ears, yet you hear not. You could hear God's voice if you wished to hear it, but you are not willing--your inability lies in your will--and that inability is the real obstruction. It is not so much a subject for pity as for censure, and so you will find it at the Last Great Day. But I pray that there may be many among you who, when the Gospel call is sounded, will say, "Here I am! I am a hearer of the Word and I do enjoy hearing it. It is sweet to me and I do lay hold on eternal life through hearing the voice of Jesus in the Gospel." Pleased be the name of the Lord if you can truthfully say this!

The next thing I see in this answer of Samuel is a responsive heart. "The Lord called Samuel," and he not merely heard, but sounded, and said, "Here I am!" Many of you have heard the Gospel. Be thankful if,

in addition to hearing it, you have been able to give a response to it. I remember the first response that I gave to the Gospel. It threatened me with punishment for my sin--and when I was able to respond to it, I said, "I deserve that threat and I bow my head to the dust," and, for some years the only part of the Gospel to which I could respond was that part which destroyed my self-righteousness and my carnal hopes--and made me feel that I was lost. Now, if you cannot go any further than that, thank God that you can go as far! If, when the Word that is preached to you says, "You have broken the Law of God and you must pay the penalty for your disobedience," you say, "Here I am. I cannot complain of the justice of the sentence." I thank God that you can go as far as that. There is something of the life of God in the soul that yields its assent and consent to the denunciations of Divine Justice.

But, Beloved, how much better it is when you can go further than this! Some of us can recollect when we went further, when the voice of God sounded over the mountains of our guilt and said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." And we replied, "Here I am," and we looked unto Him and were lightened and our faces were not ashamed! Christ said, "Where are you, Sinner?" And we said, "Here I am!" "Come," He said, "to My Cross. Are you there, Sinner?" And we answered, "Here I am!" "I am looking down with love," He said. "Look up with joy if you are there." And we answered, "Here I am!" Oh, it was a blessed thing for us when we had come to that point where Christ would receive us, where the Gospel spoke of pardon and we accepted it! Where the Gospel spoke of simple faith and we exercised the simple faith which God had given to us! Where the Gospel spoke of putting away sin and we rejoiced to have it put away! Where the Gospel spoke of repentance and we rejoiced to have repentance and to forsake the world and to follow

Jesus!

In addition to having a hearing ear and a responsive heart, it is clear that Samuel had a teachable spirit. When the Lord called Samuel, he said, "Here I am." That is to say, "I am ready to hear what You have to say to me. Speak, Lord. I only want You to speak and it shall be enough for me. I am Your willing disciple, waiting to learn whatever You will teach me." I do not know any position that is better for a Christian to occupy than that of sitting with Mary at the Master's feet and looking up into His face, saying, "Lord, I love You and I know something of Your Truth, but have You not more of it to teach me? Lord, is there any duty which You have enjoined upon Your followers, but which I have not yet seen to be a duty? Then show it to me Lord, for here I am, waiting to know Your will. Is there a Doctrine that I have kicked against, which is, after all, Your Doctrine? Then, Lord, instruct me in it! Will it cause me to forsake my former associates if I am true to You? If it must be so, I will give it all up! Lord, here I am, waiting to learn of You.

It is the lack of this resolve that makes so many denominations in the world today. Most professors never look in the Bible to see what is right and what is wrong. Their father and mother went to a certain place of worship, so they go to it. They saw things in a certain light and their children do the same. But they never search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so or not. I am afraid there are many Christians and some ministers, too, who would be afraid to search the Scriptures lest they should learn too much from them! We should soon end all the divisions in the Church of Christ if we took this blessed Book only--no book of prayer, no book of sermons, no book of devotions and no catechism as our rule of life--nothing but this Book--and opened it, saying, "Lord, speak, for Your servant hears. Whatever You have to

say to me, here I am, waiting to know and to do Your will." I ask every Christian here whether he can honestly say that he has given up his mind to be molded by the Holy Spirit--whether, upon questions that are in dispute among men, he has really searched the Scriptures and whether he is prepared at all costs to follow the Truth of God wherever it leads him? For this is both the duty and the honor of the Christian--and in that day when the Lord shall stand upon Mount Zion, the hundred and forty and four thousand who shall be especially honored will be those who "follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Notice those words, "wherever He goes." Following the Lamb in little things and great things, in Doctrinal matters, in the Christian ordinances--not following man's custom, nor any Church's regulations, but following the Lamb "wherever He goes." [See Sermons #2324, Volume 39--THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB and #2456, Volume 42--THE LAMB OUR LEADER] God give us Grace, then, to reply to the call of Jesus, "Here I am, Lord. Do You bid me believe this Doctrine? Here I am! Do You bid me be baptized in Your name? Here I am! Do You bid me come to Your Table? Here I am! Do you bid me work for You, or suffer for You, or even die for You? Show me what You would have me do, for here I am, waiting and willing to do it."

Now, in the fourth place, this answer of Samuel showed that he was in the right position. Adam was not in his right position when God called him in the Garden of Eden, but Samuel was in bed and that was where he ought to have been, for it was bedtime. So, when the Lord called Samuel, he was not ashamed to answer, "Here I am!" I wonder whether some professing Christians would be willing to say to God, "Here I am," when they are in certain positions and conditions? They can hardly justify themselves to themselves--how, then, can they justify themselves to their Lord? I pray, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that

we may all live in such a position that whenever the Lord calls to us, we may be able to answer without shame, "Here I am!" We should never be where we would be ashamed to meet our Master. For instance, the Lord Jesus calls all His servant to come out from the world and be separate--set apart unto Him--to go outside the camp, bearing His reproach. Suppose He were to come here tonight and begin to speak to us about being separate from sinners--could each one of you answer, "Lord, here I am. By Your Grace, I have taken up my cross and come right away from everything of which You would disapprove, to the best of my knowledge. And, by Your Grace, in my life I have endeavored not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of my mind"?

Further, the Lord Jesus Christ bids His children join in fellowship with one another by uniting in Christian Churches. Suppose He were to come tonight and to ask us who profess to be His, "Are you all joined together in the bonds of Christian union that I ordained for you?"--are there not some Christians here who never made a Scriptural profession of their faith and who, therefore, could not reply, "Here I am"? Where are you, then? "Oh, I am sneaking away somewhere in the background for fear anybody should find me out. I am afraid I should be jeered at if I were known to be a Christian." O, you coward! Have you never read that solemn message of Christ, "Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own Glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels"? When the muster roll of the visible Church is called, it is a great comfort for anyone to be able to answer, "Here I am!"

Besides that, the Lord Jesus would have His people meet together for prayer. On the next Prayer Meeting night, will each one of you be able to answer, "Here I am"? I hope so. Yet there are some of you whom I do

not very often see at the Prayer Meeting. I have no fault to find with the most of you, for you love the House of God and you love to meet with the saints for prayer and praise and worship. But there are some who forsake the assembling of themselves together. A Brother prayed, recently, for those who were detained on beds of sickness and armchairs of laziness--and I am afraid there are a good many of the second sort! Do not you be one of them, but when the roll of those that meet together for prayer is read, may you be able to reply when your name is called, "Here I am!"

Christ would also have His people work for Him. When the great Captain of our salvation bids the sergeant call the roll of His soldiers, I like to hear the answer, whether it is from the pulpit, or from the Sunday school, or from the Tract Society, "Lord, here I am! Here I am! Here I am!" But what has become of that man who was so zealous five years ago? I do not hear him say, "Here I am." No, he says, "I cannot come so far now." Yet it is no further than it was five years ago! It is not that the distance is too far for him to walk--it is his distance from Christ that accounts for his absence. But when the roll was read just now, where was that man who used to teach in the Sunday school ten years ago? He has given up, he says, to let the young people have a turn. Yes, but he would not like the Lord to leave off blessing him and to give the young people all His Presence and Grace! Suppose the sun were to say, "I have shone long enough and I shall put out my flames"? And the air were to say, "I have supplied breath long enough"? And the sea were to say, "I have pulsed long enough as the lifeblood of the world"? And the earth were to say, "I have yielded bread long enough"? Where would we all be? When we need to receive no more, then we may say that we will do no more--but as long as we are receiving of the Grace of God, we must come into the ranks of the workers for Him and each one

reply--when our name is called, "Lord, here I am." I ask every Believer--whereabouts in Christ's field of service are you? What are you doing for the Lord Jesus Christ? Are any of you compelled to reply that you are doing nothing for Him?

Perhaps one says, "My family requires my care." Then give it your care--you cannot do better than serve the Lord at home. I have known fathers go on preaching who ought to have stayed at home to teach their own children. And good women who have been very busy at sewing meetings who would have been better employed at home. But I am not now speaking about those who are doing good works at home. If that is your sphere, fill it, and God bless you in it! But I am speaking to others--especially young people upon whom there is a claim for service for Christ. What are you doing for Jesus, my young Brother? "Nothing at present, but I have been thinking of doing something, by-and-by." Ah, but it is good for a man that he should bear this yoke in his youth. There is no worker for Christ like the young worker! I bless God that I was preaching the Gospel at 16 years of age! I could never have found such pleasure and ease in doing my Master's work if I had not begun to do it early. And you Christian young people cannot serve the Master too soon. Samuel said, "Here I am," and I want you, John, and Thomas, and William, and you, Mary, and Jane, and Elizabeth-- each one to reply distinctly, "Here I am! Here I am, here I am!" Come into Christ's' Church, engage in Christ's work and adorn the Doctrine of God your Savior in all things!

Once more, I think that Samuel's answer implied a submissive spirit. He said, "Here I am," as much as to say, "What am I to do, Lord? I am ready for any service that is appointed unto me. Here I am!" That was a grand answer of the Prophet Isaiah to the Lord's question, "Whom shall

I send?"--"Here I am; send me." Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are we, all of us, up to that mark in the matter of service for the Savior? Several of our Sunday schools are short of teachers, will you not say, "Here I am"? It is a very delightful Christian work and Christians ought to spring forward to fill every gap in the ranks. There are thousands of workers needed in this great city--workers to go into the lodging-houses, workers to visit poverty-stricken districts, workers to get at the rich in their drawing rooms, and workers to get at the poor in their slums. O Christians, will you not answer with alacrity, "Here we are, Lord! What department of service can we take?" Suppose the Lord were to set you, my Sister, to work among the extremely poor--would you say, "Here I am"? Suppose, my Brother, you had to go on working and everybody sneered at you--could you still say, "Here I am"? It is easy, when there is a good berth to be had in the Church, to say, "Here I am!" If there is a bishopric to be given away, you can find a self-denying minister who says, "Here I am!" But if it is only a poor living, not so readily do we get the response, "Here I am!" Yet if our hearts were in a right state, we would be willing to do anything that the Master gave us to do! If two angels were sent out of Heaven and one was to preach in this pulpit and the other to sweep a muddy crossing, they would not mind which they did. So long as God gave them their work, they would feel an equal pleasure and an equal honor in doing it whatever it might be. Are you ready to say, for service, "Here I am"?

Can each Christian here say the same with regard to suffering? Here I come to heart-searching work. If Christ wants one who can bear reproach for Him, can you say, "Here I am"? If He wants one who can suffer the loss of prosperity and become poor, can you say, "If it is for Your Glory, Lord, here I am"? And can you endure it if you do say so? If God

should lay a heavy affliction upon you and rack you with pain from day to day, can you say, "Here I am"? In the dreary night-watches, I confess that I have not found it easy. I have wanted to be able to say, "Lord, here I am," but I have caught myself saying, "I do not want to be here much longer. I want to be up preaching the Gospel again, for I do not like lying here, going without my necessary rest and feeling countless depressions of spirit and grievous pains of body." But I know some Christians who are more used to pain who have learned to say with old Eli, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." I daresay some of you remember Dr. Hamilton's story of poor Betty who said, "The Lord said to me, 'Betty, look after your husband and your house,' and I did it. And then He said, 'Betty, go and talk to your neighbors about Jesus,' and I did that. And then He said, 'Betty, go and lie on the bed and cough,' and I am doing it, blessed be His holy name!" Ah, but it needs a great deal of Grace to lie and cough to God's Glory! Yet it is being done, and the groans of sick, yet submissive saints are as musical to God's ear as the hallelujahs of archangels!

II. Now my time has fled, so I can only give you the outline of what I was going to say in answer to my second question, WHAT DID THIS UTTERANCE OF THE CHILD SAMUEL FORETELL FOR HIM?

Why, it foretold, first, further communications from God. Those who answer to God's call shall hear His voice again! If you are faithful to what you know, you shall know more! If you can truly say, "Here I am," God will call you again and keep on calling you as long as He has messages to give you.

It foretold, secondly, higher service for Samuel. The little boy who, on his bed, said to God, "Here I am," would grow up to be a Prophet who would speak God's words so faithfully that God would not let one of his words fall to the ground. The child who promptly answers to God's voice

becomes the echo of God's voice before long. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is also faithful in much." He who uses one talent well shall have ten talents entrusted to him.

It foretold, next, that Samuel would have prevalence in prayer. God spoke and Samuel heard, so he might be sure that the Lord would, as we say, "return the compliment." Very often God will not hear us because we will not hear Him. If He speaks and we are deaf to His voice, we must not wonder if we find Him deaf when we speak to Him! Our success in

prayer will often depend upon our obedience to the precept--you cannot have the promise torn away from the precept. That would be like cutting a living child in two.

And, lastly, I am sure that this reply of Samuel's foretold that he would have happier calls afterwards. He who was called to hear a servile or menial message in the dead of night and yet said, "Here I am," should afterwards be called to lead the Lord's chosen people, to speak powerfully to them in Jehovah's name and to anoint Saul to reign over them when they clamored for a king! O, dear Brother or Sister in Christ, the Lord Jesus has called and you have answered, "Here I am!" He has called for you to suffer and you have said, "Here I am!" He has called you, my Sister, to give up your husband and your children and you have yielded to His will and answered, "Here I am!" So let me tell you what He will do, by-and-by. When the pitcher is broken at the fountain and the wheel is broken at the cistern, He will say to you, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away." And that message will be so welcome to you that you will gladly answer, "Lord, here I am." Have I not seen many Christians propped up in their bed with their pillows, speaking joyously to all around and telling them that the chariot had come to bear them to their Beloved? Have I not seen them

step into that chariot to be borne away to dwell at God's right hand forever? That was their way of saying to the Lord, "Here I am!" Their bodies slumber in the dust, as yours and mine shall do before long unless the Lord shall first come-- and one of these days, when we are lying beneath the sod, and the daisies are blooming above us, there will come the sound of the archangel's trumpet! And the Lord's voice will be in it and He will call, "Samuel! Samuel!" and you will recognize His voice, and know your own name, and you will answer, "Here I am!" And your very dust shall rise again to be re-animated in a nobler image and made like unto your Lord! Then will come the Judgment and the Great White Throne shall be set and the books shall be opened--and the King will say to those upon His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." What a joy it will be to each one of His saints then to answer, "Here I am, Lord! By Your Sovereign Grace I am at Your right hand, numbered among Your sheep and welcomed with them to Glory everlasting!"

Perhaps some of you think that only a great and eminent saint will be able, in that day, to answer, "Here I am." But I can tell you one name that will be read out then--"Mrs. Much-Afraid," and she will answer, "Here I am!" There will be something strange in her voice, for she never used to speak like that when she was down here. But now she speaks up as boldly as Paul himself does, "Here I am, Lord!" And Ready-to-Halt, without his crutches, will answer as bravely as any of the Apostles! And poor members of the Church who were not much noticed on earth, will each one answer, "Here I am!" And that feeble one who was always doubting, trembling, fearing, fretting and worrying--yet for all that did somehow rest in the Lord--will answer, "Here I am!" I think the music of Heaven would lose it sweetest note if there were not

many a little one there to answer, "Here I am!"

If, on Christmas night, when you were gathered around the blazing fire and the big log was burning on the hearth, and you were ready to sing for joy, if, I say, somebody were to ask, "Where is the baby?" There would be but one answer, "What? Is she not here?" Mother does not know where she is, does not father know? No, he thought the little one was all right. Do not her brothers and sisters know where the little one is? Suppose someone should say, "Don't worry yourselves about her, you be merry among yourselves." But mother cannot be merry without her baby, and father cannot rest, and brothers and sisters cannot rejoice as long as the little one is not there to share their joy. And I can tell you that God, Himself, and Christ, Himself, and the Holy Spirit, Himself, and the holy angels and all the host of the redeemed could not be happy in Heaven if one dear child of God who had trusted in Jesus should be missing at the Last Great Day! They would stop the angelic harps to find that lost one, and empty out Heaven, and send every angel and every saint out as a scout to find this poor little lost one that cannot be lost! If you are trusting in Jesus, answer to your name now, and say to Christ, "Lord, here I am!" And then you will be able to say to Him, before the Throne, "Here I am, Lord, and here will I adore You forever and forever!" God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 SAMUEL 2:12-36; 3:1-18.

1 Samuel 2:12. Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. What a very dreadful thing it was that these sons of a man of God, the sons of God's high priest, were not, themselves, sons of God, but sons of Belial, foul-

hearted, foul-mouthed, foul-living men, who knew not the very God at whose altar they served and in whose house they lived!

13, 14. And the priest's custom with the people was that when any man

offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh hook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot and all that the flesh hook brought up, the priest took for himself So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came there.God had appointed a proper portion for His priests so that they who ministered at the altar might live of the altar. But these wicked men were not content with the Divine allowance, so they robbed the altars of God and showed such greed as to make the appointed sacrifices to be obnoxious to the people.

15, 16. Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for thepriest; forhe willnot have sodden flesh ofyou, but raw. Andifany man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently and then take as much as your soul desires; then he would answer him, No; but you shall give it to me now: and if not, I will take it by force.It is a terrible thing when God's servants are domineering and oppressive towards the people of God! They who should be the gentlest of all and the most self-denying of all must not talk as this priest's servant did, and he no doubt talked as the young men whom he served bade him talk.

17. Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.It is horrible when those who should make God great among men cause His service to be despised and abhorred. When those who should be the friends and servants of God act like His enemies, it is indeed terrible.

18-24. But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give you seed of this woman for the loan which is

lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do you do such things? For Ihear of your evil dealings by all this people. No, my sons; for it is not a good report that Ihear: you make the LORD'S people to transgress. That is all that the godly old man said to his wicked sons. He was far too gentle in his way of reproving them. He was evidently afraid of his own sons--not the only man who has been in the same predicament!

25. If one man sins against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sins against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. They had gone so far in vice and sin that the Lord did not mean to forgive them. They had transgressed so foully that He would permit them to go on in sin until they perished in it!

26-30. And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men. And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus says the LORD, DidIplainly appear unto the house of your father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? And did I give unto the house of your father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Why did you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering, which I have commanded in My habitation; and honor your sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chief of all the offerings of Israel My people? Therefore the LORD God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house, and the house of your father, should walk before Me forever."But I said

it conditionally upon your good behavior. I installed you into the priest's office for life, and your sons might have continued in it after you if they had kept My commandments."

30-36. But now the LORD says, Be it far from Me; for them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come that I will cut off your arm, and the arm of your father's house, that there shall not be an old man in your house. And you shall see an enemy in My habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. And the man of yours, whom I shall not cut off from My altar, shall be to consume your eyes, and to grieve your heart: and all the increase of your house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto you that shall come upon your two sons, on Hophni andPhinehas; in one day they shall die, both of them. And I will raise Me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before My anointed forever. And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left in your house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray you, into one of the priests' offices that I may eat a piece of bread.

The same sad prophecy that the Lord communicated to old Eli was also revealed in a very special manner to young Samuel.

1 Samuel 3:1-13. [Mr. Spurgeon preached two sermons on verses 9 and 10--See Sermons #586, Volume 10--THE CHILD SAMUEL'S PRAYER and #2526, Volume 43--"SPEAK, LORD"] And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the Word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and before the lamp of God went out in the Temple of the

LORD, where the Ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here I am! And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here I am; for you called me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, andsaid, Here Iam; for you did callme. Andhe answered, I callednot, my son, lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the Word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here I am; for you did call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if He calls you, that you shall say, Speak, LORD; for Your servant hears. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Your servant hears. And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that hears it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin I willalso make an end. For Ihave toldhim that I willjudge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows; because his sons made themselves vile, andhe restrained them not. Take warning, fathers and mothers, by this experience of old Eli!

Chapter 10

Comfort for Those Whose Prayers Are Feeble

(No. 3083)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Hide not Your ear at my breathing." Lamentations 3:56.

YOUNG beginners in Grace are very apt to compare themselves with advanced disciples and so to become discouraged. And tried saints fall into the same habit. They see those of God's people who are upon the mountain, enjoying the light of their Redeemer's Countenance and, comparing their own condition with the joy of the saints, they write bitter things against themselves and conclude that surely, they are not the people of God! This course is as foolish as though the lambs should suspect themselves not to be of the flock because they are not sheep, or as though a sick man should doubt his existence because he is not able to walk or run as a man in good health. But since this evil habit is very common, it is our duty to seek after the dispirited and cast-down ones and comfort them. That is our errand in this short discourse. We hear the Master's words, "Comfort you, comfort you My people," and we will endeavor to obey them with His Spirit's help.

Upon the matter of prayer, many are dispirited because they cannot yet pray as advanced Believers do, or because, during some peculiar crisis of their spiritual history, their prayers do not appear to them to be so fervent and acceptable as is the case with other Christians. Perhaps God may have a message to some troubled ones in the present address and may the Holy Spirit apply it with power to them!

"Hide not Your ear at my breathing." This is an amazing description of

prayer, is it not? Frequently, prayer is said to have a voice--it is so in this verse--"You have heard my voice." Prayer has a melodious voice in the ear of our Heavenly Father. Frequently prayer is expressed by a cry. It is so in this verse--"Hide not Your ear at my cry." A cry is the natural, plaintive utterance of sorrow and has as much power to move the heart of God as a babe's cry to touch a mother's tenderness. But there are times when we cannot speak with the voice, nor even cry. And then a prayer may be expressed by a moan, or a groan, or a tear--"the heaving of a sigh, the falling of a tear." But possibly we may not even get as far as that and may have to say, like one of old, "Like a crane or a swallow, so do I chatter." Our prayer, as heard by others, may be a kind of irrational utterance. We may feel as if we moaned like wounded beasts rather than prayed like intelligent men. And we may even fall below that, for in the text we have a kind of prayer which is less than a moan or a sigh. It is called a breathing--"Hide not Your ear at my breathing." The man is too far gone for a glance of the eye, or the moaning of the heart--he scarcely breathes, but that faint breath is prayer! Though unuttered and unexpressed by any sounds which could reach a human ear, yet God hears the breathing of His servant's soul and hides not His ear from it.

We shall teach three or four lessons from the present use of the expression, "breathing."

I. WHEN WE CANNOT PRAY AS WE WOULD, IT IS GOOD TO PRAY AS WE CAN.

Bodily weakness should never be urged by us as a reason for ceasing to pray. In fact, no living child of God will ever think of such a thing. If I cannot bend the knees of my body because I am so weak, my prayers from my bed shall be on their knees--my heart shall be on its knees and pray as acceptably as before. Instead of relaxing prayer because the body suffers, true hearts, at such times, usually double their

petitions. Like Hezekiah, they turn their face to the wall that they may see no earthly object and then they look at the invisible things and talk with the Most High. Yes, and often in a sweeter and more familiar manner than they did in the days of their health and strength. If we are so faint that we can only lie still and breathe, let every breath be a prayer!

Nor should a true Christian relax his prayer through mental difficulties. I mean those perturbations which distract the mind and prevent the concentration of our thoughts. Such ills will happen to us. Some of us are often much depressed and are frequently so tossed to and fro in mind that if prayer were an operation which required the faculties to be all at their best, as in the working of abstruse mathematical problems, we could not, at such times, be able to pray at all. But, Brothers and Sisters, when the mind is very heavy, then is not the time to give up praying, but rather to redouble our supplications! Our blessed Lord and Master was driven by distress of mind into the most sad condition--He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death"--yet He did not, for that reason say, "I cannot pray" but, on the contrary, He sought the well-known shades of the olive grove and there unburdened His heavy heart and poured out His soul like water before the Lord! Never let us consider ourselves to be too ill or too distracted to pray. A Christian ought never to be in such a state of mind that he feels bound to say, "I do not feel that I could pray" or, if he does, let him pray till he feels he canpray. Not to pray because you do not feel fit to pray is like saying, "I will not take medicine because I am too ill." Pray for prayer! Pray yourself, by the Spirit's assistance, into a praying frame! It is good to strike when the iron is hot, but some make cold iron hot by striking. We have sometimes eaten till we have gained an appetite, so let us pray till we

pray. God will help you in the pursuit of duty, not in the neglect of it.

The same is the case with regard to spiritual sicknesses. Sometimes it is not merely the body or the mind which is affected, but our inner nature is dull, stupid, lethargic, so that when it is time for prayer, we do not feel the spirit of prayer. Moreover, perhaps our faith is flagging and how shall we pray when faith is so weak? Possibly we are suspicious as to whether we are the people of God at all and we are molested by the recollection of our shortcomings. Now the tempter will whisper, "Do not pray just now--your heart is not in a fit condition for it." My dear Brothers and Sisters, you will not become fit for prayer by keeping away from the Mercy Seat! But to lie groaning or breathing at its foot is the best preparation for pleading before the Lord. We are not to aim at a self-worked preparation of our hearts that we may come to God aright, but "the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord." If I feel myself disinclined to pray, thenis the time when I need to pray more than ever! Possibly when the soul leaps and exults in communion with God, it might more safely refrain from prayer than at those seasons when it drags heavily in devotion. Alas, my Lord, does my soul go wandering away from You? Then come back, my heart! I will drag you back by force of Divine Grace! I will not cease to cry till the Spirit of God has made you return to your allegiance. What? My Christian Brother, because you feel idle, is that a reason why you should stay your hand and not serve your God? No, but away with your idleness and resolutely bend your soul to service! So, under a sense of prayerlessness, be more intent on prayer. Repent that you cannot repent, groan that you cannot groan and pray until you do pray--in so doing God wil help you.

But, it may be objected, that sometimes we are placed in great

difficulty as to circumstances s o that we may be excused from prayer. Brothers and Sisters, there are no circumstances in which we should cease to pray in some form or other. "But I have so many cares." Who among us has not? If we are never to pray till all our cares are over, surely then we shall either never pray at all, or pray when we have no more need for it! What did Abram do when he offered sacrifice to God? When the Patriarch had slaughtered the appointed creatures and laid them on the altar, certain vultures and kites came hovering around, ready to pounce upon the consecrated flesh. What did the Patriarch do? "When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." [See Sermons #420, Volume 7--abram and the ravenous birds and #1993, Volume 33--DRIVING AWAY THE VULTURES FROM THE SACRIFICE] So must we ask for Grace to drive our cares away from our devotions.

That was a wise direction which the Prophet gave to the poor woman when the Lord was about to multiply her oil. "Go, take the cruse," he said, "pour out the oil, and fill the borrowed vessels." But what else did he say? "Shut the door behind you." If the door had been open, some of her gossiping neighbors would have looked in and said, "What are you doing? Do you really hope to fill all those jars out of that little oil cruse? Why, woman, you must be mad!" I am afraid she would not have been able to perform that act of faith if the objectors had not been shut out. It is a grand thing when the soul can bolt the doors against distractions and keep out intruders--for then it is that prayer and faith will perform their miracle and our soul shall be filled with the blessing of the Lord! Oh, for Grace to overcome circumstances and at least to breathe out prayer if we cannot reach to a more powerful form of it!

Perhaps, however, you declare that your circumstances are more difficult than I can imagine, for you are surrounded by those who mock you and, besides, Satan, himself, molests you. Ah, then dear Brother or

Sister, under such circumstances, instead of restraining prayer, be ten times more diligent! Your position is pre-eminently perilous--you cannot afford to live away from the Throne of Grace--do not, therefore, attempt it. As to threatened persecution, pray in defiance of it. Remember how Daniel opened his window and prayed to his God as he had done before? Let the God of Daniel be your God in the chamber of prayer and He will be your God in the lions' den! As for the devil, be sure that nothing will drive him away like prayer. That couplet is correct which declares that--

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees!" Whatever your position, if you cannot speak, cry. If you cannot cry, groan. If you cannot groan, let there be "groans which cannot be uttered." And if you cannot even rise to that point, let your prayer be at least a breathing--a vital, sincere desire--the outpouring of your inner life in the simplest and weakest form, and God will accept it. In a word, when you cannot pray as you would, take care to pray as you can!

II. But now, a second word of instruction. It is clear from the text, from many other passages of Scripture and from general observation that THE BEST OF MEN HAVE USUALLY FOUND THE GREATEST FAULT WITH THEIR OWN PRAYERS.

This arises from the fact that they present living prayers in real earnest and feel far more than they can express. A mere formalist can always pray so as to please himself. What has he to do but to open his book and read the prescribed words, or bow his knee and repeat such phrases as suggest themselves to his memory or his fancy? Like the Tartarian Praying Machine, give but the wind and the wheel, and the business is fully arranged! So much knee-bending and talking and the prayer is done! The formalist's prayers are always good, or, rather,

always bad, alike. But the living child of God never offers a prayer which pleases himself--his standard is above his attainments. He wonders that God listens to him and though he knows he will be heard for Christ's sake, yet he accounts it a wonderful instance of condescending mercy that such poor prayers as his should ever reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth!

If it is asked in what respect holy men find fault with their prayers, we reply, that they complain of the narrowness of their desires. O God, You have bid me open my mouth wide and you will fill it, but I do not open my mouth! You are ready to bestow great things upon me, but I am not ready to receive great things! I am straitened, but it is not in You--I am straitened in my own desires! Dear Brothers and Sisters, when we read of Hugh Latimer on his knees perpetually crying out, "O God, give back the Gospel to England," and sometimes praying so long that he could not rise, being an aged man--and they had to lift him up from the prison floor--and he would still keep on crying, "O God, give back the Gospel to poor England," we may well wonder that some of us do not pray in the same way! The times are as bad as Latimer's and we have as great a need to pray as he had, "O God, drive away this Popery once again, and give back the Gospel to England." Then, think of John Knox. Why, that man's prayers were like great armies for power and he would wrestle all night with God that he would kindle the light of the Gospel in Scotland. He asserted that he had gained his desire and I believe he had, and that the Light of God which burns so brightly in Scotland is much to be attributed to that man's supplications. We do not pray like these men. We have no heart to ask for great things. A revival is waiting, the cloud is hovering over England, but we do not know how to bring it down! Oh, that God may find some true spirits who shall be as conductors to bring down the Divine Fire! We need it much, but our poor

breathings--they do not come to much more--have no force, nor expansiveness, no great-heartedness, no prevalence in them!

Then, how far we fail in the matter of faith! We do not pray as if we believed. Believing prayer is a grasping and a wrestling, but ours is a mere puffing and blowing, a little breathing--not much more. God is true and we pray to Him as if He were false. He means what He says, and we treat His Word as if it were spoken in jest. The master-fault of our prayer is lack of faith.

How often do we lack earnestness! Such men as Luther had their will of Heaven because they would have it! God's Spirit made them resolute in intercession and they would not come away from the Mercy Seat till their suit was granted. But we are cold, and consequently feeble, and our poor, poor prayers in the Prayer Meeting, in the closet and at the family altar languish and almost die!

How much, alas, is there of impurity of motive to mar our prayers! We ask for revival, but we want our own Church to get the blessing that we may have the credit of it. We pray God to bless our work and it is because we wish to hear men say what good workers we are. The prayer is good in itself, but our smutty fingers spoil it. Oh, that we could offer supplication as it should be offered! Blessed be God, there is One who can wash our prayers for us but, truly, our very tears need to be wept over and our prayers need praying over again. The best thing we ever do needs to be washed in the Fountain filled with blood, or God can only look upon it as a sin.

Another fault good men see in their supplications is that they stand at such a distance from God in praying, they do not draw near enough to Him. Are not some of you oppressed with a sense of the distance there is between you and God? You know there is a God and you believe He will answer you, but it is not always that you come right up to Him, even to

His feet and, as it were, lay hold upon Him and say, "O my Father, listen to the voice of Your chosen and let the cry of the blood of Your Son come up before You!" Oh, for prayers which enter within the veil and approach the Mercy Seat! Oh, for petitioners who are familiar with the cherubim and the brightness which shines between their wings! May God help us to pray better! But this I feel sure of--you who plead most prevalently are just those who will think the least of your own prayers and be most grateful to God that He deigns to listen to you--and most anxious that He would help you to pray after a nobler sort.

" III. A third lesson is this--THE POWER OF PRAYER IS NOT TO BE MEASURED BY ITS OUTWARD EXPRESSION.

A breathing is a prayer from which God does not hide His ear. It is undoubtedly a great Truth of God, and full of much comfort, too, that our prayers are not powerful in proportion to their expression, for, if so, the Pharisee would have succeeded since he evidently had greater gifts than the Publican had. I have no doubt, if there had been a regular Prayer Meeting, and the Pharisee and the Publican had attended, we would have called on the Pharisee to pray. I do not think the people of God would have enjoyed his prayer, nor have felt any kinship of spirit with him and yet, very naturally, on account of his gifts, he would have taken upon himself to engage in public devotion or, if that Pharisee would not have done so, I have heard of other Pharisees who would. No doubt the man's spirit was bad, but then his expression was good--he could put his oration so neatly and pour it out so accurately. Let all men know that God does not care for that! The sigh of the Publican reached His ear and won the blessing but the boastful phrases of the Pharisee were an abomination to Him!

If our prayers were forcible according to their expression, then rhetoric would be more valuable than Grace and a scholastic education

would be better than sanctification--but it is not so. Some of us may be able to express ourselves very fluently from the force of natural gifts, but it should always be to us an anxious question whether our prayer is a prayer which God will receive, for we ought to know and must know by this time, that we often pray best when we stammer and stutter--and we pray worst when words come rolling like a torrent, one after another! God is not moved by words--they are but a noise to Him. He is only moved by the deep thought and the heaving emotion which dwell in the innermost spirit. It were a sorry business for you, who are poor, if God only heard us according to the beauty of our utterances, for it may be that your education was so neglected that there is no hope of your ever being able to speak grammatically. And, besides, it may be, from your limited information, that you could not use the phrases which sound so well. But the Lord hears the poor, the ignorant and the needy! He loves to hear their cry. What cares He for the grammar of the prayer? It is the soul of it that He wants! And if you cannot string three words of the Queen's English together correctly, yet if your soul can breathe itself out before the Most High anyhow--if it is but warm, hearty, sincere, earnest petitioning--there is power in your prayer and none the less power in it because of its broken words, nor would it be an advantage to you, so far as the Lord is concerned, if those words were not broken, but were well composed! Ought not this to comfort us, then?

Even if we are gifted with facility of expression, we sometimes find that our power of utterance fails us. Under very heavy grief, a man cannot speak as he is known to do. Circumstances can make the most eloquent tongue grow slow of speech. It matters not--your prayer is as good as it was before. You call upon God in public and you sit down and think that your confused prayer was of no service to the Church. You

know not in what scales God weighs your prayer--not by quantity, but by quality--not by the outward dress of verbiage, but by the inner soul and the intense earnestness that was in it does He compute its value! Do you not sometimes rise from your knees in your little room and say, "I do not think I have prayed, I could not feel at home in prayer"? Nine times out of every ten, those prayers are most prevalent with God which we think are the least acceptable. But when we glory in our prayer, God will have nothing to do with it! If you see any beauty in your own supplication--God will not--for you have evidently been looking at your prayer and not at Him! But when your soul sees so much of His Glory that she cries, "How shall I speak unto You--I who am but dust and ashes?" When she sees so much of His goodness that she is hampered in expression by the depth of her own humiliation, oh, then it is that your prayer is best! There may be more prayer in a groan than in an entire liturgy. There may be more acceptable devotion in a tear that dampens the floor of yonder pew than in all the hymns we have sung, or in all the supplications which we have uttered! It is not the outward, it is the inward! It is not the lips, it is the heart which the Lord regards! If you can only breathe, your prayer is still accepted by the Most High!

I desire that this Truth may come home to any one of you who says, "I cannot pray." It is not true. If it were necessary that in order to pray, you should talk for a quarter of an hour together, or that you should say pretty things, why then I would admit that you could not pray! But if it is only to say from your heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner," yes, and if prayer is not saying anything at all, but desiring, longing, hoping for mercy, for pardon, for salvation, no man may say, "I cannot," unless he is honest enough to add, "I cannot

because I willnot. I love my sins too well and have no faith in Christ. I do not desire to be saved." If you will to pray, O my Hearer, you can pray! He who gives the will joins the ability to it!

And oh, let me say, do not sleep this night until you have tried and proved the power of prayer! If you feel a burden on your heart, tell the Lord! Cover your face and speak with Him. Even that you need not do, for I suppose that Hannah did not cover her face when Eli saw her lips move and supposed that she was drunk. No, your lips need not even move! Your soul can now say, "Save me, my God! Convict me of sin, lead me to the Cross! Save me tonight! Let me not end another day as Your enemy! Let me not go into the cares of another week unforgiven, with Your wrath hanging over me like a thunder-cloud! Save me, save me, O my God!" Such prayers, though utterly wordless, shall not be powerless, but shall be heard in Heaven!

IV. We will close with a fourth practical lemon--FEEBLE PRAYERS ARE HEARD IN HEAVEN.

Why is it that feeble prayers are understood of God and heard in Heaven? There are three reasons.

First, the feeblest prayer, if it is sincere, is written by the Holy Spirit upon the heart, and God will always acknowledge the handwriting of the Holy Spirit Frequently, certain kind friends from Scotland send me for the Orphanage some portions of what one of them called, the other day, "filthy lucre"--namely, dirty £1 notes. Now these £1 notes certainly look as if they were of small value. Still, they bear the proper signature and they pass well enough-- and I am very grateful for them. Many a prayer that is written on the heart by the Holy Spirit seems written with faint ink and, moreover, it appears to be blotted and defiled by our imperfection. But the Holy Spirit can always read His own handwriting. He knows His own notes and when He has issued a

prayer, He will not disown it. Therefore, the breathing which the Holy Spirit works in us will be acceptable with God.

Moreover, God, our ever-blessed Father, has a quick ear to hear the breathing of any of His children. When a mother has a sick child, it is marvelous how quick her ears become while attending it. Good woman, we wonder she does not fall asleep. If you hired a nurse, it is ten to one she would. But the dear child, in the middle of the night, does not need to cry for water, or even speak--there is a little quick breathing--who will hear it? No one would except the mother! But her ears are quick, for they are in her child's heart. So, if there is a heart in the world that longs for God, God's ear is already in that poor sinner's heart! He will hear it. There is not a good desire on earth but the Lord has heard it. I recollect when, at one time, I was a little afraid to preach the Gospel to sinners as sinners, and yet I wanted to do so, so I used to say, "If you have but a millionth part of a desire, come to Christ." I dare say more than that now, but, at the same time, I will say that at once--if you have a millionth part of a desire, if you have only a little breathing--if you desire to be reconciled, if you desire to be pardoned, if you would be forgiven, if there is only half a good thought formed in your soul, do not check it, do not stifle it and do not think that God will reject it!

And, then, there is another reason, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is always ready to take the most imperfect prayer and perfect it for us. If our prayers had to go up to Heaven as they are, they would never succeed. But they find a Friend on the way and, therefore, they prosper. A poor person has a petition to be sent in to some government agency. If he had to write it himself, it would puzzle all the officers in Downing-Street to make out what he meant. But he is wise enough to find a friend who can write, or he comes round to his minister and

says, "Sir, will you make this petition right for me? Will you put it into good English, so that it can be presented? And then the petition goes in a very different form. Even thus, the Lord Jesus Christ takes our poor prayers, fashions them over again and presents the petition with the addition of His own signature--and the Lord sends us answers of peace.

The feeblest prayer in the world is heard when it has Christ's seal to it. I mean He puts His precious blood upon it. And wherever God sees the blood of Jesus, He must and will accept the desire which it endorses. Go to Jesus, Sinner, even if you cannot pray, and let the breathing of your soul be, "Be merciful to me, wash me, cleanse me, save me," and it shall be done, for God will not hear your prayer so much as hear His Son's blood, "which speaks better things than that of Abel." A louder voice than yours shall prevail for you! And your feeble breathings shall come up to God covered over with the Omnipotent pleadings of the Great High Priest who never asks in vain!

I have been aiming thus to comfort those distressed ones who say they cannot pray, but before I close, I must add how inexcusable are those who, knowing all this, continue prayerless, Godless and Christless! If there were no mercy to be had, you could not be blamed for not having it. If there were no Savior for sinners, a sinner might be excused for remaining in his sin. But there is a Fountain and it is open--why, then, do you not wash in it? Mercy is to be had "without money and without price"--it is to be had by askingfor it. Sometimes poor men are shut up in the condemned cell, sentenced to be hanged. But suppose they could have a free pardon by asking for it and they did not do so--who would pity them? God will give His blessing to everyone who is moved to seek for it sincerely at His hands on this one and only condition--that the soul will trust in Jesus! And even that is not a condition, for He

gives repentance and faith and enables sinners to believe in His dear Son! Behold Christ crucified, the saddest and yet the gladdest sight the sun ever beheld! Behold the eternal Son of God made flesh and bleeding out His life! A surpassing marvel of woe and love! A look at Him will save you! Though you are on the borders of the grave and on the brink of Hell, by one look at Jesus crucified your guilt shall be cancelled, your debts forever discharged before the Throne of God and yourselves led into joy and peace. Oh, that you would give that look! Breathe the prayer, "Lord, give me the faith of Your elect and save me with a great salvation!" Though it is only breathing, yet, as the old Puritan says, when God feels the breath of His child upon His face, He smiles. And He will feel your breath and smile on you, and bless you. May He do so, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LAMENTATIONS3:1-36.

The first part of this chapter is one of the saddest in the whole Book of God, yet I expect it has ministered as much consolation as some of the brightest pages of Holy Writ because there are children of God who are the subjects of great suffering and sorrow--and when they turn to such a passage as this, they see that one of the Lord's own Prophets had gone that way before them. And when they see the footprints of another of God's people in the dark and gloomy valley that they are traversing, they are encouraged. Besides, the chapter does not end as it begins. There is daylight for the poor sufferer after all, so we shall read the sad utterances of the Prophet in the hope that if we have ever known experiences similar to his, we may learn where to find comfort even as he did.

Verses 1, 2. I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath He has led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light.This seems to be the hardest part of our lot--that God should

lead us into darkness--"He has led me and brought me into darkness." Yet dear Brothers and Sisters, that is, on the other hand, the sweetest thing about our trial, because if the darkness is in the place where God has led us, it is best for us to be in the dark! A child of God in the dark should derive much comfort from the thought, "My father brought me here and He loves me so much that He would not bring me where I would be in danger. He must have had some good end and objective in view in what He has done." Surely, there is something comforting to the tried child of God in that thought.

3-5. Surely against me is He turned; He turns His hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin has He made old; He has broken my bones. He has besieged me, and compassed me with gall and woe. "I am like a besieged city that has strong forts built all round it to shut it in on all sides."

6, 7. He has set me in darkplaces, as they that are dead of old. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chains heavy.Ah, dear Friends, it is easy for some people to read such a passage as this, but there are others who have read it with aching brows and eyes red with weeping! And often, I doubt not, as they have read the Prophet's descriptions of just such sorrows as they are themselves feeling, they have said, "Then after all, we are not alone in our griefs, and we may yet be delivered even as Jeremiah was"

8. Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer What a sorrow is this--to feel that even prayer itself is unavailing! Yet this suppliant was no graceless sinner--he was a dear child of God, one of the noblest of the Lord's ancient Prophets, one of the most faithful of His ministers! You must not think, because sometimes your prayers seem to be unheard or unheeded, and you are allowed to continue in sorrow, that therefore the Lord does not love you. "Whom the Lord loves He chastens,

and scourges every son whom He receives." And that word, "scourges," is a very strong one, meaning much more than just an ordinary whipping.

9. He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone. "The Lord has shut me right up, as if He had built a wall around me on every side."

9-13. He has made mypaths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He has turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: He has made me desolate. He has bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to enter into my reins. The King's arrows had wounded him to the very quick. Perhaps some of you may know what it is to go to the Bible and yet to find no comfort in it, for the precious promises have seemed to be too good to be true to you, and you seem to have hunted out every dark and threatening passage at once--and you have said, "Ah, that belongs to me!" You have written bitter things against yourself and have thought that surely you were the target at which God was shooting His sharpest arrows. [See Sermon #3039, Volume 53--THE KING'S SHARP ARROWS]

14-17. I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day.
He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood.
He has also broken my teeth with gravel, He has coveredme with ashes.
And You have removed my soul far off from peace: I have forgotten prosperity. "It seems so long since I have had any prosperity that I have forgotten it. I have become so accustomed to trouble and sorrow that it seems as if I had never known what joy was." The original is even more sad, "I forget good."

18-21. And I said, Your strength and my hope is perished from the LORD; remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.And as long as your afflictions, poor

troubled Souls, have really humbled you, you may have hope! Recall to mind the fact that God's chastising blows have brought you down to His feet in humble submission and ended all your boasting--and therein you may have hope. [See Sermon #654, Volume 11--memory--the handmaid of hope--

Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

22. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not See where Jeremiah gets his comfort! He seems to say, "Bad as my case is, it might have been worse, for I might have been consumed, and I should have been consumed if the Lord's compassions had failed." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, and we, too, might have been in Hell at this very moment! Amidst the hottest flames of that hopeless place we might have been enduring the wrath of God, but we are not there and, blessed be His name for that! "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." He still has compassion upon us! If He had not, He would have given us up altogether! But there is love in His heart, even while there is a frown upon His brow--and while His hand is smiting us, His heart is still loving us.

23. They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness. If every day brings its trouble, every day also brings its mercy. Up to this day, at all events, we have not perished. The Lord has chastened us, but He has not crushed us. We have been cast down, but we have not been destroyed. "Great is Your faithfulness." No man can say that so truly as the one who has known what it is to prove that great faithfulness in great affliction. But when there has been a great trial, the believing soul has cast itself upon the ever-faithful God and so has been able to set its seal to this Truth of God, "Great is your faithfulness."

24. The LORD is my portion, says my soul What? With His mouth full of gravel stones, and made drunk with wormwood, overwhelmed with sorrow, yet he says, "the Lord is my portion"? Oh, yes, Beloved, whatever else we have
lost, we have not lost our God! The thieves have robbed us of our little spare cash, but they could not get at the gold that we have in the bank, they could not break into the great treasure house of everlasting love. John Bunyan says, "LittleFaith lost his spending money, but the thieves could not find his jewels." Nor can they find ours! They are all safe. "The Lord is my portion, says my soul."
24. Therefore will I hope in Him. If I cannot cast the anchor of hope anywhere else, I may "hope in Him." And what better hope do I need than that?
25. The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. Do not be in a hurry. Do not expect to be delivered out of your trouble the first time you begin to cry unto God. Oh, no--"the Lord is good unto them that
wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him." [See Sermon #2436, Volume 41--"HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK"].
26. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. God's time is always the best time. To deliver you just now might be to deprive you of the benefit of the trouble. You must bear it till it produces "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." When the doctor puts on a blister, we are not to take it off the next minute. No, patience must have her perfect work, that we "may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."
27, 28. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. [See Sermon #1291, Volume 22--the best burden for young
upon him.When it makes a man get alone to contemplate and meditate,

affliction is already doing him good.

29. He puts his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. [See Sermon #2468, Volume 42--solitude, silence, submission] That is the way to find it-not lifting your mouth up to defy

the Lord, or to murmur at Him, nor yet opening your mouth in boastfulness, but putting your mouth in the dust--that is the way to find hope! A humble, penitent, resigned, silent, submissive spirit will soon find hope.

30, 31. He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever. Oh, get a grip of that blessed Truth of God! I pray you, O you sons of trouble, lay hold of it and never let it go! The Lord may, to all appearance, cast off for a little while, but He will not cast off forever!

32-34. But though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. To crush under His feet all theprisoners of the earth. That is not God's way of acting. Tyrants may do so, but the tender, compassionate God--our gracious, loving Father--will never do that. If you lie in the dust before Him, He will not tread on you.

35, 36. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approves not. Again I say, that is not God's way of acting.

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SHOULDERS] He sits alone and keeps silence

Chapter 11

Paul's Parenthesis

(No. 3084)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 26, 1874.

"By the Grace of God I am what I am." 1 Corinthians 15:10.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same passage is #2833, Volume 49--LESSONS ON DIVINE GRACE]

IF you will read the context of this passage, you will find that these words occur in one of Paul's digressions, or parenthesis. He was a writer who very frequently went off at a tangent--he often left the subject on which he was writing, turned his thoughts in quite another direction--and then came back and went on with the subject which he had left for a while. In this respect, I have often, in my own mind, likened the Apostle Paul to Samson. When he was on the road to Timnah with his father and mother, he turned aside to slay the lion and afterwards to find the honey in the carcass. And each time he came back to his parents, just as if nothing had happened. So the Apostle Paul often turns aside from some grand argument upon which he is engaged and says something very valuable and important upon quite another topic--and then comes back again and calmly and deliberately goes on with his argument!

There are some kinds of parenthesis which we can always excuse and, indeed, commend. For instance, the parenthesis of prayer. When we are engaged in any duty, it will not delay us--really we shall make all the better speed--if we pause for a while to pray. I like to think of the

Apostle Paul, while he was writing that grand Epistle to the Ephesians, turning aside from his main argument to offer that great prayer, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His Glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." [See Sermon #707, Volume 12--HEAVENLY GEOMETRY] His argument would not suffer in the least--indeed it would be all the stronger for that little interval of prayer! At another time, it is very sweet to see how he pauses, after recording the Lord's abundant mercy to him, to write that notable doxology, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and Glory forever and ever. Amen." Such parenthesis of prayer and praise must be acceptable to the Most High.

Our text, then, is found in a digression of an exceedingly blessed kind. It would be well if preachers would digress thus nowadays, if by digressing they preached more of Free Grace and more about the Lord Jesus Christ! I have heard of a preacher who, on one occasion, when he entered his pulpit, found himself suddenly stricken with blindness. I think it was old Dr. Gouge, the great Puritan. Being unable to read the discourse which he had taken up with him, and being a man of unusual calmness of spirit, instead of making any outcry, or telling the people that he had lost the use of his eyes, he preached extemporaneously. And when he came down from the pulpit, a woman thanked him for the sermon. "Alas," said the good man, "a great calamity has happened to me. I have

lost my sight." "Blessed be God for that," said the woman, "if it makes you give up reading your sermons and enables you to preach as you have just done." It is a good thing when a preacher loses the thread of his discourse if his discourse is made of thread, and he goes straight away to the Cross, and begins talking about Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. Or if he has been wandering in the mazes of modern thought, it is well when he gets back into the old paths and preaches about the Grace of God. That is, if he can declare, as Paul does here, "By the Grace of God I am what I am." God grant that they who preach Free Grace Doctrines may never

get out of the habit of doing so! And may those who have almost forgotten the sound of the word, Grace--and those who never knew the music of it--be made to lose their way until they ramble into the blessed neighborhood of the Sovereign Grace of God, for I am sure that nothing but the Gospel of the Grace of God will ever drive Popery out of this country! The only antagonist that can ever overcome the self-righteousness and priestcraft of Romanism and Ritualism is a clear, bald, outspoken declaration of the great Truth of God that by the Grace of God the saints of God are what they are!

I. Coming to the text and speaking simply and plainly, and praying that God may speak to your hearts through my words, I want to prove to you, first, that THE TEXT CONTAINS A DOCTRINAL STATEMENT. "By the Grace of God I am what I am."

And that statement may be read, first, as meaning this--that Paul ascribed his own salvation to the free favor of God. He believed himself to be a regenerate man, a forgiven man, a saved man--and he believed that condition of his was the result of the unmerited favor of God. He did not imagine that he was saved because he deservedsalvation, or that he had been forgiven because his repentance had made an

atonement for his sin! He did not reckon that his prayers had merited salvation, or that his abundant labors and many sufferings had earned that gift for him at God's hands. No, he does not for a moment speak of merit--it is a word which Paul's mouth could not pronounce in such a connection as that. His declaration is, "It is by God's free favor that I, Saul of Tarsus, have been converted, and made into Paul the Apostle, the servant of Jesus Christ. I attribute this great change entirely to the goodwill, the Sovereign benignity, the undeserved favor of the ever-blessed God."

Now, my dear Hearers, let me put this Truth very plainly, so that you may not mistake it. If you are saved, you do not owe your salvation to anything that you have done. Nor, if you ever are to besaved, will it be the result of any goodness of your own. You may spin, but if you are ever saved, the first thing God will do will be to unravel that which you have spun. You may clothe yourself in the gaudy garments of a self-made righteousness, but God's first act of Grace will be to strip you of them and to make you feel that all such garments are nothing but filthy rags, fit only for the fire. You must deny your own merits, or you cannot have the merits of Christ! Your Church attendance, your Chapel attendance, your Baptism, your so-called sacraments, your confirmation, your private prayers, your family prayers, your Bible readings, your good thoughts, your alms deeds--all these put together have no merit in them that could help you to go an inch towards salvation! Salvation is not of works, but of Grace alone! And they who do not obtain salvation in this way will as surely perish as the blasphemer and the drunk! There is but one way of salvation--the way of free favor. That was the way in which Paul went and that is the way in which we must go if we would enter into eternal life!

The word, Grace, in Scripture, also means something else besides free

favor--it very often means operative power. When the Spirit of God works savingly upon the heart, the influence which He exerts is called His Grace. So the Apostle means here, "By the Grace of God I am what I am" that is, "Whatever I am that is right, God made me that. If I am regenerate, I must have been born-again from above by the power of God. If I have repented, my repentance was the gift of God. If I have believed, my faith was the work of God. If I have perseverance in faith, that perseverance has been the effect of the work of God in my soul. If I have ever prayed an acceptable prayer, it was God's Grace that enabled me to do it. If I have ever sung God's praise so as to please Him, that praise was first written in my heart by the Holy Spirit."

"What have you which you have not received?" is a question to which the answer from every true heart is, "I have nothing which I have not received, except my sin. But all I have that is good must have come from God." If any of you are to be saved, God must save you. Sinner, you are lost, and lost beyond recovery by any hand but that which is Divine and Omnipotent! "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." Let that text roll like thunder over the heads of those who think that they can save themselves. The Lord must do it from first to last! His is the first act of Grace when He quickens the spiritually dead--and His must be the last act of Grace when we lay down our vile bodies and our spirit enters into the joy of our Lord!

Now, these two things being true, and being surely believed among us, that salvation is by the free favor of God and that it is by the power of Divine Grace, I think I may say that if Paul had been here, he would have pushed this matter a little further. There are some of our dear Brothers and Sisters, and true Brothers and Sisters, too, who do not

see the Doctrines of Grace quite clearly. They see men as trees walking, for they seem to attribute the fact of their salvation in part to themselves. I do not say as to merit, for I believe they abhor that idea. And I do not say as to power, for I believe they hold as earnestly as we do that the sinner is dead in sin and that the power to act comes from the Holy Spirit. But, somehow or other, they make a great deal more of man's will than I think they should, just as, on the other hand, some speak too little of the will of man and treat men as if they had not any wills, but were so many logs of wood! There is Truth of God on both sides of the question and, as some of my Brothers preach the other view of the Truth, I will preach that view of it which my text gives me.

If I am a saved man, how came I to be saved? Somebody asks, "But why are you saved, and not other men?" My dear Friend, there are two questions there, so I must take them one at a time. Will you kindly let me take the first one, only altering it thus--Why are you saved? If you are saved, there is a great difference between you and others who are not saved. You were once a lover of pleasure and of the world, but you are now a lover of God. Now, somebody made that difference, and whoever did it did a good job, so let his head be crowned! Here is the crown. Now, Sirs, upon whose head shall I put it? Have you made yourself to differfrom what you used to be, and from what others still are? Are you prepared to wear the crown? You bow your head and say, "Oh, no! Let the Lord have the Glory of it." Well, then, it is quite evident that God has made a difference between you and others and that it was a commendable thing for Him to do so. And as it was commendable for God to do it, it must have been so for God to purpose to do it. And if it was commendable for Him to purpose to do it the day He did it, it was commendable for Him to purpose to do it from all eternity! And thus we

get back to the old and glorious decrees and Covenant of Divine Grace of which some are so afraid, though, as surely as this Book is written of God, it stands there that He has, "from the beginning," chosen His people unto salvation. "By the Grace of God I am what I am."

If there is an Antinomian here, he will very boldly declare the meaning of this passage. But I will speak as boldly as he does and dare to do it with the Truth of God on my side! I am sure that this is pure unadulterated Truth of God, that Grace, Grace, Grace, Grace saves the soul from beginning to end. But if you ask me, "Why is a man lost?" then the Antinomian and I will differ altogether. I say if he is lost, it is his own fault--it is his sin and his willful rejection of Christ that cause him to be lost. And if there is any Arminian here who will lay the guilt of sin on the sinner's conscience, I can do that as much as he can, and I believe I shall have Scripture with me in so doing! Damnation is all of man from first to last--and salvation is all of Grace from first to last! Someone asks, "How do these two things agree?" No, Brother, how do these two things disagree? If you will tell me when they quarrel, I will try to reconcile them. They stand in this Book side by side as two grand Inspired Truths of God and they should be preached side by side! They never did fall out and they never will. If you love self-righteousness, they will quarrel with you--but they will never quarrel with each other.

II. Now, secondly, I shall briefly treat our text, AS A GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT. Here is a child of God who stood very high among his fellow Believers, one who had many gifts, much Grace, great success, and high honor in the Church--yet he says, "By the Grace of God I am what I am." It would be right for any of us who are nobodies, and who never did anything, to talk thus. But this is Paul who is speaking, the one who could truthfully say, "I was not a whit behind the very chief

Apostles." Yet he says, "By the Grace of God I am what I am."

Paul's grateful acknowledgment means, first, that he forbade himself ever to boast. Why should he boast? Whatever he had that was good had been given to him by the great Benefactor, so he might well have said, "What have I in which I can glory? I am nothing and I have done nothing except what God has made me, and what His Grace has worked in me and by me." Beloved Friends, it is an astonishing thing that we should be the subjects of pride! Yet, considering what poor creatures we are, it is not astonishing that we are proud, or that we are anything that is bad. But if we are proud, what fools we are! Proud?--just a heap of dust and ashes that the wind would blow away if it were not for a daily miracles--just a mass of corruption that would be putrefying in a few hours if the life were gone out of it! Yet we sell out and think ourselves some great ones--and, oh, what big somebodies we are until the Grace of God brings us down to our proper level! The heavens themselves are scarcely high enough for our tall heads, we think ourselves so great! But it is a deathblow to boasting when anyone can say, "By the Grace of God I am what I am."

And, dear Friends, this grateful acknowledgment incites us to holy service. If everything that we have already received has come from God, let us surrender ourselves and all we have to God! As He has made us, let us live for our Creator! As He has worked all our works in us, let us give up to Him our spirit, soul, and body as our reasonable service. Debtors to Free Grace as we are, if others talk about good works, let us go and do them! While the idle dream of self-righteousness leads some men to make sacrifices, let gratitude for Free Grace compel us to make still greater sacrifices.

Moreover, our text, I think, as a grateful acknowledgment, leads us to further confidence in God. If by the Grace of God I am what I am, then

by the Grace of God I shall be, by-and-by, something better. He who has brought us to repent and to believe will bring us to greater faith, to fuller assurance and to completer conformity to Christ. And He will preserve us unto the end. When any tell us that God will leave us to perish at the last, I never care to answer them, for it always seem to me that those who talk so of my Master do not know Him. What? Leave His beloved, leave His spouse, leave the members of His own body to perish? It is useless to tell us that! He loves His own with too mighty a love to ever cast them away. Let others say what they will, I join with Paul in saying, "By the Grace of God I am what I am" and I am persuaded that, by that same Grace, I shall one day be with Christ and be like He. You who are not the subjects of Divine Grace may well fear that you will perish! But you who have received God's Grace may rest assured that since Grace was the motive which began the good work in you, the same motive will continue even to the end! If God had begun saving us because we were good, He would, of course, leave off saving us when we were not good! If he had begun to save us because we were pure in heart and gracious in life, He would leave off when we ceased to be so. But as He began to save us from no motive but His own Sovereign determination to save us, how can that be affected by anything that may happen to us? So let us fall back upon this comforting assurance--by the Grace of God we are what we are, and by the Grace of God we shall one day share Christ's Glory!

III. I will not say more upon that part of the subject, though it is one upon which I might profitably talk for an hour. But, in the third place, I want you to regard the text as A SWEET ENCOURAGEMENT. A sweet encouragement to whom? Why, first, to the minister Beloved Friends, he who is now speaking to you feels himself to be a marvel of the Grace of God and he can say to you honestly and without any mock

humility, that since God saved him, he has never doubted the possibility of the salvation of anyone else of the whole human race! Preserved from outward sin of the grosser kind, I nevertheless had for some years such a full sense of my own depravity and such a horror of darkness on account of the evil that I saw within myself, that I can have sympathy with the most despairing soul that is here. If you are sitting at Hell's dark door, I can tell you that I sat there month after month! And if you are tempted even to destroy yourself, I can assure you that I have known the misery that Job felt when he said, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life." Yet I am saved by the Sovereign Grace of God, Glory be to His holy name! If the Lord sent me to preach the Gospel to the devil, himself, I would believe that God was able to convert even him! I know that He never will, but if there is any man who is as bad as the devil, and the Gospel is sent to him, I shall never despair of the possibility of that man being reclaimed and made to stand among the redeemed at the last!

I know that there are many here who were drunks, swearers and worse than that--but they have obtained mercy, they have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus--and tonight they are rejoicing that their many sins have been forgiven them for Christ's sake! Those who have been in such a plight as that do not despair of the salvation of the greatest sinners here. You have gone far into sin, but you have seen another saved who was once just what you now are, so why should you not be saved? There have been murderers saved, then why not you if your hands are red with the blood of others? There was a thief who was saved at the last hour, then why not you if you are a thief? There have been many Magdalens saved, then why not you if you belong to that sad sisterhood? O you who lie despairing at the gates of Hell, the silver trumpet of the Gospel is sounded in your ears by one who has enjoyed

the music of it in his own soul! What an encouragement it is to the preacher when he can stay, "By the Grace of God I am what I am!" And what an encouragement it should be to the hearer when he is told that salvation is all of Grace! If Christ came to you and said, "You cannot be saved unless you perform so many good works," there would be no hope for the most of you, though I fear that there are some who think that such a message would just suit them, for they fancy that they have done a great many good works. In cherishing that delusion, they are like a Hindu of whom I once heard. He believed that he must not eat any animal substance, or that if he did, he would perish. A missionary said to him, "That idea is ridiculous. Why, you cannot drink a glass of water without swallowing thousands of living creatures." He did not believe it, so the missionary took a drop of water and put it under a microscope. When the man saw the innumerable living creatures in the drop of water, what did he do? Why, he broke the microscope! That was his way of settling the question. So, when we meet with persons who say, "Our works are pure, clean and excellent," we bring the great

microscope of the Law of the Lord, and we bid them look through that. And when they dolook through it and discover that even one sinful thoughtdestroys their hope of salvation by self-righteousness--and when they see a whole host of sins in their prayers, or acts, or thoughts--then they are angry with the preacher and they try to break the microscope! But, for all that, the Truth of God remains, "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin."

But salvation comes by Grace. Catch at that, Sinner, for if it is by Grace that sinners are saved, why should not you be saved? If a thing is given away, nobody can be too poor to have it. If it is the gift of

charity, poverty is a recommendation rather than a hindrance. My Lord and Master does not tell me to come and say to you that salvation is by your own feelings. It would be as impossible for you to feelright as to doright--but salvation is entirely by God's Grace! "But," says someone, "my heart is hard." Then come to God to have it softened! "But I have no good thing to bring Him." Then come to Him for every good thing! "But I cannot even bring a sense of need." Then come without a sense of need--for the man who feels that he has not a sense of need is often the one who has the best sense of need! He who says, "I have at last a sense of need," shows that he has not yet got to the bottom, for if he were brought to the bottom, he would feel that he had not any feeling--he would groan that he could not groan and grieve that he could not grieve! Dear Friends, you have to do nothing, and to be nothing, and to feel nothing by way of fitness for salvation--but just come and accept, free, gratis, for nothing--the abundant mercy of God in Christ Jesus! He is the empty sinner's fullness, the dead sinner's life, the perishing sinner's salvation! I do not know any Truth of God that can encourage poor sinful souls to pray, to repent and to believe in Jesus except the Truth that salvation is all of Grace from first to last! As the Apostle was saved by Grace, so must it be with all the rest of us--and so may it be with you!

IV. Now, to close, I think our text gives us A SUGGESTION FOR SELF-EXAMINATION.

"By the Grace of God I am what I am," says Paul. And I want each one of you to ask yourself, "What am I?"My eyes cannot reach you all, but I want you to feel that God's eyes are looking at you and that He puts this question to you, "What are you?" Paul tells us what he is, but what are you? An unregenerate sinner? An unpardoned sinner? An impenitent sinner? An unbelieving sinner? Will you put on the right

label and wear it? I almost wish I had some labels to put on you, but let your own consciences do it--and when you get home, will you take your pen and write down what you really are? You are either condemned or uncondemned! Write down whichever you are and look the truth in the face. No man is usually so near bankruptcy as the one who dares not look into his books--and that man must be bad who dares not search his own heart. What are you, then, dear Friend? Let that question begin your self-examination.

Here is another question, How much do you know about the Grace of God? Paul says, "By the Grace of God I am what I am." You see that the mark of a child of God is that by the Grace of God he is what he is--what do you know about the Grace of God? "Well, I attend my place of worship regularly." But what do you know about the Grace of God? "I have always been an upright, honest, truthful, respectable man." I am glad to hear it. But what do you know about the Grace of God? You think you do not need it, though you are not a saved soul--yet none are so certainly lost as those who think they do not need the Grace of God. Has that Grace ever changed you?' 'Well, I was born-again in baptism." Yes, I have seen a great many of those who were said to have been born-again in baptism, but I have not seen any difference between them and those who were not born-again in baptism! And nor can anybody else. "You must be born-again," even you baptized heathens who know no more about the Grace of God than if you had never lived in a land where the Gospel is preached!

I will put to you another straight question, Is Christ Jesus your only hope?Were you ever made to feel that there was no merit in anything that you ever did? Were you ever thrown flat on your face on the Grace and mercy of God, and made to pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? If not, what is your hope? If there is, in

the matter of your supposed salvation, anything that is not of the Grace of God, do with it what the man did with the forged bill--bury it in the earth and run away from it--and be afraid that anybody should think it was yours. Your own righteousness is such an abominable thing that it will as surely damn you as the greatest profanity! The best thing for you to do with it is to bury it and run away from it.

If you cannot say that you are what you want to be. If you cannot say that you know anything experimentally about the Grace of God, the last question I will put to you is this, What must that principle be which does rule you? The Grace of God made Paul what he was--what has made you what you are? "Well, Sir, I think I am as good as my neighbors, and rather better than most of them." Who made you so? I suppose you are a self-made man and it is a matter of fact that everybody worships his creator, so that if you believe that you made yourself, I am not surprised that you worship yourself. But I do wonder where you expect to go when you die, you who have never done any wrong, and have been so good that you do not need a Savior. Do you expect to go to Heaven? Well, if you could go there, what would you do? I read of the multitude that no man could number, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple." But if you could get there because your garments never needed any washing, surely you would throw up your cap and say, "Well done myself!" And what a discord that would cause in the music of Heaven! What a stranger you would feel among those multitudes who would all praise the blessed God! But you will never go there until you fling that righteousness of yours back to the pit from whence it came, for there is nothing in it that God can look upon with pleasure. It is a vile compound of pride and ignorance. May

the light of the Holy Spirit shine upon it and make you loathe it, hate it and flee from it! And may He teach you that there is life in Jesus, there is pardon in Jesus, there is salvation in Jesus for every soul that comes to Him! If you say, "By my own merits and abilities I am what I am," may God save you from that dreadful delusion and bring you humbly to trust in the merits and Sacrifice of His dear Son! So you shall find salvation and He shall have the Glory, world without end. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS9:1-31.

Verse 1. And Saul, yet breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest Notice that little word, "yet." "Saul yet breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." But there was to be a point beyond which he could not go. I pray God that there may be such a "yet" as that put into the histories of any here who are opposing God and His Christ. "Saul, yet breathing out threats and slaughter"--as if they were his very breath, as if he only lived to blaspheme the name of Christ and to persecute His followers--"went unto the high priest."

2. And desired of him letters to the synagogues of Damascus, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. He wanted his hunting ground enlarged! He had not enough to gratify his malice among the thousands of Believers in Jerusalem, so he must go to Damascus to hunt out the Christians there. Paul was always very thorough in all that he did. So, when he was a persecutor, he was a very bitter one. It mattered not to him whether the saints were men or women. In ordinary warfare it is the custom to spare the women. A brave man is satisfied to fight with men like himself--but a bigot's zeal knows no bounds--and so Saul asked for letters so that, "if he found any of this way, whether they were men or

women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

3. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus.The lion is about to leap upon his prey! The sheepfold lies in the valley and the wolf surveys it from the hillside. "Alas for the Church of God at Damascus!" you and I would have said if we had been there.

3. And suddenly there shined round about him a light from Heaven.A supernatural blaze, as though Heaven's gate had been thrown open and the Glory had come streaming down upon this rebellious man.

4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a Voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?Most people are converted in a somewhat similar fashion to this. There is "a light from Heaven" shining through the Gospel upon them. They fall to the ground in penitent self-abasement and then they hear the Voice of the Son of God speaking to their hearts. I do not mean that the external phenomena are the same as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, but the work is the same in its effects and in some of its processes. Saul "heard a Voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" It was a Divine Voice--majestic, piercing, affectionate, convincing. Saul's mind was of a deeply-logical kind, so Christ's question was an appeal to his reasoning faculties--"Give the reason for your present action. 'Why do you persecute

Me?'"

5. And he said Who are You Lord? And the lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.I do not doubt that he had been already pricked in his conscience and he had kicked out as an ox kicks against the ox-goad when he is pricked by it to make him go forward. Saul was a man of strong will and determined purpose. He had already felt in his own heart some of the sorrows that follow from a wrong course of life, yet he resolved to persevere in it,

so the Lord said to him, "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks." And if any of you resist the thrusts of conscience and the strivings of God's Spirit, you will be like a man with naked feet kicking against iron spikes, and hurting himself, but not injuring that against which he kicks.

6. And he, trembling and astonished, said Lord, what will You have me to do?This was a very natural question from one who had always tried to live by doing. He had been a work-monger up to that very moment, so he naturally cried, "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

6. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do. "You must become a disciple and sit at the feet of another man, of a humbler sort, and you must learn from him." Christ will never teach us by visions what we can learn by the ordinary means of instruction, nor will he work miracles where common methods may suffice.

7. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless. They were struck with astonishment--

7. Hearing a Voice, but seeing no man. A loud Voice stunned their ears, but they could not understand its message.

8, 9. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. What a whirl of anguish must his mind have been in all that time! The panorama of Stephen's martyrdom and of the holy men and women against whom he had breathed out threats and slaughter would pass before his inward eyes, even though his outward eyes were closed.

10, 11. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the

street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for behold, he prays. God knows where every sinner is-- the street he lives in, the number of the house, and the name of the owner of the house, so that he can find him when He pleases, or send one of His servants to him. You remember what John Bunyan said to the Quaker who came to see him in prison? The Quaker said to him, "Friend John, I am glad I have found you at last, for the Lord sent me to you, and I have been through half the prisons in England trying to find you." "No, no," said Bunyan, "do not tell me that. The Lord did not send you to me, for He knows I have been here all these years. If He had sent you, you would have come straight to the prison door." When the Lord calls a man to go on an errand for Him, He puts His finger on the right spot and says,

"Go there."

12. Andhas seen in a vision, a man named Ananias coming in, andputting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.You see how true Revelations fit into each other? Something is revealed to Ananias, and it is also revealed to Saul and, therefore, it is proved to be true.

Some years ago, a brother told me that he had had it revealed to him that I was to let him preach for me in the Tabernacle. I said that of course I would agree to that when it was revealed to me that I was to let him, but I did not believe in lopsided Revelations. You will find a great many of those crazy revelations about and you may generally judge them in some such common-sense way as that.

13-16. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem: and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Your name.

But the Lord said unto him, Go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of

Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake. He had made God's people suffer because of their loyalty to Christ--so it seemed only right that he, himself, should suffer for the same reason.

17, 18. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; andputting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared to you in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately there feel from his eyes, as it had been, scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.As he believed in Jesus, it was right that he should confess his faith in the way that Christ appointed.

19. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.Do admire the tenderness of the Holy Spirit in recording that Saul received meat and was strengthened. He had been without food or drink for three days and nights, so that it was as right for him to partake of food as to confess his faith by being baptized!

19. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. Thus did the lion lie down with the lamb and the wolf with the kid!

20. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. How he must have startled his Jewish Brothers and Sisters that day! They knew why he had come to Damascus, but, behold, he was preaching the very faith that he had gone there to destroy!

21-25. But all that heard him were amazed, and said: is not this he that destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: but their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. I never heard of a more precious basketful of material than that! Sometimes the greatest of men may owe their safety to the very poorest of instruments and I think it is the duty of a Christian to avoid trouble if he can, just as our Lord bade His disciples, when they were persecuted in one city, to flee to another. Paul was carrying out that command of his Master. It was not cowardice--it was the very soul of courage--that he might go elsewhere to proclaim the Gospel that he had received in Damascus.

26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. They did not admit anybody and everybody into the Church. They guarded it as Christ's Church should be guarded, that unworthy people might not enter it. If any of you should be kept back a little while, you can say to yourself, "Well, they kept back Paul." We are poor fallible creatures, but we try to judge rightly concerning those who wish to unite with us.

27-31. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem, And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied. Blessed be God for

such a conversion as that of Saul of Tarsus!

Chapter 12

An Exciting Enquiry

(No. 3085)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" Matthew 21:10.

OH, that something would move this great city of ours! I am afraid that at least one-third of our population is settling down in stolid indifference to all religion. It is not that there are thousands of professed infidels, but without making the profession of being so, infidels they really are. It is not that they hate the Gospel--they do not care to hear it, or to know what it teaches. They have not enough interest in it to enter the sanctuary even for once in their lives, unless influenced by fashion or by fear they may attend some ceremonial observance. I think we can hardly form a conception of the fearful heathenism of this great metropolis. You might go down street after street and find that the larger proportion of the people, so far from making any profession of religion, did not even enter a place of worship and knew nothing more than what the city missionary or the Bible woman may have been helped to teach them. We are getting into a very, very, very sad state of things--we need something or other that will get at the masses and compel the city to be moved.

The theater services which have been lately attempted have no doubt proved a great blessing--the opening of cathedrals was a step in the right direction--but everybody can see that the effect of such departures from the ordinary routine is naturally transient. There will

be no greater attraction in a theater than there will be in a chapel or church if the same Gospel is preached, after the novelty of its having been preached there shall have worn off. We can no more expect to see cathedrals crowded long together, now, than we might have expected it 20 years ago. The thing is good as an expedient, but it must be temporary in its results. We shall need something greater than this before we shall get at the masses of London! This is only, as it were, a little hammer--we need a hammer more massive than that of Thor to strike this island to make it shake from end to end! When you have three millions of people herded together, you cannot move them by simply opening half-a-dozen theatres, or by crowding a cathedral, or by filling some large place of worship.

What a hopeful sign it would be even if people were excited againstreligion! Really, I would sooner that they intelligently hated it than that they were stolidly indifferent to it. A man who has enough thought about him to oppose the Truth of God is a more hopeful subject than the man who does not think at all. We cannot do anything with logs-- we feel that we could brace up our nerves to the charge amidst men possessed with devils while we have the Gospel to cast the devils out. It is when men have no spirit at all, but are simply dull, lumpish, thoughtless logs that we cannot get on with them. For my part, I do not regret the activity of Puseyism and Popery just now. Though I dread it as an awful evil in itself, I am thankful for everything that will relieve the awful stillness of religious stagnation. If it will only stir us up to oppose it, if it will only make the true Protestant spirit of England come out, I shall be grateful for the sanitary results, however much I deplore the devastating pestilence. We need something that shall again arouse this city and move it from end to end!

I. The text seems to me to tell us what will do it. WHAT IS THAT WHICH WILL STIR THE WHOLE OF LONDON AS IT STIRRED UP JERUSALEM? A reigning Savior riding in triumph! Jesus Christ never moved Jerusalem till He mounted on that donkey, till they cast their garments in the pathway and strewed the branches and cried, "Hosanna!" Then it was, as He rode in triumph as King of the Jews, that the whole city was stirred. Oh, that we had a reigning Savior more distinctly recognized in all our churches! There is no use in mincing matters or hiding our shame--the shout of a King is not in the midst of the Church at large. The ancient Glory which rested upon the Lord's chosen has in a great measure departed. Write Ichabod, for the Glory is departed! We have not now the lighting down of the mighty arm, nor the strength of a present God--as once we had. The world knowsvery little about the Church and cares very little about her as long as Christ does not reign in her palaces! Unfurl the King's flag, proclaim His entry, make known His residence and forthwith, "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."

What was that Church which disturbed the dark ages? Why, a Church made up of men who hazarded their lives unto the death--men who stood up and preached in the dead of night to the few who were bold enough to gather to hear them--men who at other times could beard the tyrant and stand face to face with cardinal or pope and speak the Truth of God, come what might. These were men who had a reigning Savior in their midst! Yet few and feeble, that gallant host subdued the world! The Vatican trembled! The words they spoke, sustained by the character they bore, fell like thunderbolts about it. Would you enquire, my Brothers and Sisters, for the simple but saintly servants of God who brought a

Reformation into England? They were men who recognized a reigning Savior! The Church was represented by those in whose hearts Jesus Christ really did dwell--such men as Wycliffe and his successors. From marketplace to marketplace they went with but half-pages or whole pages of the Word of God, as fast as they could be printed! They read them at the market. They went on from place to place, preaching the pure, unadulterated Gospel in homely language, with fiery tongues--and soon they set all England in a blaze!

And who were they in later days, in the last century, who awoke the slumbering Church? They were men who had Christ reigning in them--such men as Whitefield and the Wesleys--men who bowed before the royal dignity of Jesus, and said--

"Shall we, for fear of feeble men, The Spirit's course in us restrain?"

Awed by no mortal's frown, would they smooth their tongues and fashion their words to win human esteem? On the hilltops, in the churchyards, by the roadsides--anywhere, everywhere--they unfurled the banner of a reigning Savior! And straightway the darkness of England gave place to glorious light! And now, could we only get the Church of God to awake, we should soon have the whole city moved. Let our ministers preach the Gospel, or let them preach it with something like force instead of treating us to moral essays and elaborately-prepared discourses! Let them speak their hearts out in such words as God would give them on the occasion! Let the members of the Church back them up by vehement zeal, earnest prayer and incessant labors! We would need nothing else to stir this city from end to end. Oh, to see the Savior riding in the midst and to hear the acclamations, while joyous converts shout, like the young children of old, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" The old attractions of the Cross have not departed. You cannot preach Christ and not get a congregation! Be

it "the Christ" whom you preach honestly and preach fully, the people must come to hear! Though they hate and loathe the Truth of God, they will come again to hear it. They will turn on their heels and say, "We cannot bear it," but the next time the doors are opened they will be there! The Gospel gets them by the ear and holds them. It has a secret, mysterious influence even over the hearts that do not receive it, to compel them at least to lend their ear to the hearing of it. Let the Church, then, awake, and that influence shall be had whereby the whole city shall be moved!

But when we speak of the Church, I am afraid we often hide our own sins under a declaration against the Church. Why, we are the Church! Christian men and women, you are the Church! You must not tie the Church up like a quivering victim and lash her--tie yourself up and let the lash fall on your own shoulders! If you and I had a reigning Christ in our hearts, we would help to move the city. Do you ask what I mean by that? I do not mean the way in which some of you show the quality of your faith by the quantity of its fruits. Your convictions and your conversion assume a very mild form. You keep them well in check--you have got a tight rein on the motions of the heart. Your religion never runs wild--never! You are such a prudent Brother, you will never be guilty of anything like enthusiasm--no one will ever chalk the word, "Fanatic," on your back! You will never move the city, my Friend--no fear of it. While appeals which ought to make your heart burn, freeze on your ears, you will never move the city. While themes which ought to bow you to the earth in humility of spirit and then lift you up as on eagles' wings in rapture of delight, affect you not at all!

Unimpressible as stone, you will never move the city!

But if you and I felt that the things we believed were of the first and last importance, that they were worth living for and worth dying for,

that there was nothing else, in fact, in all the world that was worth any care or thought except these things, then, Beloved, we would soon see the city moved! One earnest Christian fully given up to his Master, one soul perfectly devoted to Christ is of more worth in soul-winning and in world-conquering than fifty thousand of mere professors! You know how it used to be in the olden wars. The rank and file all did service in their way, but it was the one man who made the corner of the triangle to break the enemy's ranks and gathered all the spears into his own bosom--it was he who won the victory! The man who dashed foremost with his battle-axe and slew the foe--and gave courage to all the trembling ones behind--the man who told them that victory was sure to wait on courage and who dashed on against fearful odds--he was the man who made his country famous! And we need such Christians nowadays--those who know no fear, do not believe in defeat and are animated with the assurance that the Most High God is with us--and who will go on, and on, and on, conquering and to conquer!

You see, it is a reigning Christ who moves the city! Christ riding in the heart in a glorious procession of gladsome acclamation--it is this that will be the great thing to stir even London's stolid masses!

II. THE GREAT MULTITUDE, WHEN STIRRED, WILL ASK THE QUESTION, "WHO IS THIS?" and it will be an unfortunate thing if you who are with Christ should not be able to give an answer. Some of you, whose hearts are, I hope, right towards Him, are scarcely attentive enough to that precept, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." I do deprecate above all things your getting your creed from me--your building your creed upon the fact that the preacher has said such-and-such. We need Bible students as Christians--men who not only believe the Truth of God, but have good reasons for believing it! Men who can meet error

with the argument, "It is written," and can maintain the Truth at all hazards, using weapons taken from the armory of God's Inspired Book! Oh, that we had among us more who were fit to be teachers! But, alas, I am afraid we shall have to say of many of you, as Paul said of the weak ones in his day, that when they ought to have been teachers, they were still only learners--and when they should have been breaking the Bread of Life to others, they were themselves still needing to be fed upon milk. I hope that will not be the case with us. May we grow in Grace so that when the question is asked, "Who is this?" we may be able to answer it!

Beloved, is it your desire to do good to your fellow man? Have you a longing in your soul to be the means of bringing others to Christ? In order to accomplish this, it is imperatively necessary that you should have a knowledge of Jesus! Let it be a heart knowledge. You sometimes tell your children to learn their lessons by heart. You cannot learn Christ in any other way! Christ cannot be learned in the head. Only love can learn love--and Christ is Love Incarnate! It is by loving Him and communing with Him that you will get to understand Him. You must learn Him by heart. Then you must learn Him experimentally. I would not give anything for an answer to my anxious enquiries from a mere theoretical person. Could I not read the Book and get at the theory myself? I want to be taught by one who has tasted and handled the things of which he speaks. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, seek to know Jesus by living upon Him. Drink of His blood. Eat of His flesh. Be in constant communion with Him till your vital union with Him shall transcend your faith by a constant joyful experience! Know Christ experimentally.

Also Endeavor to know Christ, Beloved, by being taught of His Spirit. That learning of Christ that we get from human wit is of little

worth--it is the Revelation of Christ in us by the Holy Spirit which alone is true knowledge! John Bunyan used to say that he preached only such Truths of God as the Lord had burnt into him. Oh, may He burn these Truths into you! May He be pleased to write upon the tablets of your heart the story of your Master, so that when any shall say, "Who is this?" you may not need to pause for a single moment, or to ask any Divine to assist you in the answer--

"But gladly tell to sinners round What a dear Savior you have found!!

III. THIS ENQUIRY ABOUT CHRIST SHOULD ALWAYS BE MET WITH A CLEAR AND DISTINCT ANSWER.

If I had only one more sermon to preach before I died, I know what it would be about--it would be about my Lord Jesus Christ--and I think that when we get to the end of our ministry, one of our regrets will be that we did not preach more of Him. I am sure no minister will ever repent of having preached Him too much. You who are with Jesus, talk much about Him and let that talk be very plain. Tell sinners that "God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and His disciples beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." Tell them that He came to this earth as a Substitute for His people, that His holy life is accounted their righteousness, that His sufferings and death constitute a complete Atonement and appease the wrath of God for all their sins. Never let an opportunity be lost of telling out the Doctrine of Substitution. That is the core of the Gospel--the sinner in Christ's place, and Christ in the sinner's place! Our debts to God paid by Christ! The chastisement of our peace laid upon Him that we may have the peace through His chastisement.

I wish to put this matter very earnestly to my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus and especially to you who are in Church fellowship here. Do on every occasion and especially when you get but

half an invitation to do so--do speak out concerning the Person of Christ as God and Man, concerning the work of Christ as taking human guilt and suffering for it, concerning the worth of that work as being able to take away all manner of sin and blasphemy! Tell it to the very chief of sinners, that the blood of Christ can make them clean! Tell it to the drunk, the harlot, the thief, the murderer! Tell them all that whoever believes in Him is not condemned! And never, from fear or through shame, refuse to give an answer to so hopeful an enquiry as this--"Who is this?"

And what shall I say to you who are moved by curiosity to ask this question, ' 'Who is this?" I daresay there were some in Jerusalem who were so busy with their shops that they did not enquire, "Who is this?" "Oh," they would say, "We need not go across the threshold to see what a mob may be doing in the street--a lot of children calling out, 'Hosanna,' and a number of idle gossips following a silly Fellow as He rides upon a donkey through the street--that is all it is." Other people doubtless had a little of the bump of curiosity. They could not help enquiring. So they come into the street. They stood among the crowd and they said to one, "Who is this?" "I don't know," he said, "I came to see for myself." "But who is this?" they repeat again and again! And they very likely got six wrong answers before they got the right one! They push on and at last they get a good place--perhaps climb up into a tree, as Zacchaeus did--and there they are, all wide awake, trying to get an answer to the question, "Who is this?"

Well, I hope some such curiosity as this may be in your mind. At any rate, I had it in my mind once and I believe there are many who now have it. I will tell you the occasions upon which this curiosity is often excited. A laboring man has been in the habit of working with another who was often intoxicated, an habitual swearer and, perhaps,

even prone at times to blaspheme. On a sudden, he sees him a changed character, steady in all his conduct, affectionate, thoughtful of his wife and children, industrious and, lo and behold, he is religious! What a difference! Can it fail to cause enquiry? Or he calls in at the house of a neighbor and finds the neighbor very sick and ill. He is a working man with a large family and it would be a very serious thing for him to die and leave those little ones. But he sits up in the bed and he tells his friend that he has not any care at all about these matters--he has left them all with God. He says, "I used to fret and worry myself, but now, whether I live or die, I leave all with God. I am perfectly resigned to His will. Christ is with me here and I find it--

"'Sweet to lie passive in His hands, And know no will but His.'"

"Oh," says the man, "who is this that has made such a difference in my neighbor?" What can be the cause of this change? What can be the reason of this? He watches another. He persecutes him, jeers and laughs at him, casts all manner of threats and insinuations at him. He sees him bear it all very quietly. He knows that he cannot tempt him to do what is wrong, though he tries hard to do it. The path of integrity is trodden year after year and the worldly man, looking on, cannot make it out. He says, "Who is this?" He sees another, a very happy, lively, earnest, joyful Christian. "Well," thinks this man, "I have to go to the theater to get any fun. I must be in company and I must drink a certain quantity before I can get my spirits up. But here is a man cheerful and bright without any of these things! He is poor, but he is happy. He has got a corduroy jacket, but he has not got a corduroy heart--he's as happy as a king! His soul is merry within him--I can't make it out--'Who is this?'" These things stir men's curiosity and I hope, dear Friends, you will try to make people more and more curious

by this plan. And how often a holy deathbed stirs that curiosity! As the expiring Believer shouts victory, or sinks to his rest with perfect joy, the worldling looks on and says, "Who is this? I can't comprehend it, I can't make it out."

Now it is little wonder, my dear Friends, that there should be some curiosity to know about Christ. There ought to be a great deal more. Consider that God Himself speaks to you by Christ. Shall God speak and shall mortal man not care to hear what God says? Shall God speak to me by His dear Son and shall I have no ear to hear the Divine Word? I ought to be anxious to know it. Christ was spoken of by Prophets--Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah--all of them spoke of Christ. Were there all those testimonies about Him and shall not I care to know of Him? When He came upon earth, it was with songs of angels--and a new star was launched forth to welcome His birth! Have I no curiosity to know of Him? I understand that His Person is complex, that He is at once God and Man--a strange, wonderful Person this! Do I not wish to know more of Him? I find that He died and that He rose again, and that there is a close connection between His dying and rising again and the forgiveness of our sins and the justification of our souls. Do I not want to know about that? Christ has come to solve the most tremendous problem, come to tell us of life beyond the grave, of immortality when corruption shall have done its work--have I no curiosity about this? The bleeding Savior, hanging on the Cross, says to every man, woman and child here who has any curiosity in His Nature, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me." I commend the curiosity that would make you know more of Jesus Christ. Study this blessed Book much. Pry into those mysteries which speak much of Him, and do, oh do press forward till you have got an answer to that question, "Who is this?"

There may be, in this house of prayer, some who are in positive ignorance asking the question,' 'Who is this?" I think we ought not to take it for granted that all our congregation understands the Gospel, for they do not. The simple command, "Believe and live," which God has written so plainly in the Bible, is not understood by a great many of our hearers. I sometimes get letters from those who have heard the Gospel preached here which astound me. The way in which my correspondents look at things seems conclusive that they have never read the Bible--they imagine that my preaching and everybody else's should be altered in order to suit some whim and fancy of theirs. The ignorance pointed at in the text was strange, for Christ had lived in Jerusalem and had been working miracles there, yet the people said, "Who is this?" And Jesus Christ is preached in the very street where you live! You can hear of Him out of doors if you like, in the ministry of some open-air preacher. The city missionary will tell you about Him. There is a Testament to be had for twopence! Everybody may know about Jesus Christ and yet there are a great many who do not know about Him at all!

But is not ignorance of Jesus Christ in this age willful? Those who do not know of Jesus Christ now have nobody but themselves to blame. Let me remind you that this ignorance is very damaging--you lose by it much joy and comfort here below, beside the risks of the hereafter.

Ignorance of Jesus Christ will be fatal to your soul's welfare. You may not know how to read, but if you know Christ, you shall "read your title clear to mansions in the skies." It is a bad thing for a man not to know a little of all sciences, but a man may go to Heaven well enough if he knows only the science of Christ Crucified. Not to know Jesus will shut you out of Heaven though you had all the degrees of all the universities in the world appended to your name! Ignorance of Him

who is the Savior of sinners is ignorance of the remedy for your soul's disease, ignorance of the key which unlocks Heaven's gate, ignorance of Him who can kindle the lamp of life in the sepulchers of death! Oh, I pray you, if you have been hitherto ignorant of the Savior, be not satisfied till you know Him!

And when I speak of ignorance of Christ, I do not mean ignorance of His name and of the fact that there is such a Person--I refer more especially to that spiritual'ignorance which is so common even among the best informed. Nine persons out of ten who go to place of worship do not know the meaning of the Savior shedding His blood for the remission of sin. If you press them to tell you how it is that Christ saves, they will tell you that He did something or other by which God is able to forgive sin. Though the grand fact that Christ was actually punished in the place of His chosen people is a fact as clear in the Scripture as noonday, they do not see it! The false doctrine of general redemption--that Christ died for the damned in Hell and suffered the torment of those who afterwards are tormented forever--seems to me to be detestable, subversive of the whole Gospel and destructive of the only pillar upon which our hopes can be built! Christ stood in the place of His elect--for them He made a full Atonement--for them He so suffered that not a sin of theirs shall ever be laid at their door. As the Father's love embraced them, so the death of His Son reconciled them.

And who are these that are thus redeemed from among men? They are those who believe in Jesus Christ! This definition is not more simple than conclusive to those to whom the work of the Spirit of God is intelligible. If you put your trust in Him, it is evident that Christ died for you in a way and manner in which He never died for Judas. He died for you so vicariously that the offenses you have committed were

imputed to Him and not to you and, therefore, your sins are forgiven. If you trust Him, you cannot be punished for your sins, for Christ was punished for them! How can debts be demanded of you that were paid originally by your Savior? You are clear. The Master said, "If you seek Me, let these go their way." [See Sermons #2368, Volume 40--THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST and #2616, Volume 45--CHRIST'S CARE OF HIS DISCIPLES] And when they seized Jesus, they let His chosen people go. You are clear--before God's bar you are clear. Nobody can lay anything to your charge if you trust in Jesus Christ, for He suffered in your place. Ignorance of that great fundamental Truth of the whole Gospel keeps thousands in darkness! It is the great ball and chain upon the leg of many spiritual prisoners! And if they did but know that and could spell, "substitution," without a mistake, they would very soon come into perfect joy and liberty!

Once more. It is thought that the expression, "Who is this?" was a contemptuous one on the part of many. They said, "What next, eh? We have heard of all sorts of excitements and noises--what next? Here is a Man who has not where to lay His head, yet He is riding like a king. Here is a Man who wears the common smock-frock of a Galilean peasant--and there are people spreading their garments in the way and strewing branches of trees before Him! What next, and what next?" Perhaps with scornful tone some said, "Well, what shall we live to see? The King of the Jews! Ah! King of the Jews! Yes, very likely! His father and mother are with us--is this the poor carpenter's son? King of the Jews, forsooth!" And so they just sneered and turned away. Yes, but Friends, stop a bit. Some persons who sneer deserve to be sneered at--but we will not treat you so.

It cannot be, after all, such a very fine and wise thing to sneer at

the Savior, when you recollect that the angels do not sneer and never did sneer at Him! They came with Him when first He descended into Bethlehem's manger. They came with joyous songs on that memorable night when He was born of the Virgin. Did they not sing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men"? Do not sneer where angels sing! When He afterwards retired in an hour of terrible sorrow, to the Garden of Gethsemane where great drops of blood fell on the ground, the angels came and strengthened Him. Round the bloody Cross they watched and wondered how the Lord of Glory thus could die. And when He went into the grave, I think they hung their harps awhile in silence. This we know, that when, on the third day, He burst the bands of death, one of them came to roll away the stone and two others sat--the one at the foot, the other at the head--where Jesus had lain. And when the forty days had been accomplished and He went up to His abode--

"They brought His chariot from above, To bear Him to His Throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried, 'The glorious work is done.

In Heaven they cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." The mightiest archangel in Glory counts it his honor to fly on Jesus Christ's errands. Sneer not, then! What is there to sneer at? These spirits are at least as wise as you. Pause awhile, and "kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way."

Do you not care for angels? Then listen--do not sneer, for there are as wise men as you who have not sneered at Christ. You mention some great man who was a scoffer. Ah, well, so it may be, for great men are not always wise. But, on the other hand, what Newton believed in, what Locke trusted in, what Milton sang of, what a Bunyan could dream of in Bedford Jail cannot be quite such a contemptible thing after all. I might quote some names at which you could not and would not sneer. You

would think yourself unknown and base, indeed, if you called them unknown and ignoble. The name which these men, great even in your esteem, thought worthy of their highest reverence, surely you need not be so fast to reproach! Come, my Friend, look also into this problem. Give your wit a little exercise upon this question, "Who is this?" Seek to know who and what Christ is and whether He is not a suitable Savior for you. Do not be contemptuous, for, after all, if you look after it, there is nothing to despise. What is the Gospel story? It is this--that though you are the enemy of Christ, Christ is no enemy of yours. Here is the story, that while we were yet His enemies, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. I could never despise a man who loved his enemy, and if I saw him come to die to save another, and that other his foe, I could not despise him. I might think him unwise, and think the price of his fair life too dear to buy the wretch for whom he died--but I could not despise his love!

Oh, there is something so majestic in Christ's love that you cannot sneer at it! Uncurl that lip! He dies not for Himself in any sense! He bleeds for His friends--no, more, for His foes! His dying prayer is, [See Sermons #897, Volume 15--the FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS; #2236, Volume 38--CHRIST'S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS and #3068, Volume 53--UNKNOWN DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS] "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And even when His friends forsook Him, His last thoughts were all for them. Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich! There is nothing to sneer at here! He casts aside His Glory, hangs His azure mantle on the sky, takes the rings from off His fingers to hang them up for stars and down He comes and is born a feeble Child! In His mother's lap He lies. He lives so poverty-stricken that He has nowhere to lay His head. And when the fox

went to its burrow and the bird to its nest, He went to the lone mountain and His locks were wet with the dews of night. "Give Me a drink," He says, as He sits upon the well of Samaria. He is forsaken, despised and rejected of men. And when He dies, even God, Himself, leaves Him. Jesus cries, "Why have You forsaken Me?" And all this was because of His strong, all-conquering love for the sons of men! You cannot despise this Man! I would love the Savior even if He had not died for me. I could not help it! Such love as His must have my heart. Such disinterested giving up of all for the sake of those who hated Him must claim our heart's affections!

Do not despise Him, let me again say to you, for you do not know but that one day you may be where He is. Oh, if you knew that He would wash you in His precious blood and make you clean! If you knew that He would cast His robe of righteousness about you! If you knew that He would take you up to be with Him and put the palm branch in your hand, and make you sing forever of victory through His precious blood, you would not despise Him! And yet that shall be the portion of all of you if you believe in Him, if you cast yourselves on His finished work. Where He is, there you shall be and you shall see His face! Do not despise Him, the sinner's Friend. Can you dislike Him, the Lover of your soul? How can you refuse to be a lover of Him? Shedding His tears over you, shedding His blood for you--how can you do otherwise than cast yourselves at His feet?

Despise Him not, lastly, for He is coming again in pomp and Glory. Speak not lightly of Him who is at the door. He is coming, perhaps, while I talk of these great matchless things. Soon may He come into our midst, but He will come with rainbow wreath and clouds of storm. He will come sitting on the Great White Throne and every eye shall see Him! And they, also, who pierced Him. Do not despise Him now, for you

will not be able to despise Him then. Will you do now what you cannot do then? Oh, what a different story will some men tell when Christ comes! How those who called Him foul names will hide their fouler faces! Come up now, do not play the coward, come up now and spit in His face again, you villains, who once did it in His lifetime! Come now, and nail Him to the tree again! Judas, come and give Him a kiss, as once you did! Do you see them? Why, they flee! They hide their heads. They do not any longer despise and reject Him, but their cry is, "Rocks, fall on us and hide us!" "You mountains, open your bowels and give us a place of concealment."

But it cannot be--the Lamb's eyes of love have become the Lion's eyes of fire! And He who was meek and gentle has now become fiery and terrible! The voice that once was sweet as music is now loud and terrible as the crash of thunder! And He that once dealt out mercy, now deals out bolts of vengeance! Oh, despise not Him who shall so soon come in His Glory! Bow, now, and "kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Ask, "Who is He"? And when you put the question, answer it yourself, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Trust Jesus Christ, Sinner, and you shall know who He is! And He, knowing who you are, will save you with a great salvation! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LAMENTATIONS3:52-58'

52-55. My enemies chasedme sorely, like a bird, without cause. Theyhave cut offmylife in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed overmyhead; then Isaid, Iam cut off. Icalled upon Yourname, OLORD, out ofthe low dungeon. He said, "I am cut off," yet he called upon the name of the Lord out of the low dungeon into which his enemies had cast him. What a mercy it is that God's servants are often as graciously inconsistent as Jeremiah was just then! They are afraid that the Lord

will not hear them, yet they continue to pray to Him! They are afraid that they are cast off forever, yet they will still use the privilege of a child of God and cry to Him, though they doubt whether they have a child's right to do so! Go on, Beloved, with that blessed inconsistency, and the Lord will bless you in it!

56. You have heard my voice: hide not your ear at my breathing, at my cry. Is not that a beautiful description of prayer, when the soul cannot find words, nothing but a "breathing"? Did I say nothing but a breathing? Why, that is the very essence of prayer!--

"Prayer is the breath of Good in man, Returning whence it came."

Vocal sounds in prayer can be given forth by hypocrites. Our children have their dolls or their little animals that they press to make them squeak, but there is no life in them--so there may be a sound, yet no life. But I never heard of anything that really breathed and yet had not life. And when your soul breathes itself out before God in prayer, although it cannot utter any articulate sound by reason of the sorrow of your heart, there is spiritual life in you!

57. You drew near in the day that I called upon You. [See Sermon #1812, Volume 30--A wonder explained by greater WONDERS] Oh, sweet experience! Cannot you, Beloved, say that these words suit you as much as they did Jeremiah? I am inclined to say to Him, "They are mine. Jeremiah, they certainly were yours, but I am sure that they are equally mine!"

57, 58. You said, Fear not O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life. [See Sermon #579, Volume 10--GOD PLEADING FOR SAINTS AND SAINTS PLEADING FOR GOD] Blessed be His holy name forever and ever!

Chapter 13

"Marvelous Things"

(No. 3086)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 7, 1874.

"O sing unto the LORD a new song, for He hats done marvelous things: His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory. The LORD has made known His salvation: His righteousness has He openly showed in the sight of the heathen." Psalm 98:1,2.

THE invitations of the Gospel are invitations to happiness. In delivering God's message, we do not ask men to come to a funeral, but to a wedding feast! If our errand were one of sorrow, we might not marvel if men refused to listen to us. But it is one of gladness, not sadness--in fact, you might condense the Gospel message into this joyous invitation--"O come and learn how to sing unto the Lord a new song! Come and find peace, rest, joy and all else that your souls can desire. Come and eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness." When the coming of Christ to the earth was first announced, it was not with sad sonorous sounds of devil spirits driven from the nethermost Hell, but with the choral symphonies of holy angels who joyfully sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" And as long as the Gospel shall be preached in this world, its main message will be one ofjoy. The Gospel is a source ofjoy to those who proclaim it, for unto us who are less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given--that we should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ! [Mr. Spurgeon enlarged upon

this theme in two Sermons on Ephesians
3:8. [See Sermons #745, Volume 13--THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST and #1209, Volume 20--A GRATEFUL SUMMARY OF TWENTY VOLUMES] The Gospel is also a source of joy to all who hear it aright and accept it, for its very name means "glad tidings of good things." I feel that if I am not able to preach to you as I would, yet am I thrice happy in being permitted to preach at all. And if the style and manner of my address may not be such as I desire them to be, nor such as you will commend, yet it will matter but little, for the simplest telling out of the Gospel is of itself a most delightful thing! And if our hearts were in a right condition, we would not merely be glad to hear of Jesus over and over again, but the story of the love of our Incarnate God and of the redemption worked by Immanuel would be the sweetest music that our ears ever heard!

In the hope that our hearts may thus rejoice, I am going to talk of many things under two heads. The first is, the marvelous things which God has done in the Person of His Son and, secondly, some marvelous things in reference to ourselves which are almost as marvelous as those that God has done.

I. First, I am to call your attention to THE MARVELOUS THINGS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT. If you read it carefully, you will notice that first, there are some marvelous things that are marvelous in themselves. Secondly, some that were marvelous in the way in which they were done--"His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory." And then, thirdly, some that were marvelous as to the way in which they were made known--"The Lord has made known His salvation: His righteousness has He openly showed in the sight of the heathen."

First, then, we will consider the things that are marvelous in themselves. "He has done marvelous things: His right hand and His holy

arm have gotten Him the victory." You know the story. We were enslaved by sin--we were in such bondage that we were liable to be forever in chains. But our great Champion undertook our cause and entered the lists, pledged to fight for us till the end--and He has done it. It would have been a cause of great joy if I could have come here and said to you, "The Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken to fight our battles for us," but I have something much better than that to say! He has fought the fight and "His holy arm has gotten Him the victory." It must have required more faith to believe in the Christ who was to come than to believe in the Christ who has come. It must have required no little faith to believe in Christ as victorious while He was in the midst of the struggle. For instance, when the bloody sweat was falling amidst the olive trees, or when He was hanging upon the Cross and moaning out that awful cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But the great crisis is past! No longer does the issue of the conflict tremble in the balance--Christ has forever accomplished His warfare and our foes are all beneath His feet--

"Love's redeeming work is done-- Fought the fight, the battle won!"

What foes has Christ overcome? Our main foe, our sin, both as to the guilt of it and as to the power of it. As to the guilt of it, there was a Law which we had broken and which must be satisfied. Christ has kept the positive precepts of that Law in His own perfect life and He has vindicated the honor of that Law by His sacrificial death upon the Cross. The Law, therefore, being satisfied, the strength of sin is gone and now, O Believers, the sins which you saw in the day of your conviction you shall see no more forever! As Moses triumphantly sang of the enemies of the chosen people, "the depths have covered them," so can you say of your sins, "There is not one of them left." Even in God's great Book of Remembrance there is no record of sin against any

Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. "By Him all that believe are justified from all things." Try to realize this, Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Let the great army of your sins pass before you in review--each one like a son of Anak, armed to the teeth for your destruction. They have gone down into the depths and the Red Sea of Christ's blood has drowned them! And so He has gained a complete victory over all the guilt of sin! And as for the power of sin within us--alas, we often groan concerning it, but let us groan no longer--or if we do, let us also sing!

The experience of a Christian is summed up in Paul's utterance, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." [See Sermon #235, Volume 5--the fainting warrior--] If you take the whole quotation, I believe you have a summary

of a spiritual man's life--a daily groaning and a daily boasting--a daily humbling and a daily rejoicing--a daily consciousness of sin and a daily consciousness of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to conquer it. We do believe, Beloved, that our sin has received its deathblow. It still lingers within us, for its death is by crucifixion and

crucifixion is a lingering death. Its heart is not altogether fastened to the cross, but its hands are, so that we cannot sin as we once did. Its feet, too, are fastened, so that we cannot run in the way of transgressors as we once did--and one of these days the spear shall piece its heart and it shall utterly die. And then, with the faultless ones before the Throne of God, we shall be unattended by depravity or corruption any longer! Therefore let us "sing unto the Lord a new song," because His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory over sin within us--

"His is the victor's name,

Who fought our fight alone!

Triumphant saints no honor claim--

His conquest was His own!"

In connection with sin came death, for death is the daughter of sin, and follows closely upon sin. Jesus has conquered death. It is not possible for Believers to die eternally, for Jesus said, "Because I live, you shall live also." And even the character of the natural death is changed to Believers. It is not now a penal infliction, but a necessary way of elevating our nature from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, for, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." Even those who will be living at the coming of the Lord must be "changed" in order that they may be fit to enter Glory. Death, therefore, to Believers, is but a putting off of our weekday garments that we may put on our Sabbath attire--the laying aside of the travel-stained garments of earth that we may put on the pure vestments of joy forever! So we do not now fear death, for Christ has conquered it. He has ripped away the iron bars of the grave and He has left in the sepulcher His own winding-sheets and napkin that there may be suitable furniture in what was once a grim, cold, empty morgue--and He has gone up into His Glory and left Heaven's gate wide open to all Believers! Unless He shall first come, we, too, shall descend into the grave where He went, but we also shall come up again as He did--and we shall rise complete in the perfection of our redeemed manhood. Then shall we be satisfied, when we awaken in the likeness of our Master. So let us "sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things."--

"Hosannah to the Prince of Light,

Who clothed Himself in clay,

Entered the iron gates of Death

And tore the bars away!

Death is no more the king of dread,

Since our Immmanuel rose

He took the tyrant's sting away

And spoiled our hellish foes.

See how the Conqueror mounts aloft

And to His Father flies,

With scars of honor in His flesh

And triumph in His eyes."

And as Christ has conquered sin and death, so has He conquered the devil and all his hosts of fallen spirits. This monster of iniquity, this monster of craft and malice has striven to hold us in perpetual bondage, but Christ met him in the wilderness and vanquished him there. And met him, as I believe, in the Garden of Gethsemane, in personal conflict, and vanquished him once and for all. And now He has led captivity captive. Inferior spirits were driven away by Christ when He was here upon earth and they fled at the bidding of the King. And now, although Satan still worries and vexes the saints of God, the Lord will bruise Satan under their feet shortly. Therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is the joyous news we have to bring to sinners--that sin, death and the devil have all been vanquished by the great Captain of our salvation! And for this let us so rejoice that we sing unto the Lord a new song--

"He Hell in Hell laid low.

Made sin, He sin overthrew!

Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,

And death, by dying slew!

Sin, Satan, death appear

To harass and appall--

Yet since the gracious Lord is near,

Backward they go, and fall."

But, according to the text, what the Lord did is not only marvelous in itself, but the way in which He did it was also marvelous. Observe that He did it alone--"His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory." No one was associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in the conquest which He achieved over sin, death and the devil--and nothing is more abhorrent to a believing soul than the idea of giving any particle of Glory to anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ. He tread the winepress alone, so let Him alone wear the crown! Sinner, you have not to look for any secondary Savior-- Christ has done it all. You need pay no reverence to saints, or martyrs, or priests--Christ has done it all, so resort to Him for all you need. Christ alone has accomplished the salvation of His people--no other hand has been raised to help Him in the fight. Look then to Jesus, only, for salvation! Trust in Him with your whole heart! Throw your weight entirely upon Him, my poor Brother or Sister, if you have not yet done so, and you shall find rest and salvation in Him!

Another marvel is that He did it all so wisely--"His right hand has gotten Him the victory." You know that we use the word "dexterous" to signify a thing that is done well--we mean that it was done right-handedly. So Christ fought our battle with His right hand. He did it with ease, with strength and with infinite wisdom. Salvation is the very perfection of wisdom because, in the salvation of a sinner, all the attributes of God are equally glorified. There is as much Justice as there is Mercy in the salvation of a sinner by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ--Mercy full-orbed, and Justice full-orbed also--God fulfilling His threats against sin by smiting Christ, and giving to the love of His heart full vent in saving the very chief of sinners through

the death of His dear Son. The more I consider the Doctrine of Substitution, the more is my soul enamored of the matchless wisdom of God which devised this system of salvation! As for a hazy atonement which atones for everybody in general and for nobody in particular--an atonement made equally for Judas and for John--I care nothing for it. But a literal, substitutionary Sacrifice--Christ vicariously bearing the wrath of God on my behalf--this calms my conscience with regard to the righteous demands of the Law of God and satisfies the instincts of my nature which declare that, as God is just, He must exact the penalty of my guilt! Dear Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ suffering, bleeding, dying, has gotten us the victory! The hand that was pierced by the nails has conquered sin! The hand that was fastened to the wood has fastened up the accusation that was written against us! The hand that bled has brought salvation to us, so that we are Christ's forever! 'Twas infinite wisdom which shone in the conquest of sin, and death, and the devil.

But it was also holiness--"His holy arm has gotten Him the victory." The Psalmist seems, as he advances in his Psalms, to fall more and more in love with the matchless holiness of God--and the holiness of the victory of Christ is a great point in its favor. There is never a sinner so saved as to make God even seem to wink at sin. Since the creation of this world, there was never an act of mercy performed by God that was not in perfect harmony with the most severe justice. God, though He has loved and saved unholy men, has never stained His holy hands in the act of saving them. He still remains the holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, though He is still full of pity and compassion, and passes by transgression, iniquity and sin, and presses prodigal children to His heart. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the answer to the great question, "How can God be just and yet the Justifier of him

that believes? How can He be perfectly holy and yet, at the same time, receive into His love and adopt into His family those who are unrighteous and unholy?" O Calvary, you have solved the problem! The bleeding wounds of the Incarnate God have made righteousness and peace to kiss each other. May God grant to you, unconverted Sinner, the Grace to understand how He can save you and yet be perfectly holy--how He can forgive your sins and yet be perfectly just! I know this is the difficulty that troubles you--how can you be received while God is what He is? He can receive you, for the Lord Jesus Christ took the sins of His people and bore them in His own body on the tree and, being the appointed Head of all Believers, He has vindicated in His own Person the inflexible Justice of God! There is the Man who has kept the whole Law of God--not Adam, for he failed to keep it--but the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven! And all whom He represented are now "accepted in the Beloved," made acceptable to God because of what Jesus Christ has done. So let us magnify that holy arm which has gotten Him the victory!

I have now to speak upon the third point, the marvelous Grace which has revealed all this to us. I t is a very familiar thing for us who are sitting here to hear the Gospel, but will you just carry your minds back some two or three thousand years to the period when this Psalm was written? What was then known concerning salvation was known almost exclusively by the Jews. Here and there a proselyte was led into the bonds of the Covenant, but for the most part, the whole world lay in heathen darkness. Where there was the seal of circumcision, there were the oracles of God--but as for the sinners of the Gentiles, they knew nothing whatever concerning the Truth of God. And it might have been so till this day if the Lord had not made known His salvation and openly showed His righteousness in the sight of the heathen. Our present privileges are greater than those of ancient Israel and I am afraid

that we sometimes despise, or at least forget those whom we have for a time supplanted. They were the favored people of God and through their unbelief they have been put away for a while, but Israel is yet to be restored to even greater blessings than it formerly enjoyed--

"The hymn shall yet in Zion swell
That sounds Messiah's praise!
And Your loved name, Immmanuel,
As once in ancient days.
For Israel yet shall own her King,
For her salvation waits,
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing
With praise in all her gates."

Do we value as we ought the privilege we now have of hearing in our own tongue the wonderful works of God? My dear unconverted Hearer, how grateful you ought to be that you were not born in Rome, or Babylon, or in the far-off Indies in those days when there was no Christian missionary to seek you out and care for your soul, but when the whole of the Light of God that shone was shed upon that little land of Palestine! Jesus Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition and now it makes no difference whether we are Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, for the Gospel is to be preached to every creature in all the world--and "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved"--whatever his previous character may have been, or to whatever race he may have belonged!

Yet let us never forget that in order to accomplish this great work of salvation, it was necessary that the blessed Son of God should descend to this world. And it was also necessary that the Spirit of God should be given to rest upon the Church, to be the Inspiration by which the Gospel should be preached among the heathen. Again let me ask a

question. Do we sufficiently reverence the Holy Spirit and love Him as we should for all that He has done? The Incarnation of the Son of God is no greater mystery than the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men. It is truly marvelous that the ever-blessed Spirit, who is equally God with the Father and the Son, should come and reside in these bodies of ours and make them His temple. Yet remember that if it had not been so, there would have been no effective preaching of the Gospel and, this night, unless the Holy Spirit is here to bless the Word, there will be no open showing of Christ's righteousness to you and no making known of His salvation to your heart. All the victories of Christ, for which I challenge your graceful songs, would be unknown to you if the Holy Spirit did not touch men's lips so that they might tell what the Lord has done and publish abroad His glorious victories!

Remember, too, that in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit, there has had to be an unbroken chain of Divine Providence to bring the Gospel to you and to your fellow countrymen. Look back through the past ages and see what wonderful revolutions of the wheels full of eyes there have been! Empires have risen and have fallen, but their rise and fall have had a close connection with the preaching of the Gospel. There have been terrific persecutions of the saints of God. Satan has seemed to summon all Hell to attack the Church of Christ, yet he could not destroy its life. Then came the night of Popery, dense as the nights of Egypt's darkness, but old Rome could not put out the Light of the Gospel! Since then, in what marvelous ways has God led His chosen people! He has raised up His servants, one after another, so that the testimony concerning the victories achieved by Christ might be continued among us and might be spread throughout all the nations of the earth. And thus it comes to pass that, tonight, you have the open

Bible in your hands and I am permitted to freely expound the teaching of that Bible to you. How wonderfully has the history of our own country been working towards this happy result! Glorify God and bless His holy name that we live in such halcyon days as these when the Lord has made known His salvation and has openly showed His righteousness in the sight of the heathen!

But yet more sweetly let us praise the Lord that we not only live where the Gospel is made known, but that God has made it known to some of us in a still higher sense. Some of us now understand, as we did not at one time, the righteousness of God--His way of making men righteous through Jesus Christ. We understood it in theory long before God made it savingly known in our soul. This is another work of the Holy Spirit for which we have good reason to sing unto the Lord a new song! Sinner, I have to say to you that God has sent the Gospel to you to tell you that His Son, Jesus Christ, has conquered sin, death and the devil--and that if you believe in Jesus, you shall be a partaker in His victory! There is nothing for you to do but to believe in Him. Even the power to understand His Truth is God's gift to you. Even the faith that receives it, He works in you according to His Spirit! You are to be nothing that God may be everything! It is for you to fall at His feet, with confusion of face and contrition of heart, and when He bids you do so, to rise up and say, "I will sing unto the Lord a new song. O Lord, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me through Him who has gotten the victory on my behalf."

II. The second point of my subject, on which I must speak very briefly, indeed, is this--THESE ARE SOME MARVELOUS THINGS IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES.

The first of these marvelous things is that after all that Christ has

done, and the mercy of God in making it known, so many are utterly careless and indifferent concerning it. Tens of thousands will not even cross the threshold to go and hear about it! Bibles are in many of their houses, yet they do not take the trouble to read them. If they are going on a railway journey, they consult their Bradshaw--but they do not search God's own Guide Book to find the way to Heaven, or to learn where and when they must start if they mean to reach that place of eternal happiness and bliss! We can still ask, with Isaiah, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The most marvelous sight out of Hell is an unconverted man! It is a marvel of marvels that the Son of God, Himself, should leave Heaven and all its glories and come to earth to bleed and die in manhood's shape for manhood's sake--and yet that there should be anyone in the shape of a man who should not even care to hear the story of His wondrous Sacrifice, or that hearing the story, should disregard it as if it were of no interest to him! Yet see how men rush to buy a newspaper when there is some little bit of news! With what avidity do some young people--and some old people too, who ought to know better--read the foolish story of a love-sick maid! How freely their tears flow over imaginary griefs! Yet the Lord Jesus Christ, bleeding to death in disinterested love to His enemies, moves them not to tears, and their hearts remain untouched by the story of His sufferings as if they were made of marble!

The depravity of mankind is a miracle of sin. It is as great a miracle from one point of view, as the Grace of God is from another. Jesus Christ neglected! Eternal Love slighted! Infinite Mercy disregarded! Yes, and I have to confess, with great shame, that even the preacher of the Gospel is not always affected by it as he ought to be. And not only must I, my Brothers and Sisters, confess this, but so must others, I

fear, who preach the Word of God. Why, it ought to make us dance for joy to have to tell you that there is mercy in the heart of God, that there is pardon for sinners, that there is life for the dead, that the great heart of God yearns over sinners! And our hearts ought to be ready to break when we find that men disregard all this good news and are not affected by it. It is an astounding calamity that men should have fallen so terribly that they are insensible to Infinite Love! God grant that His Grace may show to you unconverted sinners what a horrible state your hearts must be in that, after all that Christ has done, you still give Him no token of gratitude, no song of praise for the wonders He has worked!

Looking from this point of view, there is another marvelous thing--that some of us have been brought to recognize the work of Christ so that we are saved by it, because, to confess the truth, there are some of us who were very unlikely subjects (speaking after the manner of men) to be saved. Probably each saved person here thought himself the most unlikely one ever to be saved. I know that I thought so concerning myself. You remember the story of a Scotchman who went to see Mr. Rowland Hill and who sat and looked him in the face for so long that the good old minister asked him, "What are you looking at?" He replied, "I have been studying the lines of your face." "What do you make of them?" asked Rowland. And the answer was, "I was thinking what a great vagabond you would have been if the Grace of God had not met with you." "That thought has often struck me," said Rowland! And a similar thought has often struck some of us. If we had not been converted, wouldn't we have led others into sin? Wouldn't we have invented fresh pleasures of vice and folly? Who would have stopped us? We had daring enough for anything--enough even to have bearded the very devil himself if we had thought that some new vice could have been invented, or some fresh

pleasure of sin could have been discovered! But now that God has made us yield, "by Sovereign Grace subdued," and brought us to His feet, and put on us the chains which now we gladly welcome and which we long to wear forever, O come and let us sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things for us! "His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory!" Dear child of God, if there is special Grace in your case, as I know you feel that there has been, there ought to be special honor given to Christ by you. Everyone who is saved ought to live a very special life, an extraordinary life. If you were an extraordinary sinner, or have been, in some way or other, an extraordinary debtor to Divine Love, may there be some extraordinary devotion, extraordinary consecration, extraordinary faith, extraordinary liberality, extraordinary loving kindness, or something else about you in which the traces of that marvelous right hand of God and His holy arm will be plainly manifested!

The last thing I will speak about is this--there is something marvelous in the joy which we, who have believed in the victory worked by Christ, have received. Probably all of you have sung that song of which the refrain is--

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me." That refrain is very monotonous, yet I think I should like to sing it all night and should not wish to leave off even when the morning broke--

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me."

You may turn it over, and over, and over, and over, as long as you like, but you will never find anything that makes you so glad as that thought, "Jesus loves me." And you will never find that the sweetness of that thought, "Jesus loves me," will ever be exhausted. Sinner, if you only knew the blessedness of the life of Christ, you would be glad enough to run away from your own life and run to share ours in Him! We

have peace like a river, we can leave all our cares and our burdens with our God. We are just where we love most to be--in the bosom of our Heavenly Father--and the Spirit of adoption makes us feel perfectly at home with Him. We can say, "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you!" We are in perfect safety, for who is he that can destroy those whom Christ protects? We have got into peace even with our own conscience. We have also a blessed prospect for the future--we shall be borne along upon the wings of Divine Providence until we exchange them for the wings of angels! We have a Heaven below and we are looking for a still better Heaven above--

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King!"

This is the lower part of the choir. Some of the singers are up in the galleries and we are learning, here, the notes that we shall sing above. Come, Beloved, let us make these sinners long to share our joys! If any of you saints have been moaning and groaning of late, get into your proper condition! Begin to tune up and praise the Lord with all your might till the ungodly shall say, "After all, there is something sweeter and brighter and better in the lives of these Christians than we have ever known in ours."

But whether you will rejoice or not, my soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior! And so I will, by His help, till death suspends these mortal songs, or melts them into the immortal songs before the Throne of God! God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 116.

1. I love the LORD because He has heard my voice and my supplications.

[See Sermon #240, Volume 5--prayer answered, LOVE NOURISHED] Every answered prayer should make us love the
Lord and especially those prayers that come up from our heart when it is overwhelmed within us. When we pray in deep trouble and God sends us help and deliverance, it is impossible for us not to love Him! Cannot each Believer here say, with great gratitude, "I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications"?

2. Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live. "This begging business pays so well that I will never give it up as long as I live! The Lord has heard me, so He shall hear me again and again. He is so good and so generous a God--and such bounties are continually being distributed at His door--that I will never go to anybody else, but will continue to knock at God's door as long as I live." The Psalmist goes on to tell us what was the special occasion which brought out this expression of his gratitude.

3. 4. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of Hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul [See Sermon #1216, Volume 21--T0 souls in agony] His petition was short, earnest, plain and personal. It was a
sharp arrow shot from the bow of prayer--and it reached its mark in the heart of God. Are any of you just now in very sore distress? Then let each one imitate the example of the Psalmist and pray, " Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul." Have you been delivered as the Psalmist was? Then, make a note of it! Be sure to jot it down in your diary, so that when you get into such a trouble again, you may turn to the record of God's delivering mercy and say, "The God who delivered me before has not changed, so I will apply to Him again, for I am sure that He will again deliver me."

5, 6. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes our Godis merciful The LORD preserves the simple: I was brought low and He helped me. Poor simpletons who cannot help themselves, but who are, nevertheless, free from deceit and craft and take God's Word as they find it--sincere simple souls--who trust in the Lord! He will take care of them, but He will leave those who think they are wise enough to do so, to take care of themselves.

7, 8. Return unto your rest my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. If we have enjoyed this trinity of deliverances, let us praise the Three-One God forever and ever! Praise Him, my Soul, if you are saved! Praise God, my eyes! Be filled with the happy tears of gratitude since He has delivered you from the bitter, briny tears of grief! Praise Him, you feet that He has kept from falling and run in the way of His commandments with great joy!

9. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. "That shall be my way of walking--not before men, that I may gain their praise, but I will consider the Lord and the Lord alone. And as long as I please Him, I shall not mind whether I please anybody else or not.

10, 11. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars. It is always better not to speak in haste. It is very seldom that we say much that is worth hearing when we talk too fast. "I said in my haste, All men are liars."

12. What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?That is better, for it is better to praise the Lord than to find fault with men, even if the fault found is really there. It is better for each one of us to be rendering our homage to God than picking holes in the coats of others, so let each one of us ask, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits

toward me?"

13. I will take--The Psalmist asks, "What shall I render?" And he answers, "I will take." That is a strange way of rendering, is it not? Yes, Brothers and Sisters, but that is the way for us to show our gratitude to the Lord for all His benefits toward us. John Newton was right when he wrote--

"The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more."

"I will take"--

13, 14. The cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I willpay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence ofall His people. And I can be spokesman for you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and say that the Lord is good, and that we have proved Him to be good to us under peculiarly trying circumstances. He does not fail to help His people, neither does He turn His back upon them in their hour of need. We have tried all other dependences and have been bitterly disappointed. But the Rock of Israel's salvation stands fast forever, Glory be to the name of Jehovah of Hosts! Let us pay our vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.

15. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. [See Sermon #1036, Volume 18--PRECIOUS DEATH]j It is an event for which He makes all necessary arrangements. He does not allow it to happen "accidentally," or according to the will of man. As good old John Ryland says--

"Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of Love thinks fit."

16. O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of

Your handmaid: You have loosed my
bonds. [See Sermon #312, Volume 6--PERSONAL SERVICE] The Psalmist said that he was a home-born slave because his mother was a servant of God and he was born, as it were, a servant of his mother's Lord. How delightful it is to be a Christian and the son of a Christian! Let us rejoice and be glad if that is our happy lot. It is more honor to have had a mother who feared the Lord than a mother who was princess or an empress, but who had not the Grace of God in her heart.

17-19. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence ofall His people, in the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.

Chapter 14

A Time of Finding for Lost Sheep

(No. 3087)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment" Ezekiel 34:16.

IT is a great mercy that God never leaves His Church. He has not made a Church as a watchmaker constructs a watch, which, after being wound up, is left to depend upon the strength and fitness of the machinery, but He has made a Church which, though fitted with the best of machinery, needs His hand every moment to keep it in motion. He has lighted the lamps, but He walks among the golden candlesticks. He has fixed the pillars of the Temple, but His own almighty shoulders are the actual support thereof. He has not left the Church to His ministers, but He, Himself, is the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls. Even if, as some affirm, there were no immediate Divine interpositions in the works of Providence, we know that there are such interpositions constantly in the works of Grace.

We have direct experimental evidence of God's ever-watchful care over His Church. He does not deal with His people only through instruments, but He Himself takes the Church in His own hands. This is His own declaration, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Thus does He speak of His vineyard. So, too, in this chapter, for a while, the shepherds had

domineered over the flock. Evil shepherds had crept into the office, fed themselves, but not the sheep. It would have been an ill day for the Church if Divine interposition were not the rule of His government, but because it is so, God said, "Away, you shepherds! I am against you; and I will require My flock at your hands. Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. Away, you that have dispersed and scattered My flock! I am about to make bare My arm. As you have proved unworthy servants, your Master, Himself, is coming; as you have not fed the people of My pastures and have not gathered together My flock, I Myself will grasp the crook in My own hand." He speaks in His wrath to the foolish shepherds, yet He mingles His threats with pity for those He elsewhere calls "the flock of slaughter." He says, "I will feed even you, O poor of the flock! I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick."

Ah, Beloved, if the Lord did not continually interfere in His Church, the Church would cease to exist! If the Doctrines of His holy Word had been left to man's teaching, they would, by degrees, have so degenerated that the Church would not have had a particle of the Truth of God in its midst. If God had not stretched over His Truth the broad aegis of His own Omnipotence, Truth would have ceased out of the land and those who profess to be its ministers would all have prophesied lies in the name of the Lord! The preservation of the Truth of God in our midst is owing to the direct and immediate interposition of the Almighty. And mark it well, the inward witness of the Truth in the heart of every individual Believer is an instance and evidence of the same unceasing care, inasmuch as only He can apply it to the conscience with quickening power. There is not force enough in the Truth of God to convert souls without the influence of the Holy Spirit. The minister

may be a good under-shepherd and he may endeavor to feed the flock, but God's flock cannot be fed, nor can God's wandering sheep be gathered home unless the Chief Shepherd, the great and mighty Archbishop, even Jesus Christ, shall interfere and Himself do the work! The Divine interposition of God in the midst of His Church is her great bulwark, her hope, her shield, her stay. What we need just now is not so much more shepherds, perhaps not other shepherds--albeit, when the Lord sends laborers into the field, it is because the crops are to be gathered in--but we need the great Master, Himself, to visit us and say, "I will do My own work; since you will not faithfully and fearlessly preach the Truth, I will come and interfere, that My Word may be fully and boldly proclaimed."

Now notice what God has promised to do. In this text there is a character very graphically and minutely described-- and we shall look at the four sentences as descriptive of that one character-- "that which was lost; that which was driven away; that which was broken and that which was sick "Then we shall look at the sentences, one by one, as being very possibly descriptions of four different characters. We shall also endeavor to speak of the sweet promises appended to each character and conclude with a solemn warning to "the fat and the strong."

I. First, then, notice the four features of character here--"that which was lost; that which was driven away; that which was broken and that which was sick." Sometimes we say that all four of these meet in one individual.

To begin with, "THAT WHICH WAS LOST." Doubtless there are some here who have felt in their hearts the solemn meaning of this word, "lost." Not only have I no doubt, but I have strong hopes that some souls here present are really and actually lost in their own experience. It may

seem a cruel thing that I should wish you to feel yourselves lost, but it is a well-intentioned cruelty because, if you are lost, this promise is addressed to you--that God will seek "that which was lost." I shall endeavor, therefore, to tell you how men feel when they are brought to know the dreadful word, "lost," as applicable to themselves.

A man is never lost until he is devoid of all strength. See the mariner who has fallen from the ship--as long as those brawny arms of his can stem the current, as long as he can buffet the waves and hurl them aside with the strong heart of resistance, he gives up nothing for lost. Yes, and should his arms become weary, if he can float a little, and with one hand move himself amidst the billows of the deep, he still thinks it is not yet all over. And while there is one particle of strength remaining, his hopes are too buoyant to give himself up for a lost man. Suppose he grasped a spar? As long as ever those hands of his can, with a death-clutch, keep hold of that floating piece of timber, he does not consider himself lost! Fond Hope still whispers in his ear, "Hold on, you are not lost yet. Some ship may cross this way, Providence may guide its path here and you may yet be delivered. Hold on, you are not lost while a sinew retains its might, while there is any vital force in your frame."

So, Soul, you can never say you are lost till you feel in your heart an utter departure of all your strength. Have you been brought to feel that there is nothing which of yourself you can do apart from the strength of the Holy Spirit? There was a time when you could pray, when you could repent, when you could believe, after your own fashion, with your own supposed strength--is that time all passed over now? Are you saying, "I have no power to do any of those things without Grace from on high. I would, but cannot pray. I would, but cannot repent--this stubborn heart will not dissolve, although I strive to melt it. This

haughty mind will resist the Savior, although I wish to be led in chains of Grace a willing captive to my Lord." Are you brought to feel that if your salvation depended upon one motion of your soul in the right direction, you would be lost, for you have no spiritual strength? Are you lying down, shorn of all your might, bereft of all help and hope in yourself--and do you confess, "I can do nothing without Christ"? Well then, you are one of those whom Christ has come to save! This death unto the Law is the precursor of your being made alive unto God-- and a sure sign that Divine Grace is at work in your soul! So long as you have one particle of carnal strength, God will never show you His salvation. So long as you think to do one solitary good thing of yourself, or rely upon one particle of good works for your redemption, you are under the ban and curse of the Law and are not brought to know the Covenant plan of mercy! But when you are stripped of every rag of self-righteousness, when you say, "Divinity must work, for humanity has failed--God's will must conquer my will, or else I am lost"--then rejoice, rejoice! Though you give yourself up for lost, it is now that God writes you saved! "I will seek that which was lost."

Again, a man is never thoroughly lost until not only his strength has failed him, but he has come to his wit's end. You know how David describes the mariners at sea as rolling to and fro, staggering like drunken men and at their wit's end. While the captain could devise any scheme for scudding before the wind, or evading the tempest, or nearing the harbor, or arriving at the haven, he gave not up his ship for lost. But when every device had failed--when, after suggesting twenty plans, all laid hold upon as Sovereign remedies, but which all failed, he was at his wit's end, or, as the margin reads, his wisdom was swallowed up--then he gave himself up to being really lost.

Have I one here who is, in a spiritual sense, at his wit's end? Once he

said, "I will do this, and then I shall be saved. I will forego that lust, I will renounce that crime, I will moderate my conduct, I will behave myself more Christian-like--
and then I shall be saved." Have you tried these high resolves and have they failed you? Perhaps you have sought after ceremonies and said, "I will shelter myself in the church, keep her rituals and zealously obey her rubrics." Yet that has failed you. You have tried scheme after scheme, only to discover each and all alike abortive. And now you do anxiously enquire, "What must I do to be saved?" Do you say, "I have done all that reason could dictate. I have followed every maxim I could learn as I ran here and there for counsel. I have strained every power mortal can exercise. I have taxed my poor brain till its fitful fancies bewilder me and, alas, all is in vain! What must I do? What shall I do?" Let me tell you.

You are today like a traveler who hast lost his way in a forest. You thought that there was a path and sorely have you been disappointed, until, entangled in the brambles, you have torn your clothes and your flesh. How sure you did make of some way of escape, but, alas, every avenue was blocked up and you could not get out. You have climbed the highest tree in the forest to see where the end of the dark woods might be, but the further you looked, the more intricate did it appear. At length, your hopes extinguished, your plans defeated, your strength exhausted, your tongue parched and your eyes smarting, all that you can do is, like the poor traveler in the desert, when his store of water is spent and his power is gone, lay down in fell despair and die. Are you such an one? Have you tried everything and has everything failed you? Are you now locked up in Giant Despair's castle? If so, I commend to you this blessed Truth of God--Christ came to seek and to save the lost and oh, could you believe it, what a joyous day this would be to you!

You would go out of this house dancing for joy of heart and saying, "I went in there a poor lost one, but the Shepherd of Israel has sought and found me, for Christ came to seek that which was lost!"

Again, a man is not lost until the door of hope is shut fast No man in the world ever gives himself up for lost as long as he has a grain of hope left. Tell the sick man that he must die, for the physician has pronounced his case hopeless, and will he believe you? No! He will cling to the thought that he may yet rally. Has one case of recovery ever been known? Then he hopes his disease may not prove fatal. Has one miraculous cure been worked? He thinks there may be another or if not, perhaps that his case may be the first! And so he hopes on and does not consider his condition desperate. The poor sinner, when lost, gives all up as hopeless and he says, "I have no reason to hope that Christ will have mercy upon me. He might save all the rest of the world, but upon me He will never look with eyes of compassion. Here have I been lying for weeks and months by Bethesda's pool--the angel has often stirred the water--I have seen others step in and they have been saved, My mother has been saved, my brother and my sister have found deliverance! Yet here I am just the same as ever. I go to God's House, but I sit there as an alien. I am not like one of the family and I know I am lost. It seems as if the ears of God were silent against my prayers--when I cry to Him, He disregards the voice of my groaning. Alas, my prayer is like the sacrifice of the wicked, an abomination to the Lord! I feel that He has cast me out of His sight and that I am condemned already!"

What, then, I ask--is your case too hard for Him? "No," you say, "but He will not save me. I have called so long, I have cried so often, surely God has forgotten to be gracious! I am not one of His elect. He has shut up His heart of compassion and I can never be saved." Hear

this, my Friend--if you feel all that, let me solemnly assure you, in God's name, that though lost in yourself, Christ came to save you! Would to God that all of you who hear me this day were either agonizing over your being lost, or rejoicing that you are found! You would then be equally safe, if not equally happy. I had rather, O you careless Sinners, that terrors took hold upon you and fears compassed you about, than that you should be dancing on the mountains of folly and reveling in your sins, unconscious of danger! Know this, you lighthearted, you giddy and silly ones--the hour of your damnation draws near! But as for you who are broken in pieces, sighing and groaning because you think your case is hopeless, let me tell you, as God's ambassador, that your case is not hopeless, but hopeful You may call to mind, like Jeremiah, your affliction and your misery, "the wormwood and the gall," and say with him, "Therefore have I hope."

Have I faithfully described you? Will you answer to your name as a prodigal son, as a lost child? Then, lost as you are, you have a Father! So lost as to need finding, so lost as to need saving, I think I hear a Father's yearnings over you, "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord." I think I hear the Savior's voice saying, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." A vision flits before my eyes--I think I see the blessed Jesus in shepherd's garb, with staff in hand, bearing on His shoulders a lost sheep whom He has, this morning, recovered. Just now the poor sheep was wandering in the wilderness in a solitary way--now he is laid on the everlasting shoulders, guarded by Omnipotent power and kept secure from harm! Happy soul! The angels rejoice over you, though your heart has not yet realized the sense of security which could give you joy!

There is another characteristic of the man who feels himself lost, more horrible than those I have mentioned. Waking to a consciousness that he is lost, he not only beholds the gate of Hope shut, but the gate of Hell opened. Ah, my Friends! I speak now as one who should know, as one who has felt in his own soul what his lips describe. I have passed through that experience which I have told you and this have I likewise known. Well do I remember, after many a month of prayer without an answer from God, when faith I had none and my hope had given up the ghost, I thought God would never save me. And just then I thought the gates of Hell were opened before my soul--for if ever a soul did experience a foretaste of Perdition, I think I did--and I believe many of you experienced the same before you found peace with God. You knew you were not in Hell and yet you thought even that almost preferable to your condition, you were in such dread suspense! Sometimes there was a glimmer of hope, but that only made your darkness more visible. As John Bunyan has it, the Hell drum was beating in your ears--you heard it from morning till night, and from night till morning-- "Lost, lost, lost! You will soon be in Hell!" Do you not remember when you did walk the earth and think that every tuft of grass would be as the mouth of Hell to open and swallow you up--when you could not sleep for frightful dreams and did wake and feel the very terror which haunted you in your night visions? Your poor conscience was lashed by the whip of the Law and while your wounds were smarting, you did cry, "O God! Will You never save me? The sorrows of death have compassed me about, and all Your billows have gone over me."

Do you not remember when, like David, all your bones were out of joint and you said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me"--but there was no answer? And, moreover, Satan suggested a reply--"What? Renew a right spirit in YOU? You are the

worst wretch who ever lived! Your death warrant is signed, the wood is burning that will consume you, the chains are already forged to bind you forever and you shall be with me shut up under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Now, is there such an one here, one to whom Hell's gates are opened, upon whom fiends seem perpetually hissing--one who is brought to the black land of confusion, to the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where not only is there no hope, but where the portending clouds seem to be gathered round him? Let him take heart--Christ has come to save such lost souls! And as surely as the devil is let loose upon you in this way, Christ will find him yet! He will break the teeth of the oppressor and will take you, His poor lost sheep, out of the jaws of the lion and the paw of the bear! Are you so lost? Then here is the promise for you--"I will seek that which was lost."

But you say, "Sir, I have had too long a trial to think it possible. I have attended your ministry, and other ministries, for many a long year. Sometimes I have thought that surely I might be saved, but ah, it is of no use! You may speak of all the promises you like, they have nothing to do with me. I write my name down among the lost--and charm you ever so wisely, I am like the deaf adder--never, never to be comforted! It is all over--I am locked up in this iron cage of despair--lost, lost beyond all hope and I cannot believe what you say!" Ah, poor Soul, but just notice what the text says, "I will seek that which was lost." I have been seeking you for many a Sabbath and so have other ministers, but we have never found you--but God's seeking is very different from ours! If I could, I would come to you with these weeping eyes of mine, and say, "Poor Sinner, do take heart." I would go down upon my knees with you and offer my supplications for you that you might believe in Christ. But I know it would avail little unless my

Master sought you. The under-shepherds have been after you many a day, but they could not find you. But God knows, as we do not, where you are! If you are in the deepest pit in the forest, His almighty eyes can see to the bottom! Yes, and in one of the favored moments of the day of salvation, that time accepted, He will send home a promise so sweetly that all your fetters shall break off in an instant, your night shall be scattered, your dawn begin and He will give you the oil ofjoy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness! Believe now, and you shall be comforted now--for the time of faith is the time of comfort!

Our text gives us a second characteristic of lost sheep--"THAT WHICH WAS DRIVEN AWAY." I wish to particularize this morning because I have begged the Lord to send His arrows home personally, even to three or four, rather than to let me shoot them in among you and strike no hearts at all. There are souls, not only lost, but driven away. "I could tell you of a time," says one, "when I had a hope of Heaven or, at least, I thought I had. I groaned, prayed and strived and one Sabbath--I shall never forget it--I stepped into the House of God and, during the reading of a chapter or the singing of a hymn, I fondly thought that I had seen Christ and had believed in Him! But oh, it was only for a

moment--I was only permitted to just look into the well of Living Water--no one came to draw water for me and give me a drink. I thought for a single second, 'Now is the hour of my salvation.' Something said within my heart, 'Now is the appointed time. Today is the day of salvation,' and I almost began to smile within myself at the thought that I had found the Lord. But, Sir, I was driven away and I dare not go again! I was once very near being a Believer--I was just upon the edge of having faith in Christ--but it only makes the night darker to

think I once saw a star, for I was driven away."

Now there are different ways in which poor sinners are driven away and in many cases it is the devil's work. Sometimes unbelief does it--the sinner sees Christ on the Cross, the blood flowing from His head and hands and feet and side, and he thinks--

"Oh I could but believe, Then all would easy be."

He thinks of the happy effects that would follow faith in Christ and something says within him--

"Venture on Him, venture wholly! Let no other trust intrude."

And he is just going to do it when suddenly there comes a great black thought, "What, you? You have no right to come! Away with you!" He has just pressed through the crowd and is going to touch the hem of his Master's garment, but before his finger reaches it, someone has pushed in front of him and he goes away broken-hearted--and all the more so to think that he should have ever had the presumption, as he deems it, to hope for salvation! Unbelief has pushed many a sinner away from Christ just when he was coming and has kept him away for a long time.

Sometimes legal preachers drive souls away They preach a Gospel so much mixed up with Law, so united with the doings of man, that the poor soul just coming to Christ gets driven away. And even some of God's true ministers--yes, the very best of them--sometimes drive poor sinners away from Christ. When they speak of the experience of the saint, the poor sinner writes bitter things against himself because he does not feel that he comes up to the experience which some of the Lord's children have had. Ah, we cannot always tell when we are driving poor souls away from Christ. Often, when we think we are wooing them, we are really driving them away! When we would be winning them to the Savior, some harsh expression of ours frightens sinners away from Him! Ah, poor Soul! Have you been driven away? Do you understand and sympathize with

what I have said? Before I knew the Lord, I could declare that I was driven away. Once, under a powerful sermon, my heart shook within me and was dissolved in the midst of my body. I thought I would seek the Lord and I bowed my knee and wrestled, and poured out my heart before Him. I ventured within His sanctuary to hear His Word, hoping that in some favored hour He would send a precious promise to my consolation, but ah, that wretched afternoon I heard a sermon wherein Christ was not and I had no longer any hope! I would have sipped at that fountain, but I was driven away! I felt that I would have believed in Christ and I longed and sighed for Him. But ah, that dreadful sermon--and those dreadful things that were uttered! My poor soul knew not what was truth, or what was error, but I thought the man was surely preaching the truth and I was driven back. I dared not go! I could not believe I could not lay hold on Christ! I was shut out if no one else was.

Is there someone here who has been thus driven away? I may have done it and I will weep before God in secret on account of it. But let me cheer you. Hear this--"I will bring again that which was driven away." As surely as you ever did come once, you will be brought back! That heavenly hour shall once more return! That blessed day shall dawn afresh! Christ shall appear and His love and mercy shall be bestowed on you! He has drawn you once and He will draw you again, for God never fails! He may, for wise ends and purposes, suffer you to be driven away once, but He will ultimately bring you to Himself, for He has said, "I will bring again that which was driven away."

The other two points have, I think, something to do with the driving away--"I WILL BIND UP THAT WHICH WAS BROKEN." This, I think, refers to those who have been broken by being driven away. The shepherds smote them so hard that they even broke their bones. How many have there been who, when they thought they had found Christ, but were driven away,

have felt from that moment that they were broken, that they were more sorely wounded than ever they had been! They did entertain some little hope before, that Christ might look upon then with love, but now they are broken to pieces--and that breaking, together with the breaking of the Holy Spirit, which has ground them as in the mortar and pestle of conviction, has so broken them that they feel utterly destroyed.

Besides the sickness of sin, they have upon them a sickness partly engendered by the strokes of those who drove them away. Then comes in most blessedly the fourth promise of the text--"I WILL STRENGTHEN THAT WHICH WAS SICK."

I may be taking an extreme case when I suppose one character in whom those four points meet. Have I anyone here in such a position--not only "lost," not only "driven away," but "broken" and "sick"? Your head has begun to whirl, you know not how it is, but so strongly have these convictions got hold of you that your very mind seems to suffer from them--a mystery to yourself--you cannot tell where you are! Some say that you are mad and you think, within yourself, that they have good ground for the suspicion. You are sick of your existence and almost ready to take your life! A terrible giddiness has seized you, as if a Hell were kindled in your breast to be the prelude of despair and irrevocable destruction--the first notes of the "Miserere" of eternal woe! Are you reduced to such a terrible extremity? Are you sick as well as broken and driven away and lost? Hear this, "I will seek that which was lost." Can you not believe that God's promise is true? "I will bring again that which was driven away." Do you think that God's, "I will, "s tands for nothing? "I will bind up that which was broken." Can you not implicitly believe what God so absolutely affirms? "I will strengthen that which was sick." O sick one, God give you Grace to understand that He means what He says and to believe that He will do

what He promises! Come now, is there one here in whom all these troubles meet? Let him lift up his head with joy from this moment, for Jesus Christ has come to save him and his sighing shall, before long, be exchanged for songs of thanksgiving!

II. Now, very briefly, let me hint at the four characters separately.

First, "that which was lost. "This, of course, is the awakened sinner who is made to know that, in Adam, he is lost and by his own sins he is utterly ruined and destroyed. Such an one has here the Divine authority for hope that God will seek him and that he shall yet be saved.

"I will bring again that which was driven away." This refers to the backslider who has been driven away from God by sin. Strong temptations have goaded him to follow the propensities of his own wicked will. Poor Backslider, God will restore you! Oh, I could tell of some here who have greatly and grievously departed from the paths of righteousness! And the leanness will testify that they have been driven from the pastures. Let me say to you, in God's name, that He will bring back "that which was driven away." "Oh but," you say, "six years ago I dishonored my profession, and ever since I have been as one estranged from his people." Yes, but if you are the Lord's child, if it were 60 years, He would bring you back with weeping and lamentation unto Zion! "Oh, Sir, but I have so disgraced the cause!" Turn you, turn you at His bidding! God invites you to come! My backsliding Brother, my backsliding Sister, I will not condemn you. I may become a backslider, too, and the best of these who now stand fast by Jesus may be, likewise, "overtaken in a fault." You are condemned enough in your own heart--I would not that you should "be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." "Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you." 'Tis even so with our God. "Yet does He devise means

that His banished be not expelled from Him." Come, Ephraim! You have been a stubborn child, still your Father bids you come home! Come, Prodigal! You have wasted your substance, yet a Father's loving eyes have beheld you when you were a great way off. Come! His breast heaves with love for you! Come, you driven-away one, come to Him! He loved you before you loved Him and though you did rebel against Him, He has never ceased to love you! Though you have sinned much, His loving heart is immutably the same. Oh believe in His goodness in the teeth of your own unworthiness--so shall you be comforted and the word on which He has caused you to hope shall be fulfilled, "I will bring again that which was driven away."

The next character is the broken one. The child of God is often broken--especially if he has been a backslider. He is sure to have broken bones and he is likely to limp all the rest of his days. Or the Believer may be broken by trouble, by affliction, or by assaults of the enemy. He may be broken on account of the inbred sin manifested to him by the Holy Spirit. But, broken one, God will help you, for He has said, "I will bind up that which was broken." Sweet thought! Precious promises are the ligatures with which God Himself binds up broken bones! Marvelous Surgeon! God Almighty Himself bowing down from Heaven to put the heavenly liniment and the fair white linen of a Savior's righteousness round about the wounded spirit! Broken one, rejoice! God says, "I will bind up that which was broken."

Lastly, there are the sick ones, and many such there are among the Lord's people. Their faith is weak. Their prayers are not so spiritual and fervent as they desire. There is a chill about them, or else a heat of feverish anxiety. Their hearts often palpitate with gloomy fears and sad forebodings--they are not so healthy as they desire to be before God--they

long for that perfect love which casts out fear. Yes then, do you feel that sickness, Saint, this morning? Say not because you are sick that God will let you die. No, for He says, "I will strengthen that which was sick." So then, Saints in all your distresses, Sinners in all your sins--here are exceedingly great promises ministered unto you this morning! And may the Holy Spirit show you their infinite value and apply then to you with demonstration and with power! How unspeakable the satisfaction to a poor sinner when he hears the physician minutely describe all his ailments! But to hear him speak with confidence that however painful, no symptom is beyond his skill, how the patient will brighten up! Your case, my Brother, is more cheering still! Have you not sometimes heard your doctor say, "When you recover from this sickness, you will be better than you were before"? Well now, think how far God's mercies exceed our miseries, how far His cure extends beyond our maladies, how sure He is to do for His people exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think! Then, despairing Soul, though you have all four maladies, you shall have all four promises! If you are a member of His family, for every affliction and every chastisement you shall get so many peaceable fruits of righteousness, so that you will afterwards kiss the rod and subscribe to David's testimony, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word." And mark you this--in the fulfillment of God's promises you shall receive double for all your distresses!

And now, can I say any more? Have I not gone to the uttermost case in the application of my text? Are there any poor souls that I have not reached? Then let me try once again. My dear Friends, do you know yourselves to be lost and ruined by the Fall? Do you feel that you are utterly undone, ruined and lost without Christ? Well then, in His name I solemnly declare this great Truth of the Gospel--that all who know

this and feel it may confidently believe that there is salvation for them! The only proof that I can give you that you shall be saints is that you feel that you are now sinners. O poor sin-sick Soul, I thank God that you are afflicted with this sickness, for now you will have recourse to the Physician! O poor Sinner, I thank God that you know yourself to be poor, for God will make you rich!

But as for such as you are as the text says, "the fat and the strong," you who boast that you are good enough and have need of nothing, go your own way--you want no Gospel and I have none to preach to you! You who are so good and excellent, you want no Christ to save you--you will despise the man who comes in Christ's name to preach free, unmerited, Sovereign Love. And what if you do? Does he care for your contempt? Not one whit! Reproach will sit lightly on him if he may but win souls to be found in Christ at last. If you need not the medicine, spurn it if you please, but you are fools for your pains! And if you want it not for yourselves, if you are so whole that you need not the physician, hoot him not while he goes to attend upon those who feel their danger to be imminent! Grumble not that I preach no Gospel to you, for you want it not! You are as good as you can be--in fact, rather better than most Christians in your own opinion! You are no cants, no hypocrites. You may want a patch or two of religion to make you all right at last. Your garments are white and courtly--they only need a little brushing to take the dust off. Alas for you, Sirs, Hell is built for such good people as you are! You shall find no place in Heaven--its blessed mansions are prepared for sinners saved by Grace! Hell's dark dungeons remain for those who reject Christ, despise mercy and scorn to sue for pardon because they deem themselves too good, too holy, too excellent to need a Savior!

I say again, as for you who are fat and strong, God will feed you with

judgment! You think to stand by your own works, but your best works will destroy you! You shall appear before God in your own characters and they shall ruin you forever. You think your own merits will suffice and that God will bestow on you a reward. Yes, and He will reward you, and a terrible recompense it shall be when you shall find yourselves receiving what you have earned--tribulation, wrath and destruction from the Presence of the Lord your God! Your consciences tell you that what I speak is true. You may despise the warning now, but in the silent moments of your sober thought it shall cling to you and haunt you. When your guilt recoils on your memory. When your heart and flesh fail, and your reason totters at the prospect of a dread hereafter, you will howl with misery and cry out, "Woe worth the day!"

Now you lost and ruined, come to Jesus! You broken Sinners, believe in Jesus! You that are bruised and mangled by the Fall, come to Jesus--

"Come you needy, come and welcome! God's free bounty glorify. True belief and true repentance, Every Grace that brings us nigh, Without money,

Come to Jesus Christ and buy!

Let not conscience make you linger,

Nor of fitness fondly dream--

All the fitness He requires

Is to feel your need of Him--

And this He gives you!

'Tis His Spirit's rising beam."

Chapter 15

The Storm and the Shower

(No. 3088)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the LORD of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn My hand upon the little ones." Zechariah 13:7.

WE are sure that we understand this passage, for we have our Lord Jesus Christ's application of it to Himself--"All you," He said to His disciples, "shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." It is always well, when we are considering a text in the Old Testament which we think may refer to Christ, if we can be certified that it does so by some declaration of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, or by some testimony from the lips of the Master, Himself, as we have in this case.

The passage seems to me to be best illustrated by a description I once heard from one of our Lord's servants who pictured a tempest as gathering in the heavens, the darkness deepening and, by-and-by, came the thunder and lightning, and the storm shook the earth. He saw before him a towering mountain, with its peak lifted high up towards Heaven. At the foot of it lay a sheltered hamlet. The storm seemed all concentrated around the mountain's brow that was the center of the battle of the elements. That lofty peak seemed to be split and broken

to shivers by the dread artillery of God. The hamlet down below was in comparative peace--only some gentle drops of rain fell on it, fertilizing its fields. And he who gave the illustration said, "That peak was the Christ of God, Jesus the Substitute and Surety of His people, standing in our place, on whom burst the full tempest of Jehovah's wrath, that the soft drops of pity and of Grace might fall on the people for whom He suffered."

Looking at the text in that light, we have, first, the thunder of the tempest--"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Then we have the soft and gentle shower--"I will turn My hand upon the little ones." There is the war-note first, the crack and clang of conflict and then it is peace, with the music of rest and joy.

I. First, then, LET US WATCH THAT TERRIBLE STORM.

And let us notice, first, the Victim upon whom it fell. According to the text, the sword was to awake against One who is called by God, "My Shepherd," and who is further described as "the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts." We gather, therefore, that Jesus, who suffered in our place, holds the office of a Shepherd, a Shepherd appointed by God, and sent by Him to take care of the sheep. It is not my objective, at this time, to speak at length upon this office of the Lord Jesus Christ, [Mr. Spurgeon preached many Sermons upon Christ's office as Shepherd, including the following-- Sermons #995, Volume 17--THE SHEEP AND THEIR SHEPHERD; #1877, Volume 32--OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHERD; #2120, Volume 35--THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS--OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH and #3006, Volume 52--"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"] but just to remind you that, as Jacob, when he was shepherd to Laban, was responsible for all the flocks under his care, so has God committed His

own chosen flock into the hands of Jesus, "that great Shepherd of the sheep," and He has become responsible for them. They will pass again under the hand of Him that counts them, and He will say to His Father, "Here I am, and the sheep that You did give into My hand. Of all that You gave Me, I have lost none." It is Christ's office to keep His sheep even to the end, and to lead them at last to lie down upon the hilltops of Heaven, not one of them having been lost by the way. Dear Friend, let us exult in this relationship between Christ and His people! We are as weak and foolish and as full of needs as sheep can be, but we have a Shepherd who perfectly understands us, who so loves us that He will preserve to the end even the very least among us!

I want to dwell now upon the personal description of Christ that is given by the Lord of Hosts Himself--"the Man that is My Fellow." We never wish to deny the real Manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not always possible to speak of that Manhood without making some mistakes, but for my part, I believe the mistake of falling short of a description of full and proper Manhood is far more frequent than the mistake of carrying that description too far. Jesus Christ felt as we feel, suffered as we suffer and was tempted in all points like as we are. He was a Man as to His body and He was a Man as to His soul. He was born as we are and from Infancy grew to Boyhood, and "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." He reasoned as we reason, but without the evil bias which the Fall has given to our judgment. He lived as we live, only without that tendency to evil which has come to us through our natural depravity. In everything that is included in pure Manhood, Christ was one with us. Sin was not present in the first ideal of manhood, and it was not present in Christ--"in Him was no sin." Do not, I pray you, ever set Jesus Christ up so high as to imagine that His Manhood was not like yours, so that He cannot

sympathize with you--for then you cannot sympathize with Him! And the next thing will be that you cannot love Him, and that you cannot trust Him and that you cannot come unto Him and have fellowship with Him. Believe, Beloved, that He was in all points such as you are with the exception of your sin. He had infirmities such as you have, though they were sinless ones. He felt just such aches and pains as trouble you and the depressions and downcastings that vex your spirit. Yes, He who stood in our place was a Man! The Law demanded that man, who had done dishonor to it, should also vindicate it--and it was so, for the Son of Mary stood in the gap on our behalf. The second Adam, the true representative Man, stood there to render unto living Justice full payment of the debt which the first Adam, representing us, had incurred!

But the text is equally clear in the description of Christ's Godhead--"the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts." What a wonderful description this is! A Man and yet "My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts." The word translated, "Fellow," signifies companion, associate, confidant and equal. I could not express the full meaning of it in fewer words than those. Christ was God's Companion--"the Word was with God." "I was by Him, as One brought up with Him." Christ was God's Associate, with whom the Father constantly communed in fullest fellowship. He was God's Confidant--He had seen all things that His Father had done and, therefore, He was able to make them known to us. He was also equal with the Father, and we may go even beyond our text and say that He was One with God, for so He claimed to be when He said, "I and My Father are One." I never wonder, when persons once doubt the Deity of Christ, if they go to great lengths in slandering His Character. I heard, the other day, something said with regard to our Savior's birth which it is not right for any man to repeat, yet I said,

when I heard it, "Yes, and it would be so if He were not really God." The mystery of His birth does become a matter that we have to speak of with bated breath if He was not the Son of the Highest. And His life itself (I say this with the utmost reverence to His holy name) was a barefaced imposture if He was not the Son of God, for that He certainly claimed to be! But, Beloved, we know of a surety that Christ was the Son of the Highest and "very God of very God." And such He is to us in His power within our souls. He has done for us what no mere man could ever have done and we are resting all our hopes for time and for eternity upon One who is able to save us unto the uttermost because He is Divine! He is indeed the "Fellow" of the Eternal, and I delight to think that He who stood in our place and suffered in our place, though Man, was not merely Man! It was the Infinite who became an Infant! It was God who became Man, that He might stand in the sinner's place and that so the Atonement might have an infinite value which otherwise it could not have had! It was God who bore my sins in His own body on the tree! And the Apostle spoke under Divine Inspiration when he said to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, "Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." The expression must be allowable, or it would not have been used in such a connection, so I also will use it. It was my God who bled for me on Calvary, that I might live with Him forever! Oh, what consolation there is in this Truth of God, that He who was smitten instead of us, was most truly God as well as most certainly Man!

I have thus, then, clearly set before you that wondrous Victim of the terrible storm.

Now think, next, of the sufferings He endured. Concerning them, the text says, "Awake, O sword...smite the Shepherd." It was a sword, then, with which He was smitten! Upon Christ there did not so heavily fall

the rod of chastisement as the sword of punishment. He was chastised for our sake, for "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him," but more than that, there was the sharp penal sword which demanded life itself! Against our Savior the most fatal weapon was used. He must not merely be sorrowful even unto death, but He must actually die! Dear Friends, that sword
was so keen and piercing that it cut Him to the very soul. I talk of these great Truths of God very simply, for I do not think there is any occasion here for using flowers of speech. But if we were as we ought to be, we should be very deeply affected at the thought that the Son of Man most perfect, and the Son of God most glorious, should have the sword of Divine Vengeance against sin plucked out of its scabbard that it might be used upon Him! O Darling of Jehovah, must You bleed? You fairest among ten thousand fair, You who are altogether lovely, must You be dragged down into the dust of death? O Face like the noonday sun, must You be eclipsed in darkness? O Eyes brighter than the evening star, must You be sealed in the midnight of death, after having first been quenched in floods of tears? It must be so! The sword which is for criminals, the sword which is to avenge high treason, the sword which cannot be quiet so long as there is sin before the Throne of God--that sword must leap out of its scabbard and sheathe itself in the heart of Christ!--

"Jehovah bade His sword awake,
O Christ, it woke against Thee!
Your blood the flaming blade must slake,
Your heart its sheath must be!
All for my sake, my peace to make
Now sleeps that sword for me." And then you will notice that the very wording of the text indicates the sharpness of the suffering. It is,

"Awake, O sword," as if the sword of God had been asleep! Yet I have read of Pharaoh and his hosts destroyed at the Red Sea, and of Amalek cut off from before the Lord, and of Canaanites abolished from their native land and of Sennacherib's vast army slain in a single night! Was not the sword of the Lord awake then? No--it was only, as it were, starting in its sleep. The sword of Divine Justice was stirring in its scabbard, but God's long-suffering was pushing it back. But now He cries to it, "Awake, O sword! End your slumbering now! Human sin has startled you many a time, but I have said to you, 'Sleep on, My patience must have her perfect work, so wait.' But now leap out of your scabbard, O sword, for your Victim is before you! He is come upon whom human sin is concentrated--the Victim whom you are to smite, because upon Him the Lord has laid the iniquity of all His people." It seems a dreadful thing to me. I cannot express what I have thought about it and felt about it, that this sword of God's vengeance, which, uplifted at any time, would smite us to Hell, must be bid to awake, that is, to awaken itself to more than its usual sharpness, to cut and hew and hack as it did when Christ was exposed to its keen blade. His physical sufferings, His mental griefs and His spiritual torments are beyond all description! When God's Infinite Justice was wide awake and in sternest action, you may guess in a measure, but you cannot fully conceive what our Lord must have endured!

Observe once more, for this adds to the force of the language, that this sword was awakened by the voice of God, Himself. I can imagine the cry that arose to God's sword when the world was corrupt and full of sin in the days of Noah, and man's sin cried aloud, "Awake, O sword!" I can understand how the groans and tears of the children of Israel when they were in Egypt, in cruel bondage, said, "Awake, O sword!" I can imagine the unutterable abominations of the Canaanites crying, "Awake,

O sword!" I think I can even hear your sins and mine saying, "Awake, O sword!" Yet God did not suffer that sword to awake to the fullest extent, even in those dreadful times! And, in the case of Believers, not at all, for "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." But, at last, God spoke! God, the Lord of Hosts, spoke and said, "Awake, O sword!" Now the sword must awake, for it is God who calls to it! And when God Himself bids the sword of Divine Justice smite His Son, He knows, as we cannot, what those blows must have been. "Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." The bruising of the Roman scourge was terrible, but His Father's bruising were far worse. Neither Jew nor Gentile could put Him to grief as the Father did. That was the keenest agony of all which made Him cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" So it was God who awakened the sword and God who smote the Shepherd with Omnipotent power, which, if Christ also had not been Omnipotent, would have utterly destroyed Him! I believe that our poet was right when he said that Christ--

"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, yet none to spare." Now notice, thirdly, while I am speaking about the storm, the startling effect of it upon those who were with the Victim--"Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." The disciples were alarmed at the very approach of the Savior's sufferings. They feel asleep even while He was praying in the garden. And they ran away, like cowards, when He was arrested. Some of them crept back by stealth to see Him in the Hall of Judgment, but one of them denied Him even there--and none of them had the courage to stand by Him in His time of trial. We may blame them, but there is a view of their conduct which may be taken which, though it does not excuse them, may at least show how much we are like

they are. I think they were startled at His agony, astonished at His griefs, amazed that such an One as He was could be treated with such scorn and ignominy and be put to such a shameful death. They believed Him to be the Son of the Highest and they could not understand how He could be made to suffer so. And when I have seen sin laid on Jesus, I must confess that I have been astonished and startled and overwhelmed by His grief. And I have thought that if I had been with Him in His agony, as His disciples were, I might have been scattered with them. The sufferings of the Man who was the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts, in place of us poor worms of the earth, were more than we can comprehend! God grant us Grace, if startled as we hear about them, to rally again to Him and, each one of us to say, with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God," and then to cling to Him through life and in death, come what may!

II. I will not further describe this great storm, for I need your patient attention for a little while longer while I speak of THE BLESSED SHOWER OF MERCY WHICH FOLLOWED IT--"I will turn My hand upon the little ones."

Where does this shower of mercy fall? "Upon the little ones." What does that expression mean? It is a name of fondness and endearment We who are parents love to talk about our little ones. And God, who is the Father of the family of which Christ is the Elder Brother, calls us His little ones to show how He loves us. There is a propensity about love to speak of its object as little--you know how we make little words of endearment and apply them to those of whom we are very fond. So God calls His children--His people--His little ones and says that He will turn His hand upon them. How little we all are in comparison with God! We are not worthy even to be mentioned in connection with Him. We talk about the little ants which toil and tug to move one tiny grain of wheat, but the ants might very well say to us, "We are not little at

all, compared with you, in comparison with what you are when you are contrasted with the great God who made both us and you." He fills all things and, compared with Him, we are less than nothing! Then how sweet it is to know that God will turn His hand upon His little ones, such insignificant nothings as we are--born yesterday, living today and dead before tomorrow comes--mere flowers that bloom but to fade and die! O God, how good You are to think about us who are so little!

And then, further, those whom the Lord loves are little in their own estimation and the promise of the text is to those who are little. "I will turn My hand upon the little ones"--little as to excellence. Yes, with no excellence of which you dare to boast--little as to natural strength to do that which is good. Yes, with no natural strength at all, but feeling yourselves to be helpless and hopeless apart from Christ--so little that you need to be swaddled in the bands of Grace, carried in the arms of power, fed from the bosom of eternal love and to be nurtured, kept, preserved, protected by God all your life--for you can do nothing of yourselves! Well, if you feel your littleness, here is the promise for just such as you are, "I will turn My hand upon the little ones." You strong ones may take care of yourselves, if you can. You who exult in your own native strength may go your own way. You who are rich and increased in goods may glory in what you have, but my Master fills the hungry with good things! He lifts up the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes. Thus He turns His hand upon the little ones and happy are you who are the objects of His mercy!

Next, think of the Giver of the mercy--"Iwill turn My hand upon the little ones." Then it is God, Himself--that same Lord of Hosts who smote the Shepherd--who turns His own hand upon the little ones! Was He strong to smite, Beloved? Then He is equally strong to save! Did He smite His Son with Omnipotent blows? Then He will bless us with

Omnipotent love. Oh, think of this! The hand that smote the Shepherd is now turned in another direction, but with the same power in it, to bless the sheep! How just, then, is the Grace which we receive! The right hand of God wields the sword and with it He smites His well-beloved Son. But, having smitten Him, He draws the sword and the same hand of Infallible Justice now deeds out the bounties of the Covenant, for every blessing which any child of God receives comes from Him as justly as if it were not a gift of mercy, for when Christ died for us, and so discharged all our debts, it was but just that we should be justified in Him. When He had stood in our place and offered a perfect righteousness and a complete Atonement for us, it was only justice that we should be "accepted in the Beloved." Every gift that now comes to God's people comes in a way of which Divine Justice itself approves! No, more--it so comes that it would not be just if it had not come! The right hand which smote Christ on our behalf is the same right hand which is now turned upon the little ones.

Oh, how blessed it is to see Justice and Mercy thus united in the Covenant of Grace! How honorable it is to be found in such a condition that God's own royal hand has now become our protection! Yes, Lord, I have learned the inflexible character of Your Justice in the death of Your dear Son. And as I have seen Him bleed and die, my soul has been crushed into the dust and I have been terrified because of Your severity. But now that I know that just such an One as You were in all Your sternness in smiting Your Son, just such You are in Your loving care of all Your elect and, therefore, does my spirit exult in You!

Take the attribute of Justice away from God and you have taken away that which makes all the other attributes sure to the people of God!

But when you see that He who is the God of Infinite Justice is also the God who turns His hand upon us in mercy, there is a sweetness about the

whole matter which otherwise we would not have been able to perceive!

So I close by noticing what this mercy is which comes to the people of God--"I will turn My hand upon the little ones." That is, "My hand of compassion. Before, through their sin, I put them away from Me, but now that I have smitten their Shepherd instead of them, I will draw near to them. I will be with them. I will touch them. I will be their God and they shall be My people. I will turn My hand upon them in compassionate familiarity."

"I will turn My hand upon them." That is, "My hand of power to protect them. When any come forth to attack them, I will put forth My hand to shield them from danger. No, more--I will take them up into My hand and none shall pluck them from it. I will keep then as the apple of My eye. I will cover them with My feathers and under my wings shall they trust. My Truth shall be their shield and buckler. I will turn My hand upon the little ones, so that though they were defenseless before, My Omnipotent power shall guard them against danger of every kind."

"I will turn My hand of bounty towards these little ones." God's hand is a full hand and He gives of His fullness to His little ones and satisfies their mouth with good things. He opens His hand and supplies the needs of every living thing, so He will certainly not neglect those little ones for whom Christ died as a Substitute!

Next, "I will turn My hand of gracious working upon the little ones," as if we were, like the potter's vessels upon the wheel, only half fashioned as yet. But God will turn His hand upon us. He has done something to us and He will keep on doing more and more till He has made us perfect. Already the image of Jesus Christ is, in a measure, set upon all His chosen, but the Lord will keep His hand at work upon us until He has made our likeness to Christ complete. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we

know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He," for God's own hand working continually upon us shall make us so, and then "we shall see Him as He is." Is there not much joy in this thought?

I think I ought to add here that as after our Lord had been smitten on Calvary, the day of Pentecost came and thousands were gathered into the Church--and in that respect God's hand was turned upon the little ones to gather them in, so I bless His name that He still has a chosen people whom He means to gather with His almighty hand of gracious power because He has smitten Christ in their place. And my hope concerning every sinner here lies in this Truth of God, that Jesus Christ has a people purchased with His blood, many of whom do not yet know this and, ignorant of Him, are still lying outside the fold. But them also He will bring in, that there may be one flock [See Sermon #1713, Volume 29--

OTHER SHEEP AND ONE FLOCK] and one Shepherd. We preach the Gospel to you unconverted people for this reason, because God, having smitten Christ in the sinner's place, has promised to lay His hand upon the little ones! And we trust that you may be among those upon whom He will lay His hand of Omnipotent Grace, and bring you in, that you may be His forever.

O unconverted people, do learn from the text how much it cost the Savior to bear our sin! He had to be smitten with God's sword though He was only bearing the sin of others. What will it cost you if you have to bear the punishment of your own sin forever and ever? Tremble at that thought and answer the question if you can. Christ sweat great drops of blood even while anticipating the agonies of the Cross--and if you could know what it would be for you to have to suffer for your own sin forever, it would not be extraordinary if you, also, were to sweat great drops of blood at this moment! It is such an awful thing to fall

into the hands of the living God while unforgiven, so beware, you whose sins are unpardoned, lest that sword which has been sleeping with regard to you until now, should leap out of its scabbard and pierce you to the heart! It must and will do so before long if you remain unrepentant . If Christ had to suffer so much for the sins of others, how will you suffer when the burden of your own sins shall be laid upon you!

See, Sinners, the only way of peace for you--it is through Jesus suffering in your place! Your debts to God you can never pay! No, not one in a million of them, but Christ paid the debts of all who believe in Him. You can make no atonement for yourself, but everyone who trusts in Jesus can claim His Atonement for his own. Oh, may God's Infinite Mercy move you to trust in Christ this very hour! And that being done, the Sword of Justice will be sheathed so far as you are concerned--and God will turn His gracious hand upon you and bless you from this time forward, and even forevermore!

As for you who are saved by Christ, see what you owe Him. By every groan He suffered, love Him! By every pang He endured, love Him! By the piercing of that sharp sword even to the death, love Him! And as you love Him, live for Him! And as you love Him, speak well of Him! And as you love Him, pray for the coming of His Kingdom! And as you love Him, keep His commandments! And as you love Him, grow more and more into His likeness every day you live, until you go to be with Him forever! God bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"--291, 406.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM22.

This Psalm so sweetly and so accurately pictures the inward griefs of our Divine Savior that it might have been written after the Crucifixion rather than so many hundreds of years

before it. I call your attention to the fact that this
Psalm is followed by the 23rd, which begins, "The Lord is my Shepherd;
I shall not want," to remind you that you and I
would never have had that sweet 23rd Psalm to sing if our Divine
Shepherd had not been made, with groans and tears, to
weep out the 22nd Psalm, which begins with our Savior's saddest cry
from the Cross. [See Sermons #2133, Volume 36--"my god, my GOD, WHY
HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"; #2562, Volume 44--CRIES FROM THE CROSS and
#2803, Volume 48--THE SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS]
1. My God, My God! Why have You forsaken Me?Every word here is
emphatic. Take the first two words "My God, My God. "These reveal our
Savior's claim upon God as His God. Why have You forsaken Me? I can
understand that others should leave Me, but why have You done so?" Then
lay the stress upon the last word--"'Why have You forsaken Me--Your
only-begotten Son, your ever-obedient Son, your well-beloved Son?"
1, 2. Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My
roaring? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the
night season, and am not silent. See our Savior hanging on the Cross!
Hear Him utter these sorrowful words and remember that He had come up
from Gethsemane, all crimson with the bloody sweat which had oozed from
every pore as He had agonized in prayer--yet no deliverance had come to
Him, for God had left Him to die in accordance with the Covenant into
which He had voluntarily entered.
3. But You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel. He will
not bring any charge against God, even though He has left Him. And,
Beloved, in your bitterest griefs never lay any blame upon your God.
Like Job, say, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we
not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed
be

the name of the Lord." [See Sermon 3025, Volume 54--FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER!]

4-6. Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man.--So low did Christ stoop, for our sake, that He became less than man! There is a little crimson worm, to which this passage alludes, which seems to be made altogether of blood--and Christ felt as if He were nothing but a mass of suffering, a poor trodden "worm, and no man."

6-8. A reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him. It is very easy to read these words, or to hear them read, but it is not so easy to realize the sorrow they must have caused Christ. He was dying, in unutterable agonies, yet His cruel enemies thrust out their tongues at Him, hissed their bitter taunts and made a jest even of His prayers. If you have ever been in great suffering and have then been ridiculed, you know something of the acute anguish that must have been felt by our Savior when He was dying amidst mockery and scorn without a friend to help Him.

9-11. But You are He that took Me out ofthe womb: You didmake Me hope when I was upon Mymother's breasts. I was cast upon You from the womb: You are My God from My mother's belly. Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Men recollect how God took care of them in the time of their infancy. And when they are brought very low, they look to Him who guarded them in the times when they could not lift a finger to help themselves. The Savior did so. He was peculiarly born of God--there was a specialty about His birth which entitled Him to

plead it when He was in His death throes.

12. Many bulls have compassedMe: strong bulls ofBashan have beset Me round. He was looking on the Scribes and Pharisees, and the strong Roman soldiers who made a ring around the Cross.

13. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. There was no look of pity, no token of sympathy--they were all eager for His death. The mighty men of the day and the religions men of the day were not content until they had slain the one and only Savior of men!

14. I am poured out like water. He feels as if He were being dissolved! There is such a sense of faintness upon Him that every muscle, every ligature seems to be turning to liquid and He cries, "I am poured out like water."

14. And all My bones are out ofjoint. The jarring of the Cross, when they dashed it into its place, had dislocated our blessed Redeemer's bones. What must His pain have been!

14. My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst ofMy bowels. Now the terrible death-faintness comes over Him. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity," but when his heart melts, how can he bear the strain any longer? Yet our Savior speaks of Himself again--

15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd. The wounds in His head, hands and feet and all the tortures of the Crucifixion had brought a raging fever upon Him, so that He was dried up like the burnt clay of which men make potsherds.

15. And My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death. He felt as if every particle of His body was beginning to separate itself from the rest and He was turning into dust again while yet alive. It is a fearful picture of pain and they who understand what the effect of crucifixion is tell us that this is a

very graphic, minute and accurate descriptions of the agonies of one dying as our Savior died.

16. For dogs have compassed Me. There is the ribald crowd, the common multitude, howling at Him and eager for His blood.

16, 17. The assembly ofthe wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet I may count all My bones: they look and stare upon Me. They had stripped Him and this was no small part of the Savior's grief and shame that He hung there a spectacle of scorn to ten thousand cruel eyes that looked and stared at Him.

18. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture.

Now He returns to prayer--

19-21. But be not You far from Me, O LORD: O My Strength, hasten You to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling from the power ofthe dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth: for You have heard Me from the horns of the unicorns. He had been delivered before and He expected deliverance again. And He had it, but He had to pass through the iron gates of death to get it and to win the victory over death by His own death! Now there is a change in the Psalm. The Savior's griefs are drawing to an end and He begins to look at the result of His passion. He sees what is to follow from His Crucifixion and He talks thus to Himself--

22. I will declare Your name unto My brethren. "I shall live again. I shall see Peter and James and John, and many more whom I have loved--and I will talk with them about My Father."

22. In the midst of the congregation will I praise You.[See Sermon #799, Volume 14--JESUS, THE EXAMPLE OF HOLY PRAISE] He knew that He would rise from the dead and that He would praise God in the midst of His brethren.

23, 24. You that fear the LORD, praise Him; all you the seed of Jacob,

glorify Him; and fear Him, all you the seed of Israel For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction ofthe afflicted; neither has He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him, He heard. He is telling Himself, in the little quiet interval just before He breathed out His soul, what His testimony would be concerning God--how He did hear Him and help Him at the last.

25, 26. My praise shall be of You in the great congregation: I will pay My vows before them that fear Him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek Him. [See Sermon #1312, Volume 22--good news for seekers]. He is Still talking to Himself about what WOuld happen after

His death and Resurrection--how gracious men would praise the Lord and how He, Himself, would live again to praise God among them! He so realizes the existence of those whom He has redeemed, that He seems to talk to them as if they were actually present. He says--

26. Your heart shall live forever. "I die, but by My death you shall live forever." He sees them, as it were, gathered around His Cross and He congratulates Himself upon the fact that He has bought eternal life for them.

27. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You.The conversion of the nations shall be the fruit of His death.

28. For the Kingdom is the LORD'S: and He is the governor among the nations. See how He distributes crowns, and talks of thrones, just as He is about to die--so sure is He that His soul shall not rest in Hades, neither shall His holy body see corruption, but that He shall rise again and be forever "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

29-31. All they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him: and none can keep alive

His own soul. A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come.I should have liked to hear those syllables fall from those dear lips of His. "They shall come," He says to Himself. "They shall come"--

31. Andshall declare His righteousness unto apeople that shall be born. He sees the great host of the regenerate, the twice-born, who shall be saved through His death.

31. That He has done this. It would be a very literal translation if I read these last words thus, "It is finished." Thus the Psalm ends and so ended the great Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross--"It is finished."--

"'It is finished!'--Oh what pleasure Do these charming words afford! Heavenly blessings without measure Flow to us from Christ the Lord--'Itis finished!'

Saints the dying words record."

Chapter 16

A Sermon on a Grand Old Text

(No. 3089)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"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.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, are as follows--Sermon #184, Volume 4--THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL; #1345, Volume 23--FOR WHOM IS THE GOSPEL MEANT?; #1416, Volume 24--THE FAITHFUL SAYING; #1837, Volume 31--A GREAT GOSPEL FOR GREAT SINNERS and #2300, Volume 39--THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE]

YOU will observe that Paul wrote this verse immediately after he had given a little outline of his own personal history. He had, he said, been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." And then he added this priceless Gospel verse, as if he inferred it from God's Grace to him, as well as received it by Inspiration, "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." It was an experimental text, then, one which the Apostle fetched out of the deeps of his own soul, as divers bring pearls from the ocean bed. He dipped his pen into his own heart when he wrote these words. No preaching or teaching can equal that which is experimental. If we would impress the Gospel upon others, we must have first received it ourselves. Vainly do you attempt to guide a child in the pathway which you have never trodden, or to speak to adults of benefits of Divine Grace which you have never enjoyed.

Happy is that preacher who can truly say he speaks what he does know and testifies what he has seen.

The testimony of Paul is peculiarly forcible because he was a very straightforward man. Before his conversion, he was second to none in opposing the Gospel. He was a downright man who never did anything by halves. As the old Saxon proverb puts it, "It was neck or nothing with him." He threw his whole nature into anything which he espoused and it must have been indeed a mighty inward force which led him to speed forward so eagerly in the directly opposite way to that which he had pursued with enthusiasm throughout the early part of his life! He was an honest man, a man to whom it was impossible either to lie or to be neutral. He was truthful, sincere, outspoken, wearing his heart upon his sleeve and carrying his soul in his open hand. When we hear him say, at the outcome of his own personal experience, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, we may be sure that he believed it with his whole being--and we may receive his testimony as one which he lived to prove and died to seal with his blood! Never had a fact a better witness--he lost all for its sake and counted that loss his greatest gain! Hear his words, for he speaks to you from the ground which received his blood--his blood speaks better things than that of Abel, and it cries with a voice no less loud and clear!

The text, as we find it, is like a picture surrounded with a goodly border. We sometimes see paintings of the old masters in which the bordering is as full of art as the picture itself. We might safely say as much of our text. We will look at its framework first. Here it is--"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation." When we have carefully considered that, we will study the great masterpiece itself, meditating upon the matchless saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." When we have noticed

the preface and the saying, you will then allow me to preach a short sermon upon it.

I. First, then, THE FRAMEWORK. Paul says, "it is a saying."

When we declare a sentence to be a saying, we mean that it is commonly spoken and usually said, so that everybody knows it--it is town talk--"familiar in our mouths as household words." Those who like harder words, explain that this is an axiom, a Christian axiom--a self-evident Truth of God, a thing which nobody who is a Christian doubts at all. But I will keep to our own version and add that I greatly wish that our text were more truly a saying among all Christian people at this day. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is a Truth of God which we all believe, but do we all talk about it so frequently as to make it, in very deed, a saying? Do you think that our servants, who have lived for months in our houses, would in their gossips say, "It was one of my master's sayings, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"? I will even ask--Do you think that if a person attended our places of worship for years, he would be able to say conscientiously, "Why, it was our minister's ordinary saying! It was quite a proverb with him--he was always repeating that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"? Yet a sentence cannot he called "a saying" until it is often said. It does not get into the category of sayings and is not called by that name unless it is a matter of ordinary common talk!

I gather, then, from this, that Christian people ought to talk more about the Gospel than they do, and a great deal more about that primary and elementary Truth of the Gospel, the coming of Jesus Christ into the world to save the guilty. Believers ought so often to speak of it that it should be currently reported, among even ungodly people, as one of our common phrases and stock speeches. I would like them to be able to

taunt us with it as a main part of our conversation. It would even be a good sign if they complained that we wearied them with it! Let them say, Why, they are always harping on that string! Even their children lisp it! Their young men boast of it, and their matrons and their sires affirm it and add their solemn seal thereunto, as if it were the sheet-anchor of their lives!" O you who know the wondrous story, talk of the Gospel by the way! Talk of it when you sit in your houses! Speak of it at your work! Tell it to those who pass you in the street or in the fields! Make the world hear it! Make society ring with it! If there is a new saying, though it is but a jest, men report it and every newspaper finds a corner for it. Are we to be silent about this oldest and yet newest saying? Men rejoice in bon mots, and yet this is the best of words! We have the really good news--let us publish it, let us popularize the Gospel and compel men to know what it is! If before some men we are less communicative upon the more mysterious Truths of God because we fear to cast pearls before swine, yet let this simple Truth, since Scripture calls it "a saying," be spoken again and again and again till it shall be confessed to be a common word among us!

Now Paul did not merely write "it is a saying," but, "it is a faithful saying, "a saying worthy of faith, a saying full of the Truth of God, a saying about which no doubts may be entertained, a sure and certain saying, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Many sayings in the world had been much better left unsaid. There are proverbs which pass current among us as gold, which are spurious metal and no man can tell the mischief which an untruthful proverb may work. But this is a saying fraught with unmingled benefit--it is pure Truth of God, a leaf of the Tree of Life sent for the healing of the nations!

Some matters which were important years ago are now worn out. Times have changed and circumstances have altered--and things are not now

what they were to our forefathers. But this is a faithful saying because it is as practically true today as when, 1800 years ago the Apostle wrote it to the beloved Timothy. This is still a saying full of blessing to the nations, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Like the sun, it shines with the same golden light as in the ages past and, blessed be God, it will still shine when you and I have gone to our rest! And if this crazy world holds out another thousand years, or even fifty thousand, the Light of the Gospel will not have grown dim! This coin of Heaven will not have lost its image or its superscription when time shall be no more--it is of God's minting and will outlast the world--"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Ah, you heard it when you were a boy and you did not think much of it. Your years are now many and your life has almost run its course and you are still unsaved! But thank God that now, in your old age, we have the same Truth of God to tell to you, though you rejected it in your boyhood, and it is quite as certain now as then that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." To the eleventh hour this precious sentence abides sure. May none of you despise it or doubt it, but each one of you prove it to be God's own word of salvation!

Our Apostle, however, adds yet another word--this saying "is worthy of all acceptation." I think he meant two things. It is worthy of all the acceptation anyone can give it and it is worthy of the acceptation of all men. Some sayings are not worth accepting--the sooner you have done with them and forgotten them, the better for you. But this saying you may receive as the Word of God and, having received it as Truth to other men, it will be a happy circumstance if you receive it as Truth to yourself, for it will be a blessed day to you when you appropriate it as your own! "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." If I, feeling myself a sinner, infer that Jesus came to save me, I may

without any fear rest assured that I am accepting a Truth of God, for, believing in Jesus, I may safely rejoice that He came to save me. You may receive this Truth not only into your ear--it is worthy of that acceptation, or into the memory--it is worthy of that acceptation, but you may receive it into your inmost heart--it is worthiest of all of that acceptation! And receiving it, you may lay upon it all the stress of your soul's interests for the past, the present and the future, for time and for eternity! You may accept it as being the mainstay, the prop and pillar of your confidence, for it is worthy of all the acceptation that you or any other man can possibly give to it!

It is worthy, we have said, of the acceptation of all mankind. The richest, the greatest, the most learned, the most innocent, the most pure--speaking after the manner of men--these may accept it--it is worthy of their acceptation. In the sight of God they are still guilty and need that Christ should save them. And, on the other hand, the lowest, the most ignorant, the most groveling, depraved, debauched, abandoned, helpless, hopeless, lost castaways may receive it, for it is true to them--emphatically to them--for Jesus Christ came into the world to save just such offenders as they are! If I stood in Cheapside tomorrow and any man out of the crowd should come to me and ask, "Is that sentence, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' worth my believing and accepting?" I would not hesitate, but, without knowing who spoke to me, I would reply, "Yes." If he stopped his carriage and came to me, or if he took his hand off the costermonger's barrow, or left his shoe-blacking box, or came with his rags about him, or if he had escaped from the prison omnibus--it would not matter who he was--I might safely assure him that this saying is worthy of his acceptation! It is not a stoop for a king or a saint to receive it, and

yet it meets the level of the poorest and the worst of characters. It is worthy of everybody's acceptance!

Beloved Friends, no one can ever rightly accuse us of making too much of the Gospel. However earnest we may be, we can never be too earnest--and however diligent to spread it, we can never be too diligent--for it is a Gospel worthy of every man's acceptance and, therefore, worthy of every Christian's publication! Spread it! Let the winds bear it, let every wave proclaim it! Write it everywhere, that every eye may see it! Sound it in all places, that every ear may hear it! Simple are the words and to some men their meaning is despised as almost childish, but it is the great Power of God! "A mere platitude," they say, yet it is a platitude which has made Heaven ring with sacred mirth, a platitude which will make earth's deserts blossom like a rose, a platitude which has turned many a man's Hell into Heaven and his densest darkness into the brightness of Glory! Ring out that note again, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"! It is worthy of angelic trumpets, it is worthy of the orator's loftiest speech and of the philosopher's most profound thought! It is worthy of every Christian's publication, as surely as it is of the acceptance of every human being. God help us never to undervalue it, but to prize it beyond all price! There is the frame of the picture--the basket of silver which holds the apples of gold!

II. Our meditation now turns to THE SAYING ITSELF--"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Very briefly and simply I will open up this passage as if none of us had, up to now, understood it. May the Holy Spirit instruct us!

Here is, first, a Person coming--a Divine Person--Christ Jesus the anointed Savior. The Son of God, the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, became the Savior of sinners. "Very God of very God" was He.

He created the earth and upon His shoulders the pillars thereof still lean. Yes, He who was personally offended by human sin--He, Himself, deigned to become the Savior of men. Weigh this and marvel and adore!

Next, you have the deed He did--He "came into the world." He was born a Baby in Bethlehem. It was thus He came into the world. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Thirty years and more He lived in the world, sharing to the full its poverty and toil. He was a working Man, He wore the common garb of labor. He worked, He hungered, He thirsted, He was sick, He was weary. He, in all these senses, came into the world and became Man among men--bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. As it was a sinful world, He was vexed with the transgressions of those about Him. As it was a suffering world, He bore our sickness. As it was a dying world, He died--and as it was a guilty world, He died the death of the guilty, suffering in their place the wrath of God!

Mark well the objective for which He came--He came "to save." He came into this world because men were lost, that He might find them and save them. They were guilty and He saved them by putting Himself into their place, and bearing the consequences of their guilt. They were foul and He saved them by coming into the world and giving His Holy Spirit, through whose agency they might be made new creatures and so might have pure and holy desires, and escape the corruption which is in the world through lust. He came to sinners to take them just where they are at Hell's dark door, to cleanse them in His precious blood and fit them to dwell with Himself in eternal Glory, as saved souls forever!

This is all wonderful. Angels marvel at it, so may we! But the most wonderful fact of all is that He came into the world to save sinners--not the righteous, but the ungodly! Remember His own words, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The physician comes to heal the sick--the Savior comes to save the lost!

The attempt to save those who are not lost would be a ridiculous superfluity. To die to pardon those who are not guilty would be a gross absurdity. It is a work of supererogation to set free those who are not in bonds. Christ came not to perform an unnecessary deed. If you are not guilty, the Savior will not save you! If you are not a sinner, you have no part in Christ. If you can say, "I have kept the Law from my youth up and am not a transgressor," then we have no Gospel blessings to set before you. If you were blind, the Lord Jesus would open your eyes, but as you say, "We see," your sin remains. If you are guilty, the text is full of comfort for you--it drops with honey like a honeycomb--"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Lest there should be any mistake, Paul added these words, "of whom I am chief," or, "of whom I am first." And Calvin warns us against supposing that the Apostle labored under a mistake or uttered an exaggeration. Paul was an Inspired man writing Inspired Scripture and he spoke the Truth of God. He was, in some respects, the chief of sinners. He went very, very far into sin. It is true that he did it ignorantly in unbelief, but then, unbelief is, in itself, the greatest of all sins.

It is an atrocious thing for a man to be an unbeliever--it is a damning sin, what if I say the damning sin? We have heard of a man who had committed a violent assault, who, before the magistrate, pleaded that he was drunk. Now, it is sometimes the case that magistrates admit this as an extenuating circumstance, but the magistrate on that occasion was a sensible man and, therefore, he said, "Very well, then, I give you a month for the assault, and I fine you forty shillings for being drunk. That is another offense and it cannot diminish your guilt." So is it with unbelief. Though, from one point of view, it might be looked upon as a mitigating circumstance yet, from another, it is really an increase of sin and Paul regarded it as such. And, therefore, he

believed himself to be the chief of sinners. Yet he declares that Christ Jesus came to save him! Now, if a great creature can pass through a certain door, a smaller creature can. If a bridge is strong enough to bear an elephant, it will certainly bear a mouse. If the greatest sinner who ever lived has entered into Heaven by the bridge of the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, no man who has ever lived may say, "My sin is beyond forgiveness." Today no mortal has a just pretence to perish in despair. Some of you continue to despair, but you have no grounds for such a feeling, for this is the good news which is preached to you, that Jesus Christ has come to call the guilty, the lost and the ruined to Himself--and to save the vilest of them with a great salvation!

III. Thus we have looked at the setting of the text and at the text itself. Now for A BRIEF SERMON upon it.

Our short homily shall begin with the doctrine of the text--and we will handle it negatively. Notice that our text does not say that Jesus Christ has come to compliment, to encourage or to foster the independent spirit of righteous men. It is not written that He has come to tell us that human nature is not so bad as some think it to be, or that He has come to commend those who are self-reliant and intend to fight their own way to Heaven. There is not a word of the kind and, what is more, there is not a word like it in the entire Book of God! There is no encouragement in Holy Scripture to the man who depends upon himself for salvation, or who imagines or conceives that eternal life can spring out of his own loins, or can be worked out by anything that he can do--and yet our human nature loves to do something to save itself.

I do not know that I ever felt my blood boil so with indignation, nor my heart melt so much with pity, as when I went to see the Santa Scala,

at Rome--the holy staircase up which our Lord is said to have been brought by Pilate. On those very stairs, Martin Luther was crawling on his knees, trying to find pardon for his sins, when the text came to him, "The just shall live by faith." I stood at the foot of those marble stairs. They are very high and they are covered with wood, lest the knees of the faithful should wear them out--and this wood has been worn away three different times by the kneelers. I saw men, women and children--little children, too, and aged women--going up from step to step upon their knees to find their way to Heaven. On the first step there is a little hole in the wood so that the worshippers may kiss the marble--and they all kissed it and touched it with their foreheads. The middle and top step are favored in the same manner. It was an awful reflection to me to think that those poor creatures really believed that every step their knees knelt on there were so many days less of "purgatory" for them--that every time they went up the stairs there were so many hundreds of days of deliverance from the punishment of their sins! Oh, if they could but have understood this text, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"--that men are not saved by crawling on their hands and knees, or by penances and self-inflicted misery--what a blessing it would
have been to them! And how they would have turned with scorn from these infamous impostures with which priests seek to mislead and destroy the souls of men! No, the Scripture does not say that Jesus came to encourage the righteous and to help those who are their own saviors. Note, again, that it does not say in the text that Jesus Christ came to help sinners to save themselves. There is a Gospel preached which is very much like that--but it is not the Gospel of Christ. The poor man who was wounded on the road to Jericho was found by the Samaritan

half-dead. Now the Samaritan did not say to him, "I want you to come part of the way to me in this business." But he went where he was lying wounded and half-dead and poured the oil and wine into his wounds, bound up the gashes, took him and set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn and did not even ask him to pay the reckoning, but said to the host, "If there is anything more, I will pay you." If there were anything more to be done for sinners, Jesus would do it, for He would never let them have a share of the work of salvation! The sinner's business is to take the finished work of Christ, to give up all his own doings and let Him who came from Heaven to save, do the saving which He came to do! It is not ours to interfere, but to let Jesus do His own work!

Another thought demands expression. The text does not say that Christ came to half-save sinners, intending, when He had completed half the work, to leave them to themselves. There is a motion abroad that men may be saved and yet may fall from Grace--that they may have eternal life, but it is eternal life of an odd kind, for it may die out! They may be pardoned and yet punished! They may be children of God and yet become children of the devil! Members of Christ's body and yet be cut off and joined to Satan! Blessed be God, it is not so written in this precious Book! Jesus does not begin the saving work and leave it unfinished! When He once puts His hand to it, He will go through with it! His wonderful salvation shall be completed--none shall say that He began, but was not able to finish. Glory be to His name, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners from top to bottom! He will be the Alpha and the Omega, He will be the beginning and the end to all who trust Him!

One other reflection here. Christ, the real Savior, came into the world to save real sinners. When Luther was under a bitter sense of sin, he

said, "Oh, but my guilt is so great I cannot believe that Christ can save me!" But one who was helping him much said to him, "If you were only the semblance of a sinner, then Christ would only be the semblance of a Savior. But if you are a real sinner, then you should rejoice that a real Savior has come to save you." If we meet with a man who says, "Yes, I am a sinner, I know I am a sinner, but I do not know that I ever did much amiss. I have always been honest and correct," such a person has a name to be a sinner and no more. He is a sham sinner and a sham savior would suit him well. But for another who confesses that he has been a grievous transgressor, there is a real Savior. Rejoice, O you guilty ones, that the Christ of God, Himself, really came, with real blood and presented a real Atonement to take away real sins, such as theft, drunkenness, swearing, uncleanness, Sabbath-breaking, lying, murder and things I need not mention lest the cheek of modesty should blush! Even these can be blotted out by the real Savior who has come to save the chief of sinners from suffering what is due to their sins! Oh, that we could ring this great Gospel bell till the hills and valleys were filled with its music! May the Lord open men's ears and hearts that those who hear the glad tidings may accept the Savior who has come to save them!

My little sermon has dealt with the doctrine of the text, now it must treat of the differences from the text which are these. First, it is a great and a difficult thing to save a sinner, for the Son of God must come into the world to do it. It could not have been accomplished by any other except Jesus Christ--He Himself must leave the Throne of Heaven for the manger of earth and lay aside His Glories to suffer, bleed and die. If soul-saving is so great and difficult a work, let the Lord Jesus have all the Glory of it now that it is accomplished! Let us never put the crown on the wrong head, or neglect to honor the Lord who

bought us so dearly. Unto the Lamb of God be honor and Glory, forever and ever! Amen.

And next, it must be a good thing to save a sinner, since Jesus would not have come from Heaven to earth on an ill errand. It must be a great blessing to a sinner to be saved. Dear Brothers and Sisters, this ought to lead all of us to consecrate ourselves to be willing instruments in the hand of Christ in endeavoring to rescue the fallen. That work which filled the Savior's heart and hands is noble work for us. It were worth living for and worth dying for to be the instruments in the Spirit's hands of bringing souls into a state of Grace! Think much of the blessed service which Jesus allots you, though it is but to teach an infant class in the Sunday school, or a few poor men and women whom you visit from house to house, or a group of sorry idlers at a local lodging house--mind not the degradation of the people, for to save them from sin is a work which God, Himself, did not disdain to undertake.

Another inference I draw is that if Jesus came from Heaven to earth to save sinners, depend upon it, He can do it. If He has come into the world and bled and died to be a Savior, He can do it. The price He paid is enough to redeem us-- the blood He shed suffices to cleanse us. If there is any man here who feels himself very foul and filthy, let him look up to Christ at the right hand of the Father and dare to say in his soul, "He can save even me. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. He must be able to save me." O Soul, if you can say that, and venture your soul on it, there is no risk in it. Your faith shall save you and you may go in peace, for he who can rely upon Christ shall not find the Savior fail the faith which He, Himself, has worked in the soul!

These are the inferences, then, which I gather from the text. And I

shall close by an enquiry, which my text very naturally raises in my mind, and suggests to you. If Jesus came to save sinners, has He saved me?Has He saved you?

Has He saved me? I dare not speak with any hesitation here--I know He has! Many years ago, I understood by faith the plan of salvation. Hearing it simply preached, I looked to Jesus and lived, and I am looking to Him now. I know His Word is true and I am saved! My evidence that I am saved does not lie in the fact that I preach, or that I do this or that. All my hope lies in this--that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner, I trust Him, He came to save me, I am saved. I live habitually in the enjoyment of this blessed fact and it is long since I have doubted the truth of it, for I have His own Word to sustain my faith.

Now, Beloved, can you say, if not positively, yet with some measure of confidence, "Yes"--

"All my trust on Him is stayed, All my help from Him I bring"?

Ah, then, you are favored, you are very favored. Be happy, for God has highly blessed you. You ought to be as merry as the days are long in June! A man who can say, "Christ has saved me," has bells enough inside his heart to ring marriage peals forever! Oh, be glad, be very glad, for you have the best inheritance in the world and if temporal matters are not quite as you would wish them to be, do not become discontented, but solace yourself with the fact that the Lord has saved you with a great salvation!

But are you compelled to answer, "No, I do not think that Christ has saved me"? Then I will ask you another question--May it not be, before this day is finished, that you shall be able to say, "He has saved me"? Look at the matter. It is written that He came to save sinners. Is that your name or not? Spell it over. Are you a sinner? I have distinguished

between a sham sinner and a real sinner. Do you confess that you are guilty? Then Jesus came to save such as you are. There is a passage of Scripture which says, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." You know what to believe is--it is to trust, to rely upon. Now Soul, if you rely upon Christ Jesus, sinner as you are, you are a saved sinner. If you do lean on Him, you are this moment saved, at this instant forgiven!

"Oh, but I, I_" ah, you want to crawl up that Roman staircase, do you? That is what you want, you are anxious to go up and down those steps. "No," you say, "I am not quite as foolish as that." But, indeed, if you are trying to be saved by your own works, you are quite as foolish! You make a Pilate's staircase for yourself and toil up and down its steps. "Oh but, Sir," you say, "I must be something, I must feel something." Yes, yes, it is that staircase again, always that staircase! Now the Gospel is not that staircase, nor yet your feelings, nor yet your works--its voice is, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!" You smile at the folly of Romanists and yet Popery, in some form or other, is the natural religion of every unconverted man! We all want to do the crawling and penance in some shape or another. We are so proud that we will not accept Heaven for nothing. We want to pay, or do something or other, forgetting that, "if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." The one only plan of salvation is "Believe and live"--trust, rest, depend upon, rely upon Jesus!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 CHRONICLES 33:1-19.

Verses 1, 2. Manasseh [Manasseh is the subject of the following sermons by Mr. Spurgeon--#105, Volume 2--MANASSEH; #2378, Volume 40--PARDON FOR THE GREATEST GUILT and #2385, Volume 40--ANOTHER LESSON FROM MANASSEH'S

LIFE] was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: but

did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Yet who could have had a better father than Manasseh had? He was given to Hezekiah during those 15 years which God graciously added to that good king's life. Manasseh was, therefore, doubtless carefully trained and looked upon as being one who would maintain God's worship and the honor of his father's name. But Grace does not run in the blood--and the best of parents may have the worst of children. Thus Manasseh, though he was the son of Hezekiah, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord."

2. Like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel It often happens that when the sons of good men become bad, they are among the worst of men. They who pervert a good example generally run headlong to destruction.

3. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven, and served them. One form of idolatry was not enough for him--he must have all forms of it, even rearing altars to Baal and making the stars also to be his gods!

4. Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall My name be forever. Manasseh was worse than an ordinary idolater, for he polluted the very place which was dedicated to the service of the only living and true God!

5. 6. And he built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom. Perhaps he gave some of them actually to be burned in honor of his false gods. But if not, some of his children were made to pass through the fire and were thus

dedicated to the idol deities.

6. Also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he worked much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. You cannot imagine, I think, a worse character than this Manasseh was! He seems to have raked the foulest kennels of superstition to find all manner of abominations. Like false-hearted Saul, he had dealings with a familiar spirit. He had entered into a covenant with Satan himself, and made a league with Hell, and yet, marvel of Grace, this very Manasseh was saved and is now singing the new song before the Throne of God in Glory!

7-9. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever: neither will I anymore remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole Law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel You see, dear Friends, that he was not only a monster in iniquity, himself, but he led a whole nation astray! Some people who, under the gracious rule of his father, Hezekiah, had kept the Passover in so joyous a manner, now, under this false son of so good a father, turned aside.

10. And the LORD spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. This was all that was necessary to fill up the measure of his guilt. He and his people were warned of God, but they would not listen.

11. Therefore--Since words were not sufficient, and God intended to save him, he came to blows! "Therefore"--

11. The LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. They very likely chastened him with thorns, for the kings of Babylon were very cruel. And it may be that when his back was lacerated by thorny scourges, he was put in prison with heavy fetters upon him.

12, 13. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD, He was God. There surely can be no person in this assembly who can say that he has sinned worse than Manasseh did. He seems to have gone as far as any human being could go and yet, you see, when he humbled himself before the Lord and lifted up his heart in supplication, God forgave his sin, and restored him to his former position in Jerusalem.

14. Now after this he built a wall outside the city of David, on the west side of Gihon in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. This is not of very much importance, but what else did he do?

16. And he took away the strange gods. When Divine Grace comes into any man's heart, there is sure to be a change in his actions. Manasseh "took away the strange gods."

16. And the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. Sins which were before so pleasing to

him, are now abominations in his sight--and he flings them over the city wall like unclean things! In the very valley of the Son of Hinnom where he had dedicated his sons to idols, he now consumes his idol gods as foul and offensive things, to be cast away with all the refuse of the city!

16. And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel It was not possible for him to undo all the evil which he had worked, as he soon found out.

17. Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the lord their God only. The work of reformation is slow--you can lead men to sin as rapidly as you like, that is downhill work--but to get them to toil with you uphill toward the right is not so easy.

18. 19. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God and the words of the Seers that spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel His prayer also, andhow God was entreated ofhim, andallhis sins, andhis trespass, and theplaces wherein he built high places, andset up groves and engraved images before he was humbled; behold, they are written among the sayings of the Seers. So we must remember that all the deeds that we have done, both good and evil, are written in God's Book of Remembrance.

Chapter 17

Loving the Law of the Lord

(No. 3090)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 10, 1874.

"O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, have made me wiser than my enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts." Psalm 119:97-100.

DAVID had a very small Bible, but he thought it a very precious one. Our Bible is quite a large library compared with the one that David had, yet he read and re-read it and exulted greatly in the treasure which he found in it. I have sometimes heard people say that they wished they had fuller records of the life of Christ. And when they find John writing that he supposed that even the world itself could not have contained all the books which might have been written about the Savior, they ask, "Why have we not more of the interesting incidents of His career preserved?" Some of these very people do not read what ispreserved and they seem to forget that the Bible is exactly the right size--most portable and most useful and that if we had a larger one, some people might then have said--"It is too large a Book for us ever to read it through and to have it at our fingertips." Let us be thankful that the Bible is so large that there is abundance of fresh reading for every day of the year, and let us prize it as David prized his much smaller portion.

David was one of those who helped to enlarge the Bible. The Spirit of God rested upon him in so large a degree that he has given us, in the Book of Psalms, a most precious part of Sacred Writ. Yet he did not despise the rest of the written Word that he possessed and it is notable that those saints who had most of the Spirit of God were always those who most highly valued the Scriptures. When Peter, filled with the Spirit, stood up with the eleven, on the day of Pentecost, his sermon consisted mainly of quotations from the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit even quotes from writings which He Inspired in order to show the value which all of us should attach to the written Word. Certain persons have said that they did not need what was written, for they had the Spirit within them to teach them all they needed to know. But such talk as that is not according to the Spirit of Christ. Neither is it according to the mind of the Inspired Psalmist, for although God spoke by him, yet he greatly valued that which God had spoken by others and he searched the Scriptures which he possessed with much avidity and intense delight. Beloved, if the man who was Inspired by the Spirit of God thought so much of the Word of the Lord, how highly ought we to value it, we who will never be inspired writers, and who cannot stand on the same platform with David in that respect! Our conscience ought to commend to us the Infallible Truth which God has presented for our use in the Sacred Scriptures.

Being desirous to press upon you, Beloved, a sense of the value of Holy Scripture, I want you to learn from our text, first, David's love for the Word. Secondly, howhe showed it And, thirdly, what benefit came to him from it

First, then, let us consider DAVID'S LOVE FOR THE WORD. He has tried to express the inexpressible by saying, "O how I love Your Law!" He cannot tell the Lord how much he loves it. He had good reason for loving God's

Law--his love was a reasonable one. Love is sometimes blind, but in this case, David loved with his eyes open and loved with good reason. We ought to love all that God gives to us, and especially all His blessed teaching. If you do not love the Bible, you certainly do not love the God who gave it to us--but if you do love God, I am certain that no other book in all the world will be comparable, in your mind, to God's own Book. Where God's handwriting is most plainly to be seen, there God's servants will at once turn their eyes. When God speaks, it is the delight of our ears to hear what He says.

Further, David loved the Law of the Lord, because being God's Word, it was solid Truth In other books, there is some truth and some error. Apart from the Bible, the best book that was ever written in this world has mistakes in it. It is not possible for fallible men to write Infallible books. Somehow or other, we either say more than is true or less than is true. The most skillful writer does not always keep along that hairline of truth which is more difficult to tread than a razor's edge. But Scripture never errs. Here is the gold bullion without a single particle of alloy. Here is the Living Water leaping from the Rock and there is no defilement in it. David truly wrote, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Such is the Truth of God as we find it in Scripture. Now, a man of truth naturally loves the Book of Truth, and finding it to be so pure he cries, "O how I love Your Law!"

In addition to this being God's Book and being, therefore pure, David no doubt loved it, because of the majestic goodness, the sublime Grace of its Revelation. What has the Bible taught us? Some terrible things, certainly, for it has revealed the wrath to come. But glorious things, too, for it has revealed the great Substitute who took our sins upon Himself and put that wrath away for all who trust Him. How wondrous is

the Revelation of God in Christ Jesus! Well might the Prophets long for it and kings desire to see it. You have it in this blessed Book of God. You have far more of the Revelation than David had, for though he could see Christ in the types of the Old Testament, you can see Him much more clearly in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. How much, then, you ought to love that Word which so plainly shows you the way of salvation through the atoning Sacrifice of God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son! Clasp the Bible to your bosom, repentant, pardoned Sinner, and say to the Lord, "O how I love Your Law, for through this Word my chains have been broken and I have been set free forever!" David also had good cause to love that Law of the Lord because it had been his comfort so often in the time of his sorrow. And many of us can say the same. How often have I, in times of frightful depression of spirit, reached down my Bible and within a few minutes have been able to leap for joy of soul and sing in the conscious realization of the comforting Presence of my God! Get but the one text suitable to the occasion, applied to the heart with power by the Holy Spirit, and it will not matter where you are--you will be sure to be glad. You might lie in a dungeon, as Paul and Silas did, scarred with the scourge, but you would sing as they did and make your fellow prisoners hear you. If you could but get the right text applied to your soul by the Holy Spirit, it would be precious to your soul in your times of deepest distress and would be like a star lighting up your darkest night!

I might thus go on for a long while, showing you that David had good reason to love the Law of the Lord, but you probably believe that as much as I do, so I will content myself by reminding you that he loved it all He says, "O how I love Your Law!" He means not only some of it, but all of it. Dear Friend, if there is any text of Scripture that has a quarrel with you, you had better submit to it at once! If you are not

in full agreement with the Word of God, you are wrong and it is not!
There are some passages of Scripture which certain Brothers and Sisters do not care to read, as they do not suit the views that they hold.
There are some commentaries that seem to have been written on the principle of twisting the text into the shape that the commentator approved. And I am afraid we have all had a share in attempts to make the Word of God say what we think it ought to have said according to our system of divinity. That will not do, Brothers and Sisters! We must give up trying to mend the Scripture and say to the Lord, "O how I love Your Law! I love it too well to wish to alter a single letter of it."
One Brother does not like the Doctrine of Election. Another likes the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, but he does not like the Doctrine of Human Responsibility and he cannot endure exhortations to sinners to repent and believe the Gospel. Well, Brothers, it does not matter what you like, or what you do not like! If the Doctrines are in the Word of God, you had better make up your mind to like them, for they will not be taken away to please you! You cannot bend the Bible to your mind--how much better it would be for you to bend your mind to the Bible and to say, "O how I love Your Law--the Doctrines of it, the precepts of it, the promises of it, the ordinances it enjoins upon me, the warnings it sets before me, the exhortations it gives me!" Love the whole Bible from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation and be prepared even to die rather than to give up half a verse of it!
Further, David loved it always. I find that we might read his declaration in the past tense and yet give the sense of the original--"O how I have loved your Law!" He is a saint who loves God's Word always. We have heard of some who read their Bibles on Sunday, but put them away in a drawer with a sprig of lavender all the week. That was not David's plan--he could say, "O how I love Your Law! It is my

meditation all the day." And no doubt he meant every day of the week. We must love God's Word when we are at business and act upon it there. And love it in our families and act upon it there. To love the Bible in the study as a book to start into is a good thing, but it is not a good thing if it ends there--we must love the Word so as to live upon it wherever we may be. In any company, if it is right for you to be there, you will feel, "I am not afraid to take God's Word with me here, for I am now doing what is in accordance with it." I have heard that "the Golden Rule" once went to a place where men were gathered together to make money--I think it was the Stock Exchange--and they called the manager and locked it up, for they said, "'Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you,' is a rule that will never do here." But the Christian does not find it so--he can transact his business and keep his Bible near his heart all the time. When the Bible and the ledger fall out, it is a bad business. Oh, that we might love God's Book all the day and make it the guide of our ordinary business transactions!

David not only loved God's Law always, but he was not ashamed to say that he loved it--"O how I love Your Law!" Young man, were you not afraid, the other night, to confess that you were a Christian when your companions began chaffing you about your religion? I hear that they read a paper that was very critical and sarcastic and that one of them turned round to you and said, "I think you are one of that sort." And you blushed a good deal at the accusation. Well, blush now to think that you blushed then, for there was nothing to blush about! Ashamed of being a Christian? Be ashamed of ever having been ashamed! David said, "O how I love Your Law!" He cared not who heard him and if our hearts are right with God, we shall not be ashamed to stand up, even if we are alone, and confess Christ! Minorities have generally been in the right,

and the multitude usually runs to do evil. Voxpopuli is not often vox Dei--it is more frequently the voice of the devil than the voice of God! That man is worthy of being called a man who dares to do right whatever others may do or say. "O how I love Your Law!" said David, to let all men know that he was in love with the Law of the Lord to the best conceivable extent!

II. But now, secondly, HOW DID HE SHOW HIS LOVE? He says, "It is my meditation all the day."

Perhaps some thoughtless person says, "I suppose that David had nothing to do but sit down and read his Bible." He had to be fighting Philistines and ruling a kingdom! And with so much to do that his hands were kept fully occupied, someone asks, "How, then, did he meditate all the day?" Well, those who are the most busy are often the very men who do the most meditation, for idleness and meditation are not generally very close companions. An idle man usually has idle thoughts, but the busy man, when he is able to think, thinks busy thoughts that are worth thinking. Now, if we love God's Word as David did, we shall mediate upon it all the day as he did. How are we to do that?

It is an admirable plan to fix your thoughts upon some text of Scripture before you leave your bedroom in the morning--it will sweeten your meditation all the day. Always look God in the face before you see the face of anyone else. Lock up your heart in the morning and hand the key to God and keep the worldout of your heart. Take a text and lay it on your tongue like a wafer made with honey and let it melt in your mouth all day. If you do this, and meditate upon it, you will be surprised to notice how the various events of life will help to open up that text. If that particular text does not seem suitable to some special occasion, steal away into a quiet place and get another one--only let your soul be so full of the Word of God that at all the

intervals and spaces when you can think upon it, the Word of God dwelling in you richly may come welling up into your mind and make your meditation to be sweet and profitable!

I am afraid there are not many Christian who meditate upon the Word nowadays. Meditation seems to have gone out of fashion. But if you do not meditate upon what you read, you might as well read some ordinary book for all the good your reading will do you. It is no use to hurry through your reading of the Scriptures like a man riding through a field of ripe corn--it is no use trying to reap a good harvest in that fashion. To get the goodness out of the Scriptures, you must meditate upon them and so digest them, just as you have seen the cattle lie down to chew the cud after eating. To get the nourishment out of a text, turn it over and over in your mind, ruminate upon it, pull it to pieces word by word. It is a good thing, sometimes, not to be able to read fast, so that, like Mrs. Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom, one has to spell a text out letter by letter--L e t, let--n o t, not--y o u r, your--h e a r t, heart--let not your heart--b e, be--t r o u b l e d troubled. That is the way to suck the sweetness out of the text! A text of Scripture is often like an apple tree with abundance of ripe fruit on it and we are underneath the tree. Give it a shake, Brothers and Sisters--shake it till the ripe fruit drops down!

David proved his love to the Law of the Lord by meditating upon it. Perhaps you think that would be very dull work, but I am sure it was not, nor will you think it so if I tell you what it was upon which he meditated. The Word of

God was a letter from his Father--and if ever your father has been away in a far country, you know how you have prized a letter from him! Good wife, if your husband has gone for a long sea voyage and he has written home to you, how many times you have read his letter! Did I not see it,

the other day, almost worn to pieces because you have carried it in your pocket ever since you received it? Nobody else knows how precious it is to you because nobody else is as nearly related to the writer as you are.

The Bible also contains the portrait of our truest and best Friend. I have seen you look at a photograph, the likeness of your dear mother who is in Heaven, or of a dear child, or of someone still dearer, for you like to look at that face. And one reason why we love to read the Bible and meditate upon it, is that it contains such a lifelike portrait of Christ. The Bible is also the charter of the Christian's liberty. He was once a slave, but he is now free through the blessed Emancipator who is revealed in this Book. The Bible is the title-deed to our heavenly inheritance. The Bible is our patent of nobility, for here we read that we are made kings and priests unto God! The Bible is our chart by which we steer safely across the watery wastes of life. The Bible is our checkbook. We come to it and take out the promises upon the Bank of Heaven--we fill them up and present them before God in prayer--and we have what we will of Him when we ask in the name of Jesus! The Bible is to us the telescope through which we look forward to the celestial city where we are journeying!

I might keep on thus, by the hour together, singing the praises of this blessed Book, but I have, surely, given you reasons enough for our making it the theme of our meditation all the day. I wonder how many of us do this? If I were to say, "Hands up, everyone who has a Bible," everybody's hands here would go up. I suppose that nobody here is without a Bible. But if I were to ask, "How many here, constantly, as a habit and a delight, meditate upon the Scriptures?"--I wonder what answers I would receive? Well, I will not ask you that question, but let everybody ask it of himself and judge himself concerning it in the

sight of God.

III. Thirdly, we have to enquire, WHAT BENEFIT CAME TO DAVID THROUGH LOVING THE LAW OF THE

LORD? He was such a Bible reader and Bible lover that he gained some benefit from it--what was that benefit? He tells us that he grew wiser than three different sorts of people. First, he was made wiser than his enemies. Secondly, he had more understanding than all his teachers. And, thirdly, he understood more than the ancients. These are three of the blessings which meditation upon the Bible will give to us!

First, we shall be wiser than our enemies. God had taught David the meaning of the Scriptures and, by his daily meditation upon them, he had become wiser than his enemies. Some of you young Christians have to live from day to day among those who would like to pick holes in your coat if they could. They are watching you to try to bring an accusation against you--and they are very subtle and crafty--how shall you be able to guard yourselves against them? This is the best way. Get the Bible worked into your soul and act according to its teachings--and then your enemies will not be able to bring a true accusation against you! Or if they do, they will be like the men who watched Daniel who could find nothing to bring against him except his religion. If you want to baffle all those who would bring a charge against you, do not trouble about them in the least. Care only to walk according to God's Word, for so you will defeat them!

In addition to trying to bring accusations against you, they will also seek to lay traps for you. Many a young man has had a hard time of it through the traps that have been laid for him. All sorts of schemes and plots have been devised to try to draw him aside from the right path. But the craftiest man in the world will not be able to overthrow the man who simply follows the directions given to him in the Word of God!

Keep to that course and you will win in the long run. Although I do not like our common proverb, "Honesty is the best policy," yet there is a measure of truth in it--that even as a matter of policy, to do right is the best plan. I have often seen very cunning men quite puzzled by a simple-minded, straightforward, honest Christian.

David says that he was able to defeat all his enemies because God's Word was always with him and he followed the directions that he found there. And, dear Friends, whether you are young or old, if you love the Law of the Lord, put your trust in Jesus and then obey the teachings of your Divine Master, you will certainly be able to defeat all the subtlety and all the malice of Hell! You may, like Joseph, be put in prison without being guilty of the crime laid to your charge, but it will be the straightest way to a Throne! You may be persecuted for righteousness sake, but if it came to the very worst and you were to be a martyr for the Truth of God, that would be the straightest way to Heaven! Therefore be just

and fear not. Obey your God. Let the dogs of Hell howl at you as they may--you shall be more than conqueror at the last!

Next, David had more understanding than all his teachers. He went into the schools as well as into the camp and after his mental battles with the leaders there, he says, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your testimonies are my meditation." I do not think he means that he had more understanding than the wise, good, pious teachers, but that he had more understanding than those who vainly set up to be leaders. There are still some of that kind left to plague us--the dry-as-dust teachers who would gladly teach us the letters of the Word, but ignore its true spirit. If there were any teachers in David's days like the Jewish Rabbis who have left us the Talmud, the Mishna and the Gemara, he might well say that he knew more than they

did! They knew so much that they muddled everything. They went down so deep that they stirred up the mud at the bottom and then neither they nor anybody else could see! David meditated upon the Law of the Lord and, therefore, he knew a great deal more than those learned Rabbis knew.

But surely I may use the text with reference to skeptical learned men. Every now and then there is a great eruption-- a volcano bursts up just under the foundations of the temple of the Truth of God as if it were going to blow it all up-- and the lava of skepticism begins running down our streets as if everything were about to be destroyed! At one time, it is a bishop who has been figuring on a slate and found out that Genesis is wrong. At another time we are told to give up some other portion of Scripture as being incorrect. Well, what do we say to all this? Why, that we have more understanding than all these skeptical teachers if we meditate in God's statutes! We may not know how to answer all their questions, but we know how to ask them questions which they cannot answer! We may not be able to confute them in argument, but we shall still believe the Law of the Lord! Many a poor Christian has been baffled by some clever infidel, but he has said to himself, "If that gentleman had tried to prove that I do not exist, I daresay he could have proved it in the same fashion as he has proved this point, which I could not answer, but I know what I do know--and I do know that Christ is a precious Savior. And as I have read of Him in His Word, so have I found it in my own experience. The Word of the Lord and my experience tally, so I am satisfied." If you come straight from searching the Scriptures, you need not mind who attacks you--the Scriptures will be like a coat of mail to repel all the darts of those who assail you--and you shall be able to stand up against those who are far more learned than you are. It is well if you can cope with all the

arguments of the skeptic and meet him and master him on his own ground--but the most of believing men and women are not able to do so. If you cannot argue thus, be content if you are like Cowper's poor woman who knows no more than that the Bible is true, for you may, like David, still be more than a match for the skeptic and understand more than all your teachers because you meditate upon God's statutes.

Last of all, David says that he had more understanding than the ancients because he kept God's precepts. Oh, those ancients--they have a great deal to answer for! Some people seem to think that if anything is ancient, it must be right. If you look (I hope you will not care to do so) into some of our parish churches, you must say that no human being could see any difference between them and the Roman Catholic places. If you do go in, ask the Ritualistic "priest" why he wears all that finery, why he burns stuff that has such a nasty smell--and what he means by all the mummeries and incantations that are such a mystery to you. He says, "This is what the ancient Church did." It he could quote the really ancient Church of the New Testament, you might agree with him--but he refers you to St. Honorius, St. Veronica, or some other ancients, either real or legendary. Does this "priest" succeed in getting people to believe in his ancient nonsense? Yes, he gets his conversation among those silly women and sillier men who read novels, but never read their Bibles! But they never do and never will pervert a true Bible reader and Bible lover! If they ever do get hold of a nominal Baptist, they make a great boast of it because we are so accustomed to go to the Bible for everything we teach, and to test everything by the Bible! I have known a Romanist say, "I can't make any headway with you. You don't believe in any traditions, not even in infant baptism! You will have a Bible proof for everything, or else you will not accept it." Yes, and if all professing Christians would but

keep to that principle, Romanism and Ritualism would make far less headway than they do! We say, with Isaiah, "To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Give us a Bible-reading, Bible-loving people, and all the "priests" in the world, with all their finery, will never make any headway! An open Bible is death to their follies and lies if there are but people with open eyes to read it! The worst of it is that although we have the open Bible, we have not as many Bible readers and Bible lovers as we wish to see. May the Lord graciously increase the number the whole world over!

There is another kind of ancients that we have to guard against--very old sinners. There are old sinners who will say to you young men and young women who have lately been converted, "Ah, we have seen a good many people just as earnest as you are now, but you will soon grow as cold as they did." Some of them will shake their heads and say, "We know you religious people, you are all a set of hypocrites." A wicked old sinner will tell you that when you are as old as he is, you won't be led astray in this way, yet he is himself going to Hell as fast as he can! He says, "Don't you, young man, imagine that you know everything. I have had more experience than you have had and I know a thing or two that is worth knowing." I used to have an old man of that kind in my congregation at Waterbeach--a man pretty near 70 years of age whose whole life had been one of wickedness and sin. He came to the place where I preached on purpose to pick up young men to lead them astray if he could. He was nothing better than a walking beer-barrel and his mouth poured out little but filth. I had some sharp brushes with him and I could not help feeling a holy indignation against him whenever I saw him. There are some such old sinners still about. Beware of them! Their hoary hairs are no crown of glory to them, but a crown

of shame! A hoary head, where there is no Divine Grace, is worse than a fool's cap--and there is no fool in the world like an old fool, and no other fool that can equal a gray-headed sinner who has for 70 years rejected Christ and, in spite of a thousand warnings and invitations, has deliberately made his own damnation sure! Take no notice of him, I pray you. If it is an old woman who has lived in the ways of sin and tries to allure you to evil, O young man, flee from her--young woman, escape from her at all costs! There are none whom Satan uses so much as he does these ancients, because they can balk so glibly and look so sweetly at you and all the while they are deceiving you and trying to ruin your immortal soul! If you cling to the Bible, they can do nothing with you. When there is a great parade of age and authority, yet the advice given is backed up by experience that is vicious, turn at once to your Bibles and say to the old man, or to the old woman, respectfully, yet firmly, "That is what you say, but thisis what God says"--and then turn to your God and say with David, "I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts."

To sum up all, the heart must be right with God and it can only be so as the result of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the heart is right and you are saved, I beseech you to let your Bibles be everything to you. Carry this matchless treasure with you continually. And read it, and read it, and read it again and again! Turn to its pages by day and by night. Let its narratives mingle with your dreams! Let its precepts color your lives! Let its promises cheer your darkness, let its Divine illumination make glad your life! As you love God, love this Book which is the Book of God and the God of books, as it has rightly been called. And may God make this Book to be your comfort when you pass through the valley of death-shade. And may you in Heaven have forever to praise Him who revealed Himself to you through

the pages of this blessed Book! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 119:113-128.

Verse 113. I hate vain thoughts: but I love Your Law. Presumptuous thoughts, erroneous thoughts, wicked thoughts, foolish thoughts--all three David hated. A good man ought to be a good hater as well as a good lover. What should he hate? He should hate vain thoughts. What should he love? He should love the Law of the Lord. If we do not hate sin in the very egg, we shall not be likely to hate it in its fuller development. The very thought of sin must be detestable to us and if we do not think of evil, we shall not speak evil, nor do evil. We ought to begin with David at the beginning, and say, "I hate vain thoughts." Yet negative religion is not sufficient, so we should go on to the positive form--"'I love Your Law' and I love it so much that I wish I could always keep it, never transgress it and never forget it."

114. You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your Word. "You are my protection against every kind of danger." David had been accustomed to hide in the caves of the mountains, but now he says that he hid himself in his God. When he did not hide, but stood out bravely against the ranks of his foes, then God was his shield to cover him in the day of battle.

115. Depart from me, you evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. If, by your evil example, you would keep me from serving my God, I will make you keep yourselves from me so that I may neither see nor follow your ill example--"Depart from me, you evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God." David puts his foot down firmly and says, "I will keep the commandments of my God." It is a grand thing to be able to speak of "my God." Another man's God would be of little use to me, but when He is my own God, my God in Covenant relationship, then I may well say, "I will keep the commandments of my

God."

116. Uphold me according unto Your Word, that I may live. "Lord, I cannot even live unless You uphold me according to Your promises." The Christian is so dependent upon God that he owes his life and the continuance of it to upholding Grace.

116. And let me not be ashamed of my hope. "If Your promises could fail me, then I would have cause to be ashamed of my hope. Therefore, O Lord, let me never at any time have the shadow of a doubt concerning the truthfulness of Your promises, lest I should begin to be ashamed of my hope!"

117-118. Hold me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually. You have trodden down all them that err from Your statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. "They are like salt that has lost its savor, which is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out and tread it under their feet. And this is what You do with ungodly men, especially with those 'that err from Your statutes.' Then tread them beneath Your feet, 'for their deceit is falsehood.' They try to make it look like truth, but it is falsehood all the while." How much of deceit there is in this world which men gloss and varnish so that the thing looks right enough though all the while it is deception and a sham! May God keep us from all the trickeries and falsehoods and errors of the age!

119. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross. "As the dross is thrown away when the useful metal has been extracted from it, so, O Lord, when You have taken all Your saints out of the world You will put the wicked of the earth away like dross."

119. Therefore I love Your testimonies. What? Does David love God's testimonies because they are thus severe? Yes, for it is the mark of a true Believer that he does not kick against the severities of his God.

Worldlings can rejoice in the god of this age who is said to be nothing but effeminate benevolence, but the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob is the God of Justice who will by no means spare iniquity! And for that very reason a true Believer says with David, "I love Your testimonies."

120. My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments. This is the man who truly loves God and this is the kind of fear that perfect love does not cast out. Though we love God supremely, we become for that very reason God-fearing men, and dread to do anything that would cause Him anger or sorrow.

121. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to my oppressors. When a man is conscious of doing right, he has a good ground of appeal to God. If, when it was in your power, you did not oppress others, you may plead with God that He will not let others oppress you. If it has been your habit to act with judgment and justice towards others, you may expect that God will defend you against all your oppressors.

122. 123. Be surety for Your servant for good: let not the proud oppress me. My eyes fail for Your salvation. "I have looked for it so long, I have longed for it so eagerly that my eyes seem to grow inflamed with watching--a film seems to come over them so that I cannot see out of them--'My eyes fail for Your salvation.'"

123. And for the Word of Your righteousness."I look for no salvation except in the way revealed in Your Word. And I do not wish You to do an unrighteous thing even to save me from my oppressors."

124. Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy. He dares not ask to be dealt with by God on any other ground than that of mercy. Though he is innocent of that which the ungodly laid to his charge, he is not innocent before God and, therefore, he pleads for mercy. He acknowledges that God is his Lord and Master and that he is God's

servant. And as a man should deal mercifully with his servant, he pleads that God will so deal with him--"Deal with Your servant according unto Your mercy."

124. And teach me Your statutes. He had kept God's statutes so far as the eyes of men could see but, before God, he takes a humbler position and begs to be taught what he is to do. He asks to be instructed, like a child, in the statutes of his God.

125. I am Your servant. This is the third time in four verses that David mentions this relationship. He seems proud of being God's servant. Though he were but as a menial, yet would he glory in it--"I am Your servant."

125. Give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies. "Lord, do not merely teach me, but give me understanding." That is what our teachers cannot do. They may put the truth before us so plainly that we ought to understand it, but they cannot give us understanding.

126. It is time for You, LORD, to work: for they have made void Your Law. And surely this is an age in which this prayer is very suitable. On all hands we see God's Law ridiculed, or denied, or travestied, or else hidden under tradition or under the dicta of so-called scientific men, or in some way or other "made void." Oh, that God's right hand of Grace might be stretched out to do some miracle of mercy in the land at this very time!

127. Therefore I love Your commandments above gold; yes, above pure gold. "Therefore"--because the wicked tasted God's Law and made it void--David loved it all the more! It is a live fish that swims against the stream, it is a live man of God who can say, "They have made void Your Law, therefore I love Your commandments above gold; yes, above fine gold."

128. Therefore I esteem all Your precepts concerning all things to be

right. "Ungodly men think they are wrong. That is an additional proof to me that they are right." When a certain old philosopher had been praised by a bad man, he asked, "What have I done amiss that he should speak well of me?" And there are some men's mouths out of which the praise of Christ or the praise of the Scriptures would be to God's dishonor. They tell me that So-and-So spoke blasphemously against Christ, but why should he not do so? It is natural for him to be a blasphemer. When serpents hiss, do they not act according to their nature? I do not read that Christ stopped men's mouths when they blasphemed Him, but I do know that when the demons bore witness to Him, He silenced them, for He liked not to be praised by diabolical mouths! Let ungodly men say what they may--we know the value of their speeches and we are not troubled by them.

128. And I hate every false way. Again David mentions his hatred of all falseness. Some men are such "chips in the porridge" that they neither love nor hate, but the Believer is a man or woman who has both loves and aversions. He loves the truth and, therefore, he hates every false way.

Chapter 18

Pedigree

(No. 3091)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 7, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Are they Israelites? So am I." 2 Corinthians 11:22.

PAUL was proud of his extraction as a Jew. Taking this expression in its literal sense, I feel that he had much to be proud of. Judah's banner must not rank second among the nations. The nation of Israel is most ancient and most honorable. When as yet Greece and Rome were not known, God had brought forth His people out of Egypt "with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm," and had cast out Amorite and Perizzite to make room for the vine which He had brought out of Egypt. Poets, statesmen, philosophers, divines had all come to ripeness and the fullness of strength in Judah's land, while as yet the other nations were sunken in barbarism. When our little island of the sea was just a mass of forests, with here and there, perhaps, a naked savage wandering through it, David was praising God on a ten-stringed instrument! We talk of Norman blood, but what is it compared with Jewish blood? We speak of the dignity of peers and nobles of our infant monarchy, but this ancient nation stretches its parents of nobility far back--right up to the days of "the Friend of God," when he stood under the oak at Mamre!

The people of Israel were famous because of God's election. As a nation they deserve honor, but as the elect of God they must stand high in our esteem. One little stream of pure love and truth went wandering amidst the arid wastes of human depravity. The election of Grace fell

mainly--I might almost say entirely--within the 12 tribes that sprang from the loins of Jacob in those early days. They were the conservators of the lamp of the Truth of God. Theirs were the oracles and grandest and best of all of them, "as concerning the flesh, Christ came." Never despise the Jew when you remember that while our Savior was a Man, yet He was a Man of that peculiar type. Let us think of the Jew, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Son of Mary, and feel a sympathy forever with His flesh and blood.

Besides, the Jewish race has a history yet to come, marvelous and strange history whose lines are intertwisted with all the threads of the history of other nations. I am not about to amuse you by any prophesying. This is not the place to desecrate the Sabbath with whimsical interpretations of Daniel, Ezekiel and the Revelation! But still, it is plain upon the very surface of Scripture that Israel shall yet be restored to grandeur as a nation, that the King of the Jews shall reign and that in all the splendors of the millennial age, the Jew, ingathered with the fullness of the Gentile, shall have his full share. This much we know and in this much even we, the Gentiles, do unfeignedly rejoice. For the Son of David is He who has made both one and broken down the middle wall of separation between us--and henceforth there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free--but we are all one in Christ Jesus. However, were I here tonight as a convert to the Christian faith with Jewish blood within my veins, I would speak with no bated breath concerning it, nor wish to hide my pedigree, but count it the highest of all honors which could come to me after the flesh, that I sprang from the loins of Abraham, "the Friend of God." I do not marvel that Paul was so jealous of it, or that he says, "Are they Israelites? So am I." He was no bigot--remember, he was the Apostle of the Gentiles--it was he who constantly disclaimed all

confidence in circumcision. It was he who withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed in this matter. It was he who, as with a battle-axe, was continually breaking down the barriers which divided Jew and Gentile. But yet, for all that, as a man, he was not ashamed to say, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham?

So am I."

I propose now, however, to take the text in another light. In a spiritual sense, all the Lord's people are Israelites. "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel" after a carnal lineage, but all God's people are the true Israel, the spiritual seed in whom the promises made to Abraham are this day fulfilled. I hope we can say, some of us, with a loud and

emphatic utterance--and others with a humble whisper, "Are they Israelites? So am I," thus putting in our claim to the privileges which belong to the people of God.

Let us accordingly spend a few minutes, first, in describing a peculiar people--Israelites. And then, secondly, in asserting a personal claim, s aying, "So am I."

I. This PECULIAR PEOPLE, called Israelites, I will describe in two ways. The Israelites of God are like their father, like Israel. And they are like their ancestors, l ike Israel.

First of all, they are like their father All the Israel of God are in some respects like Jacob, who was surnamed Israel.

[Mr. Spurgeon preached many Sermons on Jacob, among them being the following--#239, Volume 5--JACOB AND ESAU; #401, Volume 7--JACOB'S WAKING EXCLAMATION; #1401, Volume 24--JACOB WORSHIPPING ON HIS STAFF; #1544, Volume 26--MAHANAIM--OR, HOSTS OF ANGELS; #2116, Volume 35--THE UNCHANGING GOD CHEERING JACOB IN HIS CHANGE OF DWELLING PLACE; #2817,

Volume 49--JACOB'S FEAR AND FAITH and #3010, Volume 52--JACOB'S MODEL PRAYER]

They are so, for one reason, because of their election. What says the Scripture? "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand," it was said, "The elder shall serve the younger." Jacob was God's chosen one. He had set His love upon him and, before he was born, He had distinguished him as His elect one. Now that is a deep mystery and there are many who quibble at and question it. I am not here to answer them. The Book says so--let them quibble with the Book, not with me! That Doctrine, I know, is often used to discourage seeking souls and the great Truth of predestination is set in contrast with the other Truth of free agency, as though the one contradicted the other. But, believe me, it is only our ignorance that makes us think the two things contradictory! "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," is just as true as Christ's later declaration, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draws him." It still stands true that "whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," though it is written, "I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" and, "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy."

Let this be recognized as a Truth of God, then, by every true Israelite--that he is so by reason of the choice of God. We cannot say it was our choice--we dare not attribute our separation from the rest of mankind to anything in us by nature. We must lay our crown at the feet of Divine Sovereignty and bless that distinguishing, discriminating Grace which has made us differ from the rest of mankind! We are Israelites by election.

And you will observe that, very early in Jacob's life, he, too, made an

election. "Chosen of God before time began," he chose his God's inheritance in return. There stood the mess of pottage and there, unseen, was the birthright, the inheritance according to promise. Esau, hungry and profane, said, "I shall die of hunger, and then what good will this birthright do unto me?" And for a mess of pottage, which he chose, he rejects the heavenly heritage! Not so Jacob--what Esau sold, Jacob bought. He bought at a dearer price, however. Think, oh, think of that greater inheritance than a mere mess of lentils! At any rate, you have now before you a picture of what every true Israelite becomes by the work of God's Grace in the heart. If you choose this world and neglect the world to come, you are Esau. You may be a child according to the flesh, but you are not a child according to promise. But if you from your heart can say, "I count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt and for the love I bear His name, what was my gain I count my LOSS" then, dear Friend, this election, which you make, is a proof that God has made an election of you and that you are of the seed of Israel whom God has blessed. They turn from the pottage to take the portion--they leave earth to seek Heaven.

Then comes one feature in Jacob's history which is common to all true Israelites. No sooner had Esau got his pottage and Jacob the blessing, than Esau sought to slay Jacob. There must be a hatred between the child of the flesh and the child of the Spirit. They slept together in the same womb, but they could not live together on the same earth without animosity against each other. Jacob must flee. He must leave his father's house. He must go outside the camp. And this is your lot if you are an Israelite. The world will soon find you out and you will be a speckled bird--and the birds round about you will be against you. If any man suffers as a Christian, let him rejoice! And if you are a Christian, you will have to suffer as a Christian for Christ's sake.

You must bear reproach. And in obeying your Master's Laws, you will come into conflict with the world's customs and, consequently, will lose the world's favor. So there are Israelites and you are among them--and for the Truth of God's sake you become an alien to your mother's brethren.

Jacob, in leaving his father's house, however, received a great blessing in which he is typical of all Israelites-- namely, the manifested Covenant made with himself personally. He slept with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy--and as he slept, he dreamed that he saw a ladder, the foot thereof stood on the

earth, but the top reached to Heaven. And at the top of it was the God of the Covenant who made a Covenant with His servant which He established and made fast forever. Beloved, if you are of God's Israel, you have had some insight into the Covenant of Grace--you have seen it in the Person of Jesus Christ whose Humanity, like the ladder's foot, stands here on earth, but whose Deity, like the ladder's top, is lost amidst the blaze of God! You have seen, by the eyes of faith, the God who makes and keeps the promise in the Person of Jesus Christ, speaking to you and saying, "Certainly I will be with you, and I will bless you." You must have had some such Revelation of God in Christ Jesus, or else I would have to question whether you are one of the Israelites at all--for they who know the Lord, know Him as their Covenant God and know him as David did when he said, "Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

To complete our little outline of Jacob's history in which all the Israelites must follow him, I introduce you to Jacob at the brook of Jabbok. It was there that Jacob became Israel--the supplanter became a

prevailing prince! Oh, it was a noble sight which the stars alone saw, when Jacob grasped the Angel! Bold hands, that of mortal that can grasp the Angel of God! And oh, it was nobler still when, having grasped Him, he was not content with using hands alone in that blessed struggle, but came to use feet and knees, and every bone and nerve and muscle! It was a matchless wrestling, then, when the Angel would have thrown the man, but the man would gladly throw the Angel! He played the man, indeed, then, when he said unto God, "I will not let You go except You bless me." "I will not." O God, can Your creature thus address You? Yes, when You have given us faith enough to utter such a word as that, You have given us full permission to speak even as we will unto You and, each one of us to say, "I will not let You go except You bless me."

Now, if we are Israelites, we know something of wrestling and prevailing prayer You are no Christian if you do not pray. A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. You have no inheritance among the people of God if you have never struggled with that Covenant Angel and come off the conqueror. Prayer is the indispensable mark of the true child of God. I know what you will tell me--you will tell me that you are so weak and feeble. Ah, Brother, in this you are like Jacob, who went from Peniel, halting on his thigh. It is not given to mortals to be altogether strong. You must feel your weakness. You may be mighty with God and yet He may make you weak with men. You may be too strong for the Angel and yet one touch of this Angel's finger may cause your sinew to shrink so that you go halting to your grave. Ah, some of us have not merely had one sinew shrunk, but very many--and whenever we try to run the heavenly race, we feel these shrunken sinews much injure our running. But still we are pursuing, and though lame, we shall yet take the prey. So, you see, in election, in the choosing of the inheritance rather than the pottage, in being hated by his brother, in being

separated from his father's house, in entering into Covenant with God, in wrestling and even in weakness, Israel becomes the type of the true Israelite! And I hope, as I have been going over the history, some of you have said, "Are there any such persons in the world that are Israelites? Even so am I." I hope you have seen your own portrait, here, and have said, "The preacher has photographed my history--so am I."

Now we are going to give you another portrait of the Israelite, this time not taking the single man, Israel, but taking the race Israel in their early history. When Israel ceases to be a family and becomes a nation, we find it in the house of bondage, in what is very significantly called, "the iron furnace"--iron for strength and a furnace for heat! So is it with every Israelite. Every child of God is originally found in the bondage of sin. It gives us no effort to remember when we were the slaves of Satan. The scars of his whip are scarcely healed. When we see others sinning, we are glad to say, "Such were some of us, but we are washed. Oh, how lately did these arms wear the fetters and were these feet hampered with the chains! We are free now, but once we were slaves!"

Israel in due time was delivered--delivered in two ways--delivered by blood and by power. So is it with every child of God--delivered by blood. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the lintel and on the side posts, and while the Destroying Angel, swift to slay, went through the whole of Egypt and slew the first-born, He spared the first-born of Israel--not one of them fell dead. Oh yes, and we, too, through the precious blood of Jesus, which has been sprinkled upon us, we too are saved! Our Passover Lamb is slain for us--the sprinkling of His blood has made us safe--it speaks better things than the blood of Abel, for it speaks peace to us and gives us safety and deliverance. And, my

Brothers and Sisters, we have been brought out with power, too! Power as great as that which worked plagues on the fields of Egypt and made Pharaoh's haughty heart yield! The might of the Holy Spirit, which has set us free, is as great as that which divided the Red Sea and made its waters stand "upright as a heap." Let Moses sing, but we will sing too! Let Miriam dash her joyous fingers against the timbrel and we will emulate her! We will sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, "for He has triumphed gloriously in our cause. He has set us free and brought us up out of the house of bondage, breaking the iron yoke from our necks." Thus we are like Israel.

Israel went into the wilderness and, I suppose we have all been there, at least all of us who are God's people find this world to be a wilderness to us. In the wilderness they were all covered by the pillar of cloud by day, and they were enlightened by the pillar of fire by night. And Divine Providence is our daily protection and our constant comfort. They went out daily to gather manna. Brothers and Sisters, I suppose you find that you have need of daily Grace and that you cannot live upon bread alone, but you must have the Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God. You have learned to eat angles' food! The meat that drops from the skies is necessary to your life. The corn that grows in the furrow cannot feed your soul. Your body leans on that staff of life, but your soul needs more spiritual food such as Jesus Christ alone can give. Beloved, the children of Israel in the wilderness all looked to the same Tabernacle and there they saw one ministering priest offering incense and sacrifice by blood. And we stand tonight all looking to the same Savior, hoping--no, KNOWING--that we are all washed in the same precious blood! And as we see the smoke of His Sacrifice going up to God, we, as one undivided Israel, praise and bless His name!

You remember, too, that all Israel under Joshua crossed the Jordan to the land of Canaan and won their heritage. Each tribe had its portion and everyone was settled in his proper place. We are, so it were, standing upon Jordan's brink. Since last we met, some of our Beloved ones have crossed the stream, "and we are to the margin come." Nor does it trouble us, for Jordan is dry. The Ark of the Covenant stands in the middle of that river and makes it so dry that every child of God shall go through it dry shod! The trumpet sounds which bids us march to victory! The land that flows with milk and honey is before us--we have a portion fair in that blessed land. Let us go to Pisgah's top tonight if we cannot cross the Jordan just yet and, with Moses, "view the landscape over." There are the glittering lights of the habitations of the blessed. There are the groves of immortality where they wander. There are the rivers of joy at which they sit and the oceans of glory in which they bathe! Listen to their songs! Catch you not the strains that come from the celestial harps? Know you nothing of the harmonies? Have you never perceived their gracious melodies? Here is your portion, Beloved! All Israel came to the promised land and so shall we! And we shall then forever reign with Jesus, our blessed Jesus, who leads us in to possess the land!

So much, then, concerning Israel from the second picture. I trust some of us have been saying, while we have seen the picture and heard the history of Israel described, "'Are they Israelites? So am I." I too was in Egypt. I too have had the blood sprinkled on me. I too have eaten of the Paschal Lamb. With loins girt about I have passed into the wilderness of separation, wandering my forty years up and down these arid plains of earth. I am looking for my heritage. I look to my great Leader, and I follow Him to victory and to peace!"

Having thus described the peculiar people, we stop a moment and notice

A PERSONAL CLAIM-- "So am I." This is a claim that needs proof. The Apostle knew that his claim was indisputable, but there are a great many persons who say, "So am I," when they have no right to say it. When others come to the Lord's Table, they come there. When Believers in Christ are baptized, they are baptized, too, and they virtually say, "Whatever saints may be, such are we." Ah, it is one thing to pretend to be a noble in Christ's court, and another thing to really be a peer in Heaven's realm! Your patent of spiritual nobility will serve your turn here among poor men who cannot investigate it, but remember! Remember! You will all be tried before you will be permitted to enter Heaven! See you not those scales in mysterious vision? I see them before my eyes--massive scales--and the weights of the sanctuary are put into one scale and each one of us must, before long, take our place in the other scale. Will it turn with us? Shall we be found good weight, or shall we leap into the air while the voice shall say, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin--you are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting; your claims are disproved and your hopes destroyed forever"? Beloved, let us not claim to be Christians if we are not! I warn any of you who make a profession of religion, especially if you are members of this Church, if your hearts are not right with God, shake off your profession as Paul shook off the viper from his hands! Nothing can be more detrimental to you, at the last, than to have had a name to live while you have been dead! Far better to honestly confess yourself a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel than to be an interloper among the saints of God, partaking of the children's bread while you are not a child and entering into the sanctuary of God where you have no right to stand! If we dare to say, "So am I," let us only say it after having searched

ourselves as in the Presence of the great God and having said to Him,

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Supposing that we have given good proof, I can only say that the claim in the text is one which will yield us great joy. When God's people are rejoicing most, what a satisfaction it is to me if I can say, "So am I!" Here stands one of the Lord's people and he cries, "My sins are forgiven through His precious blood. I am a pardoned sinner!" "So am I." "I am covered with Christ's righteousness, a garment all Divine bedecks me and I am accepted in the Beloved!" "So am I." "He has taken me into union with Himself and made me a member of His body. I am a member of Christ's mystical body!" Oh, can you say, "So am I"? Surely these three words will be enough to make Heaven begin below if, when the saints rejoice most in their standing and position before the Lord, you can say, "So am I." And you can certainly do so, dear Friend, in all the fullness of joy, if you can say with me--

"A debtor to mercy alone, Of Covenant Mercy I sing! Nor fear with Christ's righteousness on, My person and offering to bring. The terrors of Law, and of God, With me can have nothing to do-- My Savior's obedience and blood Hide all my transgressions from view!" "This is the reason I trust Him wholly, trust Him only, trust Him simply, trust Him now and trust Him always." Oh, if you can say, "So do I," then all the position which the saints of God hold belongs to you! All their enjoyments are your possessions! You may say, "Such am I."

Now I want to introduce you to a few little scenes, one after the other. I will suppose that we are all talking together about the happiness of God's people. One quotes the text, "Happy are you, O Israel. Who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?" and he expatiates thus, "God's people are a happy people, they find that

godliness has the blessing of this life and of that which is to come.
We can praise God all day and even in the night He is still with us, and we make the night watches vocal with His praise. We are a happy people." I hear a voice up in the corner of the room where we are sitting. Someone says faintly, "And so am I." Let us go and look. Why, here is a poor old woman who has been bedridden. "How long, Sister?" "Thirteen years." "Have you much to comfort you?" "Oh, very much! I have my Savior's Presence." "Have you had a good nurse and kind attendants, with plenty of temporal comforts?" "No, I have had none of those things. I am a poor pensioner of the parish. I have sometimes scarcely enough bread to eat." "Have you many pains?" "Yes, I am full of disease, racked from head to foot with sickness." "I thought you said just now, 'So am I! I am happy.'" "Oh, yes! I did say that and I will say it again, for, notwithstanding all my tribulations, my consolations abound through Jesus Christ and I can say--
"'Sweet affliction, sweet affliction For it brings my Savior near'--
"notwithstanding all my sufferings and my pains, and my having tossed to and fro till my bones have come through my skin, yet, if you say you are happy, 'So am I.'"
We are talking together again about the riches of God's people. I have been giving out a hymn in the little parlor, and we have been singing--
"How vast the treasure we possess! How rich Your bounty, King of Grace! This world is ours, and worlds to come-- Earth is our lodge, and Heaven our home. I would not change my blest estate For all that earth calls good or great! And while my faith can keep her hold, I envy not the sinner's gold!"
And I say, "We are rich and increased in goods, we have all we need, and we are thankful for it." And I hear a voice say, "So am I." Come here and show yourself! "I don't like to show myself in such

respectable company as this." "Never
mind, come here." "No," he says, "my clothes are too much out of repair for me to come before this present company. I have toiled and worked very hard, but now in my old age I cannot work much and the garb of poverty is the only one that I can wear. I eat my bread with my own tears and with much of the sweat of my brow--and I have nothing in the world I can call my own--and I never expect to own anything except that spot of ground in which my ashes shall be buried by charity. But if you say God's people are rich, so am I. I have got here the title-deeds of a mansion fair and of a heritage so rich that I would not barter it for the throne of the Caesar's or all the kingdoms of the earth."

While we are thus communing with one another, we turn from the happiness and the riches of God's people to speak about their safety. "All those who trust in Jesus Christ are saved. Their sins are all forgiven. They can never be condemned. Their feet are upon the rock. They shall be with Christ in Glory--they are saved!" And I hear a voice come from somewhere up there, "So am I." Now, whose voice is it? I think I remember hearing it before. It sounds like the voice of a dying man, like the voice of a man in pain--a rough voice, too, as if it belonged to some very uncouth body-- who is it? It is the dying thief and he says, "You were singing about me just now--

"'The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in his day And there have I, though vile as he, Washed all my sins away!'

"I am a dying thief, but I am saved! It is only a few minutes ago since I believed in Jesus, but I am saved! He who has served the Lord for 70 years cannot say more than that. He can say, after 70 years of service, 'I am a saved man,' and I can say, though Jesus only now turned His eyes upon me and said that He would remember me, I too am a saved man."

So, you see, there are some things in which the very youngest Believer

is placed on an equal footing with the very oldest-- they are alike saved if they can each say, "So am I."

There may be somebody in this chapel, perhaps, who cannot read. Such people are getting scarce in London and if we use a long Latinized word in the sermon, that poor body says, "I cannot make out what he is talking about." But if I begin to talk about Jesus Christ and say, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." If I begin to speak about experimental vital godliness within the heart and about union to Jesus Christ. If I say that all the Lord's people know something about His love--they are all taught in His Grace--I know you, my Friend, would say, "So am I. So am I. If there is any man here who says that he is a debtor to God's Grace, so am I. If there is any man who says that he owes more than others, so do I. If there is anyone here who claims to have had much sin forgiven and, therefore, to be much in debt to God's Grace, so am I. And if there is any man here who vows, when he gets to Heaven, that he will sing the Lord's praises with all his might, for he feels himself to be a very deep debtor to God, so am I. Dear Friend, I am not inclined to yield to you when it comes to the question of claiming the privilege of God's Israel, the privilege of nearness to His heart, of access with boldness in Christ Jesus, the privilege of prayer, the privilege of suffering, the privilege of service. If you say, 'I am entitled to these things,' I will put in my claim, and say, 'So am I.'"

And I do hope there are some poor trembling saints here who will be so tenacious of their privileges that though they are the very least in Israel, "less than the least of all saints," yet, since the mercies of God belong to the saints, as saints, and not as full-grown saints, or advanced saints, or well-taught saints, they will put in their plea and each one say, "So am I. So am I."

I was thinking, as I came here tonight, whether I would not even defy the very angels of God about this matter. There are spirits before the Throne of God--bright spirits that walk in white and sing His praises--and they are very happy, and they are full of joy. So am I! They wear white robes, they are clad in pure white linen. So am I! They stand secure in Jesus' love. And so am I! They sing of their election by His Grace. And so will I! They are there, and they see His face and sing His praise. And so will I! They know themselves to be loved by Him. So do I! And they drink of the river of His pleasures as they think of Him. So will I! Beloved Christian, in some respects you are on a par with the glorified spirit. You are as much pardoned as they are. You are as much justified as they are. You are as much one with Christ as they are. You are as much chosen of God as they are and you are, in one respect, as safe as they are--no, in some things you have the advantage! There are works which perfect saints above all holy angels cannot do, so let no one stop you in your glorying in Christ Jesus. But when they speak the most, say of yourselves through Grace, "So am I." Oh, what a different tale we might have told tonight! Think of what a different story the preacher might have had to tell tonight. Oh, think--think--think--dear Hearer! There might have been heard the wailing of lost souls, gnashing
their teeth and crying, "We are lost--lost--lost forever!" And you and I might have been saying, "And so am I." There might have come up a dolorous cry from the depths of Hell, "We are banished from God's Presence! The light of His love shines not on us! We are in the blackness of darkness forever!" You and I might have said, "So am I." But instead of that, He has plucked us from the miry Pit and set our feet upon a Rock, and made us sing His praise tonight and, with the brightest spirits, say, "So am I." Oh, how we ought to love Him! Now,

tomorrow, if you go out into the world and you see a Christian badly beaten, and hear men jeeringly say, "There is a Christian"--step forward and say, "So am I." Tomorrow the devil will be tempting some of the Lord's people and you may, if you like, turn tail and run away. But come boldly forward and say, "So am I." Take your share with them! Some of us are workers for Christ. I wish you could each one say, "So am I." There are some who give their talent, their time, their substance, their whole heart to Jesus. I wish we could each one say, "So do I." Standing here, we have sometimes said that if Jesus Christ would tread on us. If He could make Himself one inch more lofty, we would be glad to be trodden as the mire in the street, for we have given ourselves unto Him as a burnt-offering, living and dying. May every Christian here feel, "So am I." Oh, prove your gratitude by your devotion and live as those who, having claimed privileges, are willing to take the responsibility connected with it!

Is there a lost and ruined sinner here? "Yes," says one, "I am." Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am hanging on Him and trusting Him. I would that each one of you could say, "So am I." Sinner, you have no hope but in Jesus. Trusting Him, His saints are safe. Will you trust Him? God help you to trust Him at this very moment! Cast yourself where millions have cast themselves before--upon the covenanted mercy of God in Christ--and as they leap up and cry, "We are saved," you, too, may stand up and say, "So am I." May the Lord bless us! May we be numbered with His Israel in the day when He comes to make up His jewels, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM81.

Verse 1. Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob In these days, the Psalms would have to be altered if they are to suit the dogmas of modern thought, for "the God of Jacob" is

altogether rejected by those wondrous thinkers who think they know so much! The God of the New Testament, they say, is a very different Being from the God of the Old Testament. According to them, the Old Testament God is too stern--the New Testament God is far softer, quite effeminate, indeed, if they rightly describe Him. But we do not hesitate to say, over and over again that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob--the Immutable and Unchangeable One--the God of Sinai, is as much our God as the God of Calvary! And so we delight "to make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob."

2-6. Take a Psalm, and bring here the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the Psaltery Blow up the trumpet in the New Moon, in the time appointed on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a Law of the God of Jacob. This He ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when He went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots. Child of God, have you forgotten the time of your deliverance? God has not and here He reminds His people Israel of their deliverance out of Egypt. So He says concerning you, "I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots." Do you not remember the joy of that glad moment when the burden of sin was taken away from you and the pots of your own self-salvation lay broken at your feet? Glory be to Him who brought us out from that terrible house of bondage!

7. You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder: I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah.But how sadly did they stand the test! You and I, too, have not only received much mercy at the hands of God, but we also have had our testing times. We can look back to the waters of strife with deep regret that there we failed so sadly.

8-10. Hear, O My people, and I will testify unto you: O Israel, if you will hearken unto Me; there shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god. I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt: open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. What a wonderful verse this is! We have been so accustomed to hear the expression, "I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt," followed by the Law. But here it is followed by a gracious encouragement to us to pray--"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Whatever force the Law derived from that preface, this exhortation derives the same force and no child of God ought to forget that. He who delivered you from the burden of sin bids you open your mouth wide and He will fill it! And after your deliverance from guilt, do you not feel that you may well ask great things of such a gracious God?

11-15. But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me. So I gave them up unto their own heart lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued the enemies, and turned My hands against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto Him: and their time should have endured forever Alas, poor Israel! Through what sufferings and captivities did you go because you would not trust in the Lord? And how often some of God's children have had to go through years of sorrow and spiritual captivity because of their lack of close walking with their God and complete obedience to Him! May we learn from the sins of others and be helped to walk closely with our Master!

16. He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied you. If the Word of God does not seem to feed us as once it did, it will surely be because we

have not hearkened to our Lord, or walked in His ways. May He give us

Grace to render complete obedience to His holy will!--

"So shall Your choicest gifts, O Lord,

Your faithful people bless,

For them shall earth its stores afford

And Heaven its happiness."

Knowing and Doing

(No. 3092)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 14, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 17, 1874.

"For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through Hispoverty, might be rich." 2 Corinthians 8:9.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are as follows--# 151, Volume 3--THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST; #2232, Volume 37-- CHRIST'S MOTIVE AND OURS; #2364, Volume 40--POVERTY AND RICHES and #2716, Volume 47--CHRIST'S POVERTY, OUR RICHES]

WE may, for once, dispense with a preface, and go straight to our subject. The text speaks, first, of something that we know. When we have, for a while, meditated upon that, we will speak of some things that are due because of this something that we know.

I. First, then, I am going to talk to you about SOMETHING THAT YOU KNOW.

I have heard that people like to be told, over and over again, what they already know. If you tell them what they do not know they may or may not listen to you, but if you tell them what they do know, they will be sure to be interested. If I were to speak about the town from which one of our friends from the country has come. If I were to mention something that occurred not long ago in the High Street of that town, I would be sure to have his eyes fixed upon me and his ears opened to my words. "Ah," he would say, "I know that town well. I was

there Saturday afternoon." Well now, I am going to speak of something with which all Christians are so familiar that I may refer to it as something that they certainly know. Whatever else they know or do not know, I may address all of them who are here and say, "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Beloved Believers, you could not have been Believers in Christ it you had not known this! You could not have had faith if you had not had this knowledge--it would have been impossible for you to have been converted unless you had known Jesus Christ who has now your soul's entire confidence! It is an essential part of your very profession that you should know this and, therefore, we assume that you do. Whatever else you do not know-- and I suppose there are some Doctrines that are yet too high or too deep for you to comprehend, and some experiences to which you have not yet attained, and some Graces that are as yet not consciously enjoyed by you--you do "know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich."

You know, first, that "He was rich "We believe that He was infinitely rich and eternally rich, for He was "very God of very God," and none can be compared for riches with God, who has boundless wealth. God was able to create the heavens and the earth at His own good pleasure and of Christ we are expressly told that "by Him were all things created." "He was rich" in His essential Deity and rich in the homage of the holy beings that He had made. The hosts of blessed spirits adored Him, principalities and powers counted it their highest honor to be conformed to His will. Heaven is Heaven because He is there. "By Him all things consist" and, therefore, all things reflect His Glory. We are not among those who think that Jesus was a mere Man--blessed be God, we know better than that! We could not trust our salvation to the

very best of men. But Christ is God--He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He certainly was rich in happiness. We cannot conceive of His ever feeling a pang of pain or having a single thought of care while yet He dwelt in His Father's bosom. He must have been as happy as He was holy! We say that "He was rich," but that is a poor expression, after all, for human language utterly fails to express how rich He was. He was more than rich--He was more than great, He was GOD--all that that word can possibly mean! We know that we have no controversy about that, for "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

We also know, dear Friends, that though He was rich, "He became poor " I am only telling you something that you know full well, but let your minds be refreshed with the remembrance that Christ was so poor that He was wrapped with baby clothes just as any other infant was. Although He was The Infinite, He was so poor that He had to be sheltered in a stable because there was no room for Him in the inn. Afterwards, He was so poor that He was banished from His own country and had to flee into Egypt. He was so poor that He was the fit companion of a humble carpenter at Nazareth. So poor that when He came out into public life, His dress was the common garment of a laborer, woven from the top throughout without a seam. He had not where to lay His head, though foxes had their holes and birds their nests. He was so poor that He was indebted for His daily bread to the charity of gracious women who followed Him and ministered to Him of their substance. Though the cattle on a thousand hills were His, He sat upon a well at Sychar and said to a poor woman, "Give Me a drink." Oftentimes, He knew what faintness and hunger meant--and the longer He lived, the more intense His poverty became, until, at last, He was left without a friend when He most needed sympathy--without one to speak a good word for Him when

He was arraigned before the bar of those who had resolved to condemn Him to death! Then was He taken out to die without a rag to cover Him. And when He was dead, He was indebted for a tomb to one who lent it to Him out of love. Never was there anywhere else such poverty as the poverty of Christ, for it was not merely external, it was also internal. He became so poor, through bearing our sin, that He had to lose the light of His Father's Countenance, emptying Himself of all the repute He had. He became a spectacle of scorn and shame because our shameful sin had been laid upon Him. See Him on yonder shameful Cross! Mark His many wounds, hear His expiring cry! And as you gaze upon that spectacle of majestic misery, remember that although He was rich, He became thus poor.

I must remind you, yet further, of something else that you know--"that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." I want everyone of you, if it is true, to say, "For my sake, out of love to me, Jesus Christ left His Throne in Heaven to die on the Cross of Calvary."

Forget that there is anybody else here now if you can, and just take this Truth of God to yourself--Jesus Christ loved you and gave Himself for you--as much as if nobody else had ever lived. For you were poured out those drops of gore which streamed from His blessed brow in the Gethsemane sweat. For you He endured that shameful kiss by which Judas betrayed Him. For you His blessed shoulders were bared to the cruel Roman scourge. For you His hands were bound with cords, His thorn-crowned head smitten by the soldiers and His marred Countenance became smeared with their abominable spittle! For you the Lord of Glory became "a worm and no man," and was "despised and rejected of men." Surely there was nothing in you that could have merited love mighty enough to suffer so! Yet it was all for you and for me!

I seemed to be speaking to myself just now and I would gladly stop

preaching and sit down and weep that Christ should have borne all this for me, as I am sure He did. But, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, will not you also remember that it was for your sakes that He became poor? Let each one of you, in imagination, stand at the foot of the Cross and say, "That suffering was all for me! That sacred head was wounded for me! Those dear eyes were red with weeping for me! Those lips that are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, and those cheeks, so full of love and tenderness, were stained and marred for me! Those holy hands and those cruelly-fastened feet from which His life's blood flowed, poured out that sacred flood for me! That throat all parched, those limbs all dislocated by the jarring of the Cross--above all else, His soul's deep distress, the unknown anguish that made Him cry, 'Lama Sabachthani?'--a\\ this was for me!" Ask God the Holy Spirit to write all this on your soul, dear Brother or sister in Christ, and to make you feel, "All this was for
me."

Notice also that as Christ, for your sakes, became poor, it was "that you, though His poverty, might be rich" It will be a change of thought for you if you now think that you are rich. I hope you felt like weeping, just now, when I spoke of how Christ became poor. Now feel like singing as I remind you how rich you are! You are rich through that which is imputed to you, for all that Jesus had and did is yours. His matchless Righteousness is yours--you have it on already if you are a Believer--and so you are arrayed in fair white linen, whiter than any fuller could make it! His Atonement is yours. His precious blood has washed all your guilt away and you are now whiter than snow, without spot even before the eyes of the All-Seeing One!

You have also riches of another kind--riches within you. The life of Christ is in you by reason of His death. For you the Holy Spirit has so

worked in you that the life of God is within you and you can never die! Because Christ lives, you must also live. You may be wearing very poor apparel tonight and have but few coins in your purse, but you are very rich--the Czar of all of Russia and all the emperors who have ever lived are not as rich as you are unless they also have a share in all that you possess, for "all things are yours," and no one can have more than "all things."--

"This world is yours, and worlds to come. Earth is your lodge, and Heaven your home!" When the stars come out, count them if you can, for all the glories of Heaven are yours. And beyond the stars, the endless realms of bliss are all yours. It is not merely for today or for tomorrow that "all things are yours," but they shall be yours throughout the eternal ages! When the sun's lamp has burnt out and the moon has been turned into blood, still shall you live on as long as the unending life of God, and all the Glory of your God shall be yours. Does not your very heart sing as you try to realize how rich you are and how rich you shall be forever?

Now come back to this point--you are rich through Christ's poverty. You have been lifted up so high because He was dragged down so low! You have been filled because He was emptied. You live because He died. As you think of your innumerable mercies, remember that there is not one of them but has the blood mark upon it. All your possessions have come to you through the Well-Beloved who impoverished Himself that you might be enriched.

This is the finishing stroke. The Apostle says "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." I have spoken to you about His being rich and becoming poor, and making you rich through His poverty. But the point that we must never forget is that it was Divine Grace that led Him to do this. He was under no compulsion, so far as His Father was

concerned, to come from Heaven to redeem us from destruction and, as far as you and I were concerned, He was under no obligation to come and save us. Do you ask, "Why did He do it, then?" Ah, that is one of the things you will have to ask Him. I know of only one reason and that is, "His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins." That quotation naturally suggests the next question, "But why did He love us?" You must ask Him that, also, and when you do ask Him that question, you must look up at Him and then you will see that He loved us because He is all Love.

II. You know His Grace, says the Apostle--His graciousness to us, His willingness to bless us, how He came, not by constraint, but entirely because of His own graciousness that He might save us. I am not going to enlarge further upon

that topic, but to speak of SOME THINGS THAT ARE DUE BECAUSE OF WHAT WE KNOW. I want to use this

knowledge as a hammer to strike home some nails.

If you know the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, what then, Beloved? First, it is due to Him that you trust Him. "Why," says someone, "I thought you were preaching to saints." So I am. "But that is the exhortation which you give to sinners." Yes, that is quite true, for that is what sinners are bid to do--to trust in Jesus that they may be saved. But I want to give the same exhortation to saints as to sinners. I know that we are trusting in Jesus if we are saved, but do we trust Him as He deserves to be trusted? He has given us the most convincing proof of His love that can possibly be conceived--how is it that we do not always rest in His love, feel quite confident about that love, lean our whole weight upon that love and live in the full conviction that that love is altogether our own? I mean this--do you not sometimes get into Doubting Castle? Have not some of you been fretting lately about

some pecuniary trouble? Were you not worried, the other day, about some little domestic affair? Surely it is time that you fully trusted your Lord! If there is a wife who says to her husband, "I am afraid of this, and afraid of that," he says to her, "But, my dear wife, can you not yet trust me? Have I not given you proofs enough of my love?" Now, no earthly husband has ever given such proofs of love to his spouse as Jesus has given to us, so we ought to trust Him wholly, fully, constantly, unwaveringly with everything! It ought to be our habit to "steal away to Jesus" whatever happens to us--never to carry a burden for a minute, but to take it to His feet--never to worry, never to fret, never to mistrust, but since He was rich and for our sakes became poor, that He might make us rich, the very least we can do is to trust Him! It seems to me that not to do so is to insult Him--and He whispers to each dear child of His here, "After all that I have done for you, repose upon Me. Put your aching head upon My bosom. Exercise it no longer with a thousand anxious cares, but believe that I love you, died for you and that I will see you through it all and, therefore, leave it all to Me." God help you to learn that first lesson--to trust in the Lord with all your heart!

Next, "you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, secondly, love Him. "But I do love Him," says one. Do you? "Yes," you reply, "I do." Well, suppose He were to come here at this moment and that He were to come to your pew and say to you, as He said to Peter, "Do you love Me?" would you answer, "Yes"? "Yes," you reply, "I would say as Peter did, 'Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.'" Suppose He were then to say to you, "What have you done today to prove your love to Me?" What could you answer? Suppose He were to say, "I will take this day's actions as a specimen of your love." Would you be willing for Him to do so? If He said, "I will take yesterday's

actions," I am afraid there are some here who would have to say, "Dear Master, do no such thing. We hope we do love You but, oh, give us Grace to love You more, for we cannot continue to live as we have done. Do help us, by Your Holy Spirit, to live after a different fashion." Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I want your love for Jesus to be not merely in name, but to be as real as your love to your dearest ones! No, I want it to be a passion far more operative than the fondest love of a mother for her child or of a spouse for her husband! Do you so love Jesus? Why, compared with what Christ has done for you, what have you done for Christ? May we never cease to praise our mother's love! Dear and blessed was the woman who bore us, nursed us and cared for us as no one else could have done! Yet this mortal life of ours would have been a curse to us if Jesus had not come to redeem us from eternal death and shown us a greater love even than our mother's! Beloved, if you feel the love of your father and mother stirring in your heart--and I am sure you do if you are worthy of the name of a man--much more let the love of Jesus Christ fire and fill your soul! Some of you have children and for then you would willingly sacrifice everything. Well, we do not doubt your love to your wife and your child, but let your love to Jesus be quite as operative on your daily life as these loves and even more so! In the remembrance of Gethsemane and Golgotha, I claim your heart's best love for Christ, and I pray that His blessed Spirit may compel you to gladly yield it to
Him!

But now, Beloved, I have to go a step further and say that if you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to you, I come to claim that in proof of your love, you render to Him your daily service. Paul was writing to tell the Corinthians that the poor Christians in Macedonia had made a very generous contribution towards the poor saints in

Jerusalem. And He wanted the richer brethren in Corinth to give their share to help those in need. Instead of telling them that they ought to do this, he put it to them thus--"You know how freely Jesus Christ, though He was rich, became poor that you might be rich. Now, for His sake, act in the same spirit toward your needy Brothers and Sisters in Judea."

Let me explain how this principle affects me and every one of you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. It means this--praise Jesus for dying for you! Do not need anybody to urge you to be obedient to Jesus--spontaneous love deserves spontaneous love. Do not need to be driven to your duty and do not let it be duty so much as delight, even as Jesus said to His Father, "I delight to do Your will, O My God." You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in all that He did--do all that you have to do with a like gracefulness of spontaneity, that is, do it without needing to be pressed to do it. No honey is so sweet as that which drops freely from the comb, and no service is so sweet to the Lord Jesus as that which a Believer spontaneously renders to Him.

Think of what you would like to do for Jesus. He thought long ago about what He would do for you and it was a great joy to Him to think of it. Now think what you can do for Jesus. You know what you sometimes do for a dear friend when a birthday is coming on--you plot, you plan, you say to yourself, "What shall my present be? What surprise can I arrange?" I want you, in some such fashion as that, to turn over in your mind what you can do for the Lord Jesus. Have you an alabaster box of precious ointment at home? Then bring it as your love-gift to Him--you surely would not give Christ your odds and ends, would you? "No," you say, "I will give Him the best that I have. I only wish it were a thousand times as good as it is." When Jesus became poor for your sakes, it cost Him all that He had--now do something for Him which will be costly to

you, for He well deserves it. O our blessed Savior, we are not going to give You kisses and tears and words only. No, we will pinch ourselves, we will deny ourselves, we will plan and toil so that we may give You something that costs us our heart's deepest emotions, our mind's best thoughts and our body's sternest labor! Of all that we have on earth, we will choose the choicest and best for you, our dear Lord and Master. You see, I am almost beginning to press you to this blessed service, but that is not what I intend to do--I am aiming at the very reverse of that. I do believe that the Lord Jesus delights to see His people thinking what they can do for Him, without any minister urging them to do it, without any circular from a society, or a collector calling at the door for their half-guinea. Do not imagine that just because you belong to such-and-such a church, you must do something for Christ. It is true that there is such a necessity, but you should put the matter in quite a different form from that--"May I have the privilege of doing something for Him who for my sake became poor? And if there is anything to be done that is more lowly than other service, less seen and reckoned to be less honorable than other service, is that the post for me?" Those who truly love Christ will gladly wash His feet and wipe them with the hairs of their head. They will not covet the higher work of anointing His head, but will be satisfied to be allowed to anoint His feet. Anything for Jesus--that shall be our motto. We know how freely He became poor for our sakes. Let us, with just such freeness, render ourselves up as living sacrifices unto God, which is our reasonable service.

I must add this one thing. "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich." Now go and imitate Him as far as you can. If you see anybody in need, be generous, for Christ

was generous. If you meet a sinner, do not turn your back upon him, as a Pharisee might, but help him all you can, for Christ helped you all He could. If it should cost you a great deal of trouble to win that soul for Christ, gladly put yourself to that trouble because Christ took so much trouble to save you. A good Brother said to me, the other day, concerning a certain boy, that he was afraid we would never do much with him because he was of very corrupt origin. I said, "So were you." "Ah," he replied, "I do not quite mean it that way." "No," I said, "but I do mean it that way." He or she who is a son or daughter of Adam had a corrupt origin--and as we all came from that source, we are all corrupt! Do not ever say of anybody, "That person is too bad for me to do anything with him." It is the genius of Christianity to select the worst, first, and we should never regard any man as utterly hopeless until he is dead. As long as the breath is in his body, no matter though all the devils from Hell were also in him, there is enough power in the Lord Jesus Christ to make the whole troop of them flee--and it is for us to attack those devils in His name! Jesus Christ, having saved us, the salvation of other sinners mustbe possible.

I want you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, wherever you are, to tell others about Him. "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," but others do not know it! You have been made to know it in order that you may tell it to others. We have come nearly to the close of another Sabbath, so permit me to put a question or two by way of examination to you who profess to be Christ's. Have you talked about Jesus Christ today? Have you spoken to anybody about His soul today? "I have been in the Bible class, Sir, studying the Word." That is good, but did you, today, come to close grips with anybody about his soul? I believe that is the best way to be soul-winners for all who cannot exercise the

public ministry-- and even for ministers it is the best way! When God really stirs us up to get a hold of men, we shall soon see them saved. I try to talk straight home to my hearers as far as I can, but I am conscious that the man who gets a hold of his fellow men, talks to them individually, tells them of their danger and pleads with them to trust in Jesus, is the man who is sure to be blessed to them! Have you done that? Some of you have children--have you ever prayed with them, one by one? "Oh, yes," you reply. I am glad you can say that, dear Brother. But I am afraid there are some who cannot say it. Perhaps you have a fellow servant who is utterly godless--did you ever speak to her tenderly and affectionately about her soul?

We neglect the souls of others because we do not realize as we ought that Christ, though rich, for our sakes became poor. If we really knew this as we ought to know it, we would begin to care about other people for Christ's sake. What a strange man was that Paul who wrote our text! After his conversion, he went all over the world, as far as he could, preaching Jesus Christ. They stoned him and put him in prison, but as soon as he got out of prison, he was preaching again! He had chains on his wrists and was taken as a prisoner to Rome, but he kept on preaching when he had the opportunity. Do you know why he did so? I believe it was because, one day, when he was riding to Damascus, something very extraordinary happened to him. Jesus Christ spoke to him out of Heaven and he fell to the ground. And when he got up, his whole being had received such a twist that he was very strange ever after! Brothers and Sisters, I should like you tonight, if you never before had it, to get such a realizing view of Christ's coming down from Heaven, lying in the manger among the horned oxen, living for nearly 30 years in obscurity and then, after His brief but wonderful public ministry, bearing all your sins in His own body on the tree! I should

like you to have such a view of Him that, like Paul, you would receive such a twist as you would never get over as long as you live! I have sometimes felt that twist, as I have recalled the day in which I first saw the Lord--and then I felt as if I could do some extraordinary thing for Christ that would make men say, "What a fanatical fool that fellow is!" I should like to be thought a fanatical fool by all those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ! And I am afraid, Brothers and Sisters, it is only because we love Christ so little that men treat us so well.

I should like for us to feel that twist so strongly that, henceforth, we should know nothing "save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified," and live for nothing else but Christ, so that people would say of us, "What strange men they are! They seem to be all on fire for Christ. The zeal of the Lord's house seems to have eaten them right up." That is the kind of man I want you to be and that is the sort of woman I want you to be--and if you really know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was consumed with zeal for your salvation--it would be only fair that you, also, should be utterly consumed with a passion for His Glory! God grant that all of us may be so, from this time forth and forever!

If there is a sinner here who does not love this Jesus, who gave Himself for us, I will not say what Paul wrote, "Let Him be anathema maranatha," that is, cursed at the coming of the Lord, but I will say this--remember, Sinner, that if the Grace of Jesus does not save you, the Justice of Jesus will destroy you! And if you are not saved by His first coming, you will be condemned at His second coming. And that may God forbid, for His mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 CORINTHIANS 8.

Although this is rather a practical than a spiritual chapter, I hope that we shall get profit out of it by the teaching of the Spirit of God who inspired Paul to write it. Paul was writing to the Church at

Corinth to commend the Churches of Macedonia, that he might stir up the one Church by the example of the others. The saints at Jerusalem were starving because of a famine and it came into the mind of certain Gentile Churches to send help to the mother Church at Jerusalem. It was regarded as a very wonderful thing that Gentiles should be sending help to Jews. I hope it would not be thought wonderful now, but it was then. And Paul, who loved the saints at Corinth, and saw that they were a little backward in this matter, stirred them up to greater diligence.

He did not like the Churches in Macedonia to go so far ahead of the Church in Corinth which was richer, more endowed with gifts and, therefore, he set to work to stimulate their generosity. Thus he begins--

Verse 1. Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the Grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. That is a quaint old expression, "We do you to wit." It means, "We would let you know, we would tell you, we would inform you of what the Macedonia saints have done." And he does not at first say, "We would let you know of the liberality which the Macedonia Churches have shown," but, "of the Grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia." What we do for God, God's Grace has first bestowed upon us! If there is any virtue, if there is any zeal, if there is any faith, if there is any love, it is the result of the Grace of God bestowed upon us! Always look upon things in that light, for then you will not grow proud. Give what you may, and do what you may--you may regard it as the effect of the Grace of God bestowed upon you.

2. How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of the joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.They were very poor people in Macedonia, but they loved God so much that they abounded in liberality. Considering how little they

possessed, and how much they were tried and persecuted, they had been wonderfully generous.

3. For to their power, I bear record, yes, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves. They were willing to give even beyond their power! They gave up to the full limit of what they could do and then wished that they could give even more. And notice that "they were willing of themselves." Paul had not to stir them up to do this, nor even to mention the subject to them--"They were willing of themselves." That is the best kind of service to God which a man ever does, that in which he is willing of himself. It is the slave who is flogged to his work--the child is willing of himself. Oh, that on the altar of God you and I may gladly place our offerings because we have been made willing of ourselves!

4. Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. Paul did not have to beg them to give, but they begged him to take their gifts! And when the saints of God are in a right state, they come forward voluntarily, as Paul says that these Macedonian Christians did, "praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints" by going to Jerusalem and giving away this money where it was needed.

5. 6. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will ofGod. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same Grace also.Paul said,

"Titus, do not let the Corinthians be behind the Macedonians in this matter. Go and show them how they may receive similar Grace."

7. Therefore, as you abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that you

abound to this Grace also.These Corinthians were an instructed people. They were so well taught that they were able to carry on an open meeting for years without a minister--and the natural consequences followed-- they fell into sixes and seven, and there were divisions among them, so that Paul had to counsel them to have a minister. "I beseech you, brethren, you know the house of Stephanas that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, that you submit yourselves unto such, and to everyone that helps with us, and labors." They were a notable Church, people of standing among them. Paul admits all that, but he says, "Do not be behindhand in your liberality to the cause of God."

8. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. And, Christian men and women, whenever you see other Christians excelling you in any Grace, seek to catch up with them! Why should you be in the rear rank? You are to run with patience the race that is set before you, so do not be outstripped by your fellow runners. If God has given to one Christian much of any Grace, He can, if He pleases, give as much to you.

9. For you know. These are most precious words, worthy of being written in letters of gold--"You know."

9. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich. "You know the wonderful story of how you are rich through Christ's poverty. What a change it was for Him, from the riches of Heaven to the poverty of His Manhood here, and what a change it is for you from the poverty of your sin and ruin to the riches of His Grace! Now you know this--you do not need anybody to tell you about it, so imitate it--distribute to the poor and especially to the poor saints, as you have the power and the opportunity."

10. And herein give my advice: for this is expedient for you who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. They had started a year ago, but the project had hung fire, as such things often do. Many a man is good at resolving and starting, but not so good at going on to the end.

11. Now therefore perform the doing of it "Do not let your good resolves be buried, let them be turned into action! 'Now therefore perform the doing of it.'" So I might say to who are here. "You have purposed, you have determined, you have resolved a great many times. 'Now therefore perform the doing of it.' If it is a good resolve, it will be best to carry it out at once."

11, 12. That as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which you have. For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has andnot according to that he has not This is how we should always act--see what we can do and do it--not wait till we can do twice as much. There is a great waste of holy effort and of holy giving because so many people are ashamed to do a little and, therefore, do nothing because they cannot do much. That is not the way for God's children to act. With your willing mind do what you can and God will help you to do more!

13, 14. For I mean not that other men be eased, and you burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality. Paul would have the rich Church at Corinth give to the poor Church at Jerusalem for the Corinthians themselves might be in need some day, and then the Church at Jerusalem would in turn give to them. This is the Law of the Kingdom--if God prospers you, help another who is not being prospered just now--and then, one of these days, he may help you in your time of necessity.

15. As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing left over; and he that had gathered little had no lack That was the law of the manna in the wilderness. Some people brought in a good deal, for they had a great many children, and so it was all eaten up. Some brought in a little, but God multiplied it, so that there was no lack. So, if in Providence God gives you a large supply of good things, divide it among a large number of needy ones. And if He gives you only a small measure, be content and do your best with it.

16. But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. Titus thought of them as Paul did--they were like-minded in this as in many other matters.

17, 18. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. And we have sent with him the Brother whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches.I do not know who "the Brother" was. There have been many guesses but perhaps none of them were right. You see that human praise, even in the Church, is not a very lasting thing. There was somebody whom all Christians praised, yet nobody knows him now. So, if you get to be esteemed among men, you may be unknown, even as this good man is! But if you have the praise of God, He will never forget you!

19. And not that only, but who was also chosen of the Churches to travel with us with this Grace.Paul did not like handling the money at all. They had to press him to do it and then he sent Titus and somebody else to take charge of it and to keep a strict account so that they should never be blamed in the matter of this distribution. So, Beloved, see that you so serve God that even the devil cannot find fault with you! Be so exact, especially with what is given to God's cause, that no man shall ever even thinkthat you have taken any of it to yourselves.

19-21. Which is administered by us to the Glory of the same Lord, and

declaration of your ready mind: avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.The Apostle is very particular and careful, and herein he sets an example to all of you who have anything to do with any work for God. Do not let it rest on yourselves alone--have others associated with you to share the responsibility and help you to look after it.

22. 23. And we have sent with them our Brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but not much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you. Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you. "If anybody outside wants to know who Titus is, say that I have sent him to be the leader in this particular work. If you want to know who he is, he is 'my partner and fellow helper concerning you.'" Well said, Paul!

23. Or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches and the Glory of Christ. This is the reply to any enquiry about the other brethren--they were probably poor men, humble men, plain preachers of the Word, yet Paul calls them "the Glory of Christ." What a wonderful thing it is that any man should be the Glory of Christ! An honest, upright character. A holy gracious conversation brings Glory to Christ. Men say, "If that man is a follower of Christ, he does credit to his Master." Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us think of this. And if we are not the messengers of the churches, we may be "the Glory of Christ."

24. Therefore show you to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

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

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

Chapter 20

The Church of God and the Truth of God

(No. 3093)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1856.

"The house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth." 1 Timothy 3:15.

[This sermon was preached during "The Rivulet Controversy," of which an account is given in Volume II of C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, in the chapter entitled, "The 'Down-Grade' Controversy Foreshadowed." It was a very long discourse--nearly one-third longer than the twelve pages here given-- and although it was delivered more than half a century ago, its message is as timely, now, as it was then.]

WE live in very singular times just now. The professing Church has been flattering itself that, notwithstanding all our divisions with regard to Doctrine, we are all right in the main. A false and spurious liberality has been growing up which has covered us all, so that we have dreamed that all who bear the name of ministers are, indeed, God's servants-- that all who occupy pulpits, of whatever denomination they might be, are entitled to our respect as being stewards of the mystery of Christ. But, lately, the weeds upon the surface of the stagnant pool have been a little stirred and we have been enabled to look down into the depths. This is a day of strife--a day of division--a time of war and fighting between professing Christians! God be thanked for it! Far better that it should be so than that the false calm shall any longer exert its fatal spell over us! The day is come when we must know who

are for the Lord and for His Truth--and who are on the side of error!

The time is now come when some men, once distinguished among us for the attractiveness of their preaching, must be ranked among those who are opponents of the Truth of God! We did once imagine, in the blindness of our charity, that we all preached one Gospel, but now the enmity of the carnal mind has appeared. Carnal churches have chosen to themselves cruel teachers who have begun to teach strange doctrines which they mystify by their words, garnish with their eloquence and try to support by deceptive logic apart from simple Scripture.

The time is coming when it shall be openly proved who is on the Lord's side. At this very hour separations are taking place everywhere. We weep for the cause--we do not weep for the effect. We weep that there should have been such heresies growing up in the midst of the Church, but we do not weep when we see those heresies brought out to the day and slaughtered with what some think remorseless cruelty, but what we believe unflinching justice! We desire that God may spare to us the men who are still faithful and who will never cease, at the risk of being called bigots, to drag out to the light those who lie against God's Gospel--to bring them publicly before the world as opponents of the faith which is in Christ Jesus, whereby we hope to be saved. May God give us courage to stand up for the right! It is with this view that I have selected my text--to urge upon you, at this time, the great duty of standing fast at your post for the Truth of God and the equally great duty of endeavoring, wherever you are, to maintain them right. Be you not carried about by every wind of doctrine. Give not heed to every schismatic who would lead you aside. Hold fast by the oracles of the Most High! You know what you have been taught and whereunto you have been called--and you know the foundation whereupon you have been built up. "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the

Lord." Whatever may happen to denominations, whatever divisions we may live to see, let it still be known that for God and His Truth we are prepared to hold our ground at any expense or at any risk!

Now, first, we have two things mentioned in one text And then, secondly, we have the relationship which exists between them. The two things are "the Church of the living God"and "the Truth "The relationship that exists between them is that "the Church of the living God"\s "thepillar and ground of the Truth. "

I. First, then, we have TWO THINGS MENTIONED IN OUR TEXT.

The first is "the Church of the living God. "Note well its unity. It is not said the churches of the living God, but the Church. God has not two churches, He has but one. We may be called by different names and, according to Scripture, we are to be separated, like sheep, into different folds, yet there is still only one flock and one Shepherd.

The independence of Scripture is still to be practiced. Each Church is to be separate, having its bishop and its elders governing in the fear of the Lord, without respect of persons and without being disturbed by the opinion of any other Church. But though we are separate churches as to our organization, we are really but one Church, under one Head, the Lord and Bishop of our souls. There are not two churches any more than there are two Gods. There are not two Lords. There, are not two faiths. There are not two baptisms--there is one Lord, there is one faith, there is one Baptism--and there is one Church holding the one Lord, the one faith and the one Baptism. If any hold not the Truth of God, we cannot allow that they belong to "the Church of the living God." It is not for us to adopt the cant phraseology of the present day and say that men may be of the Church, and yet differ from the Truth of God. No, by no means! They are either initiated by the Holy Spirit into God's Church, or they are not. If they are not one with Christ, if they

are not washed with Jesus' blood, if they have not received His Spirit, if they have not been humbled to know and believe Him to be King in the midst of His own assemblies, if they have not put their trust under the shadow of His wings--whatever they may profess or believe, or however they may stand before men--if they do not so stand before God, they do not belong to the one Church! And not belonging to that, they cannot belong to Christ! Though our Lord Jesus Christ has only one Church, a part of its members, I believe, may be found in every denomination--but they owe not their standing to the fellowship they hold with denominations. There is one great denomination, "the Church of the living God," to which every true Believer must belong. Some persons allege that the children of God may act on different principles, may believe different doctrines, may be the recipients of different kinds of Divine Grace and that their apprehensions of God and of Christ may be thoroughly diverse--we hold no such opinion! If there is not the vital principle in a man's heart, teaching him the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, he does not belong to the one "Church of the living God." Thus, there is but one Church, however divided it may be.

You will further observe that the Church is called "the house of God." Why? Because, first, it had God for its Architect--it is not built after man's plan. The Tabernacle in the wilderness was framed after the pattern which God gave to Moses in the mount and, verily, Christ's Church is built after God's own model--it is not molded according to man's idea, it is not shaped according to his option--the will of God and His will, alone, has been followed in the construction of His own house, which is the Church. God has ordained every stone and He has marked where each is to be placed. He planned her walls and her pillars, her foundations and her pinnacles. He has not left anything in the Church to the mere impulse of man, but He has comprised every

tittle in His own statutes and decrees. He has not given a vague idea for man to develop, but He has made known His mind in His own words. There is no designer of the spiritual temple save the Infinite Jehovah! There is no architect of the house of the living God save the living God Himself.

And not only is He its Architect, but He is its Builder. He has not left it for us to dig the stones out of the quarry, or to lay them one upon another. He does the whole work Himself. The foundation upon which each living stone is based has been laid of old, Jesus Christ, Himself, being the chief Cornerstone. In His obedience and His Sacrifice no creature rendered help. Nor less, as "the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple," is every portion of the structure the work of God and not the work of man. To the Sacred Trinity we look for the gradual construction of the edifice. In Christ we "are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." There is never a child of God brought into the Church by man's contrivance or man's persuasions--each precious stone is brought there by God, and by God alone! No child of God is sanctified by man--he is sanctified by the living God. No heir of Heaven is fitted into the Church by man--God alone puts him into his proper position. Men at times try to build with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble upon the one foundation, but God consumes them all, for He will have no building in His Church but His own--

"The vast materials all He forms, Nor power nor love He spares. He guards the building from all harms, And all the Glory bears."

I have often remarked that when men have been adopting a patent process of building up a church by the revivalist sermons of some crazy-brained preachers, after the first excitement has subsided that church has became sickly and fallen

into a very sad and grievous state. Those revivalists have often been like locusts in our churches, devouring every green thing! And the revivals they have stimulated have well-near brought us to destruction! God will not have men usurp His prerogative in the building! And though they may with their own hands speedily pile up a mighty structure, yet, like the baseless fabric of a vision, it soon disappears and is gone.

In His building, He allows no man to use tool or hammer--He will use men fortrowels and hammers, but He will not allow them to make use of themselves or of others. His own hands shall perform it!

Again, it is God's house because God resides there. Wherever the Church is, there is God. God is pleased, in His mercy and condescension, to stoop from the highest heavens to dwell in this lower Heaven--the Heaven of His Church. It is here, among the household of faith, He deigns--let me say it with sacred reverence--to unbend Himself and hold familiar fellowship with those round about Him whom He has adopted into His family. He may be a consuming fire abroad, but when He comes into His own house, He is all mercy, mildness and love. Abroad He does great works of power, but at home, in His own house, He does great works of Grace. Into this house we have been brought--we trust we live there and He has manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world. A father will reveal himself to his children as he will not to his servants, or to those with whom he mingles in his business. So, in the Church, God is pleased to manifest all the greatness of His love, all the marvelous depth of His compassion and show Himself to His people as He never did to angels--and as He never will to the unregenerate! It is the house of God because all who live there have access to their Father and because they can always find Him there-- a very present help in time of trouble.

Again, the Church is God's house because He provides for it The

household of the Church would be starved if God did not provide for it. Does the Church need pastors? God gives us pastors after His own heart. Does it need teachers? Then the teachers shall be taught of God. Does it need supplies? He makes for it a feast of fat things, full of marrow. Are comforts and luxuries needed? There are the wines on the lees well refined and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which, He says, "I have laid up for you, O my Beloved." God always provides for His Church because He is the Husband--the houseband of it! Blessed be God, He never leaves the Church to be provided for by man! We tell you that in dependence upon God we will seek to bring you a portion of meat in due season, but we never undertake to provide the meal. The Lord will provide! We are but His servants, to bring unto His people food for their spiritual sustenance. Beloved, the Church is God's own house and since His Word has taught us that "if any provide not for his own, and for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," we can never believe that God will leave His house destitute of supplies! No, while He is Infinite in goodness, while Heaven and earth cannot measure the riches of His estates, while He is the Lord of all flesh and the Monarch of all worlds, we may rely upon it that His house will always be abundantly provided for and His table bountifully spread!

One more remark here. The Church is God's house because therein God is honored, and therein He rules. Among men it is justly said that "without hearts, there is no home." In the circle of a man's household, he expects to find those "eager to please," and if he has children, surely the affection of the little prattlers shall call forth his fond paternal love. However he may be belied abroad, it is meet that he should be honored at home--that is the place where he deserves and commands obedience! There he is master and lord, and every beck of his

should be obeyed. So, the Church is God's house, the abode of His household and His family. Therefore, though the world may disobey Him, yet His Church always welcomes His Presence, rejoices to do His bidding and listens to His words. In the Church, God must always be honored. Let Him speak and our ears shall at once give attention, and our feet shall run with swift obedience. "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God," to learn His mind and to do His bidding. May He grant unto you, Beloved, this distinguishing sign that you belong to this Church which is the house of God, because by your profession and your practice He is continually honored!

The second thing mentioned in the text is "the Truth."What do these words mean, "the Truth"? Depend upon it, they mean nothing more nor less than is wrapped up with the two covers of this Bible! What is the Truth? I might tell you that it is the counsels of Heaven revealed on earth, the mind of God made known to men, all the precepts, statues, and testimonies of the Most High. I might point you to the Person of Christ, His obedience to the Law, His death, His Resurrection and His Ascension, and tell you that the Gospel contained in the writings of the four Evangelists is the Truth of God! Or, once more, I might tell you of the witness of the Holy Spirit, those convictions He brings home to the Believer's heart and the teaching by which He trains up the heirs of Glory from the moment of conversion till their final gathering into the heavenly garner--and say that all the witness of the Holy Spirit is "the Truth." But then you might ask me why we should call these the Truth. What difference is there between their being true, and their being "the Truth"?\ answer, what God says is necessarily true. It is most certainly true because God has said it. It needs no evidence to

establish it, no argument to prove it. Therefore it is so far above evidence and proof that it is really "the Truth." I have, as your minister, to assert it, illustrate it and preach it as dogmatically as possible, for there can be no appeal against "the Truth." You have, as disciples, to believe it, search it and explore its depths--but there is no room to doubt or reason how much or how little you ought to receive, seeing it is, prima facie, "the Truth."

Note its importance. It is called the Truth. There are many other truths in the world beside God's Truth. There is natural truth, the truth of science, the truth of history and the truth man constantly utters on the evidence of his senses which we unhesitatingly receive. Yet, though these may be important in some degree, they give way to the all-important Truth of God. Now the definite article, "the," is here put before the word, "Truth," to teach us that if everything else we believe to be true should prove true, the whole would sink into insignificance when compared with the importance of the Truth of God! See, then, that you do not underrate the importance of God's Truth. I would have you particularly value it, for some think it a matter of comparative indifference and that although it is right for us to believe all things which God has revealed, yet it is not important that we should do so! They suppose that it is of little consequence what sentiments we hold--we may be half right and half wrong, and yet be quite as well off--it matters little, so long as the heart is right, what the head believes. Alas, Sirs, this is a strange infatuation! The saints of old purified their souls "in obeying the Truth through the Spirit." I cannot understand how your hearts can be right while you oppose the Truth of God! Were it only that God has revealed it, you might know that it is of Divine importance. What He speaks, it is surely incumbent upon us to believe! What He has set forth, we ought to

accept as essential to our well-being, our comfort and our happiness. You may turn a deaf ear to the words of our poets, our philosophers, or our historians. You may even be content to live in ignorance of the laws of your country, "but see that you refuse not Him that speaks" to you from Heaven. This would be perilous, indeed!

Mark then well the importance of the Truth of God, for in these days men are apt to set light by it and, for the sake of peace and quiet, to lead us to suppose that contrary things can also be true.

The Truth is not only important, but substantial in its character. The Gospel which God has revealed is so essentially THE Truth there is nothing false, as there is nothing trifling in it. It is Truth unalloyed. It is Truth which ought to be undoubted. It is a vile sin to imagine that there can be any fallacy in the utterances of an Infallible God! Let everything else we credit be a lie. Let all that man has asserted and proved be swept away--God's Words are the Truth, substantially and really so!

The Truth, moreover, is a thing of unity. It is not said "truths," but "THE TRUTH." God's Truth is only one. Have you ever noticed, in the great summary of Doctrines, that as surely as you believe one, you must believe the rest! One Doctrine so leans upon the others that if you deny one, you must deny the rest. Some think that they can believe four out of the five points and reject the last. It is impossible! God's Truths are all joined together like links in a chain. There is but one Truth, and one system of the Truth of God.

"Then," say some, "tell us how to discern the Truth." You may judge of it by three things--by God, by Christ and by man. That is, the truth which honors God, the truth which glorifies Christ, and the truth which humbles man. Unless a Doctrine exalts God, unless it acknowledges Him Monarch of Creation and gives Him absolute power over His creatures--He

the Potter and ourselves the clay, He molding the vessels as seem good in His sight, we the vessels that are molded after His pleasure, God everything and ourselves nothing--that doctrine is not the Truth of God. And unless a Doctrine magnifies the Atonement--if it asserts that the Atonement may fail, that it was made for many who do not benefit by it, that God's purpose in redemption is in anywhere frustrated--it is not of God, it is of Satan! If a doctrine teaches that man is possessed of good natural powers, that he is not so fallen as the Bible states, that he can do something to help himself, that his exertions can meet with God's Grace half way, that he can assist a little in the work of salvation, or, at any rate, that he can preserve himself from falling and hold on his way with steadfastness, it is a man-glorifying, God-dishonoring doctrine! Cast it to the winds, for it never came from above. God never intended it to be preached otherwise than as the very foil of blackness against the brightness of His own Truth!

II. Now I desire to address you very solemnly on THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THE
CHURCH AND THE TRUTH. "The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth."

There is a sense in which the Truth is the pillar of the Church, for the Church is built on the Truth. It is on the revealed Doctrines of Divine Grace, such as Eternal Predestination, Immutable Affection, Covenant Security, the responsibility of Christ as the Surety of His people--it is on such Doctrines as these that the Church is built--and in this sense the Truth is the pillar and ground of the Church. In another sense, the pillar and ground of the Truth is God. He Himself maintains His own Truth. It is not committed to the hands of mortals to maintain it apart from God. One of the best proofs of this is that the Truth is still preserved in the original purity, after so many

hypocritical preachings of it, and so much wresting of it to wrong purposes. While God lives, His Truth can never die! There remains the sense in which the Church is, as it were, delegated by God to maintain and support the Truth. You must understand this, then, instrumentally--while God is the real pillar and ground of His Truth, yet in this world He is pleased to make His children such. Really and effectively it is God who upholds the Truth, but instrumentally it is the ministers and elders and members of the Church who maintain the Truth and hold it firm.

In reading this verse, I was pleased with two thoughts that occurred to me. The Church is both the pillar and the ground of the Truth. Sometimes it is the pillar of the Truth when it preaches the Word, when it administers the ordinances and publicly shows forth the Gospel. But sometimes there have been seasons of persecution, when the disciples have not been able to go forth and testify to the world--and then the Church becomes a kind of underlying foundation, the ground of the Truth. In the days when Paul stood before Nero, he was like the pillar of the Truth. At another time, when he was shut up in a dungeon and could not come forth, he was in his heart like the ground of the Truth. When the Church stands boldly out and preaches the Word, it is the pillar of the Truth! When it is hidden in the Roman catacombs and cannot proclaim the Savior's name to the world, there still lives the Truth of God deep in the hearts of Believers-- and they are then the ground of the Truth. We, Beloved, who are of the house of God and of the Church of God, are the maintainers and supporters, instrumentally, of God's Truth on the earth. Come, then, let me stir you up to do your duty! Let me beg of you who love God's Truth not to leave it to itself. Perhaps you imagine that God's Truth, being mighty, must prevail without your assistance. It is true, it must and will, but then God has

said that if you belong to His Church, you are to be the pillar and ground of the Truth. To leave God's Truth to shift for itself is as bad as to leave your own children to provide for themselves. True, the great decrees of destiny shall be carried out and our Savior's Kingdom shall be established--but it shall be by means! God has honored you by choosing you to be the maintainers, the testifiers, the pillar and ground of the Truth. I will endeavor to awaken you, then, by one or two exhortations, to be faithful to this, your solemn duty.

In the first place, remember how your fathers, in times gone by, defended God's Truth--and blush, you cowards, who are afraid to maintain it! Remember that our Bible is a blood-stained book--the blood of martyrs is on the Bible, the blood of translators and confessors. The pool of holy Baptism, in which many of you have been baptized, is a bloodstained pool--full many have had to die for the vindication of that baptism which is "the answer of a good conscience toward God." The Doctrines which we preach to you are Doctrines that have been baptized in blood--swords have been drawn to slay the confessors of them! And there is not a Truth which has not been sealed by them at the stake, or the block, or far away on the lofty mountains where they have been slain by the hundreds. It is but a little duty we have to discharge compared with theirs. They were called to maintain the Truth when they had to die for it--you only have to maintain the Truth when taunt and jeer, ignominious names and contemptuous epithets are all you have to endure for it! What? Do you expect easy lives? While some have led through seas of blood and have fought to win the prize, are you wearied with a slight skirmish on dry land? What would you do if God should suffer persecuting days to overtake you? O cowardly spirits, you would flee and disown your profession! Be you the pillar and ground of the Truth. Let the blood of martyrs, let the voices of confessors speak to

you. Remember how they held fast the Truth of God, how they preserved it and handed it down to us from generation to generation! And by their noble example, I beseech you, be steadfast and faithful, tread valiantly and firmly in their steps, acquit yourselves like men--like men of God, I implore you! Shall we not have some champions in these times who will deal sternly with heresies for the love of the Truth--men who will stand like rocks in the center of the sea so that, when all others shake, they stand invulnerable and invincible? You who are tossed about by every wind of doctrine, farewell! I acknowledge you not till God shall give you Grace to stand firm for His Truth and not to be ashamed of Him nor of His Words in this evil generation!

Think about it again, that you have the greatest reason to be the pillar and ground of the Truth from the fact that this Truth has been of immeasurable service to you. How often has it gladdened your hearts? You were once in darkness, but now are you light in the Lord! Once you had no clear view of that great mystery of godliness, but now God has been pleased to open your eyes, having touched them with spiritual eye-salve, so that in His Light you can see light. You are now brought to see that which is revealed and to believe the Doctrines of Grace.

Have you not found these things comforting? How often have they supported you in the hour of peril? How often have they checked you when you would have sinned, and guarded you from despair when you were trodden underfoot by the enemy? How often have they nerved your arm for conflict, or moved your foot for journeying? How well furnished have you been since you believed these things, who were but poor defenseless creatures before! Will you not, then, maintain the Truth and spread it abroad? Will you blush to acknowledge the Word which has brought salvation to your souls, which has rescued you from the thralldom of

sin and introduced you into the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free? No! I beseech you by the glorious panoply wherewith Christ has arrayed you, by His perfect love wherewith He has covered you, by the crown which He has promised you, by the Heaven which He has prepared for you--be you faithful to the Church of Christ, whereof you are members! Be you still the pillar and ground of the Truth.

Reflect once more, as another weighty reason, that you should ever have been led to know the Truth at all Why, you know you did not deserve it! You believe that God has chosen you in His Sovereignty, entirely irrespective of your character. You must regard yourself as being the last man in the world that you could ever have thought God would have chosen. Some of you were sinners against His love and against His Law--great, open and apparent sinners! Others of you were secret transgressors--you sinned against God with a high hand and an outstretched arm, though men knew it not. Many of you were poor sinners involved in the darkness of deceitful doctrine--you had been led astray to believe yourselves saved, whereas you have since found that it was no work of the Spirit, but the mere excitement of your carnal feelings. And now that you, the chief of sinners, rescued by Divine Grace from death and Hell, are brought into His Church, will you not, for gratitude's sake, considering what you owe your Master, defend and maintain His Truth at all hazards, in the midst of a gainsaying generation?

Then, once more, you are bound to maintain this Truth as you consider the manifold blessings which it will confer upon your fellow creatures when it shall win the day. The Truth of God is always a blessing. Men may hate it, but it is a blessing and it brings a blessing to their door, though they welcome it not. They may think it curses them, but the Truth is no curse unless men make it so to themselves. Nothing can

benefit your generation, nothing can ameliorate the morals of mankind, nothing can refine the earth, nothing can wash away its blood, nothing can cleanse its stains, nothing can purge its lusts, nothing can stop its wars and heal its feuds--nothing better, nothing nearly so well as the maintenance of the Truth of God! Therefore, be very bold for it. It is the earth's one hope--take it away and that world's brightest star is quenched and her central sun is dim. Maintain the Truth, then, for the world's sake, I beseech you.

And if encouragement can stir you up to duty, let me remind you that the time is coming when Truth shall be triumphant. Soldier of the Cross, the hour is coming when the note of victory shall be proclaimed throughout the world! The battlements of the enemy must soon succumb. The swords of the mighty must soon be given up to the Lord of lords! What? Soldier of the Cross, in the day of victory would you have it said that you did turn your back in the day of battle? Do you not wish to have a share in the conflict, that you may have a share in the victory? If you are even in the hottest part of the battle, will you flinch and flee? You shall have the brightest part of the victory if you are in the fiercest part of the conflict! Will you turn and lose your laurels? Will you throw away your sword? Shall it be with you as when a standard-bearer faints? No, Man, up to arms again, for the victory is certain! Though the conflict is severe, I beseech you, on to it again! On, on, you lion-hearted men of God, to the battle once more, for you shall yet be crowned with immortal

Glory!

May God, then, grant unto us that we may always stand fast in the fight, as we would stand foremost among the conquerors! Mark those who have already overcome--they are pillars in the house of their God and they will "go no more out forever." As you mark their white garments,

their crowns, their palms, do you not pant to join the triumphant host? I know you do! Well then, wrestle hard as they did and, by Divine Grace, you, also, shall overcome and then shall you sit down with Jesus on His Throne, even as He did overcome and is set down forever with His Father upon His Throne!

But some will say, "If we go forth resolved to maintain this Truth, we shall be called bigots and we shall get very much ill feeling from the world." Well, if you are afraid of that, I have done with you! I call you not kith or kin with me if you are abashed at such trivial rebuffs. If you blush at that, Sir, you will never do much for your Master's honor! If you do not know how to stand fast against the world, you will find the world will stand fast against you. Did they not call Luther a bigot? Did they not say he was a mere declaimer? Did they not charge him with lack of logic and say he was a man that hurled invectives? But did any of these things move him? No, he persevered and still spread abroad the savor of his Master's name in every place till he finished his course with joy as a conqueror! What sort of a character was John Knox in his day? Were not all manner of accusations heaped upon his head? But what did he say? "If I am God's servant and on God's side, I will not start for anyone of you." And now he has this for his epitaph, "Here lies a man who in his life never feared the face of man." Such an epitaph, few of you would merit.

"But," says another, "how am I to know that it is THE TRUTH?" That question I answer in this way--if you do not know it is the Truth of God, you cannot stand up for it. I am only speaking to men and women who do knowthat it is the Truth. A true Christian cannot allow that he is in error, for he sees the Truth positively written in God's Word. But you tell me that I may err. No, but I cannot err when I have God's Word in my lips. People will controvert and will go into endless

arguments to show that we are wrong. We cannot be wrong, Sirs! We cannot allow ourselves to be even supposedto be wrong when we hold fast by the Scriptures only--for that were to suppose that God's Word could be wrong! Our inferences from Scripture may be wrong, but when we have the genuine Scripture, itself, we cannot admit the possibility of our being in error! And unless you are most solemnly convinced that you have the Infallible testimony of God in your own consciences and of the truthfulness of His Inspired Word, I do not ask you to be defenders of the Truth--such defense would be childish, and I would be more childish to ask for it!

"But," another says, "I don't think it necessary to make a noise about Doctrine--it does not concern souls much." Does it not? I believe souls have been instrumentally damned by the thousands by false doctrine. I believe that the universal redemption scheme is doing immense mischief. As Joseph Irons said, "When men once believe that Jesus Christ died for His elect, they begin questioning, 'Did He die for me?' and that stirs them up to seek to know the Truth of God. But when they hear that there is salvation for all, they say at once, 'Then I may sit still and fold my arms!' And so they are deluded into Hell." When men are told that they can do all things, and have power to save themselves, do you not think that is a soul-deluding doctrine? They seek to do what they can and they do a great deal, resting content with a spurious conversion, instead of the conversion which is of God and not of the will of the creature! I do not believe in all the conversions we hear of as brought about by false doctrine. God forbid that I should! Men who preach false doctrine may be sometimes useful in conversion because they preach some true doctrine, but a false doctrine never converted a soul yet, unless it converted it into worse dangers and made it tenfold more the child of Hell than before! It is foolish for you to cry out that Doctrine

does not matter! What would you do if it were not for Doctrine? How could your soul be saved? How could you enter Heaven but for the Doctrine of Redemption? Yes, and how could you get to Glory but for the Doctrine of Election--the Doctrine that you were chosen in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world? Say what you like, you will find Doctrines far more essential than you ever dreamed!

Now, how many of my hearers have had any spiritual realization of the preciousness of these things? "Ah!" cries one, "I will defend the Truth." Stop, young man! Have you felt in your heart the great Doctrine of God's Sovereignty? Have you been humbled in the dust to know that God has a right to do with you as He pleases? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty! Have you been brought to see the blood of Christ shed especially for you? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Particular Redemption, for you do not understand it. Have you ever felt your own depravity in all its desperate character? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Original Sin. Have you felt that God the Holy Spirit has called you out of darkness into marvelous light? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Effectual Calling. Do you feel in your soul that God has enabled you to persevere up to the moment and have you the solemn conviction that you shall hold on your way? If not, you cannot defend Final Perseverance. I beseech you examine yourselves and see whether you have these Doctrines in your heart. If you have, I shall never be much afraid that you will not maintain them, though I think it right, sometimes, to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. And as there are too many who would guide your minds into "THE NON-DOCTRINE SCHEME" and feed you with that which is vague and visionary instead of that which is substantial and true, I would the more earnestly exhort you, as for your very lives, to "hold fast the form of sound words which you have received." Stand fast,

Beloved! Be not moved in the evil day and, having done all, stand fast in the Lord! May God grant it for Jesus' sake!

Chapter 21

Heart Piercing

(No. 3094)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 28, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING,

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"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 2:37

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text (together with verse 36,) is #2102, Volume 35--"PRICKED IN THEIR HEART]

I DARESAY you have seen collections of celebrated sermons which have been chosen with more or less discretion. I suppose that the sermon of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, was one of the most celebrated discourses that was ever delivered, for it was the means of bringing 3,000 persons to conviction, to conversion, to profession of faith and to union with the visible Church! Yet I do not believe that any library collector would ever have put this sermon by Peter among the most famous. It does not seem to me to be very eloquent--there is no climax in it, nothing of that fashionable thing called a "peroration." It is all plain speaking and hard hitting, very personal, very much to the point, very full of clear Scriptural reasoning--but there is nothing at all oratorical about it. It is just such a simple speech as you might expect from a fisherman as Peter had been! I should think that Peter's discourse was delivered calmly and deliberately. He was at a white heat of earnestness and was altogether too earnest to lose his self-control. His whole being was so thoroughly possessed by what he had to say that

he thought little of how he said it.

It was a very powerful sermon, but where did the power lie, do you think? Well, instrumentally and speaking after the manner of men, I think it lay partly in Peter's vivid realization of what he was saying. He knew that his Lord and Savior had, with wicked hands, been crucified and slain--and that He had risen from the grave and had gone back again to Heaven. You could see, by his whole manner, that he was not talking about myths and fancies, but about truths and things of which he knew for certain. There is always a power about a man's message when his hearers know that he who delivers it believes what he is saying and has no latent doubts, no concealed skepticisms, but speaks what he knows and testifies what he has seen.

The next secret of the power of Peter's discourse was, I think, that it was full of Scripture. There is a quotation, first of one Psalm, and then of another--David said this, and David said that--Peter's superstructure of argument was built upon the solid rock of Holy Scripture. Peter had a great mass before him that day needing to be moved and I do not wonder that he got such good leverage with such a fulcrum as he had. The more of Scripture, yes, of the very words of Scripture that we can use in preaching, the better and, certainly, the more of such thing as can begin with, "Thus says the Lord." Men will not care about what we say, or, "Thus says Mr. Wesley," or, "Thus says John Calvin"--it is, "Thus says the Lord" that will have power over them! McCheyne says that you will generally notice that conversions are worked rather by the preacher's text, or by some passage of Scripture quoted by him, than by his sermon, "For," he adds, "it is God's Word, not our comment upon God's Word, which is usually blessed to the salvation of souls." I think it is so, though the rule is not without many exceptions, and our Lord hints at that when He says, "Neither pray

I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word," as if the message of God-sent servants was not only God's Word, but also theirword--and men were led to believe on Jesus through hearing it.

But the real strength of Peter's sermon lay in this, that he had been that very day baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Sitting in that upper room with the rest of the disciples, he had heard "the sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" which "filled all the house where they were sitting." And the "cloven tongues like as of fire" had sat upon

Peter as well as upon the rest--and he, too, had been "filled with the Holy Spirit," so that through him the Holy Spirit spoke. Therefore it was that when he delivered that very simple sermon, his hearers were pricked in their heart, and thousands of them cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Oh, that some such power might fall upon this congregation this evening, especially upon the unconverted part of it, that they might be "pricked in their heart" as Peter's hearers were!

I. My subject is the pricking in the heart and my first observation is that A SAVING IMPRESSION IS ALWAYS A PRICK IN THE HEART.

A prick in the heart is very painful. To be pricked anywhere is not a thing to be desired, but a prick in the heart would not merely be painful, but, in a natural and literal sense, it would be fatal. There are a great many different kinds of impressions made by preachers upon their hearers, but blessed is that preacher who makes a wound right in their hearts!

A saving impression must be made in their heart, because all their religion must begin there. A great many attempts have been made to make men religious from the outside. Some have thought that a very low coat,

reaching almost to the ground, and a strange kind of hat--a biretta, I think it is called--have a great deal of religion in them. It is amazing how much religion is supposed to depend upon tailors and hatters! But I fail to see how anybody's heart can be affected by the cut of his coat, or the shape of his hat! Some try to affect a man by the performance of certain ceremonies. They take him in his childhood and "regenerate" him after their fashion. And later they "confirm" him in something or other and external ceremonies of various kinds are performed upon him. They remind one rather of Babylon than of Jerusalem. But I have never heard of anyone being brought to Jesus Christ in that way, or of any conscience being awakened, or any man finding peace with God in that fashion!

Some have tried what could be done by advising abstinence from meats and drinks. This is a very proper thing in its place and may lead to useful results. But Christ's teaching is, "Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but that which comes out of the mouth that defiles a man." It is the heart which must be affected! And nothing that comes of man, or that can be manipulated by the human hand seems able to touch that. "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God," is the demand even under the old Law of God--and one of the first laws of pure spiritual religion is this--"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." And, therefore, no impression can be of any saving use to a man unless it reaches his heart.

Many of you, dear Friends, have made a profession of religion and you are moral enough to be reckoned consistent with that profession and attentive enough to outward religious duties to consider yourselves to be all that you should be. But, oh, I do implore you never to be

satisfied with any religion which does not affect your heart, and with no religious exercise which is not true heart-work. You might as well be sitting in your own homes as be here without your hearts. It is no more useful to sing a hymn than to sing a song unless you sing it with the heart and so make melody to God. The heart, the heart, the heart, the heart--that is the vital place! Out of it are the issues of life and unless it is savingly affected, the whole life will still be estranged from God!

If those who hear the Gospel are to be blessed by it, they must be impressed and pricked in their heart because other impressions may even be evil They may be forcible, yet they may be productive of no good results. Another of Peter's discourses made a very singular impression upon his hearers. If you turn to Acts 5:33 you will find these words, "When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them." That time, you see, the wound went just as far as the heart, but it stopped there--"they were cut to the heart." It was a deep cut--to the heart, but not in the heart! And the consequence was not that they cried out, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" but they, "took counsel to slay them." Oftentimes if the Word is delivered earnestly and with power, men cannot help feeling the force of it. But what do they do after feeling it? They gnash their teeth for very rage, or they try to besmear and bespatter the preacher and to ridicule or misrepresent what he has said. If anything has pointedly come home to them, they twist it into quite another form and say, "The preacher said such-and-such," when he really said nothing of the kind! That is a way of taking counsel to slay him--they dare not kill his body, but they kill his reputation as far as they can. You may be deeply impressed by a sermon so as to feel under it in a way which you will never forget and yet, for all that, you may only be cut to the heart!

Yet I would rather that people were cut to the heart than not wounded at all, because I hope that the sword of the Spirit will penetrate a little further and really enter the heart. I have often been told this sort of story--"I came to hear you preach, Sir, on such an occasion, and I went away very angry. I could not bear the Doctrine that was proclaimed and I went out hating the man who had talked in that fashion. Yet I could not forget it. It rankled in my mind until, at last, I began to think there was something in it. By-and-by, I saw that it was true and then I said, 'What a fool I am to struggle against it!'" I do not mind my hearers being angry with me because of my preaching, for it is a good deal like fishing. If you have a good large salmon at the end of the line, he will struggle and pull with all his might--and thus he will swallow the hook all the more deeply and there will be the less likelihood of his getting away. And an obstinate resistance to the Gospel is sometimes an indication that the Gospel is piercing and pricking the hearer--and making him snap at it as a wounded beast tries to bite the spear which has been thrust into him and which he cannot pull out. So, when a man is cut to the heart, I hope that he will soon be cut in the heart, but if the sword of the Spirit does not prick him in the heart, no permanent good will be effected.

And further, supposing the impression made should be good in itself, yet if the hearer is not pricked in the heart, the impression will be only transient and we shall have to say to the man, as the Lord said to Judah, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away." Or if the impression lasts a little longer, it will only need enough of the fervent heat of the rising sun upon the blade which has begun to spring up, but under which there is no depth of earth--and in due season its verdure will vanish and it will perish. If it is not

real heart-work, it will not last. The reason why so many backslide is that they built on the sand--there was no deep foundation-work. The soul-saving work, the work which lasts, is that where God plows deeply into the conscience and sows the good Seed of the Kingdom in the heart. It is principle, not passion--full conviction, not merely a profession of faith--that will endure unto the end. If the impression made does not prick the heart, it will be only transient--and when it disappears, evil will come of it, for perhaps the people who are most difficult to be moved are those who have been impressed a great many times, yet not saved. The first time you heard God's faithful servant preach, you felt ready to weep yourself away under the power of the Truth of God which he proclaimed, but now his voice has grown so familiar that even when it is most pathetically earnest, you go to sleep under it! I have been in a mill when there has been such a clatter of wheels that I could not hear myself speak, yet the miller has told me that he was so used to the noise that he could go to sleep in it. And there are persons who have sat so long under a faithful minister that they have got used to his message and do not feet its force as they did when first they heard it. To use a common expression, they have become Gospel-hardened. And this is a very serious state for any man to reach. May God save us from that perilous condition by causing us to be pricked in the heart!

When the Truth pricks the hearers of it in the heart, the impression becomes operative. In the case before us, if you read the narrative, you will find that these men became earnest enquirers. They said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren--what must we do?" Being told what to do, merely, "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you," they did repent. There was a change of mind which was followed by a corresponding change of life--and they were baptized--they obeyed the command of Christ and made an open declaration of their faith in

Him in His own appointed way. Thus they were added to the Church, "and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' Doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

All this followed because they had been "pricked in their heart." It was a sorrowful beginning, yet it was a good beginning, for it was God's way of beginning the work of Grace in their souls. I wish that all converts began in that way. Some seem to me to jump into religion as if they were going into a bath--and then jump out of it again just as quickly. I do not believe in the faith that is unaccompanied by repentance. Some have spoken in disparagement of repentance by saying "that the original word means nothing more than a change of mind." And you might imagine that it was a very unimportant change of mind. But their knowledge of Greek is not very deep and their experimental knowledge of true religion would seem to be still more shallow. This change of mind, I believe, was never better pictured than in that verse of the children's hymn--

"Repentance is to leave The sin we loved before And show that we in earnest grieve, By doing so no more."

A faith that has no tears in its eyes is a blind faith, for where there is sight there will be weeping. Never did a soul look to Christ, whom it had pierced, without weeping and mourning because of its sin. Faith and repentance are twins--they are born together and they will live together--and as long as a Christian is in this world both will be needed. Rowland Hill used to say that the only thing that he would be sorry to leave when he went to Heaven was that sweet, lovely, sorrowful Grace of repentance--he supposed he could not repent in Heaven, but it was such a sweet experience to keep on repenting that he would wish to repent forever if such a thing might be.

II. Now, in the second place, let us notice WHAT TRUTHS GOD USES AS

DAGGERS TO PRICK SINNERS IN

THE HEART.

I have known some pricked in the heart merely by discovering that the Gospel, the Bible, was really true. They have been skeptical--they have perhaps been blasphemers but, all of a sudden, being honestly convinced that the Bible was true, they have been broken down at once, just as Saul of Tarsus was. He would not have persecuted Christ if he had believed Him to be the Messiah, but he thought He was an impostor and, therefore, honestly determined to put down His followers. He says concerning himself, "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." The moment the Lord Jesus called to him out of Heaven, and said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?...I am Jesus who you persecute," he was pricked in the heart and soon he became, as many others have become, just as earnest in the defense of the Truth of God as he had before, in his ignorance, been in opposition to it!

I have known others pierced in the heart by shame through some particular sin. I will give you an instance in which that was the case.

A young man has been moral from his youth up. He has had much to thank God for with regard to what he has been. He has never mixed with the wanton or wicked world, yet there is always a danger as well as a benefit in this state of things. This young man becomes self-righteous. He thinks himself a great deal better than others. Perhaps he says that he is a sinner because everybody says that out of a sort of compliment to God, but he does not feel that he has ever done much that was wrong and he wishes that other people were half as good as he thinks that he is! But one day he commits a certain definite sin. I do not know whether the young Brother is here, but he told me of a case ofjust this kind. He said that when he was in the workshop one day, he upset the oil can and an enquiry was made as to who had been so careless. He was

asked--and he said that he had not done it. And from his usual character everybody believed his denial. "But," he said, "as I went home that night, it came to my mind, 'You are a liar. You are a liar.' I felt so mean," he said to me, "I never felt like that before. I had always acted like a man and like a good man, I thought, but now I felt that I had been a liar. When I got up in the morning, I did not like to go among the other men in the workshop. I thought they would all look at me and say, 'You are a liar.' I could not bear to think of it and a sense that I had lied brought me down on my knees before God."

Now I do not say that I was glad that young man had told a lie, but I did feel thankful that he had discovered what a liar his heart had been all his life--for his heart had always been saying to him, "You are a good fellow," yet he had not been so in reality! If there had not been lies in his heart, that lie would not have come out of his mouth. If there were rats under that floor, you might not know it was so until one happened to pop his head up through a hole in the boards--yet he only shows you what was there all the while! And so, sometimes some one sin has crept up into the light to let a man see what always was secretly in his soul--and that one sin has proved to be, in the hands of God, a sharp sword which has cut right into his heart and convinced him that he is a sinner in the sight of God.

In a great many other cases, God has used teaching concerning His Law as the means of pricking sinners in the heart A man reads the Ten Commandments and he says, "All these have I kept from my youth up." But he is told, upon Christ's authority, that every Commandment contains within itself a great deal more than appears on the surface, as, for instance, "You shall not kill," is a Commandment which is broken by anger. "He that hates his brother" so that he wishes that there were no such person, is, in heart, the perpetrator of the crime of murder! Then

take the Command, "You shall not commit adultery." "Oh," says one, "I never sinned in that way!" And some excellent woman says, "I could not bear even to think of such a thing!" Yet there have been unchaste desires, glances, thoughts, imaginations--and the Commandment covers all those. I do not need to go into the details of each command--it will suffice to sum all up as that "certain lawyer" did. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." Did you ever do that? Has anyone among us come anywhere near to doing that? When the Law of the Lord, in its wide sweep and wondrous compass of all our thoughts

and imaginations and devices comes to be thoroughly understood by us, then it is that God causes us to be pricked by its sharp point!

I have known some also pricked in the heart when they have discovered that there is to be a judgment about everything that we have done--no, more than that--about everything that we have said and everything that we have thought--and that that judgment will be most solemn and its sentence most severe. There will be pronounced, from the lips of God, a sentence of condemnation upon the ungodly which will rest upon them forever and ever, so that they shall abide in a living death in which there shall be no gleam of light or joy, but all shall be a desolation and a ruin, where misery shall lift up its doleful notes forever proclaiming the Infinite Justice of God. Many have been "pricked in their heart" when they have found that though some preachers make our sin to be only a trifle, God's Word does not. Man may try to make the penalty of sin seem small, but God's Word does not. God's scale of sin and man's scale of sin differ very widely. God regards sin as a vast evil requiring an Infinite Atonement, while some who profess to be His servants treat it as quite an insignificant thing. I pray that the

Truth, as revealed in God's Word, may be applied with power to every unwounded heart here, and that many may be "pricked in their heart," and caused to cry out, as they did after Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what must we do?"

On the other hand, a great many have been "pricked in their heart" by a sense of the great goodness of God. They have said, "Has God been so good, so kind, so tender to us and have we never loved Him or sought His Glory?" And they have felt ashamed as they have thought of their base ingratitude. There is one thing I often feel--I do not know whether you feel as I do and I do not know whether I can quite make you see what I mean--I often feel a great pity for God, I feel as if I could weep tears of blood because God is so shamefully treated by His own creatures. God Himself feels their ingratitude, for He says, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." He feels that it is a hard case that He should be treated thus, and when men feel that it is a hard case, it is a proof that they have been "pricked in their heart."

But the chief instrument, I think, that God uses for pricking sinners in their heart is the dying love of Jesus Christ Nothing wounds like the Cross of Christ, just as nothing heals like the Cross. When we discover that out of Infinite love and pity, Jesus came to this earth and took upon Him our sins, our sorrows, our sicknesses and died in our place upon Calvary's Cross, we say, "How can we stand out against One who is so disinterested, so condescending and so kind?" Looking to Him whom we have pierced by our sin, we are made to weep on account of it. Are not your hearts, my fellow Christians, always most tender when you get nearest the Cross? I am sure you agree with the poet who wrote--

"My sins, my sins, my Savior,

How sad on You they fall!

Seen through your gentle patience

I tenfold feel them all.

I know they are forgiven,

But still their pain to me

Is all the grief and anguish

They laid, my Lord, on Thee." Yes, a bleeding Savior makes men's hearts bleed. When He is pieced, they also are pierced. Of one thing I am sure, that nothing ever pierced my heart like the discovery of God's boundless love in giving His well-beloved Son to die for me. I will put it to any man here, even if he is living this day an ungodly life, even if he has plunged into the very worst and most infamous of sins--if tonight he could know that God had loved him from before the foundation of the world--that long before the stars began to shine, electing love had pitched on him to be its peculiar object--that Christ died especially for him--that for him there was appointed pardon and acceptance. And for him a crown already made in Heaven and a white robe which would fit no one but himself, and a harp which no hand but his could ever play, oh, I think he would loathe himself, and say, "I did not know this, or else I would not have lived as I have lived. I did not know that I was the favorite of Heaven. I did not know that I was bought with the precious blood of Jesus! I did not know that God had ordained me unto eternal life, else had I long ago fled into my Father's arms and cried, 'I have sinned against Heaven, and before You.'" O Spirit of the living God, make such a Revelation to some of God's elect here now! Wound thus their hearts and then lead them to the wounded Savior, and let them know that whoever believes in Him was loved of God before time

began and shall be loved of God when time shall be no more!

III. Now I want to notice very briefly, in the third place, WHOSE HAND USES THESE SHARP DAGGERS SO THAT SINNERS GET "PRICKED IN THEIR HEART." Not Peter's, my Brothers and Sisters, nor mine, nor the hand of any Gospel minister! It must be a more powerful hand than any of these--even the hand of the Holy Spirit The fact is that He who wrote these Truths in the Bible must Himself write them on men's hearts, or else they will forever remain inoperative except to condemn! There is One who knows all about the human heart--the Holy Spirit searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men--and He knows how to apply the Truth of God so as to make it quick and powerful, and to drive home to the heart that sword which, because He uses it, is called "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." I pray that He may take the Truth this very moment and use it thus. A sword hanging on the wall does not wound anybody. Our daily prayer ought to be, "O almighty Spirit, gird Your sword upon Your thigh and wield it in Your Omnipotent might, that sinners may be 'pricked in their heart,' and so be brought to repentance and salvation!"

One very comforting thought is that He who alone can pierce sinners' hearts, is named "the Comforter." Catch at that, Sinner, catch at that! He who wounds the heart is also the Comforter! He who kills is the Quickener who makes alive! The Spirit who convicts is also the Spirit who consoles! He has come to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and ofjudgment, but it is also His office to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us. Though one of His hands holds a sharp dagger, the other hand bears the remedy with which to heal the wound, for still is that saying true, "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal." Only He who kills can make alive, but blessed be God that the same Divine Spirit is both Wounder and Healer!

Therefore let us, who are the children of God, cry mightily unto the Spirit and entreat Him to make the preaching of the Gospel, here and everywhere else, to be like a sharp sword piercing the hearts of sinners! How many preachers, nowadays, are using a sword without either edge or point? I recollect hearing a sermon and before it was preached there was a prayer offered that souls might be saved by it, yet I could not see how any soul could have been saved by that sermon unless the hearer had misunderstood what the preacher said and then, perhaps, he might have been converted. Yet many people called it "a very fine sermon." The man had put the sword of the Spirit into a splendid scabbard decorated all the way up with gold and diamonds--and then he waved it about and prayed the Lord to kill somebody with it! But the Lord could not do it unless He acted directly contrary to His usual method of working! He often uses our weakness and our infirmity to glorify Himself, but He cannot do many mighty works with some instrumentality. Brothers and Sisters, pray to God to send us the Holy Spirit--that is what we need above everything else! Pray day and night for this and believe and expect that God will grant your request. If the preacher does not happen to be the man you like best to hear, say to yourself, "God can use that man," and then pray, "O Lord, give him Your Holy Spirit!" I remember that Mr. Matthew Wilkes once preached from the text, "You are our Epistle written in our hearts...written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." He compared the preacher to a pen and said that some pens needed mending now and then, and that all pens, however good they were, must be dipped in the ink if they were to do any writing at all. And he added, "You ought to pray all the more for your preacher when he does not write well, 'Lord, dip him in the ink! Give him more of the unction of the Holy Spirit and then his word will have power over the hearts of

men!'"

IV. Our last enquiry must be, HOW CAN THESE PRICKS IN THE HEART BE HEALED? You had the answer in the first hymn we sang tonight--

"When wounded sore the stricken soul Lies bleeding and unbound. One hand only, a pierced hand, Can salve the sinner's wound. When sorrow swells the laden breast, And tears of anguish flow, One heart only, a broken heart Can feel the sinner's woe."

Is your heart bleeding? Then bring it to the bleeding heart of Jesus, for that will stanch its wound! Does your brow ache? Then put it near that brow which was crowned with thorns and its aching will soon be gone. Are you sorely wounded? Then lay your wounds close to the wounds of Jesus and they shall be healed.

This is the whole story. You are guilty and God must punish sin. He cannot be a just God and yet not exact the penalty for sin. But Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and He has stood as the Substitute for His people, bearing their sins in His own body up to the tree and on the tree. And there He endured the wrath of God against sin, "being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." You ask, "Did Christ bear my sins?" Let me ask you--do you believe in Him? Do you trust Him as your Savior? Will you confide your everlasting destiny into His dear hands? Will you abandon your self-righteousness and will you rest in Jesus alone? Will you take Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be your soul's only confidence? If you can truly say, "Ah, that I will, and glad will I be to have such a Christ to trust in," then I can assure you that He did die for you--and that your sins are pardoned and shall never be mentioned against you any more forever! Go in peace, for you are justified by faith, and you are dear to the heart of God. Remember that glorious declaration, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ

Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Go away singing of Substitution--the richest word in all our language--Christ standing in my place that I may stand in Christ's place! Christ on the Cross for me, Christ in the grave for me and now I in Heaven where Christ is, for God "has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." I at the right hand of God, beloved and honored because Christ has gone there to prepare a place for me that where He is, there I may be also!

Yet, before you go, let me urge you, if you are trusting in Christ, to confess your faith as the converts did on the day of Pentecost--

"Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!
The trumpet call obey!
Forth to the mighty conflict,
In this, His glorious day!
You that are men, now serve Him,
Against unnumbered foes
Your courage rise with danger
And strength to strength oppose." You who really love the Lord ought to be ashamed to make any difficulty of confessing your faith in Him. I remember, when I was a lad of fifteen, resolving that as a Believer in Christ, I ought to join the Church in the place where I was then living. I asked the deacon about it and he said that I must see the pastor. I remember well going to see him on a Monday and receiving a reply that he could not see me. I called again on Tuesday and Wednesday and got an answer that he was busy and could not see me. But when I made up my mind to do a thing, even in those days, I meant to do it. So I managed to get to the door of his study and I said to him, "As I have come three times to see you, Sir, and the Church Meeting is to be held tomorrow evening, I will go to the Church Meeting and propose myself as

a member. I mean to be united to the visible Church of Christ. So if you cannot see me, I will go to the members and ask them to receive me."

When he saw how determined I was, he found time to see me directly, and I was very soon admitted into the Church. Now, you will not have as much trouble as I had, for you will find many Christians ready to welcome you into our fellowship. It is no trouble at all compared with what Christians found it in the olden times. I think I see, in the early days of Christianity, a good old saint at one of the meetings down in the catacombs, talking with a young man who says to him, "I wish to be a follower of Christ." The old saint says, "I rejoice, Brother, to give you the right hand, but do you know what it means to be a follower of Christ?" "Well," he says, "I think I do." "Come with me," says he, "and we will take a walk to the Coliseum." And in the dead of night, while the moon is shining upon that vast amphitheatre, the old man says to him, "Do you see there tens of thousands of seats?" "Yes." "Well, if you do become a follower of Christ, it is very likely that everyone of those seats will be filled with a cruel spectator who will gaze upon you one of these days." "But, Brother, what would happen to me then?" "Come with me," he says, "across this great arena. Do you see those bones? They are the bones of some of the soldiers belonging to the army that you wish to join. Now step across to this low arch. Can you hear those growls?" "Yes, Brother, what animals are those?" "Lions, tigers, and other savage beasts from Africa and Gaul." "Why are they there, Brother?" "To tear the Christians limb from limb when they shall be placed in the middle of that amphitheatre. If you are with them, there will be tens of thousands looking down upon you, eager for your death, and not one of them will pity you. Are you prepared to follow Christ here?" I think I

can hear the young Christian hero, when he thoroughly appreciates the risk, saying, "It will be hard for flesh and blood to die like that, yet, by the Grace of God, I will never bow before an idol. My hope is fixed on Jesus Christ who bled and died for me. Brother, put my name down! Introduce me to the pastor of the Church and let me be immersed into Christ, for His I am, and if I am called to die here, by His Spirit's help I will not draw back! I will face the lions and die the martyr's death, that I may wear the martyr's crown."

You young men and young women who have lately been converted here, are not called to such a death as that. Will you shrink from the little trials and petty persecutions of the present time? Are you afraid of someone who will point the finger of scorn at you and say, "There goes a Christian"? Then, what poor stuff you must be made of and how little of the Spirit of God can be in you! You have grave need to question whether you have been born-again, for if you are, indeed, the Lord's own--if He has bought you with His blood--you will come forward and say, "His I am, and I am not ashamed to admit it! No, but I even glory in it."

The Lord bless you, dear Friends! If you have been wounded in heart, may He heal you! And if you never have been thus wounded, may there be such a wound produced in your heart right speedily that only the pierced hand of Christ shall be able to salve--and to Him shall be the Glory forever and ever! Amen.

Faith in Christ

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE FRIENDS' MEETING-HOUSE,

BISHOPSGATE STREET, ON TUESDAY MORNING, MAY 8, 1877.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

Acts 16:31.

THE subject which I have chosen for this morning and which may God the Holy Spirit bless to us, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the way of salvation. Nothing can be of more importance than this subject and, therefore, nothing will more thoroughly interest a company of practical businessmen.

The preaching of the Gospel has become, happily, very common in these days. You may hear it at the corner of the streets and any day you may have the same message pushed into your hands in the form of a tract as you go about your business. Since the late revival, when so many were drawn together to hear the Word of God, I should hope that there are few now among us who are unaware that the religion of the Gospel sets forth faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation. I have no doubt that there may remain a remnant to whom this will be news but, in this city, after the great stir that was made, I should suppose that at least the vast majority of intelligent, educated people know that this is the teaching of Christ's ministers--that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is not condemned, but has passed from death unto life.

Salvation by Grace through Faith is no new Doctrine. In addition to its being in the Word of God, as taught by our Lord and His Apostles, it is

the distinguishing Doctrine of the Christian religion all through its history--and it is always clearest when that Christianity is most pure. Especially is it the very heart and essence of Protestantism. When Luther was upon the Santa Scala at Rome, hoping to earn merit and indulgences by creeping up and down that idolized staircase upon his knees, repeating many prayers, this text came to him, "The just shall live by faith." And he got up and forsook his superstitions once and for all. Finding peace by faith in Jesus, he began at once to declare to others the message which had brought life and light and freedom and joy to his own soul! The Reformers, following Luther's example, made this the cardinal point of their preaching. And today it is still true that the article of a standing or a falling Church is the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, or that men, believing in Jesus Christ, are accounted just before the bar of God.

Let me set forth the manner of this Doctrine. We have sinned against God and it is inevitable that sin should be followed by punishment. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And a judge who never punishes does not do right, but neglects his office. God, who is all Love, as a necessary consequence is also sternly just, for the omission of Justice from His Character would be the omission of an essential ingredient of love. God, therefore, must punish sin. And every transgression must have its just recompense of reward. But His only-begotten Son, in wondrous compassion to our souls, came into this world, took upon Himself our nature and veiled the Godhead in human flesh and, being found in fashion as a Man, He suffered in our place the penalty which was due to the Law of God--

"He bore, that we night never bear, His Father's righteous ire."

He took the debts of this people upon Himself and upon the Cross, by death, discharged them all--so that they are blotted out and can never

be mentioned against His people any more forever. But who are His people? Who are the people for whom He died? Who are those for whom He was an actual, literal and efficient Substitute? They are known by this--that they believe in Him. According to His own saying, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Our Lord tells us that the Son of Man was lifted up, "That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And yet again, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." By His death our Lord has made a full Atonement for the sins of all who believe in Him and they are, therefore, justified in the sight of God!

This believing in Christ has been illustrated in a great many ways and I do but repeat what you have often heard. Believing is relying upon, or trusting. It is not a mere assent to a dogma, or the acknowledgment of a fact of the past. It is trust--trust in that Christ who died upon the Cross, that through His merit, He can remove the guilt and punishment of sin. And also trust in that Christ who rose from the dead and is gone into Heaven, that by the power of His eternal Spirit, He can cleanse us from the dominion and habit of sin. That is the faith which saves--trust in the living Jesus who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. We have heard faith illustrated by the picture of a child in a burning house. In vain does he attempt to escape from the fire. The flames are bursting into the room. He rushes to an upper window, he hangs there grasping the sill. Can he be saved? Yes, a strong man stands beneath him and cries, "Drop into my arms! I will catch you." The boy looks down. He observes that the man is strong. He believes that fact, but that belief does not save him, though it leads

up to it. The act which really saves him is when he trustfully lets go of every other hold and simply drops into the arms which are ready to receive him. Here you and I, by nature, hang in danger, and Christ beneath us says, "Drop, and you shall be safe in the arms of Jesus." The act of faith is not believing that Christ is an actual Person, nor the believing that He is able to save us, but the practical act of the mind arising out of the two beliefs which leads us to give up everything else and trust to
Him.

I remember hearing an illustration of faith which struck me very much. It came from an idiot. They had been teaching him all they could, but it was weary work. He had a little brain left and, after long teaching, and especially teaching him the great Doctrine of Faith, one of the teachers began to question him and said, "John, have you a soul?" The poor creature replied, "No, I have no soul." The teacher felt grieved and thought that he had spent his labor for nothing. But the poor fellow went on to say, "I had a soul once, but I lost it. And Jesus Christ found it and so I always let Him keep it, and so it is His and not mine." Truly, the very essence of faith lies there--the consciousness of being lost in ourselves and found in Christ, and the leaving of one's soul in Jesus' hands! When we go to Christ, faith does very much the same as when a man takes his money and deposits it at the bank. I see you come up to the counter and pay in very large sums of money. But you do not come back in half-an-hour and say, "Show me my money." You do not stand there at the counter half the day to watch the sovereigns as they are counted in order that you may make sure that your money is safe! No, you trust in the bank and go your way. So do we deposit our souls in the hands of Christ, committing them to Him as unto a faithful Creator. And then we say with the Apostle Paul, "I know

whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him unto that day."

Now, this believing in Christ has appeared to some persons to be far too simple and they have said, "Well, but why is not everybody saved, if they are to be saved merely by trusting in Christ?" Truly, it is very simple, and yet of all the mental acts that are ever performed by mankind, this is one of the most difficult. "How so?" you ask. I will express myself in a paradox--its easiness makes it difficult. Let the story of Naaman illustrate it. He comes in great pomp from Syria to be healed by Israel's Prophet. He was a great man with his master--his retinue was considerable and, therefore, with no little self-importance he drove in his chariot to the Prophet's door, hoping to be healed of his leprosy. The Prophet only sent him a message--"Go wash in Jordan seven times." Naaman was angry. He thought that surely the Prophet would come out to him--such a great man as he was--and that he would go through certain ritualistic performances and, among other things, strike his hand over the place and cure the leprosy. But, "Wash in Jordan seven times? Does he insinuate that I need a bath?" The prescription was too commonplace and the course of cure by far too simple! It was too difficult for him because it was so easy--and he turned and went away in a rage! But his servants wisely said, "My father, if the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather then, when he says to you, Wash, and be clean"? Had not the servants been wiser than the master, Naaman would have gone away with his leprosy uncured!

And so it is all the world over--our proud hearts reject the simple, artless, unencumbered plan of believe and live. If there were orders given today from Heaven that if we went on pilgrimage from Bishopsgate to John o'Groat's House

barefooted we would be saved, many of us would be on the road at once! But when the message of mercy consists only of, "Believe and live"--when God declares that we have only to trust His Son and rest in the Atonement which He has made, we say, "No, it is too simple a business." The difficulty lies only in our proud hearts! They are so lofty and self-sufficient that they do not readily stoop to be saved by Another's merits and never, until the Spirit of God brings us down humbly to feel our need of such an Atonement, are we willing to accept the salvation of Jesus Christ!

But simple as the whole matter is, there is a great misunderstanding about it among some who look unfavorably upon evangelistic efforts. I have noticed in the newspapers a controversy which arises from a misunderstanding as to what faith is. Somebody has very severely condemned a hymn which says--

"Nothing, either great or small--
Nothing, Sinner--no
Jesus did it--did it all,
Long, long ago."

Now it has been supposed that we teach that faith in Christ, altogether apart from moral character or obedience to the Law of God, will save the soul--and it is then charged that we undervalue the decencies and moralities of life! It is no means so. We have never taught that a faith which is without works will save a man, for we know that such a faith is dead and is, therefore, of no value! We do teach--and every man who rightly preaches the Gospel teaches--that we are saved by faith in Christ and not by works. But we also teach that he who is saved, is saved from sin, is saved from unholiness, is saved to morality and to something a great deal better--to holiness and careful walking before the living God!

What is salvation? It is necessary to explain that word in order to make this matter clear. Salvation is not merely being snatched from Hell and being admitted to Heaven. The greatest trouble of a really awakened conscience is not Hell, but sin. "How can I be saved from sin?" is the anxious enquirer's main question. Since I spoke here last week I have received notes from persons present who have said, "Speak to us about how we can conquer besetting sins. Tell us how we can get supremacy over carnal lusts," and the like. That question I am answering now! Christ's salvation rescues men from themselves and frees them from the domination of evil! I would give nothing for a supposed deliverance from Hell if it does not come by way of deliverance from sin! It is sin that makes Hell, for there would be no Hell if man had no evil within him, as there certainly can be no Heaven for a man till he is made good and fit to dwell with God, for the fire of Hell is a guilty conscience before God--and the bliss of Heaven is holiness and reconciliation to the Most High.

Now, this kind of salvation comes to a man by faith, or in other words by trusting Jesus to save him. It is not merely that I believe the fact that Christ died on the Cross--I do believe that, but the mere historical belief in a past transaction will not save me! I trust in Him who died for me and believe that He will set me free from the power of my sins. Jesus Christ, who still lives in the highest heavens, says to me, "You are sick in soul. I can save you. Will you trust Me? You must trust not anything you can do, or anything you can be, but trust Me." Very well. My reply to Him, if I am really led by the Spirit of God, is, "Great Physician of Souls, I do trust You." Now what follows upon trusting a physician? Obedience to his orders! Imagine a physician calling upon a person who is sick and promising him a cure upon the one condition that he will have perfect confidence and leave himself in the

doctor's hands. The physician remarks, "Your disease is a very terrible one. What are you accustomed to eat?" The patient at once mentions certain articles of diet and the physician shakes his head and says, "If you continue to eat in that fashion, I can do nothing for you. You really must give up the unhealthy matters upon which your disease feeds." Then he adds, "Here is the medicine which I prescribe. I have never known it fail. You are quite sure you trust me?" "Yes, Sir, implicitly." "Then all will be well."

The physician goes his way and calls again in due time, but the patient is not a bit better. "You are no better. How is this?" The doctor looks surprised. "What food have you been eating?" The patient tells him and it turns out that he has been taking precisely what he was forbidden to take. "Well," says the doctor, "you do not trust me. You have no faith in me." "Oh yes I have, Sir! I have the greatest possible faith in you." "Then why do you act in this fashion? You are mocking me! I consider myself to be trifled with and I shall have no more to do with the case unless I have your confidence. You have no faith in me if you persist in disobedience. You do not trust me unless you keep to the regimen which I prescribe. Did you take the medicine?" "No, I did not like it. I tasted it and I did not admire the flavor--and so I set it aside." "And yet you say that you trust me?" "Yes! And you said that if I trusted you, you would work a cure."

"But," replies the physician, "you know what I meant and you are mocking me! You do not trust me at all, or else you would both forego what I forbid you and gladly accept what I prescribe you."

Is not this reasonable? Carry it, then, into the matter of trust in Jesus. The faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which saves the soul shows itself in obedience to the precepts which He lays down and in forsaking the habits which He condemns. This is the faith which we declare saves

the soul and I defy any man to say that there is anything in such teaching which is detrimental to morality or opposed to good works! No, rather, but whatever things are pure and of good repute are fostered by such preaching and are undoubtedly produced by the saving faith in Jesus Christ of which we speak!

Now, the assertion that simple faith in Jesus Christ will save a man from sin and will ultimately make him perfect if it shall work in him by the power of the Spirit of God is most reasonable. The natural and inevitable fruit of faith in Christ is holiness. For observe. We spoke last week about a child that had no love to its father and of the great grief of the father's heart because the child was alienated. What would be one of the readiest ways to get back the boy's heart? If you can get that lad to believe in his father--to confide in his father! The affection which he had lost will come back again. When a man trusts God and accepts His way of salvation, that trust naturally influences his affections and through his affections it is sure to influence his life.

That is clear enough to any man who chooses to remember the laws of the human mind. Confidence in a person's love tends to make us love him in return.

A sense of pardon is a wonderful curative of sin and this comes by faith. The man who is conscious of being guilty is usually possessed by a sort of sullen despondency as to better things. The old proverb that you may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb operates on many a man, "I am lost," he says, "and if lost, I may just as well go in and enjoy myself while I am here." But oh, when that man is led to believe Christ, quite another feeling possesses him! The joy of pardon banishes all gloom and he cheerfully cries, "How shall I continue in sin after such a loving forgiveness? Has Christ washed it all away and cast it all behind His back? Then will I labor with all my heart to show my

gratitude to Him and henceforth the evil which I once loved shall be detested by me!" Many a man has felt more influence exerted upon his mind by the Grace that has pardoned him than by the Justice which threatened to punish him! And when God comes and deals with us in that fashion, assuring us that we are forgiven, there is a conquest attained over sin!

He who believes that he has been forgiven by the merit of the Redeemer's death, loves Christ. And let any man who loves Christ answer me--Is not the love of Christ the most potent force conceivable for delivering you from sin? You cannot see yonder Cross and mark the drops that flow from Jesus' wounds and say, "Thus my sins were washed away"--and then go and offend Him. No! But for the love you bear His name, you feel ready and willing to do anything and suffer anything, rather than grieve His Spirit. The love of Christ constrains us to all sorts of self-denials and self-sacrifices when once we are fully possessed with it! It purges from all that is petty, mean, selfish and impure--and as he who believes in Jesus Christ has a faith which works by love after this fashion, you can clearly see how faith leads on to a holy life.

There is one fact connected with our being saved through faith which ought always to be remembered. It is thought that if a man knows himself to be forgiven and saved he will go about the world and feel that he is somebody and look down upon other people as if they were almost unworthy of his acquaintance. I have never met with any case where that has occurred but, still, it is thought that such would be the case. But observe--if this salvation comes to a man not at all by his own merits, but only as the free gift of God. And if all that he has done has been to accept it and lay hold upon it by simple faith--instead of feeling proud,he feels humbled by the great mercy

which he has received! He cannot trace any of it to himself, so as to claim the smallest measure of credit for it--and so he is saved from the tendency to pride and Phariseeism which otherwise his distinguished position as a saved soul might have suggested to him! The principle which delivers from pride and self-conceit, which is in itself no small salvation--is that of faith in Christ!

He who believes in Jesus has another means by which he overcomes sin, namely, that he reckons himself henceforth not to be his own but to be henceforth the property of his Redeemer. This rings in his ears--"For you are not your own: you are bought with a price." And so, if he is true to his convictions, he cannot live to himself. He has higher aims and nobler objectives than any which concern his own personal advantages. He reckons that his time, his substance, his faculties, his position do not belong to himself, but he uses them as a steward for his Master and gives to his Lord the interest. I think I need not dwell longer on this point, for it will be clear to all who wish to see it, that faith in Jesus is a very operative faculty and tends to promote holiness.

But faith is not that mere cold, barren thing which says, "The creed is true," and then doubles it up and forgets it, or puts it on the shelf all the week to be taken down only on Sundays--it is a loving trust in Christ which changes the heart and affects the entire life! It is the grandest, greatest power ever seen on earth, for by it the Holy Spirit displays His might in the salvation of men!

But, men and Brothers, the proof of any theory must always lie in results. What are the facts? Has Gospel preaching produced morality, purity, holiness, or the reverse? There are some of us who have been preaching the Doctrine of Justification by Faith for years. What have been the results? According to the opinion of some, we ought to have

gathered around us a frightful nest of hypocrites who would strut about the world, looking down upon everybody else but really being the most lustful and licentious of men since they are free from all the restraints which are supposed to arise out of the doctrine of salvation by works! That, of course, would be the consequence if it is, indeed, true that Justification by Faith discourages morality! The preacher ought to be the center of a happy hunting ground for the police if our objectors have any foundation for their allegations! But how have we found it? I will not vaunt myself beyond my line and measure, but I will say that the purest, holiest, most honest and most worthy people I have ever known are Believers in this Truth of God. Do you tell me that they were naturally excellent and would never have gone wrong whatever they had believed? I have a reply for this also. I know scores of those who were once degraded women and even harlots of the street, who, at this moment, are chaste women, scrupulous in purity and loving their Lord! I know thieves, drunkards, persons of all classes and castes from whom I have heard the story of their lives and who have told me that they would have continued as they were--sinful and leading others into sin--if it had not been that they heard of free salvation through the precious blood and believed and lived!

We cannot bring these people up before you to speak personally, because you yourselves see that it would be an indiscreet and improper proceeding. But if the case had to be tried like any other in a court of law we could produce proofs by the hundreds that faith is the friend of morals and the source of purity! Yes, we could not only bring you brands plucked out of the fire from the lower ranks of society, but there are gentlemen who are equally illustrious instances of Divine Grace. We have heard of gentlemen respected in their spheres who, nevertheless, behind the wall were living in fornication and adultery

and all sorts of filthiness, but who, nevertheless, chanced to drop in and hear the Gospel and were led by Grace to believe it--and their lives have become henceforth renewed and purified! It has been their earnest wish to undo the mischief they have done and to live all the more devotedly to the Glory of God because they know that they have done so much damage to society and to their own souls. We are not here to unveil private lives, or make heroes out of great sinners, but we cannot and will not have it said that faith in Christ does not cleanse men when we know to the contrary! If, as I stand preaching on the Sabbath, I were to say, "Let those who have felt the power of the Gospel and have been delivered by it from gross sin, stand up," there are not a few who would run the risk of being thought immodest and who would rise and say, "Yes, blessed be Jehovah Jesus' name, we are brands plucked out of the burning! We have felt the transforming power of Divine Grace."

What has done this except the Gospel? Truly I know not! I heard a missionary say the other day that he stood in public places in India and preached the unity of the Godhead--and that when the Hindus rose and objected, he knew their objections and answered them. Then he preached the deity of Christ and the Muslims opposed him. "But," he said, "I was so familiar with the controversy that I could reply to all their remarks and win the victory. I did this for years," he said, "but I saw small good come of it. But when I changed my plan and began to preach the great love of God to man through Jesus Christ and taught them to believe and live, then came success! I saw them moved to tears and converts came to prove the power of the Gospel." What does Dr. Chalmers say--(no mean witness)--that for years he preached morality and virtue till he scarcely could find any in his parish! But when he began to preach Jesus Christ and simple faith in Him, then he saw the

worst of the worst reformed and men sought after holiness and truth! We cannot but speak what we know and testify what we have seen! The quaint old English proverb is that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," and one great proof of the Gospel lies in the effect that it produces. If, good Sir, you profess to believe in Jesus Christ and your faith does not affect your heart and your life--it is a counterfeit and you will do well to be rid of it as soon as possible lest so suspicious an article should be found upon you!

My time has almost expired and, therefore, let me use it in pleading with you. Jesus Christ has a great claim upon the faith of everyone of us here present. My Brothers, you who believe in Him, do not believe in Him half enough. You who trust Him with your souls, should trust Him with everything else. Rely upon Him in Providence as well as in Grace. To those who do not trust Him, let us say this. Do you believe in the New Testament? Is that to you an Inspired volume? Then to you I speak. You believe that Jesus Christ is God--can you not trust your soul with God? What can be too hard for Him? What if you are guilty--cannot God pardon you? What if your heart is evil--cannot God change you? Cannot He who made you, make you new? Surely, then, to doubt God is insanity, since where there is Omnipotent power there is no rational room for doubt!

Remember, next, that Christ came into this world commissioned by God to save. He did not come as an amateur, taking the office upon Himself without authorization. When He descended on the breast of Mary and lay in the manger, God sent Him with a high commission at His back, giving Him authority to be a Prince and a Savior. We may well trust the Messiah whom God, the Everlasting One, sends with unquestionable warrant!

Remember, too, that the work which He had to do He has altogether

finished. To put away sin was Christ's work-- He has put it away! Not a pang of punishment remains to be borne for sin by anyone who believes in Jesus--

"He to the utmost farthing paid Whatever His people owed."

He who believes in Christ may know that Christ took all the load of sin upon Himself--every particle of it--past, present and to come--and threw it into the depths of the sea where it is drowned forever! It were somewhat harder to believe in a Christ who has to do this, than in a Christ who has done it! But Jesus claims our trust because He has already done the work!

Many like ourselves have been saved. Look at Heaven--filling with the redeemed. And look at earth--how many still among us are wending their way to the blest abode! Trust Him of whom no man ever dared to say that He deceived him! I have stood by scores of dying beds, but I have never heard a Christian say, "I trusted in Christ, but He has failed me." I have seen them with the clammy death sweat upon their brows, but I have never heard them say, "I die deceived, for I trusted Christ to support me now and He has left me to perish." Surely somewhere in the world someone would have found Him out by this time if He were not trustworthy! But, instead of it, we trust Him so implicitly that we wonder others do not, for we feel, for our own part, that if we had ten thousand souls we would ask for no other Savior, but would confide the whole ten thousand and ten thousand more in His once pierced hands!

Have you never trusted Him? Then, since He is worthy of your confidence, confide in Him now! Sitting in these benches, at this unusual hour for listening to the Gospel, hear this pleading voice--

"Oh, believe the record true, God for you His Son has given! You may now be happy too, Find on earth the life of Heaven." Rest in Jesus and a thrill of life will go through you such as you have never felt

before!

I saw not long ago a woman who said to me, "Is it indeed true that upon trusting in Jesus I shall be saved at once?" I replied, "It is even so." "Why," she said, "My father, when he got religion, was nearly six years a-getting it. And they had to put him in a lunatic asylum part of the time! I thought that there was no getting saved without going through a very dreadful process." I spoke to her of the Person and the work of Jesus, and repeated to her the Divine Command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." She caught the idea and obeyed the command! I perceived that she yielded to the Truth of God and really trusted, for I saw a change come over her face which betokened the rest of her soul. Those who are familiar with such scenes know what a beauty lights up the countenance of the plainest persons when they come to see the way of peace and enter upon it. "I am saved," she said, and she hastened off, saying, "I will get away now, for your time must not be wasted! I am saved and you can tell the Truth to some others and perhaps they will rejoice as I do."

Are there none here this morning to whom this Gospel will be good news? Young man, it may be that you will begin this morning a new life and that there will be for you a grand career in the service of God! The beginning of the new life is faith in Jesus Christ--

"Only trust Him, only trust Him!
Only trust Him now!
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN31-21

Verses 1, 2. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these

miracles that You do, except God be with him. When enquirers come to see any of you who are Christians, do not begin talking to them, but let them begin by telling you what they have to say, for it will probably guide you as to what you shall say to them in return. Our Lord Jesus could read all hearts and He needed no one to tell Him what was there, yet, for our sakes He sets the example of letting Nicodemus speak first. This man was a Pharisee and, consequently, was apt to attach too much importance to the outward part of religion--so observe how the Savior deals with him by dwelling on the inner part of it--upon the necessity of the new birth. He has less to say to him about believing and more about experimental godliness and the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart. Our main business, in dealing with men's souls, is not to teach them what they want to know but what they really need to know, bringing forward ever that Truth of God which, if it is not the most palatable, shall be the most profitable to them.

3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. "He has no idea of what it is. He cannot perceive it. He has not the faculty by which he could see or understand the meaning of the Kingdom of God."

4. Nicodemus said unto Him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? His religion was external, you see--he could not grasp the spiritual idea which Christ had set before him. This matter of the new birth is very simple to all of us who know what Jesus meant, but it was exceedingly difficult to Nicodemus--as it has been to all but those who have experienced it.

5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. The entrance into that Kingdom is by a new birth in which water and the

Spirit of God are both necessary. There is a cleansing and there is a new creation. There is the cleansing water of the merit of Christ and there is the Divine operation of the Spirit of God. Or, if the Savior only means entrance into His visible Kingdom, then it is through Baptism that the man outwardly makes his profession of faith in Christ. It is through the Spirit of God alone, however, that he really enters into the Kingdom of God. Note the distinction between seeingthe Kingdom and entering into it--no man can even see the Kingdom of God, much less enter it, except by that new birth which is worked only by the Holy Spirit!

6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. No matter who the father is, nor who the mother is, there is no such thing as inherited godliness. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing more. All that is born of the flesh cannot rise beyond its original source. However much the man may improve himself, our Savior's words will still remain true-- "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

6. And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit Everything is according to its birth and according to its nature. The Spirit of God must, therefore, operate upon us and we must have a new birth if we are to see and to enter the Kingdom of God.

7. Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again."Do not wonder at this, for it must be so. The first birth, at its best, can only give you flesh. There must be another birth, a birth from above, to bring you into the realm of spirit that you may understand and share in spiritual things."

8. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit He is a mysterious personage, not to be understood by carnal man. You see his outward life, but you cannot see

the hidden spring by which that life is moved and controlled, for that mysterious inner life is only discerned by those who possess it.

9, 10. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?"Do you profess to teach others and have you never been taught this first great spiritual Truth of God?" Nicodemus was not the last Rabbi who did not understand what it is to be born-again, and it is greatly to be feared that there are still many who are teachers of others, who yet have never experienced this all-important change. The Lord have mercy upon them!

11. Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen; and you receive not Our witness. The testimony of Christ and of His Apostles, and of all true disciple of Christ is this--that there is such a thing as a new birth. Men may not believe that it is true but, for all that, it is as certain as any other fact in the history of the world! It is foolish for any to deny it because they have not experienced it themselves. Although they have not experienced it, others have, and those who declare that they have been born-again are as honest, as reasonable and as trustworthy as any other people in the world. If any counsel had to prove his case in a court of law, by the mouth of five or six witnesses, I am sure that he would not want better witnesses than those who declare that they have been born-again! Many of them are well known people of high repute and their testimony ought to be believed. But it is not a question of six, or a dozen, or a dozen thousand witnesses. There have been hundreds of thousands of men and women who have borne witness that a miraculous change has taken place in them, by which they have been born into a new world and have received a new life! And the testimony of these witnesses ought to be believed. It was hard that Christ should have to

say, "You receive not Our witness."

12. IfIhave told you earthly things, and you believe not, howshallyou believe ifI tell you of heavenly things?"For regeneration is, as it were, one of the commonplaces of the Christian religion. It is a thing that very often takes place among men. But if this foundation Truth of God is not believed, how can men expect that yet higher Truths of God shall be revealed to them?

13. And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man who is in Heaven. So far, this chapter treats of the new birth and there are many people who are much perplexed because they cannot comprehend this great mystery. They ask, "How, then, can we be saved? Is there no way of salvation without the new birth?" Assuredly there is none, yet the way of salvation is very simple and clear. It is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," and it is very significant that this chapter which, beyond any other, teaches the Doctrine of the New Birth and, with equal clearness, teaches the Doctrine of Salvation by Faith in Christ.

Listen--

14-18. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternallife. For Godso loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. That is the proof of his condemnation--he must be an enemy to God who will not believe on His Son! He who refuses to believe the witness of God is, by that very fact, convicted and

condemned! And if he had no other sin, it is sin enough to sink him to the lowest Hell to deny the veracity of God--to make God a liar by refusing to believe in Jesus Christ His Son! See, then, how these two Truths are blended. "You must be born-again," and, "he that believes on Him is not condemned." Why is that? Because he is born-again! That new birth has taken place in him and eternal life is his because he has believed on the only begotten Son of God!

19-21. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are worked in God. Now, my Friend, are you willing to come to the light--to the light of Scripture--to the light of Revelation? If so, so far well. God grant us Grace to feel that light is our friend--that we do not need to shun it, but desire to walk in it!

Chapter 23

The Second Time

(No. 3096)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 24, 1874.

"And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers." Acts 7:13.

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this incident, based upon Genesis. 45:1-5, are as follows--#449, Volume 8--JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS and #2516, Volume 43--JESUS AND HIS BRETHREN]

THIS did not happen on the first occasion when they went down into Egypt. Joseph knew them, then, but they did not recognize him. He filled their sacks with corn, put the purchase money into their sacks, gave them provision for the way and sent them home, but he gave them no token by which they were able to recognize him as their long-lost brother. And I want to show you that as it was with Joseph, so it is with Jesus. There are times when sinners do not know Him even when they are speaking to Him. And on the first occasion He does not manifest Himself to them, but it is a very delightful thought that, full often, at the second time, Jesus is made known unto His brethren even as Joseph was. I will tell you the gist of my discourse at once. It is this--if you have sought the Savior and have not yet found Him, seek Him again! If your first seeking has been a failure, let my text be a message of encouragement to you--"At the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers"--let it encourage you to seek the Savior again in the hope that, at the second time, Jesus may make Himself known to

you!

We are constantly preaching the same Gospel, in the simplest terms we can find--and the Gospel that we preach is this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Believing on Christ is simply trusting Him, trusting in His great atoning Sacrifice in which He stood in the place of sinners and suffered as their Substitute, so bearing, that they might never have to bear, the righteous wrath of God on account of their sin. We might have supposed that every person who attended our ministry did at least fully understand the plan of salvation, but it is not so. There are seekers here who are still in the dark. The light shines upon their eyes, but those eyes are blind--even in broad daylight they grope as in the night because there is a night within their spirit which it is not in our power to change into spiritual day! There are some seekers after Christ who, notwithstanding the simplicity of the Gospel, remain seekers by the space of weeks, months and even years. Yet, it seems to me that no man or woman who is out of Christ ought to remain in that condition for another hour! During that hour he may die and be damned, and it ill becomes him to run so solemn and terrible a risk. If I had any doubt of my being saved in Christ, I would give no sleep to my eyes nor slumber to my eyelids until I had found Him. I would say to myself, "I must have Him! I cannot live without Him." Yet there are some who seem to be awakened to a sense of their danger and who are apparently concerned about their soul's eternal interests, yet they remain in that state of semi-concern and semi-awakening not merely for an hour, or for a day or two, but from month to month, and even from year to year, continually crying with Job, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" Yet they never get any nearer to the Savior--turning their faces towards Zion, yet never truly starting upon the heavenly pilgrimage! Desiring,

hoping, fearing, resolving, debating, yet never actually trusting in Christ--and so not saved!

Our fear concerning these Seekers who are not finders, is that one of two things will happen to them--either they will fall into utter despair, or else into complete infidelity--perhaps into both, for despair is often the mother of infidelity. They will first, perhaps, fall into gloom, depression, despondency. And at last they will say, "It is no use for us to keep on seeking the Savior, for if we do seek Him, we shall not find Him. If we pray, we shall not be heard. If we listen to the Gospel, it will not bless us. If we make an appeal to Christ, He will not grant our request." And so they will settle down into deeper and deeper and yet deeper gloom and declare that there is no salvation for them. Out of this despair may ultimately come an utter infidelity like that of those of old who said, "There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices and we will, everyone, do the imagination of his evil heart." We have known some who have said that as there was no hope for them in the next life, they would have their swing in this life! They were going to be lost, they said, and therefore they might just as well enjoy themselves here while they could. If they could not be pardoned, they might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb--they would lay the reins upon the necks of their lusts, give full sway to all their passions--and plunge into sin till they were covered with its pollution!

Dear seeking Friend, I tremble lest that should ever be the case with you. I fear lest you should wipe away those tears and that they should be succeeded by the infidel's jest. I dread lest your trembling should cease and be succeeded by a conscience seared as with a hot iron! Such experiences have happened to others and I am afraid lest they should happen to you. The sun has been shining upon you and it seemed as if it

was going to melt you into penitence. It will certainly do one of two things--it will either soften you or harden you. And if the melting time should pass over and you are not melted, there may then come a hardening time, and you will become Gospel-hardened and remain forever without hope concerning the world to come! May the God of Infinite Love and Mercy graciously grant that it may not be so with you! And that it may not be so, I shall try now to speak some words of encouragement to you. And may God the Holy Spirit move all who are the Lord's people to pray that these words of encouragement may be the means of bringing you, this very hour, to full acceptance with God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

I. I want to remind you, first, that THERE IS A SOMETHING WHICH YOU DO NOT KNOW.

Those who went down into Egypt did not know their brother Joseph in his exalted position, but "at the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers." Sinner, you need above everything to know Christ When Joseph's brothers went down into Egypt, they thought that if they could buy corn there, it would be enough to supply all their needs. But the grand thing that God had in store for them there was not merely corn, but that they might find Joseph who would secure to them all the corn and everything else that they could possibly need! So, Sinner, I remind you again that your great need is to know Jesus Christ! And if you do come to know Him, you will have all that you can require.

You need to know Christ as Lord of All. The keys of all the granaries of Egypt were under the power of Joseph. He could open or close them when he pleased and when he gave his orders, none could countermand them. So, only in a much higher sense, it has pleased the Father that in Christ all fullness should dwell, "therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Infinite ability to

save is treasured up in Christ because He is Lord of All. Oh, how I wish that you all knew this! You tell me, Friend, that you doknow this. Yes, you know that it is a fact, but you do not realize that all that is needed for your salvation is laid up in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and that nothing is needed from you and that you have not to procure anything from any other source! If you did but know Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, to be the appointed and anointed Savior, able to save you to the uttermost, it would make a grand change in your whole life!

But you also need to know not only that Christ is Savior and Lord, but that He is your Brother, one with you in nature, relationship and love. The sons of poor old Jacob did not know that the man who was lord over Egypt was their own brother! They had never even dreamed of such a thing, yet all the while his heart was palpitating with love to them. The passion of his soul could scarcely be restrained. He saw the well-remembered image of his father in every one of their faces and he longed to weep upon their necks and to tell them how much he loved them. He restrained himself for a while, but "the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers." And then, oh, how glad they were to know him as their brother! And, dear Friend, if you ever found out that Jesus Christ is your Brother and that He loved you before the foundation of the world--if ever you should make this blessed discovery that for love of you, He took your nature upon Himself and was born at Bethlehem--that for love of you He sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane, and that for love of you He died upon the Cross of Calvary--oh, then what joy will fill your spirit! This is what you need to know-- Christ in His eternal love for sinners, Christ in His brotherhood with all who trust Him, Christ in His everlasting union with all His redeemed people! And if you ever know this, you will know

more than Solomon, himself, could have taught you, and you will be able to speak upon a theme which will far exceed any upon which Demosthenes or Cicero was ever able to speak! O Soul, we want you to know that Jesus is ready to forgive you, ready to befriend you, ready to help you, ready to enrich you, ready to enrich you with His own spotless robe of righteousness in place of your own filthy rags, ready to be All in All to you between here and Heaven! I pray that the Holy Spirit may impart this knowledge to you this very hour, so that you may go out of this place saying, "Christ has now been made known to me. I never knew Him before. I have ridiculed His religion, I have despised His Gospel, but now that I know that He loved me and gave Himself for me, that makes all the difference! Knowing that I am one of His chosen people, one of His redeemed ones, one for whom His precious blood was shed, I can never speak against Him again! But I will praise Him as long as I live, and after I die I shall live again to extol Him forever and ever for having made Himself known to me as my Lord and Savior, and Brother!" That is what you all need to know if you have not yet learned it.

II. Now, secondly, THERE IS A REASON WHY, AT YOUR FIRST GOING, YOU DID NOT LEARN THIS. Joseph was not made known to his brothers at their first visit, nor have you yet found Jesus so as to know His love. You have sought Him in some fashion or other, but He has not yet made Himself known to you. Shall I try to tell you why?

I cannot be sure, but I think that one reason is that you have not really looked for Christ to be made known to you. These sons of Jacob went down into Egypt, not to hunt for Joseph, but to buy corn. In like manner, you prayed, but for what did you pray? You say that you asked that your sins might be pardoned, that you might be saved from Hell. That is quite right as far as it goes, for you need that, even as

Joseph's brothers needed corn, but you need more than that, as they did. Your prayers were not answered because you did not really ask for what you most needed. Your previous searches ended in failure because you were not seeking what you most needed. If you had truthfully said--

"You, O Christ, are all I need-- More than all in You I find" and then had presented to God this petition--

"Gracious Lord, incline Your ear, My requests vouchsafe to hear. Hear my never-ceasing cry-- Give me Christ, or else I die! Wealth and honor I disdain, Earthly comforts all are vain-- These can never satisfy, Give me Christ, or else I die"-- you would soon have received an answer to your supplication. But if you have been praying in the wrong fashion, it may be that is the reason why the first time you went to Christ, He was not made known to you.

In the next place, you did not go to Him with a confession of your guilt Joseph's brothers went down into Egypt, the first time, simply to buy corn--they did not go there to search for their brother, Joseph, feeling that they had done a great wrong to him. But he took means to bring home to them a sense of their guilt, so that they said one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Though his life had not actually been taken, it was no credit to them that he had been spared. They had practically aimed at his murder and they confessed their guilt. And you, Sinner, have been guilty of the death of Jesus. Have you ever realized that it was your sins that fastened Him to the Cross of Calvary? Have you ever thought how greatly you have sinned against Jesus, the ever-blessed Son of God? No, you have thought of your sin as committed against yourself, or against your neighbor, but not as against Jesus! Yet this has been the greatest of all your sins--that you have been the cause of His death. And when He convinces you that He loved you before He made the world, this will cause you to

condemn yourself because you have not loved Him in return. I know that when I found out that Christ had bought me with His precious blood, I felt grieved at heart to think that I had so long been an enemy to Him. This is what you all need to know, and what some of you do not yet know. As you have not come to Him with a broken heart and contrite spirit, you should not wonder that Jesus has not yet revealed Himself to you!

You remember that when Joseph's brothers went down into Egypt the first time, they did not all go. They left Benjamin at home, so Joseph would not reveal himself to them until Benjamin was with them. And sometimes, when sinners go to Christ, they do not go whole-heartedly. They leave some faculty or capacity dormant, just as these brothers left Benjamin at home. You prayed, you say, but what sort of a prayer was it? It was a cold, languid prayer, scarcely worthy of the name. You did not put your heart into it and you know that our Lord Jesus Christ said, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force," implying that intense earnestness is required if we would prevail with God. Or if lukewarmness was not the hindrance in your case, possibly there was a Benjamin-sin that you had not given up, or a Benjamin-self-confidence that you wanted to keep--but all these must be abandoned if Christ is to make Himself known to us. We shall never learn to know the Lord until we go to Him and pray from our very soul--

"You do freely save the lost!
Only in Your Grace I trust--
With my earnest suit comply
Give me Christ, or else I die!
All unholy, all unclean,
I am nothing else but sin.
On Your mercy I rely,

Give me Christ, or else I die!

Lord, deny me what You will,

Only ease me of my guilt.

Suppliant at Your feet I lie--

Give me Christ, or else I die!"

If you will to be lost, you will be lost, but if you resolve that, by God's Grace, you will notbe lost, but will cry to Him for mercy as long as there is in you any power to cry, I venture to believe that you will not be lost! That very importunity which the Holy Spirit has implanted in your spirit is a token for good. You may well expect that the Lord means to save you when He makes you resolve that you will not let Him go except He shall bless you. Perhaps the reason why you have failed until now to find Christ is that you have not been in real earnest in seeking Him.

I may tell you one thing, you have kept the Lord waiting so long that if He were to make you wait still longer, you ought not to wonder In some of our London squares which are still private property, you may drive through almost any day in the year and nobody tries to stop you. But, occasionally, the owner has the gate shut just for a minute or two, and you have to ask permission to go through. The gate is only shut in order to preserve the rights of the proprietor over the roadway. And, in a similar fashion, a sinner will sometimes find the gate of Mercy shut for a while to make him realize that God has the Sovereign right to do as He wills, and that it sometimes pleases Him to withhold for a season the Light of His Countenance. But, Sinner, if God were to make you pray to Him for 50 years, if He heard you at the last, it would be well worth your while to keep on praying! If He were to let you seek Him for 20 years and give you the Light of His Countenance only at the last, you might be satisfied to have it so! He is not

likely to do anything of the kind, but if He did--you might be more than content as long as He did but bless you!

III. Now we will turn to the third point. I have reminded you that your great need is to know Christ. And I mentioned some reasons why you have not yet known Him. Now I want to assure you that THERE IS GREAT HOPE IN YOUR GOING TO HIM AGAIN.

I will read the text once more--"At the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers." They went again to their brother--and you had better go again to Christ, for remember that you must go or perish You sang just now--

"Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer.
But if Iperish, I willpray
And perish only there.
I can but perish if I go--
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die."

That is most true. There is only one door to salvation and that door is Christ! So you had better keep on knocking if the door remains closed. There is only one road to Heaven and if that road seems to be blocked, you had better try again and again to pass along it, for there is no other way! You must either know Christ or else everlasting Hell must be your portion. Joseph's brothers knew that they must either go down into Egypt for corn or else starve, so they went there. And, poor Sinner, go to Christ because you must go--there is nowhere else for you to go.

Another reason why you should go to Christ again is because others have gone to Him and done well by going. I wish I could speak personally to every seeker here who has thus far sought Christ in vain, and encourage

him by my own case. I sought the Lord, when I was a child, not only for days and weeks, but for months and even for years before I found Him. I can scarcely tell how it was that my brain was so muddled and my heart so distracted that I could not find Him, but I know that I wanted Christ and yet could not get Him. I remember how I made up my mind that I would go to every place of worship in the town where I lived--and I did go to every dissenting place of worship that I knew of. Sometimes I heard a man preach up election and then I said to myself, "That Doctrine will do very well for the saints, but it is not for me." I went to hear another man who was preaching the precept of the Gospel--that was just like teaching people to dance who had no legs, and was no good to me. Then I went to another place where the minister was preaching some intellectual doctrine of which I could make neither heads nor tails. So I went in vain from one place to another and often I went down on my knees and my little bedroom was the scene of sorrowful groans and falling tears. But, in God's good time, I found the Lord, by His Grace, and at this moment I know that I am saved. So why should not you also come to know Christ even though, until now, He has not made Himself known to you? And not only I, but hundreds of those who are sitting here had a hard time in coming to Christ, but they did come to Him at last--so why shouldn't you?

You are like poor Mercy in John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." When Christiana and her children went in at the gate, Mercy was left outside. And while Christiana pleaded for her admission, she knocked so loudly that she startled her friend inside. When the Keeper of the gate looked out, poor Mercy had fallen down in a swoon through fear that she would not get in, but he took her by the hand and led her gently in and bade those that stood by bring something to stop her fainting. Thus you see that Mercy got in and so will you if you only keep on knocking!

Knock as if you would break the gate down! Feel that you must get in! Put your whole soul into your prayers and keep on seeking for Jesus with all your might, feeling that you must be saved and that you cannot rest content until Christ reveals Himself to you. As others have found mercy, why shouldn't you?

Go again, because, as I have already reminded you, since you went the last time, you have lingered far too long. You were very earnest in seeking the Savior a few months ago, but as you did not succeed in finding Him, your earnestness passed away. But remember that before this time your soul might have been lost. Thank God that you are still alive, for if your body had been this night in your grave, your soul would have been in Hell. As you are not there, take heart and resolve to seek the Savior once more, for it may be that you will soon find Him. I will tell you a secret--I believe that you are a man or a woman in whom God has put His Spirit, who has already begun to work within your heart. I think you are one of those to whom Jesus will reveal Himself. I believe He has long wanted to do so. When Joseph's brothers went down to Egypt the first time, though he did not tell them who he was, he knew well enough who they were. He was rough in his manner towards them, but when they went away, I am certain that he wished they would come back the next morning. And I expect he said to his servants, "Send word to the guards at the frontier of Egypt that when those men come back from Canaan, they are to let me know at once that they have come back." They probably made their corn hold out longer than Joseph thought it would, but even when he was busy about the affairs of the kingdom of Egypt, I have no doubt that he often sat down and said to himself, "I wonder when those brothers of mine will be here again. I should like to hear about my father. I should like to see my brother Benjamin."

He was wanting them badly, yet they did not know it! And Jesus Christ is wanting you, for those to whom He reveals Himself are those whom He loved long before they were born and long before the world was made. For love of them He came down from Heaven to earth, lived in poverty and died in shame that He might save them. He is married to them and they are as dear to Him as the spouse is to her husband. Jesus wants you, Sinner, and if you do but know this, I feel sure that it will be sufficient to make you say, "Then I will go to Him yet again trusting that He will reveal Himself to me."--

"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin Has like a mountain rose. I know His courts, I'll enter in, Whatever may oppose."

IV. What will happen if you do go to Christ again? This story of Joseph and his brothers gives us A FORECAST OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DO GO TO CHRIST AGAIN.

Suppose that the Spirit of God should now work upon your soul and show you that all that is needed for your salvation is already done, that you have nothing to do because Christ has done it all? Suppose that the Holy Spirit should then enable you simply to put your trust in Jesus? You will be saved, saved now, and saved forever! Yet it is possible that your experience will be like that of Joseph's brothers. At first, when you know who Jesus is, you will tremble in His Presence. You will say to yourself, "After these many years of hearing the Gospel and slighting it, will Jesus receive me now?" You will fall on your knees and even while you are in prayer, possibly you will feel, "It cannot be any use for me to seek Him. I am growing old, now, and I have wasted a long life and spurned the Grace of God which has been pressed upon me all these years. I fear it is no use for me to seek the Lord now." Then I will tell you what will happen next. Christ will bid you draw near to Him, as Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me,

I pray you." The Holy Spirit will incline you to think about Christ and you will think about who He was and what He was, and what He did and what He is--and you will hear a Voice which will say to you, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." And you will look to Jesus and so you will be drawn near to Him!

What will happen then? Why, what happened to Joseph's brothers! He will fall upon your neck and kiss you. By that act you will realize that all your offenses are forgiven and your transgressions are all blotted out! That kiss will be to you the token of forgiveness and acceptance. And then Christ will say to His servants, "Take off My brother's filthy rags. Make him clean, give him a change of raiment and let him sit at My table and feast with Me." Then He will tell you that He will provide for you all your days and, by-and-by, will take you to dwell with Him in Heaven forever and ever!

Does someone ask, "Can all that happen to me tonight?" I answer--Yes, if you will dispense with every other confidence and come and rest in Jesus only, it will happen to you tonight! "But, Sir," says another, "I have been so long seeking." There is really no need for anyone to be seeking Christ for a long while. Remember what Paul wrote, "Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God have raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed."

"But," says one, "I cannot understand how the simple act of trusting

Christ can change the heart and save the soul." Even if you cannot comprehend it, it is true that as soon as a man has trusted Christ, he knows that he is saved! Then he loves Christ for saving him--the impulse of love and gratitude changes his whole attitude towards God and towards God's will so that he desires to do the very things which once he loved not to do, while sin, which was formerly his delight, has become a misery to him and he longs with all his heart to escape from it! There is salvation for each one here who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, but there is no salvation in any other way! As my eyes range around this audience, I see that many of you are strangers to me. But I know the characters of some who are now present. I know that there are some here who were once members of a Christian Church, but who fell through drunkenness.

There are others here who once made a profession of faith in Christ, but who were turned aside by one sin or another and so disgraced their profession. Yet the Lord says to them, "Return, you backsliding children; come back to your God." I charge you to come back without further delay! Some of you have been inclined to return unto the Lord, yet I fear that you are again relapsing into indifference. May the Lord bring you a second time and make sure work of it, even as the second time Joseph was made known unto his brothers!

As for you strangers who are with us at this service, if you are unconverted it may be that you have been hitherto satisfied with your state even though you have never possessed real vital godliness. Well, if it is so, I pray that you may speedily learn to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and your Brother! Never be satisfied with anything short of that. Some people think they are all right because they have learned the catechism and are familiar with the prayer book. Others feel perfectly content because they know the creed of the place

they usually attend. Ah, Sirs, all that is of no avail! Nothing and no one but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified can save a single soul! And it is no use merely to know Him by report--you must know Him personally and spiritually--your heart being humbled before Him because your sins slew Him. Your heart rejoicing before Him because God allowed Him to be put to death in order to save your soul!

Dear Hearers, if I should never be able to speak to you again, let this one Truth of God ring in your ears and abide in your hearts--"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"--so that if you are not built upon Christ, the Rock of Ages, you are off the only foundation that will endure the test of time, and death, and judgment! And you are building on the sand--and down your building will come just when you most need a shelter! And great will be the fall thereof. You must have Jesus made known to you and only Jesus can make Himself known to you by

His ever-blessed Spirit! The sun alone can show you the sunlight, and Jesus must visit you in a supernatural way and reveal Himself to you by His own Spirit. You must be born-again by the power of the Holy Spirit! And if it is not so with you, and if you are not resting in Him alone--where He is, you can never go! But if you know Him. If you are in Him, go your way in peace, for "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Knowing Him, you have saving knowledge and you shall, by-and-by, be with Him where He is, to behold His Glory and to dwell with Him forever! May God grant to all of you this privilege, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 7:1-8.

Verses 1, 2. Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. Use your judgment, of course--the verse

implies that you will judge in a right sense. But do not indulge the criticizing faculty upon others in a censorious manner, or as if you were set in authority and had a right to dispense judgment among your fellows. If you impute motives and pretend to read hearts, others will do the same towards you. A hard and censorious behavior is sure to provoke reprisals. Those around you will pick up the peck measure you have been using and measure your corn with it. You do not object to men forming a fair opinion of your character, neither are you forbidden to do the same towards them. But as you would object to their sitting in judgment upon you, do not sit in judgment upon them. This is not the day of judgment, neither are we his majesty's judges, and therefore we may not anticipate the time appointed for the final assize, nor usurp the prerogatives of the Judge of all the earth! Surely, if I know myself aright, I need not send my judgment upon circuit to try other men, for I can give it full occupation in my own Court of Conscience to try the traitors within my own bosom.

3-5. And why behold you the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull the mote out of your eye; and, behold, a beam is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cut the mote out of your brother's eye.The judging faculty is best employed at home. Our tendency is to spy out splinters in other men's eyes and not to see the beam in our own! Instead of beholding, with gratified gaze, the small fault of another, we should act reasonably if we penitently considered the greater fault of ourselves. It is the beam in our own eye which blinds us to our own wrong doing! But such blindness does not suffice to excuse us, since it evidently does not shut our eyes to the little error of our brother. Officiousness pretends to play the oculist, but

in very truth it plays the fool! Fancy a man with a beam in his eye pretending to deal with so tender a part as the eye of another and attempting to remove so tiny a thing as a mote or splinter! Is he not a hypocrite to pretend to be so concerned about other men's eyes and yet he never attends to his own? Jesus is gentle, but He calls that man a "hypocrite" who fusses about small things in others and pays no attention to great matters at home in his own person! Our reformations must begin with ourselves, or they are not true and do not spring from a right motive. Sin we may rebuke, but not if we indulge it! We may protest against evil, but not if we willfully practice it! The Pharisees were great at censuring, but slow at amending. Our Lord will not have His Kingdom made up of hypocritical theorists--He calls for practical obedience to the rules of holiness!

After we are ourselves sanctified, we are bound to be eyes to the blind and correctors of unholy living--but not till then. Till we have personal piety, our preaching of godliness is sheer hypocrisy! May none of us provoke the Lord to say to us, "You hypocrite!"

6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. When men are evidently unable to perceive the purity of a great Truth of God, do not set it before them. They are like mere dogs and if you set holy things before them they will be provoked to "turn again and rend you." Holy things are not for the profane. "Outside are dogs"--they must not be allowed to enter the holy place. When you are in the midst of the vicious, who are like "swine," do not bring forth the precious mysteries of the faith, for they will despise them and "trample them under their feet" in the mire. You are not needlessly to provoke attack upon yourself, or upon the higher Truths of the Gospel. You are not to judge, but you are not to act

without judgment. Count not men to be dogs or swine, but when they avow themselves to be such, or by their conduct act as if they were such, do not put occasions in their way for displaying their evil character.

Saints are not to be simpletons-- they are not to be judges, but, also, they are not to be fools. Great King, how much wisdom Your precepts require! I need You, not only to open my mouth, but also at times to keep it shut!

7, 8. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. To men you may not always speak of heavenly things, but to God you may. "Ask, seek, knock." Let your prayer be adapted to the case. Let it increase in intensity, let it advance in the largeness of its objective. To receive a gift is simple, to find a treasure is more enriching, to enter into a palace is best of all! Each form of prayer is prescribed, accepted and rewarded in a manner suitable to its character. The promise is universal to all who obey the precept. The commands are in opposition to the methods of carking care which have been denounced in the former chapter--and they are encouragements to the precepts of giving and non-resistance set forth previously, since he that can have of God for the asking may well give to men who ask and even yield to those who unjustly demand! With such boundless stores at command, we should not be either niggardly or litigious. Lord, help me to have done with fretting and to abound in asking, seeking, knocking! So shall I soon overflow with thanksgiving.

Chapter 24

A Suitable Watchword

(No. 3097)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Help, LORD." Psalm 12:1.

THIS was a prayer of David. It was offered under peculiar circumstances. He had been treacherously betrayed again and again. He delivered the city of Keilah from the Philistines and then had to flee from the place, or the men of Keilah would have delivered him up to his enemy, Saul. He went to the wilderness of Ziph and the men of Ziph at once ran to Saul to betray him. Doeg was present when David received some help from Ahimelech the priest and he set off straightway to inform the king. Everyone seemed to act treacherously with David while he was in his state of wandering. He therefore turned away altogether from men in whom he could put no confidence--and he cried, "Help, Lord."

Let us spend a few minutes, first of all, in remarks upon the prayer itself. Then let us offer a few suggestions as to when it may be used. And we will close up with some encouragement to expect and answer.

I. First as to THE PRAYER ITSELF.

That which strikes you at once is its shortness--"Help, Lord." Two words--and one of these is rather the direction of the prayer than the prayer itself. It is the very soul of brevity. "Help, Lord." I may, however, say that it is none too short for all that for there is a fullness and suggestiveness in it which could not readily be exhausted. It is no fault in our prayers if they are short. And I think in our

public petitions, especially at Prayer Meetings, it is a virtue to be aimed at to be brief. Mr. Jay says, with regard to his sermons, that he knew there were some excellences which would cost him much pains to attain, "But," he said, "there was one I knew to be within my reach, namely, brevity, and therefore I made not the sermon too long." Praying, indeed, being a more spiritual exercise than even preaching, must not be protracted. It is remarkable, if you remember, that Joshua's arm never grew weary while he was fighting the Amalekites, but Moses' hands grew weary while he was up on the mountain in prayer. Because prayer is a more spiritual exercise than fighting and, consequently, the spirit being our weaker part, we feel the weakness the sooner there. Let us not, then, pray our members into a good frame and then pray them out again--but when we have expressed our desires with that fewness of words which is proper in the Presence of God, let us close our supplications and let some other Brother take up the note. This is a short prayer.

Do you not see, dear Friends, that those of you who have been saying, "We do not pray because we have not time," are guilty of a great falsehood? It cannot be lack of time. "Help, Lord." Why, it takes scarcely a second to offer such a prayer as that! It is not lack of time--it is lack of heart and lack of inclination. People talk about praying as though they needed an hour to pray every morning and every night. I grant you it would be a very blessed thing if we could get the hour. I wish that, like the Puritans, we could always get an hour for devotion every morning and likewise at evening, but this is not absolutely necessary. You working men must not say, "We cannot pray because we have not time." Why, in your work, in the midst of your goings to and fro, if God has given you the heart of prayer, you will be lifting up your soul to God! I think it is a good thing to have some

small change of prayer about you. I compare this prayer to our small change. It has been said of some great men that they could not talk in company--when they got upon their feet and had a prepared discourse, they could speak very much to edification, but in general society they could not edify anyone. Someone said they had gold, but it was all in bullion--it was not minted--they could not put it into a shape so that it might be current in society. Well now, we must have the bullion of prayer, so as to be able to wrestle with God by the hour together if necessary, but to have the minted small change of brief or exclamatory prayer, to send a thought up to
Heaven--the glance of an eye, a tear-bedewed word to let drop before the Throne--that, also, is well! I invite you to adopt the prayer, brief as it is, and use it tonight, tomorrow, all your days--"Help, Lord."

Besides being very short, it was very seasonable. It is well to have seasonable prayer, for those prayers speed best that spring out of an emergency which, as with a fair wind, drives the soul to the Throne of God. The worst of those forms of prayer which are of merely human composition, I think, is that they are very much like those ready-made clothes which we see for sale--they are intended to fit everybody, and yet rarely do they fit anybody. Forms of prayer must, from the necessity of the case, be unseasonable. That is the best prayer which draws its adaptation from my present circumstances, its intensity from my present feelings and its aspiration from my present faith. It makes me cry in just such language and plead just such promises that I could not plead any other--I could not wish for any other, I could not ask in any other style than I now do. That is a seasonable prayer. David, you see, had been betrayed and deceived. He had met with flattering lips and deceitful hearts. He found all men in his day gone aside from

honesty and so he turned right away from those broken cisterns that were leaking at every point, to cry to the great Fountain that he might have a draught from the cooling stream! "'Help, Lord!' Men will not help me. I am reduced to an extreme so far as the creature is concerned. Now is Your turn, O You gracious One! Put out Your mighty arm, now that man's puny arm is broken. 'Help, Lord!' Help, I pray You!"

How distinct this prayer is! There are many, many prayers that one has heard, but when uttered, you could not say what had been asked. If anyone should ask you, "What has that Brother been praying for?" you would think and say, "I really do not know. He hassaid, 'Lord, bless us!' but what particular blessing he desired, I was not able to make out." Many of our dear Brethren edify us with an account of their experience and with a little exposition of the Doctrines of Grace--very edifying and proper in any other shape--but as a prayer--terribly out of place! The Lord knows your experience, He knows the Doctrines of Grace and does not need you to inform Him upon these matters. This prayer is to the point, "Help, Lord." The man knows what he needs and he asks for it. He does not ask wealth, health, long life--he needs help. He has come to a dead lift and he cannot lift his burden, so he cries, "Help, Lord." It is one word, but that one word goes straight to the mark. What a mercy it is to be able to pray pointed prayers! David said, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You." Now, according to some scholars, the Hebrew there is, "I will marshal up my prayers." "As the sergeant sets the soldiers in a row when he is about to drill them and marshals them, and as the commander-in-chief forms them into battalions and so on, even so will I set my desires in proper order and marshal them in battalions before the Mercy Seat, that I may show that I am not uttering the crude, undigested thoughts of a careless mind,

taking solemn words upon a thoughtless tongue, but that I am speaking to God that which has caused me thought--which fills me with emotions and comes from my soul with an intent and a desire, myself knowing what that intent and desire may be." Oh, let us stand fast in prayer to direct petitions--short, but seasonable and direct!

We have something else to say of it--it is rightly aimed. The Psalmist evidently looked straight up to God. He says, "Help, Lord." It is no roundabout way of praying. It is no crying, "Help, you saints and intercede for me! Blessed Virgin, plead for me!" It is, "Help, Lord." Straight to the Throne he goes! There is no knocking at the doors of second causes and human helps. "Straightforward makes the best runner." He runs immediately to his God--there is no beating around the bush to ask that he may have Providential assistance, or that a friend may be raised up for him, or that in some way he may be delivered--it is simply this, "Lord, I leave all the rest to You. Only do, You Yourself, come and undertake my cause. Put Your arm where the weight is. Put Your shoulder to the wheel. This surpasses my power and I turn entirely from all creatures to You. 'Help, Lord.'" It is a well-aimed prayer. He knew to Whom he was speaking, to One full of love and faithfulness, strength and wisdom--and so he says at once, "Help, Lord."

Nor can you fail to observe that this prayer has in it a confession of weakness. A man does not cry for help--at least, a man with such a heart as David had does not cry for help unless he needs it. Shall I ask of God for that which I already have? No, a sense of need makes me pray. David has been striving with all his might, but he finds his strength inadequate to the task. He has been looking about for help everywhere, but he finds there is no help and, sensible of his own utter nothingness and vanity, he turns at once to God. It is well when prayer is steeped in the oil of repentance, when it is dipped in a

sense of need. No prayer speeds so well with God as that which comes with an empty hand before His Throne. If you bring your pitchers full, you shall take them all away empty--but if you bring your pitchers empty, you shall take them away full! "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he has sent away empty." Lord, help me always to come as an empty-handed beggar to the Throne of Your mercy, that I may go away as a full-handed rejoicing saint!

And yet, with a confession of weakness, I think there is also here a resolution to exert oneself. The very word, "Help," seems to imply that he did not expect to sit still and do nothing. In the matter of our own personal salvation, all the work is done for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, "it is finished." But in the matter of Christian service and Christian labor, it is not done for us. We are expected, having the New Life within, to set about working out our own salvation "with fear and trembling." He who has saved us expects us to run the race as pilgrims, to fight the fight as warriors, to plow the fields as husbandmen, to build the walls as laborers together with God and to work in general for Him in all sorts of ways. Now, if I cry, "Help, Lord!" that means that I intend to exert myself. You have no right to sit down and say, "Lord, help me," and not go out to seek work. He will help you--yes, help you into the jail or workhouse, but no other kind of help will you get! You have no right, when you have a besetting sin, to fold your arms and say, "Well, I hope the Lord will help me to overcome it." He will help you, but remember the old proverb, for it is true, "He helps those that help themselves." When He has taught you to smite with your sword against sin, then He will smite too. He works withyou. He works inyou to will and to do. He does not work in us to sleep and to slumber after our own carnal propensity, but He works in us "to will and to do

of His own good pleasure." We hold not with salvation by works, but we do hold with works by salvation. We know that works cannot save--but we know that a man being saved produces good works. When I pray, then, "Lord, help! Help, Lord!" it is implied that if it is a case where I can do anything in the service of God, I shall put the strength which He has given me into active exercise and then lean upon Him.

II. Well, now, SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE USE OF THIS PRAYER, "Help, Lord."

There are some articles of merchandise of which we are told on the label that they will keep in all climates, and will be useful at all times. I think I may say the same of my prayer. This prayer is a sword of two edges--it is an article that can be used for a thousand different things! It is a most handy prayer. It turns every way. You may use it in all cases, at all times. Let us take one or two.

Temporal circumstances may involve you in difficulty. I suppose, Beloved, there are many of you who are often in trouble with regard to Providence. You work and do your best to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but no one can foresee crushing misfortunes. Sometimes employment fails. At another time the dishonesty of others may bring you down from competence to poverty. Sometimes sickness may fall upon you and you may be disabled. In a thousand ways you may be brought to feel that you need help in Providential matters. Now, dear Friend, today you may have been trudging all over the city looking for a friend. You have written letters and you have gone to all you know--and you are getting pretty near to the end of all your earthly hopes. I suggest that, before you leave this sanctuary, you pray this prayer, "Help, Lord." Use it, appropriate it, expand it according to your faith and your feelings somewhat thus-- "Help, Lord. You did feed Your servant Elijah by ravens and You made the widow's cruse of oil and

handful of meal to last. 'Help, Lord.' I do not expect a miracle, but I expect the same help which a miracle would bring me and expect it in the ordinary course of Providence. If You do not put Your hand out of Heaven to help me, You will assist me by some ordinary means which would not, however, have been available if You had not so arranged it. 'Help, Lord.'" It really is marvelous, and most of our lives will prove it, how good the Lord is in a pinch. Just when you have said, "Now it is all over with me," then it is that the Lord has appeared for your deliverance. When your hopes have been like Lazarus in the grave, not only dead, but something more, for Martha said, "Lord, by this time he stinks; for he has been dead four days"--yet even then, when Christ has appeared, there has been a resurrection to your circumstances and your comforts and you have again been able to rejoice!

Some of you are students of Scripture. Your difficulties are not pecuniary ones. You turn over, day by day, this precious Book and it is your desire to understand it, but you are vexed with certain perplexities. There are things in it which are hard to be understood and you need to arrive at definite, distinct truth, to know true knowledge. Let me suggest to you, dear Brother, that when you have studied the Scripture anxiously and carefully, and sought out the opinions and judgments of good and gracious men who were taught of God, that you should never forget to add to all this the prayer, "Help, Lord. Help, Lord!" There is more got out of the Bible by praying than by anything else. When a certain Puritan had a dispute upon matters of doctrine with another, he was observed to speak very fluently and with great power. While his opponent spoke, he was observed taking notes--and one desired to see his notes--and what do you think they were? They were just these words, "More light, Lord! More light, Lord! More light, Lord!" That is the best way of taking notes--a cry for more

Light of God! All of a sudden, that very text of Scripture which seemed as hard as a flint, will fly open by a touch of the Holy Spirit's finger when you have said in prayer, "Help, Lord."

This prayer will well suit those who are engaged in inward conflicts. I have heard of some Christians who do not believe in inward conflicts. Brother, take care lest you have to prove them beyond all other men. I heard today something which reminds me of how different our experience is at one time from what it is at another. A dear servant of the Lord was good Mr. Harrington Evans--perhaps a very model preacher, one who spoke very sweetly of Christ. A Brother was telling me today that he remembers hearing Mr. Evans say that he hardly liked a Christian to pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." He said, "I do not like it. The saint is forgiven. I know he sins, still he is thoroughly forgiven and there is a kind of clank of the chain about the prayer, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'" "Yet," said my informant, "if I am not mistaken, on Mr. Evans' tombstone are those words, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'" So that what he thought was a clank of the chain once, he came to look upon as being a most precious and comfortable prayer after all! And some of our Brothers do, at times, get a little top-heavy and say, "I do not make confession of sin." More the pity, Brother--you are making a birch for your own back! You will have it before long, depend upon it. There is no position for the child of God so safe, so Scriptural, so true as that of still clinging to Jesus as you did at the first--still mourning for sin and rejoicing in the Atonement made for you as a sinner! I must confess that I cannot ordinarily get that comfort by drawing near as a saint which I can get by coming to Christ as a sinner! My evidences often fail me and when they do I give up all seeking after them and go straight away, without any evidences, to Christ over again as the sinner's Savior and find

fresh joy and peace in believing! May we be kept in such a frame of mind as this!

How many of you are exercised with conflicts tonight? You do not know which will get the upper hand, good or evil. There is conflict and combat going on within as though a pitted battle were being fought there. The soil of your heart is torn up by the prancing of the hoofs of the enemy horses. You think, "I shall surely perish after all."

Brother, Sister, in your time of conflict here is a prayer for you,

"'Help, Lord. Help, Lord!' Help the newborn babe to conquer the old man! Help the vital spark to keep its flame alive now that floods are poured out against it! Let not the dragon swallow up the man-child! 'Help, Lord.' Help! 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Help You me, Lord, and I will yet sing, 'I thank God, through Jesus Christ, my Lord!'"

Will not this prayer suit those of you who are just now desirous to honor God in your sufferings You have lately fallen into sickness. You have to be much on your bed and you are afraid that you will get impatient. I know aged persons are sometimes troubled with the fear that if they should be long living in infirmity, they might get peevish and petulant--doubtless it is the vice of old age. Well, at such a crisis, dear Friends, whether aged or young, this prayer will suit you,

"'Help, Lord. Help, Lord!' Help me if my pains multiply. Help me!" This is a prayer for dying saints at the stake. How often it has sprung from their lips! When the flames have leaped up upon them, they have prayed, "'Help, Lord.' Help me to burn! Help me to be faithful. Suffer me not to turn aside from my Master! 'Help, Lord.' Now I have more to suffer than the creature can bear, sustain me, Lord!"

Not less meet is this prayer for those of you who are not suffering, but working. Most of us, I hope, are workers for Christ. And why should

we ever go out to our work without the prayer, "Help, Lord"? And when we are in it, we cannot expect to prosper except the desire is still coming up, "Help, Lord." And when we have done the work, it is a sweet evening's prayer with which to close the day, "'Help, Lord.' Make my work to stand. 'Help, Lord.'" I give this prayer to you, my Brothers and Sisters in the Church, elders and youngsters, overseers and deacons--to you, Brothers and Sisters, who teach the young of this flock. To you who are toiling in our classes. To you who preach in the streets, or go from place to place proclaiming the Word of God. Be this your prayer henceforth, "'Help, Lord.' Help us to declare the Gospel faithfully and fully, and to be the means of bringing souls to Yourself."

Indeed, I do not know where this prayer would not be suitable! There is Mary just going out to a new situation, leaving her mother's roof, and she is thinking, "Now I do not know who my master may be, but I am a Christian and I hope I may be able, as a servant, to show what Christianity is." I am glad, Mary, you have got that wish. Now pray before you go into that new situation--"'Help, Lord.' Help! I have not been all I ought to be. I have not always honored my Lord and Master, but now please help me to adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior in all things.'" And there is a dear Brother, perhaps, very young, who is just entering upon a new sphere of labor. It is labor new to him--his heart is in it,

but still he does not quite understand it and he wants to do it so that God may be glorified. Well then, Brother, do not go out of the door till you have said, "Lord, help. Help, Lord, and sustain me!"

And this is a prayer, I think, that we must take up, all together, in these days when Romanism is coming back all over the land. "In these perilous times, when the false prophets and the magicians are abroad

seeking to entrap men with their gaudy ceremonies and their sumptuous shows, it is for us to protest and to preach the Word, but help, God of Luther! Help us to deal a death-blow to the dragon! Help, God of Calvin! Help us to unfurl the banner of the Gospel once again! Help us, God of Zwingli, to stand steadfast in the day of trial! 'Help, Lord.'

It is only Your right arm that can save England from once again being under the hoof of the Pope of Rome! Come and deliver Your saints in this, their day of trial. 'Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.'"

III. By way of ENCOURAGEMENT TO EXPECT AN ANSWER, let me now address a few closing words.

"Help, Lord." We may expect that He will do so in the future because He has done so in the past. You remember your conversion--

"Many days have passed since then, Many changes I have seen, Yet have been upheld till now-- Who could hold me up but Thee?"

You have had much help, dear Friend. Were you to write your history, could you remember all the interpositions of Divine Providence and put them down? It would make a strange story. So I sometimes think with regard to myself. Yet I am not sure that it would, for I suppose our stories would be very much alike! We have all had to say of the goodness and mercy of God, "By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God of our salvation." We have had judgment like a sentence of death in ourselves, but we have had deliverance like life from the dead! There have been drops of wormwood, but there have been seas of milk and honey! Our souls have to raise an Ebenezer here and we expect to raise one more on Jordan's shore and to the last to sing, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." I know what the devil tells you. He is telling you that you have got into an extraordinary position now and, though God helped you before, yet

this is a new trial, a wilderness where there is no way out. Well, then, "His mercies are new every morning." In new straits you shall have new mercies! Our God is the same "yesterday, today and forever," but the phases of His mercy are as numerous as the phases of our grief. He has helped you, so go to Him and He will help you again!

Take this thought to console and to comfort you--His relationship as a Covenant God to you as a sincere Christian necessitates His helping you. You have a child. That child is up to his neck in the mire and he will soon be swallowed up alive in the bog, but he cries, "Father, Father, help!" Now, some passerby who had a brutal heart might ignore the cry, but you are his father, you cannot resist his cry! "What? Not help my child?" Why, every man here feels that I would insult his manhood with the supposition that he could leave his child to perish who he might help! No, you would fly as on the wings of love to help your child! If we, being evil, would help our children, how much more shall our Father, who is in Heaven, help us?

Moreover, He is related to us in another relationship-- "Your Maker is your Husband." Let any husband here imagine his wife to be in distress and she looks him in the face, and says, "My Husband, it is a time of emergency, my heart is breaking, help me." Would she have to ask twice? Not of those of us who have learned the word, "Husbands, love your wives." And surely God is the best of husbands! And if our heart can but feel the marriage-bond between our souls and Christ, we need not fear but that He will respond to our tears and to our cries. He will say, "Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God." "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers; they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." I might enlarge on this thought, but you can think it out for

yourselves. God's relationships necessitate that He should help us.

All the attributes of God are involved because they are pledged to the help of His people. Suppose He did not help us--then the enemy would say that He could not! That would be a reflection on His power. Or the foe would say that He wouldnot. That would be an imputation on His love and, considering His promise, it would be a stain upon His Truth. He has brought us into our present condition and if He does not deliver us out of it, then that would be a stain upon His wisdom--and the enemy would say that He steered the ship where He could not manage it. But that could never be, so trust Him and fear not! Your life is secure. He will preserve His children to the end.

But, Beloved, God willhelp us--wehave the promise He has given. It is very beautiful to notice this in the Scriptures. When you get a prayer in one chapter, you get a promise in the next which is the very counterpart of the prayer. I may say that the promise is the type and the prayer is very often the copy printed off that type. Listen to this, "Help, Lord." Then listen to this, "I will help you." You know there is such a promise as this, "I will help you." You say, "Help, Lord," and He says, "I will help you." Do you believe your God, Christian? "I will help you." Do you believe Him? You dare not disbelieve Him! Well, then, lift up your head, brush away those tears, let those heavy hearts again be exalted and let that dull heart of yours begin to sing! You have asked for help and He has promised to give it. The thing is done. Go your way! Rejoice in your God and remember how He has said, "Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

All this I have spoken to Christians, but there would be plenty of room and opportunity, if we had the time, to put this prayer into the lips of the sinner, too! In many respects it suits the sinner. "'Help,

Lord.' I have a load of sin, take it from me. 'Help, Lord.' I have a hard, stubborn heart, melt it. 'Help, Lord.' I am blind, I am lame, I am sick. Here I lie at mercy's gate, 'Help, Lord.'" O Sinner, if you can only pray this prayer from the bottom of your soul and present it through the blood of Jesus Christ, you shall have help! I pray you, do not go to bed tonight, do not shut those eyes of your in slumber till from your heart you have uttered this prayer, "Help, Lord. Help, Lord!" And every morning rise with it. And every night retire with it till you shall have the answer! And then when you have got the answer, you may still go on and plead it in another shape, and in another form--even in the hour of death you may still plead it, "Help, Lord." When the river Jordan swells up to your chin, you may still say, "Help, Lord." Till you get up to the Throne of God and even there I was about to say, one might say, "Now, Lord, I do not need help any longer, except it be to praise You. Oh, help me to extol You, to magnify You! Give me more and more the seraph's fire, the angel's tongue. Help me to hymn Messiah's name and praise the splendor of His Grace world without end."

I leave you, then, with the prayer, "Help, Lord." May the Lord help you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 11.

Verses 1-3. I will love You, O LORD, my strength The LORD is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler, and my horn of my salvation, and my high tower I shall call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies. At first he says, "I will love You," then, "I will trust You." Now he says "I will call upon You," and that calling upon God is especially in the sense of praising Him. And when you have just experienced a Divine deliverance, how full your spirit is of sacred gratitude!

4-7. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His Temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was angry. God was angry with Saul and with all David's persecutors because they hunted that good man like a partridge upon the mountains! The prayer of the poor suppliant called down the anger of God upon his adversaries.

8. There went up a smoke out ofHis nostrils and fire out ofHis mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it This is a wonderful picture of the anger of God. The Hebrews always connected manifestations of anger with the nose and mouth just as they ascribed various passions and feelings to the different members of the body. So David says, "There went up a smoke out of His nostrils and fire out of His mouth devoured." Does someone ask, "Can prayer move God in this way?" Yes, it seems so. Of course David had to speak after the manner of men--there is no other way in which men can speak, so he describes God as being thus stirred by the cry of His poor child when it came up into His ears. Nothing brings a man's temper into his face like an injury done to his child. And God, as a Father, cannot endure to have His children hurt. "He that touches you touches the apple of His eye."

9, 10. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind. So quick is God to come to the deliverance of His persecuted people!

11-13. He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that

was before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.
The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail storms and coals of fire. Behold the dread artillery of Heaven as God turns His terrible guns against the enemies of His people and pours out hot shot from His lofty bastion-- "hail stones and coals of fire."
14, 15. Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. The Psalmist is evidently describing the passage of the Red Sea, and likening the descent of God to His individual help to that memorable descent of God to the rescue of His entire people. And indeed, God is as great in His help to one as in His help to all! He is never little. When God helps you, my Brother, He is a great God, and greatly to be praised, as greatly so as when He comes to the rescue of an entire nation! Therefore sing unto the Lord, whose arm is lifted up for you, even for you, as truly as it was lifted upon Israel when He brought them out of Egypt "with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror."
16. He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. [See Sermon #1432, Volume 24--divine interpositions] The Lord made another Moses of him. Pharaoh's daughter gave the name of Moses, that is, one drawn out, to the child who was brought to her, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."
17. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me; for they were too strong for me. Is that the reason why God interposed on David's behalf? Then let all His weak children find comfort in the fact that when our enemies are too strong for us, God will come and deliver us! Let us be thankful for burdens that are too heavy for us to

bear and cast them upon the almighty shoulders that can easily sustain them. If we could do without God, we would do without God, but as we cannot, God will come to us and help and deliver us!

18. 19. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me. What a sense of Divine love God's gracious deliverance brings! Perhaps David would never have known how greatly God delighted in him if he had not been in such dire distress and had not had such a great deliverance.

20-24. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore has the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight If God gives you Grace to be honest, upright, true and steadfast in the time of temptation, you may be quite sure that He will deliver you! In fact, He has already worked the greater part of your deliverance in thus keeping you from sin! The worst thing that a trouble can do for a Christian is to carry him off his feet and make him forsake his integrity.

25-27. With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with an upright man You will show Yourself upright; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the forward You will show Yourself forward. For You will save the afflicted people; but will bring down high looks. If your faith cannot endure testing and trying, it is but poor faith. It will not do to die with if it will not do to live with it. But if you cry to the Lord and He enables you in the time of your distress to be faithful to Him, then He will certainly give you deliverance sooner or

later.

28-30. For You will light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. For by You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall As for God, His way is perfect If you practice self-reliance, but not God-reliance, you will be sure to fail. What poor strength that is which does not come from God! Is it worthy of the name of strength at all? Is it not impotence and impudence combined? May God keep us from imagining that we can do anything apart from Him! At the same time, may His gracious Spirit work in us the sure confidence that we can do everything He bids us do when He is our Helper! David had that confidence, for He goes on to sing.

30-37. The word of the LORD is tried: He is a buckler to all those who trust in Him. For who is God says the LORD? Or who is a rock says our God? It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect He makes my feet like hinds 'feet, and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. You have also given me the shield of Your salvation: and Your right hand has held me up, and Your gentleness has made me great You have enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. I have pursued my enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.Remember that this is a soldier's song--a song under the old covenant when men might fight as they may not fight now. We must, therefore, spiritualize this ancient war song as we read it.

38-45. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. For You have girded me with strength unto the battle: You have subdued under me those that rose up against me. You have also given me the necks ofmy enemies; that Imight destroy them that hate me. They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but He answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the

dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.
You have delivered me from the strivings of the people; and You have made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. So it came to pass that the Philistines were afraid of David and he delivered his people from the attacks of all invaders, and brought them that blessed peace which Solomon enjoyed with them.
46-50. The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock; and let the God ofmy salvation be exalted. It is God that avenges me, and subdues the people under me. He delivers me from my enemies: yes, You lift me up above those that rise up against me: You have delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto You, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto Your name. Great deliverance gives He to His king; and shows mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his seed forevermore.

Needless Fears

(No. 3098)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Who are you that.. .have feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?" Isaiah 51:12,13.

OBJECTS often influence us out of proportion to their value because of their nearness. For instance, the moon is a very small insignificant body compared with the sun, yet it has far more influence over the tides and many other matters in the world than the sun has simply because it is so much nearer to the earth than the sun is. The life that is to come is infinitely more important than the life that now is and I hope that in our inmost hearts, we reckon that the things that are seen and temporal are mere trifles compared with the things which are not seen and eternal! Yet it often happens that the less important matters have a greater influence over us than those which are far more important, simply because the things of earth are so much nearer to us. Heaven is infinitely more to be desired than any joy of earth, yet it seems far off and, therefore, these fleeting joys may give us greater present comfort. The wrath of God is far more to be dreaded than the anger of man, yet sometimes a frown or a rebuke from a fellow creature will have more effect upon our minds than the thought of the anger of God. This is because the one appears to be remote, while, being in this body, we are so near to the other.

Now, Beloved, it will sometimes happen that a matter which is scarcely worthy of the thought of an immortal spirit will fret and worry us from day to day. There is some oppressor, as the text puts it, whom we dread and fear continually, yet we forget the Almighty God who is on our side, who is stronger than all the oppressors who have ever lived and who has all people and all things under His control! The reason why we act thus is because we think of God as if He were far off, while we can see the oppressor with our eyes and we can hear with our ears his threatening words. I want, at this time, to be the means in the hands of God of turning the thoughts of His people away from the distress of the present to the joy and comfort which, though more remote, ought to still be more powerful over the mind and heart because of the real intrinsic greatness.

I. And first I want to speak upon this point--that MANY FEARS WHICH ARE ENTERTAINED BY GOOD MEN AND WOMEN ARE REALLY GROUNDLESS. "You have feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy...and where is the fury of the oppressor?" The probable meaning of this verse is that the oppressor never came, so that they never did feel the force of his fury and, in like manner, many of God's people are constantly under apprehensions of calamities which will never occur to them--they suffer far more in merely dreading them than they would have to endure if they actually came upon them! In their imagination, there are rivers in their way and they are anxious to know how they shall wade through them, or swim across them. There are no such rivers in existence, but they are agitated and distressed about them. Our old proverb says, "Don't cross the bridge till you come to it," but these timid people are continually crossing bridges that only exist in their foolish fancies! They stab themselves with imaginary daggers, they starve

themselves in imaginary famines and even bury themselves in imaginary graves! Such strange creatures are we that we probably smart more under blows which never fall upon us than we do under those which do actually come! The rod of God does not smite us as sharply as the rod of our own imagination does--our groundless fears are our chief tormentors and when we are enabled to abolish our self-inflictions, all the indications of the world become light enough. It is a pity, however, that any who are taught of God and who have had faith in Christ given to them, should fall into so guilty and, at the same time, so painful a habit as this of fearing the oppressor who does not come and who never will come!

Some are much troubled by the fear of man. That is exactly the case mentioned in our text--"the fury of the oppressor." He was a very oppressive man--hard, unfeeling, proud, strong, exacting--and they were afraid of him. In addition to this, he must have been a person of impetuous temper, one with whom you could not reason and so passionate that they were not merely afraid of the oppressor, but of "the fury of the oppressor." He is the kind of person whom you do not know how to meet or how to escape from. If you flee from him, he will pursue you in his fury. If you remain quiet, your patience will not make him quiet--and if you resist him, his fury will be so much the greater.

That appears to have been the character of the oppressor feared by those with whom the Lord was at that time reasoning. And we have known Believers who have been afraid of what such-and-such a powerful man might do if they acted as their conscience told them they ought to act. He would turn them out of their farm, or they could lose his business from their shop.

Perhaps the fearful one is some young person who has a relative who hates religion and what this relative in power may do she cannot

imagine. Or the oppressor is an arbitrary employer and if his employees do not exactly obey his orders, even though those orders happen to be wrong, they will lose their employment. They may be for months without work and they and their children may be reduced to starvation. They picture a long vista of trials and troubles that will come upon them because of "the fury of the oppressor." Now, sometimes there is a foundation for this kind of fear, for men do act in very cruel manner to their fellow men--and the very persons who talk most about being liberal in their views are generally the greatest persecutors. If I must have a religious enemy, let me have a professed and avowed bigot, but not one of your "free thinkers" or "broad churchmen," as they are called, for there is nobody who can hate as they do! And the lovers of liberal-mindedness who have no creed at all think it to be their special duty to be peculiarly contemptuous to those who have some degree of principle and cannot twist and turn exactly as they can. There is no doubt that there are still trials of cruel mockeries to be borne by those who are true to Christ. "The cold shoulder" is given in society. In other company, hard words are used and coarse jests are made. Christians must expect to have to bear the opposition of man. It always was so and it always will be so. If you turn from the way of the world and practically accuse the world of being wrong, the world will resent it. "If you were of the world, the world would love his own." But after all is there not a great deal more thought of this matter than there is any need to be, for, "where is the fury of the oppressor?" I have known young Christians afraid of somebody or other and not daring to avow their conscientious convictions--and when at last they have plucked up courage enough to do so, they have been surprised that the person they expected to oppose them has been quite favorable to them. The wife has been afraid to mention to her husband

that she desires to unite with the Church, but when he hears of it, he thinks that he, too, will go and hear the minister. I remember a man and his wife who came to join the Church. They were each afraid to tell the other of what they had experienced--and when they met each other on the night that they were present with other candidates, they were greatly surprised to find that, instead of having any reason to be afraid of one another, they had the utmost cause to rejoice! They said that it was like a new marriage to them when each found the other to be in Christ Jesus, yet each of them had thought the other to be so strong in opposition to religion that they had not dared to mention their conversion till thus they made their mutual discovery! Perhaps, dear Friend, you have no more need to be afraid than they had. Go on--the giant that stands in your way may turn out to be only a shadow, or if he really is a giant--God will help you to fight against him and make you more than a conqueror!

Some have a fear of another kind--not of any opposition to themselves, but they are afraid of the Church and the Truth of God being utterly destroyed by the opposition of men. Have you not many times noticed a kind of panic going through the churches through some supposed discovery in science, or some new doctrinal error that has appeared? One Christian has met another and begun tremblingly to talk about what was going to happen. "The old times were so much better than these"--they begin with that note--"and here is a new danger, how are we to meet it?" It was anxiously asked a few years ago, "How are we to meet these discoveries of geology?" Yet we hardly ever hear about them now or, if we do, we do not trouble about them! Then Dr. Colenso had made certain calculations which were very terrifying to timid folk! And Huxley tried to prove that we had descended or ascended from monkeys--but who cares about their theories now? Yet I have met with

nervous people who greatly feared the fury of this tyrant, Science, which was utterly to destroy us! But what has it ever done against the Truth of God?

At this time, as you are well aware, it is the belief of a great many people that, owing to the spread of Ritualism, the candle that Latimer lit will be blown out and we shall all be in the dark--or at least shall have nothing better than candles made at Rome to light us! I constantly receive magazines that prophesy the most terrible times. According to them, some of us will no doubt be roasted alive at Smithfield. Well, I know that the devil can blow very hard, but I do not believe that he can blow out the candle that God lights--much less can he blow out the sun of the Gospel which has burned on now for over 1,800 years! Blow away, Satan, as hard as you can, but you will never be able to blow out this Light of God--it will still shine on to the end of time! You may blow away a cloud or two which obscures the Light, but the Light itself will be as bright as ever!

It may be that in the place where you live there has come up a new doctrinal error. Somebody has discovered that men are nothing but a species of large apes and that only those who believe in Christ are immortal--all the rest will die out eventually--annihilation is to be their doom! Many are dreadfully frightened by that doctrine, but I believe it to be too contemptible to alarm anybody who studies the Scriptures. It is a very pretty toy and many will play with it. And after a certain time there will come another pretty toy, and they will play with that! And so it will be till Christ, Himself, comes and breaks up all the toys and brings His Church back to the grand old Truth of God which will stand firm notwithstanding all the assaults of men or devils! But you and I need not fear, Beloved, because of any of these things! What is there, after all, to cause us to tremble for the

Ark of God? Just nothing at all! Never let any member of this Church get to whining in this way and saying that the Gospel will die. The heavens and the earth will pass away, but the Word of the Lord shall endure forever! That which the Lord has declared in this blessed Book of His shall stand fast throughout eternity!

Another fear which sometimes comes over truly godly people is that, perhaps, after all, they shall fall from Grace and perish. There may come a temptation which will find out their weak point and overthrow them. The vessel has sailed well up to now, though not without much tossing and perils, but, perhaps it will strike upon a rock and be utterly broken in pieces. They know how weak and frail they are and how many temptations surround them. They know how treacherous and cunning the devil is. They know how potent is the world with its many allurements. David feared that he would perish one day by the hand of Saul--and these fearful souls, as they pass into some fresh phase of life, or encounter some new trial, dread lest, after all, Grace should not be sufficient for their needs and they should come to a miserable end! I know this fear. Who among us has not felt it? Who among us can honestly examine his own heart and not feel it? Yet, dear Friends, there is really nothing in it to trouble the true child of God. If our religion is a religion of our own getting or making, it will perish--and the sooner it goes, the better! But if our religion is a matter of God's giving, we know that He never takes back what He gives and that if He has commenced to work in us by His Grace, He will never leave it unfinished! Were the Covenant founded upon works, it would fail! If it depended upon ourselves, it would surely break down! But if it is the "Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure," it cannot fail! If the promise is the promise of God who cannot lie, He will surely keep it unto the end. We ought not, therefore, to be

burdened with this anxiety, but simply go on in the path of daily watchfulness and humble dependence upon the preserving power of the Lord Jesus Christ--and so we shall find that we shall get safely to Heaven after all!

We have known some, too, who have been afflicted with fear of need coming upon them as to pecuniary matters. One says, "The giant of poverty will surely seize me! I have not enough laid by to furnish me with a sufficient maintenance." I have known some even dread because they had not enough for their own funeral--as if that would not be sure to be settled somehow. The living will surely take care to bury the dead. I have known others say, "If I were to be out of work. If such-and-such a thing were to happen. If so-and-so were to die, what would I do?" Ah, and if we fret over all the "ifs" that we can imagine, we shall certainly never be without fretfulness! But where is your dependence, Christian, for this world? Have you placed it upon man? Then I wonder not that you are full of fear! But why do you not trust your body where you trusted your soul? If you have trusted Jesus to be the Savior of your immortal spirit, can you not also trust Him to be the Provider for this poor flesh of the things which perish? God feeds the ravens--will He not feed you? Up till this moment the commissariat of the universe has never failed! The myriads of living creatures have received from His hand all they have required! Then is He likely to forget you? He has never done so yet--your bread has been given you, your water has been sure--why should He change His custom and leave His own dear child to starve? "Oh, but," you say, "the brook Cherith is dried up!" Yes, but when the brook dried up, God sent His servant Elijah to Zarephath where there was a widow woman who would sustain him. When one door shuts, another opens--and if one well goes dry, the water bubbles up somewhere else! The means may change, but the God of

the means changes not! He will supply your needs. Stand in your proper place, do your duty, obey His will and He will not fail you, but bring you safely to the place where fears shall never come to you anymore. Another fear (and I will mention but this one), is the fear of death Some even among God's people hardly dare think of dying. It is a dreary necessity with them that they must die--and they fret and trouble about it quite needlessly. But, Beloved, if we have perfect peace with God, we should not fear dying! I have known some who have thought that they would rather be translated, but I would rather not. If I were walking out tomorrow evening and I saw horses of fire and chariots of fire standing ready to take me up, I would feel a great deal more troubled about getting into a fiery chariot than about going home and lying down to die! If my Lord and Master shall choose to let me live till He comes and so prevent my death, His will be done, but the Spirit says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," so let us be content with that blessedness. But there is a fear of death in some good people's minds and they cannot always shake it off. Yet, Beloved, there is nothing in it. If you are in Christ, you will never know anything about dying. I do not believe that Christians feel anything in death. If there are pains, as there often are, they are not the pains of dying, but of living. Death ends all their pains. They shut their eyes on earth and open them in Heaven! They have shaken off the cumbrous clay of this mortal body and found themselves disembodied, in a moment, before the Throne of the Most High--there to wait till the trumpet of the Resurrection shall sound and they shall once again put on their bodies, transformed and glorified like to the body of their Lord! Get rid of that fear of death, Beloved, for it is not becoming in a Christian. The Believer's heart should be so stayed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life, that he should leave

himself in his Heavenly Father's hands to live or die, or to wait till the Lord shall come--just as the Lord shall please.

II. My second observation is this. THERE ARE SOME FEARS WHICH WOULD DIE AT ONCE IF WE DARED TO QUESTION THEM.

Did you notice that the text is a question? "Who are you that...has feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?"

Did you ever question your fears, my dear Friends? I mean you, Miss Despondency over there, and you, Mr. Much-Afraid. Did you ever question your fear? If not, catechize it now--put it through the catechism.

Suppose it is the Church of God that is afraid of the oppressor? Let the Church ask, Where is the oppressor of which she needs to be afraid? Is it a Doctrinal error? Well, the Church was once over-run with Arianism and it seemed as if the heretics had killed the Doctrine of the Deity of Christ! But the Lord was pleased to raise up His valiant servant, Athanasius, and very soon Arianism was put to the rout! The Church of Christ scarcely perceives the scars of all the conflicts through which she has passed. That which threatened to destroy her has never really injured her, but she has come out of the furnace all the purer! As for persecution, has it not commonly proved that the more the saints have been persecuted, the more they have prospered and that the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church? Suppose there should again come martyr days? Suppose there should again come days of heresy? Well, the Church has had such days before, yet she has survived them. The grand old vessel has been in many a tornado and storm before now, yet she has not even lost a spar or split a stitch of her canvas! Why, therefore, should she be afraid now?

Ask the question again, "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" And the answer comes, It is under the control of God. Even Satan, your fiercest

foe--God created him, God governs him, God can do with him just as He pleases. Then as to that poverty of which you are afraid, it will not come unless God permits it! And if it does come, the Lord can alleviate it. You are afraid you will lose a very dear child--but you will not lose her unless the Lord takes her. You are fretting because you fear that a special friend of yours will soon be taken away--but he cannot be taken away till the Lord takes him. What are you afraid of? Is it your own death? Learn to sing good old John Ryland's verse--

"Plagues and deaths around me fly! But till He bids I cannot die! Not a single shaft can hit Till the God of Love sees fit." Then, again, the Lord asks, "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" as if it was so soon gone that one might look in vain for it. Some man oppresses you. Well, he shall die, perhaps soon. The trouble that now frets you will be gone in the twinkling of an eye. If not soon so far as this life is concerned, yet, when you get to Heaven (and that will not be long), how short a time will your trial seem to have lasted! "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment," says the Apostle, "works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory." You fret about your trouble and worry yourself continually concerning it, but the text seems to ask you, "Where is it?" It is a meteor that flashes across the sky and is gone! Ask your troubles such questions as these and they will soon vanish.

I will ask you a few more questions. You have fears with regard to a great trouble that threatens you. Well, will it separate you from the love of Christ?If you cannot answer that question, let Paul answer it for you--"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." You say that

your enemies slander you, but will Christ believe them? They are trying to take away your character, but will your Lord think any the less of you? Will HE be deceived by their lies? You say that friends are forsaking you, but will they take Jesus away and make Hmforsake you? You say that your enemies are doing all that they can to destroy you, but can they destroy the Divine promises? The Lord has promised to give unto His sheep eternal life--can they take that promise from you, or make it of no value? They may frown at you, but can they keep you out of Heaven? They may threaten you, but can they make the Covenant of Grace to be of no effect? While eternal things are safe, we may well be content to let other things come or go just as God wills!

Again, can anyone do anything to you which God does not permit? And if God permits it, can any real harm come to you? "Who is he that will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good?" "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Then how can anything work for your hurt if you are really the Lord's? Can anyone curse those whom God blesses? Are you like those foolish persons who are afraid of a witch's curse, or of some spell that the wicked may cast over you? Even Balaam said, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." Balak might summon Balaam to his aid and the two together might stand and look on Israel and wish to curse them--but they could not curse those whom God had blessed! If all the devils in Hell could fill your house and seek to injure you, there is no need for you to fear or tremble more than Martin Luther did when his friends were afraid for him to go to Worms, but he said, "If there were as many devils there as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would face them all in the name of God." And you may say the same! If earth were all in arms abroad and Hell, in one vast

hurry-burly, had come up to join with the world against you, you might still say, "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge," and charge them in the name of the Most High, and put them all to rout, for greater is He who is with you than all those that are against you!

III. Now, lastly, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if these fears are groundless, and if a few questions will scatter them, I appeal to you who are cast down to CRY TO GOD TO DELIVER YOU FROM THIS STATE OF BONDAGE.

If there is no ground for your fears, what is the use of tormenting yourself for nothing at all? And if God is indeed with you, do you not dishonor Him by your fretfulness and your fears? What would you think of a little child, in its mother's arms, who was always afraid that it was not safe there? Would it not look as if there were some defeat in the child's loving confidence in its mother?--

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,"

you may well be--

"Safe from corroding care."

He is able to keep that which you have committed unto Him so, if you do not trust Him, you really dishonor Him! The commander of an army who saw his soldiers turning white with fear and trembling as they marched to the conflict, would say within himself, "These soldiers of mine are no credit to their leader." And will you, who have a Captain who is so well able to protect you, show the white feather? Shall a cowardly spirit be permitted in the service of God? Shall the Captain of our salvation have to lead a coward host to the fight with the powers of darkness? I have sometimes thought, when I have heard about the fears of God's people concerning the times in which we live, and what is going to become of us, that surely they did not know that the King is

in the midst of us, that the Lord is as a wall of fire round about us and the Glory in our midst! For if they did but know that He is our Protector and Defender, they could not be so cast down as they are. Besides, you who are of a fretful spirit often grieve other Christians. There are others who are like you and they get worse through coming into contact with you! Your complaint is one that is catching! Every now and then I meet with Christians who like to hear sermons that make them miserable. I had a letter from one, some time ago, who said that as soon as he came here and saw how cheerful the people looked, he felt certain that he was not among the tried people of God, so he went away and turned into a little place where there were only 15 or 16 people--and he heard a good deep-experience sermon about the corruption of the heart--and there he felt at home! For my part, I like such texts as these, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." We have plenty of troubles and trials and if we like to fret over them, we may always be doing it. But then, we have far more joys than troubles, so our songs should exceed our sighs! We have a good God who has promised that as our days, so shall our strength be--

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

"Ah!" says one, "but this is a howling wilderness." Yes, if you howl in it, it will howl in response--but if you sing, it will sing too! Remember the ancient promise, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."--

"Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry--
We're marching through Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high."

And once again, do you not think that a dull, heavy murmuring spirit is

a great hindrance to the unconverted?If they find you in this state, they will say, "This person's religion does not appear to do him much good." Worldlings often say that Christians are the most miserable people in the world. I think that is a great mistake on their part and that they do not really know us, for if they knew some of us, they would find that we have cheerful spirits notwithstanding a good deal that might depress us. Do not any of you Christians let the worldling say that Christ is a hard Master! I should not like to drive a horse that was all skin and bone, for people would say that it was because his master kept him short of corn. I should not like to have in my house, a servant who was always wringing her hands and whose eyes were usually full of tears. Visitors would say, "Her mistress is a vixen, you may be sure of that." And if professing Christians are always seen to be in a wretched, unhappy state, people are sure to say, "Ah, they serve a hard Master! The ways of Christ are ways of unpleasantness and all His paths are misery and wretchedness."

Sinner, that is not true! But it is true that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart," and we earnestly wish that you would come and prove the truth of it for yourself! Believing in Jesus, you would have a perfect peace and a bliss that nothing can destroy! You would have a little Heaven below and a great Heaven above! You would be able to take your troubles to your God and leave them there! And you would march along with songs of rejoicing till you come to that blessed place where there are pleasures forevermore!

May God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 43:1-19.

Verse 1. But now thus says the LORD that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel The Lord reminds us that He first created us,

and that He afterwards molded us. We are like Jacob by nature, but He has made us Israel by Grace.

1. Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine. Redemption is a deep well of comfort. If the Lord has indeed bought us with His blood, He will not think lightly of us. And if He has called us by name and declared that we belong to Him, we may rest assured that He will not lose His own property, but that He will preserve it to the end.

2. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overpower you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you [See Sermon #397, Volume 7--fire! FIRE! FIRE] The Lord does not promise us immunity from trial and trouble--we shall have to go through waters and rivers, and shall have to pass through fires and flames--it is through much tribulation that we must enter the Kingdom of God. But He does promise that no harm shall come to us from it all. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God"--that waters, rivers, fires and flames bring us benefits and blessings--and that they shall none of them bring a curse upon us.

3, 4. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable. [See Sermon #917, Volume 16--precious, HONORABLE, BELOVED] God puts honor upon His beloved ones. They were in themselves dishonorable, for they had nothing of goodness about them until the Lord imparted it to them.

4. And I have loved you. God loved His ancient people Israel. He has always loved His Church and He still loves Believers.

4, 5. Therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life. Fear not: for I am with you. It is enough for a child that his mother is near him, or that his father is with him--then is it not enough for you, O child of God, that God is with you? Israel was scattered when Isaiah wrote this prophecy, and would be afterwards scattered far and wide over the face of the earth. So God gave this comforting assurance, "fear not: for I am with you."

5, 6. I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earh. [See Sermon #2799, Volume 48--the CHURCH ENCOURAGED AND EXHORTED] God's chosen ones have wandered very far away from Him, but the Great Shepherd of the sheep, who bought them with His blood, will gather them and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.

7. Even everyone thatis called by Myname: forlhave createdhim for My Glory, Ihave formedhim; yes, Ihave made him. Three expressions are here used concerning the man who is called by God's name. First, "I have created him"-- made him out of nothing. Then, "I have formed him"--fashioned him, made him into his proper shape. The last sentence may be read, "Yes, I have completed him." When God begins His work in us, we are in the rough. As He goes on working in us, we gradually take the form of His dear Son and, by-and-by, He will complete us. And then we shall wake up in His likeness. Blessed be His name for this!

8. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Some think that the Lord refers here to those who were once blind, but to whom He has given eyes. And to those who were deaf, to whom He has given ears. Many of us are of that order. One thing I know is that, whereas I was once spiritually blind, now I can see! And

another thing I know is that, whereas I was once spiritually deaf, now I can hear the voice of God!

9. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled. As though there was to be a great debate as to who God is and what God is, He first summons all His people whose blind eyes and deaf ears He had opened, and then He calls for all the nations to be gathered together and gives them this challenge--

9. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth the witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Where else have we any true knowledge of God except in His Word and among His people? The myths and mysteries of the heathen, how dark, how indistinct and shallow they are! What true prophecy did their oracles ever give? Ask Greece and Rome, the most polished of the ancient nations, what did their so-called gods ever foretell? Let them bring any holy book of theirs which reveals the future and which is true.

10. You are My witness, says the LORD. The chosen people of God have become witnesses for Jehovah that He, and He alone, is the true God. That He, and He alone has truly foretold the future. Let the heathen prove that their gods have done the same if they can--we know that they cannot. "You are My witnesses, says the Lord."

10. And My servant whom Ihave chosen. [See Sermon #644, Volume 11--GOD'S WITNESSES] That great Servant of God, you know His name, even Christ Jesus the faithful and true Witness, bears better witness for God than the whole nation of the Jews, or the Lord's chosen people in all ages can bear!

10, 11. That you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside Me there is no Savior. Look the whole

world over and see where there is any Savior for sinners except Jesus Christ. Does any other religion even profess to have a Savior? Destroyers they have, but where is their Savior?

12. Ihave declared, and have saved. "I said that I would save, and I have saved."

12. And 1 have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore you are My witnesses, says the LORD, that I am God. When, in Hezekiah's day, the idols had been destroyed, God told Hezekiah that He would deliver him from Sennacherib, and He did so.

13. Yes, before the day was I am He. When there was no day, there was the Ancient of Days.

13. And there is none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall let it? (who shall hinder it?)--

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

14. Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. Up the broad river Euphrates, and down to the Persian Gulf, Babylon and Chaldea gloried in their greatness, but God sent the Medo-Persian power to break them in pieces for the sake of His people, that Cyrus might let them go free!

15-17. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the LORD, which makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; which brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. Like the wick of a lamp, soon put out. Here is, probably, an illusion to the overthrowing of Egypt at the Red Sea--they came out with their horses and chariots, but they were made to lie down together in the sea. God overcame His people's enemies

then and He can and will do the same to the end of the chapter.

18. Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Do not look merely upon what God has done; but look to the future and remember that He is able to do the same again.

19. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. O dear child of God, have you got into the wilderness and have you no comfort there? Are all your wells dried up? God will work a new miracle for you--you shall have a new manifestation of His gracious power!

Chapter 26

The Double Forget-me-not

(No. 3099)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1874.

"This do in remembrance of Me." 1 Corinthians 11:24.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this passage and verses before and after are as follows--Sermons #2, Volume 1-- THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST; #2368, Volume 39--THE GREATEST EXHIBITION OF THE AGE; #2595, Volume 44--WHAT THE LORD'S SUPPER SEES AND SAYS and #2638, Volume 45-- THE RIGHT OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER]

THERE are some persons who do not consider the Lord's Supper to be a Divine ordinance. They say that they cannot see where it is commanded in Scripture. I have long ago given up trying to understand other people's understandings, for some of them are constructed upon such peculiar principles that I believe the Holy Spirit, Himself, could not put a Truth of God in such a form but that some people would understand Him to mean the very opposite of what He said! Now to me, Christ's command to observe the Lord's Supper seems to be so plain and so positive that it would take greater ingenuity than I possess to be able to justify myself, as a Christian, if I lived in neglect of the Communion! I know a good deal of what has been invented by others, but I cannot myself invent any syllogism, or argument, or reason by which I could set aside such a plain Divine precept as that which is recorded in this Chapter-- "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and

said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." If Christ did not mean that we were to do this, and to do it in remembrance of Him, what did He mean? It seems to me to be very plain and positive that this is what He did mean and being so, the precept comes to Christians with very great force for it is issued upon the highest possible authority!

It is not the Apostle Paul who tells us to do this in remembrance of Christ, but the Master, Himself, who says, "This do in remembrance of Me." The utmost solemnity appertains to the Ten Commandments because they were issued by God Himself on Mount Sinai--and there is no less weight attaching to the command before us, since it was issued by the Son of God, Himself, who could truly say, "I and My Father are One."

It also seems to me that this command derives singular solemnity from the occasion upon which it was given. If the issuing of the Law of God was specially solemn because "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire," I venture to say that the giving of this plain, positive command, "This do in remembrance of Me," is none the less solemn because it was given by "the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed." What other night, in the world's history, can be more august and more solemn to Him and to us as Believers in Him, than that night when He went, with His disciples for the last time to Gethsemane? My Lord, as this command was given by You at such a special time, how dare I neglect it if I am indeed Your disciple? Let none of us who believe in Jesus, live in habitual disobedience to this command of His!

Let me make just one other introductory observation, namely, that this commandment was evidently not issued for one occasion only, for it is

quoted by the Apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians--and he adds these significant words, "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He come." The command, therefore, remains in force until the Second Advent--and until Christ, Himself, shall again appear upon this earth, these memorials of His passion are to be constantly before us!

I. I am going to remind you, first, of THE NEED OF SUCH COMMEMORATION OF CHRIST--"This do in remembrance of Me."

The need exists, first, because of our forgetful memories. Memory, in common with every other faculty, has been injured by the Fall. It is more retentive of that which is evil than of that which is good and, as you all know, far more easily recollects injuries than benefits. But it certainly does show the deep depravity of the human heart that we should ever be likely to forget our Lord. Have we not often sung--

"Gethsemane, can I forget?"

Yet we have practically forgotten Gethsemane and have omitted to act towards our Lord as we should have acted had Gethsemane been perpetually painted on our memories. Yes, we are apt to forget our truest Friend, our best Beloved, Jesus, in whom our souls delight! We do forget Him, and it ought to humble us when we remember that Christ knew what forgetful lovers we would be and, therefore, gave us this love-token, this double forget-me-not.

Did there not also exist a need for this command in the fact of our childish condition?We are not, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, what we shall yet be. We are, to a great extent, still underage. We are children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of God, but at present we are under tutors and governors. Now in a child's book there should be pictures. We are not altogether little children--we have grown somewhat--and some Christians think we have grown so big that we do not

need pictures, but Jesus knew that we should be, in many respects, little children or big children, so He has put two pictures in the Book which He has given to us because He would have us remember that we are not yet men, we have not yet come to our full estate. The two pictures are Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Because I am a child, therefore must I still have emblems and tokens, for these are more powerful to my mind than mere words would be.

No doubt, also, the two ordinances were left, and especially this one, because we are yet in the body. We are still linked with materialism. We are not yet purely spiritual and it is no use for us to pretend that we are. Some good people sit still till they are moved, which would be an admirable form of worship if we had not bodies. But, as long as we have bodies, there must be some kind of linking of the spiritual with the material, let the links be as few as they may. Christ has made two--they are enough, but they are none too many, for let it be remembered that there is a time coming when the material itself is to be lifted up and re-united with the spiritual! "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." And as if to teach us not to despise the material, not to consider everything that can be touched and seen as therefore foul and beneath the consideration of spiritual minds, our Lord has given us water in which we can wash, and bread and wine, the products of the earth, that, being yet earthy, we may anticipate the time when the earth shall shake off the slough which came upon her at the Fall and, as a new earth, with her new Heaven of pure blue over her, shall become a holy Temple of the Living God!

I have often grieved over the fact that these two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, have become nests in which the foul bird of superstition has laid her eggs. But the Lord foresaw that when He

instituted them--yet I have often rejoiced, notwithstanding this drawback, that we are able, through these material symbols, to get nearer to Him whose body was material and is material, whose blood was real blood, who was born into this world of a virgin of real flesh and blood, was often weary and was, in fact, a Man such as we are, a real Man, who once on Calvary died--no phantom, no myth, no dream of history, but One who could have gripped my hand, as I, my Brother or Sister, can grip yours, and One who felt the nails that went through His hands as you and I would feel it if nails were driven through our hands! Therefore it is that we come to no shallow feast, but to a real one of bread and wine to make us feel that it was a real Christ who died for us and that this poor body, which is so real to us, is yet, after all, to be cleansed and purified by that great Sacrifice of His upon the Cross of Calvary!

I hope I shall not be thought uncharitable if I suggest that the Lord's Supper was given to us for other reasons. Some have said, "We do not need this memorial, for we can think of Christ through hearing about Him from ministers in the pulpit." Yes, you can hear the ministers, but what can you hear from some of them? In many and many a case, you will hear what will do you little good, for the one thing that is absent from many a ministry, nowadays, is the clear proclamation of the great central Truth of God of the substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Earthly ministries are not to be relied upon, for almost all of them by degrees fall back from the faithfulness, seriousness, and earnestness with which they commenced. There is scarcely an instance in history in which human ministries have fully preserved their pristine purity, yet, wherever Christians have been able to meet together to observe this ordinance as a memorial of

Christ's death, they have always kept up a living testimony to Christ's

death! If ministries were silenced, or if ministers had lost their zeal, there was always this memorial ministry--the breaking of bread and the pouring out of wine in remembrance of Christ!

Somebody probably says, "But, surely, the Church would always keep Christ in memory." Alas, alas, that which ought to be the very Glory of the earth-organized Christianity has full often become one of the main agents of evil in the earth! And therefore I bless God for an ordinance which is not a Church ordinance, or a minister's ordinance. I hope none of you are under the impression that, at the close of the present service, I am going to administer the Lord's Supper God forbid that I should ever venture to do such a thing as that! No, it is you, or we, who come to the Lord's Table to break bread and to drink of the cup--and we come together, not as a Church holding certain views, but we come simply as Christians to, "do this in remembrance" of the Savior who died for us! You may break bread wherever you will, wherever two or three Christians can meet together and if you truly love your Lord, the oftener you do this, the better. "This do you, as often as you drink it," is no command addressed to an ecclesiastical organization concerning an ordinance to be administered by men who have the impertinence or impudence to call themselves priests, but a command to all Christians everywhere, on any day of the week, and in any place--beneath the blue sky of Heaven, or in a barn, or in a tavern if they happen to be tarrying there--to break a piece of bread in memory of their Lord's broken body, and to drink of the cup in mutual loving memory of His precious blood poured out for them! And, mark you, if it should ever come to this, that ministries should fail, I mean what we usually consider to be ordained earthly ministries. And if churches should fail, there will still be found faithful followers of Christ--hunted and harried, it may be--to the very ends of the earth!

And they will break the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of Christ and so, till the trumpet sounds to announce His return, it shall be remembered that Jesus was Incarnate and that Jesus died, and that through Him we have access to the Father!

Thus have I tried to show you why a commemoration feast was needed, but I do not pretend to know all the reasons for its institution, nor a tithe of them. Jesus said, "This do you in remembrance of Me"--and that is all the reason that any truly obedient child of God will ever need!

II. Now, secondly, let me try to show you THE SUITABILITY OF THIS COMMEMORATION FOR THE PURPOSE INTENDED.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this ordinance is in itself a very suitable commemoration of the death of Christ A crucifix might have been suggested as a means of keeping the death of Christ before us, but I need not remind you how that has become the very emblem of idolatry. I do not know of any memorial of Christ that could have been so suggestive and so admirable as the one which Christ has ordained. In itself it is admirable, for here is bread, the very staff of life--a fit token of that flesh of Christ which is, spiritually, "meat, indeed." The fact of His Incarnation is most nourishing food to our hearts. We believe in Him as God, veiled in human flesh, and that great Truth of God, that wondrous fact is as much food for our souls as bread is for our bodies. Further, in this memorial we have the bread broken, indicating Christ's sufferings and the breaking that He endured on our behalf. The bread is, in itself, a most appropriate memorial of suffering. Was it not wheat that was sown in a furrow in the field and there buried? Did it not spring up to be bitten by frosts, to be blown about by rough winds, to suffer all the extremities of climate, to be drenched by the rain and scorched by the sun, to be cut down by the sharp sickle, to be threshed, to be ground, to be kneaded, to be put

into the oven, to be passed through I know not how many processes, any one of which might be a sufficient type of suffering? The suffering body of the Incarnate God is the spiritual food for our souls, but we must partake of it if it is to nourish us. This emblematic bread must not only be broken, but eaten--a significant type of our receiving Jesus by faith and depending upon Him, taking Him to be the nutriment of our new spiritual life. What can be more instructive than all this? Then there is the wine, "the fruit of the vine." There are two tokens, you see, because the two represent death. The blood in the body is life, the blood out of the body is death, so the two emblems are separate, the wine in the cup and the bread yonder--these together indicate death. Water was not used, for water had been applied, in another way, in the other ordinance of Believers' Baptism, and water would have been a pale, faint memorial of Him whose rich living blood could far better be set forth by the blood of the grape, trodden under foot of man and made to flow forth from the winepress. The wine is an admirable token of the blood of the atoning Sacrifice. Men need drink as well as food-- therefore both are put upon the Communion Table to show a whole Christ as the true food of the soul. You have not to go to Christ for spiritual food and to go somewhere else for spiritual drink, but all you need you can find in Jesus, and find it in Jesus Crucified, in Jesus Sacrificed and put to death in your place. Surely the emblems themselves are most significant and suitable reminders of Christ's death.

And the whole ordinance is a most suitable memorial of Christ's death because the Lord's Supper can be celebrated anywhere. There is no climate where we cannot have bread and wine. There are no persons so poor that, among them, they cannot furnish the table with these simple emblems. It may be decorous to have a silver cup and plate, but it

certainly is not necessary--any cup and plate will do. They talk of the "chalice" and "water"' in the strange ecclesiastical jargon that so-called "priests" use, but I say, "cup" and "plate." They may be of any material, and the table of any sort. A cloth of "fair white linen" is decorous, but not necessary. Let there be but a table and bread and wine, and that is all that is required. And if half-a- dozen godly peasants, women in homespun and men in smock frocks, are gathered together in a cave, or under a wide-spreading beech, they can show forth Christ's death "till He come." But as for that man-millinery show over yonder, and that "altar" of theirs, and that bell and the people bowing down to worship Jack-in-the-Box--for I will give it no better name--all that is sheer idolatry! It is no memorial of Christ! It may be a memorial of the devil, and of the way in which he turns Christianity into Popery, puts Christ off the Throne and sets up a man who calls himself infallible! But wherever the bread is broken and the wine is poured out by true Believers in memory of Christ, there His command is obeyed.

The Lord's Supper is also a suitable memorial because it can be frequently celebrated. You may break this bread and drink of this cup as often as you please. A costly rite could only be performed now and then, but this ordinance can be observed in the morning and in the evening and every day of the week if you will--and very little expense will need to be incurred. To the end of this dispensation, there will be enough bread and wine and sufficient gracious men and women to come to the Table of their Lord and thus to keep up the recollection that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of Mary, died on Calvary's Cross, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." I devoutly thank my Lord and Master for giving me so cheap, so easy, so unostentatious and withal so significant and symbolic a memorial of the

death He died for me and for all His people!

III. Now, thirdly, and very briefly, let me speak of THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS CELEBRATION WAS ENTRUSTED. Who are to "do this in remembrance" of Christ? Well, first, if you look at the connection of our text, you will find that they are persons who discern the Lord's body. That is to say, the persons who rightly come to this Table understand that this bread and this wine are types or emblems of Christ's broken body and shed blood, And they are also persons who have the spiritual perception to discern that the Christ Incarnate, the Christ who died upon the Cross is very precious to them. I trust there will be many who will come to this Table, each one of whom will be able to say, "Ah, I know what a precious Christ He is! He is my joy, my hope, my delight, my All in All." Come and welcome, all of you who can thus discern the Lord's body. I know that you can do so, by the joy which this Communion gives you, by the sweetness which it leaves upon your spiritual palate when you feed upon it. You may certainly come, for you have the spiritual life which possesses the spiritual senses by which you discern the Lord's body. Yes, you may come--no, more, you must come, for your Lord and Master said, "This do in remembrance of Me."

In the preceding chapter to that from which our text is taken, we are told that those should come who have fellowship with Christ in so doing--"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?...Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?...But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: you

cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table, and of the table of devils."
So it seems to me that as the Jew, who ate of the sacrifices, had, at any rate, a nominal fellowship with the God of the altar, and as the heathen, who drank of the cup of devils, thereby had communion with devils; so none may come to the Lord's Table but those who are prepared to acknowledge that they are in fellowship with the Lord. Is God your God? Is Christ your Savior? Do you avow yourself to be a disciple of Jesus and the child of God? If so, come and welcome to this Table! But if not, stand back, for you have no right to come here! If you do, you will bring upon yourself a curse, and not a blessing. But as for all of you who are trusting in the blood of Jesus, all of you to whom Christ is all your salvation and all your desire--all of you
who call Jehovah your Father through faith in Jesus, all of you who are reconciled to God by the death of His Son-- come to this Table and have fellowship with the God of Heaven and earth, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! But let no one else come. I am always sorry when persons are urged to come to the Communion Table as though they would receive some benefit from it although they were not converted, for there can, by no possibility, be any benefit to any who come to the Lord's Table unless they are Believers in Jesus! God might bless the ordinance to their conversion, but in the nature of things it is highly improbable, for they would be acting in direct disobedience to His command! They have no right there and they will be far more likely to be blessed if they humbly stay away until they have believed in Jesus--and then they will have the right to come, the right given by His love. IV. Now, lastly, LET US CARRY OUT THE DESIGN OF THIS ORDINANCE.
The Lord's Supper is intended to remind us of Jesus. I am not going to preach now. I want you who can, to carry out the text--"This do in

remembrance of Me." Many of you are coming to the Table--remember your Lord and Savior now. Remember who He is and who He was. Remember Him, let Him stand before your mind's eye now as the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." I do not appeal to your imagination, I appeal to your memory. You know--

"The old, old story,
Of Jesus and His love."

Recall it now. Remember that He died, for that is what you are especially bid to remember here. I have met with one, who was, I hope, a Christian, who said to me, "My confidence is in a glorified Savior." But I could not help saying to him, "My confidence is in a Crucified Savior." Christ Crucified is the foundation of all our hopes, for Christ could not have risen from the dead if He had not first died. Of what use would His plea be if He had not His blood to offer? Do not be led astray even by ideas about the Second Advent if they depreciate the death of Christ! Rejoice in Christ's Second Coming and look and long for it, but remember that the basis of our hope lies in Christ Crucified. "We preach Christ Crucified" and as we have preached so have you believed, so let none turn you away from your confidence in Christ Jesus suffering in the sinner's place, and--

"Bearing, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," is a call from Christ upon the Cross. Remember that all your hope hangs upon Him who hung upon the Cross and died there. Remember that when He died, you died in Him, for "if One died for all, then were all dead." And now you must "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ."

Remember Him, I pray you, till your hearts grow warm and your love

burns within you. Remember Him till you resolve to serve Him, till you go from this Table determined to die for Him if necessary. Remember Him till you also remember all His people, for it is not to one that He says, "This do you," but, "This do in remembrance of Me," is said to all His people, and it needs at least a little company to do this. Remember Him till all the Church militant, and the Church triumphant, too, seem gathered around your heart and you commune with the whole Church of Christ in Heaven and on earth! Remember Jesus till you feel that He is with you, till His joy gets into your soul and your joy is full. Remember Him till you begin to forget yourself and forget your temptations and your cares. Remember Him till you begin to think of the time when He will remember you and come in His Glory for you. Remember Him till you begin to be like He. Gaze upon Him till when you go down from this mount into the wicked world again, your face will glow with the Glory of having seen your Lord! I long to get to this Table again, though I have not been away from it any Sabbath for many a long day, for it has been my constant habit, wherever I have been, to get a few Christian friends together to break bread in remembrance of Christ. When I am with you, you know that I would never be absent on the first day of the week, from my Master's Table unless there was something that absolutely prevented it and I trust you may come with as keen an appetite as I have now, and then you shall lack no stores for this feast! And may the Lord feed us with Himself to the full!

How sorry I am that there are many here who must not come to this Table, for they have never trusted in Christ! If it seems nothing to you now not to love and trust the Lord Jesus Christ, remember that if you die in that state, a day will come when it will seem to you to have been the most horrible thing that ever happened that you should have lived and

died without love to Him and trust in Him! God save you! Believe in Jesus now and you shall be saved now. Cast yourselves upon Him and He will not cast you away. So may He bless you, for His dear name's sake! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MARK 15:1-41; LUKE 8:1-3.

Let us read again what we have often read before, that saddest of all stories which, nevertheless, is the fountain of the highest gladness--the story of our Savior's death, as recorded by Mark.

Mark 15:1. And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. "The whole council" could be there, so early in the morning, for such an evil purpose! Wicked men are very diligent in carrying out their sinful schemes, so, when Christ was to be murdered, His enemies were there, as Luke tells us, "as soon as it was day." How much more diligent ought the followers of Christ to be to give Him their devoted service! It is a good thing to begin the day with united prayer and holy converse with His people. Let these wicked men who were so early in the morning seeking to secure the death of Christ make us ashamed that we are not more diligent in His blessed service.

2, 3. And Pilate asked Him, Are You the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto Him, You say it And the chief priest accused Him of many things: but He answered nothing. Silence was the best answer, the most eloquent reply that He could give to each accusers--they deserved no other answer. Moreover, by His silence, He was fulfilling the prophecy, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth."

4, 5. And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answer You nothing? Behold how many things they witness against You. But Jesus yet answered

nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. You will often find that your highest wisdom, when you are slandered, will lie in the imitation of your Lord and Master. Live a blameless life, and it shall be the best reply to the false charges of the wicked.

6-10. Now at that feast He released unto them one prisoner, whomever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had always done unto these. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will you that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priest has delivered Him for envy.And he therefore hoped that the people, who were not moved by the same envy, would have chosen to have Jesus set at liberty.

11-13. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will you then that I shall do unto Him whom you call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify Him.This was the very best reply to the charge of high treason, for if Jesus had really set Himself up as a king in the place of Caesar, the people, when they were thus publicly appealed to, would not have cried out, "Crucify Him." If there had been any truth in the allegation that He was the ringleader of a sedition, the Jews would not have said again and again, "Crucify Him." Thus Christ gave Pilate a much more effectual answer than if He had Himself spoken.

14-16. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil has He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when He had scourged Him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium. The hall of the Praetorian

guard.

16, 17. And they called together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple. The uniform of the Roman soldiers was purple, as if to indicate that they belonged to an imperial master. So when these soldiers, in mockery, put on our Lord the old cloak of one of their comrades, it sufficed to clothe Him with the royal purple to which, as King, He was fully entitled.

17-19. And platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him. All this homage was paid to Him in mockery, yet what stern reality there was in that mockery! That band of soldiers really preached to Christ such homage as a whole world could give Him.

20. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.They "led Him out to crucify Him." It seems as if Christ had to lean upon those who led Him. The word almost signifies as much as that. At least it might be the word employed concerning anyone leading a child or a sick man who needed support, for the Savior's weakness must have been very apparent by that time. After the agony and bloody sweat in Gethsemane and the night and morning trials, and scourging, and mockery, and the awful strain upon His mind and heart in being made a Sacrifice for sin, it was no wonder that He was weak! Besides, He was not like the rough, brutal criminals that are often condemned to die for their crimes. He was a man of gentle mold and more delicate sensibilities than they were, and He suffered much more than any ordinary man would have done in similar circumstances.

21. And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His

Cross.Christ could not bear it Himself. The soldiers saw that He was faint and weary, so they laid the Cross, or at least one end of it, on Simon's shoulders. [See Sermon #1853, Volume 31--up from the country and pressed into
SERVICE]

22. And they brought Him. Here the word almost implies that they lifted Him and carried Him, for His faintness had increased. They "led Him out to crucify Him," but now they bear Him.

22. Unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull We sometimes speak of it as Mount Calvary, but it was not so--it was a little rising ground, the common place of execution, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem.

23. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not. He did not wish to have His sufferings abated, but to bear them to the bitter end. Christ forbids not that pain should be alleviated in the case of others, wherever that is possible. But in His own case, it was not fit that it should be so relieved, since He was to bear the full brunt of the storm of vengeance that was due on account of sin.

24. And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.Christ's garments must go to His executioners in order to carry out the full shame associated with His death as well as to fulfill the prophecy, "They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

25-27. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with Him they crucified two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left As if, in carrying out that ordinary etiquette which gives the central place to the chief criminal, they gave to Christ the place of greatest contempt and scorn.

28. And the Scripture was fulfilled, which said, And He was numbered with the transgressors. You could not count the "transgressors" on those crosses without counting Him. There were three, and the One in the middle could not be passed by as you counted the others.

29-32. And they that passed by railed at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, You that destroy the Temple, and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the Cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the Cross, that we may see and believe. That is the world's way--"that we may see and believe." But Christ's way is, "Believe and you shall see." Christ off the Cross is admired by worldlings, but Christ on the Cross is our hope and stay, especially as we know that this same Christ is now on the Throne waiting for the time when He shall return to claim as His own all who have trusted in the Crucified.

32. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. Out of their black hearts and mouths came words of ridicule and scorn even then.

33. And when the sixth hour was come. When the sun had reached the zenith, at high noon.

33-41. There was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Andsome of them that stood by, when they heardit, said, Behold, He calls Elijah. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let Him alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and

gave up the
ghost, He said, Truly this Man was the Son of God! There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome (who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him). And many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem. We can read further about these gracious women if we turn to Luke 8.

Luke 8:1-3. Andit came topass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching andstrewing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him. And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance. The previous Chapter tells how the woman in Simon's house manifested her love to the Savior. She showed her love in one way, and in a very special way. But there were others who had similar affection for Him, who showed it in other ways. What is right for one person to do might not be a wise or right thing for everybody to do. Christ did not need His feet washed with tears every minute in the day, nor to have them anointed with even precious ointment very often. There are some Christians who ought to do and I trust will do, some extraordinary thing for Christ--something which shall need no apology from them because they are extraordinary persons, who used to be extraordinary sinners--and it would not be right for them to run in the ruts made by others--they ought to strike out a distinct pathway for themselves. Happy is the Church that has any such members! Happier still if it has many such. But there are others who love Christ just as truly, yet who must be content to show their love to Him in some other and apparently more common but, perhaps, in the long run, more useful way. These

gracious women ministered to Christ of their substance. He was only a poor itinerant Preacher who needed daily sustenance. Some people say that every preacher ought to earn his own bread by trade or profession and preach freely, yet the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Preachers, did not do this.

"Oh, but Paul did!" Yes, Paul attained to a very high honor. But we may be perfectly satisfied, as the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, to attain to as high a degree of honor as our Master did and, inasmuch as He never did any carpentering after He began to preach, but gave His whole soul and being up to the work of preaching, He was fed and cared for by the kindness of these godly women who were glad to minister unto Him of their substance. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." So, as ministers of Christ, we need not be ashamed to minister spiritual things to the people and to receive of their carnal things in return. These women, though they did not wash Christ's feet with their tears, nor anoint them with precious ointment, did well, for they "ministered unto Him of their substance." Let us all do for Him all that we can.

Chapter 27

Homage Offered to the Great King

(No. 3100)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 9, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised." Psalm 72:15.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same verse is #717, Volume 12--PRAY FOR JESUS]

I BELIEVE we must refer the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy to the times of the latter-day Glory when Jesus Christ shall again appear upon the earth. Then "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." Then "they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust." It has been a great question as to whether Jesus Christ is to come again in Person or by His Spirit. Many passages of Scripture seem to point to His actual and Personal coming and, somehow or other, it does delight my soul to anticipate that Christ may yet come to the scene of His former battles and make it the scene of His future triumphs. I am rejoiced to think that His head, once crowned with thorns on earth, may on earth itself wear a crown of Glory and that His feet that were once wearied in His pilgrimage here with the flinty stones of Jerusalem may yet "stand on the Mount of Olives," while He ushers in "the day of the Lord in the valley of decision." And that His shoulders which once wore the purple robe in mockery may yet be visibly clothed with the royal attire of universal empire when "the Lord shall be King over all the

earth."

I am somewhat confirmed in this conviction by the words of the text, "And He shall live." It does strike me that such a prophecy as that would not be necessary concerning Jesus Christ, either as God or Man, if it were not that He is again to visit the earth. It is quite certain that, as God, "He shall live," for God over all, blessed forever, only has in Himself immortality and it is quite impossible that the Godhead should ever expire while, as Man, Jesus Christ must live, for when the just are raised, they die no more, but have life eternal--and when they ascend up into Heaven, as Jesus has done, they have a life that God confers upon them which becomes as immortal as the very life of Deity itself! So that it does appear to me that neither in respect to His Manhood or His Godhead, would it have been necessary to say, "He shall live," unless we are to understand it in the same sense that we should read it if it was written of His first coming--He shall live as the God-Man. He shall live on earth as other men do. He shall live here below. And I do think that no exegesis can fully explain the passage unless we interpret it as to His actually living, residing here as very Man upon the earth once more.

Be that as it may, the text, we trust, has a fulfillment in your ears this night and has been, in a certain manner, fulfilled ever since the time when it was written, "to Him," to Christ Jesus, there is "given of the gold of Sheba." To Him prayer is also made and to Him praise continually ascends. Here are three things which are, throughout all time, even till the dawning of eternity, always to be bestowed on Christ! The first is the gift of property--the gold of Sheba. The second is the gift of prayer and the third is the gift of praise.

I. To commence with the first, I shall be allowed here to make some remarks with reference to THE PECUNIARY MATTERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

because no man on earth will ever suspect me of making any personal allusion either to my own Church or congregation, or with regard to myself or any institution connected with this place of worship. In nothing have I to find fault with my Church and people! Let it go forth to Christendom at large that in their collections and contributions to the cause of God, they stand second to no Church beneath the blue sky. I have simply to tell them that such-and-such a thing is needed for sacred purposes--and forth comes their money. It is always bestowed at the time it is required and, therefore, it cannot be suspected that in anything I say, there is the least allusion to them, except it be to their honor.

It is written that "to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba." I think that this ought continually to be impressed upon the minds of all Christians. Since Jesus Christ is the Son of God and their Savior, and has given Himself for them, they are not their own, but are bought with a price. Their possessions as well as themselves are the absolute property of their Redeemer! They have, in fact, nothing whatever in their own private right. They have made over themselves to the Lord Jesus, to have and to hold them through life and even till death and forever and ever. They are not to call their own their purse, their lands, their houses, nor anything that they have--but to give up everything to their Lord. From the moment when He Himself comes to them and unfolds their interest in His Covenant, they are henceforth to consider themselves as His servants, as His children, "having nothing, yet possessing all things," because they have all things in Christ.

Were this well considered, my Friends, how much greater liberality should we find among Christians, especially in the support of Gospel ministers? When God sends an ambassador into the world, wherever He sends him, the people are bound to receive him in some kind of honor

and respect. Jehovah Himself has said that the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn is by no means to be muzzled. But it is the disgrace of our denomination, as well as of many others, that not a few of the best of God's servants are toiling weekday after weekday and Sabbath after Sabbath upon a miserable pittance scarcely sufficient to maintain the family of a day-laborer! I thought, the other day, when reading Martin Luther's "Table Talk," that it was rather too bad for him to say what he did, but since then I have myself felt similar indignation when I have thought upon this subject. He said, "If I were God, and the world were to behave so wickedly to me as it does to Him, I would kick it all to atoms." I thought it was a dreadful thing to say, but I have myself been almost inclined to say that had I been the everlasting God and sent ambassadors down from Heaven, and had they been treated as they are now, I would have called every one of them back straightway and would have said, "Is that the way you despise My sent servants? Will you show them no honor? Will you do them despite as you have always done?" Yes, I thought, I would call them back, revoke their charters and say, "Henceforth I will send no more ambassadors." But, Beloved, ambassadors are not thus received by you and they ought not to be anywhere! God's servants should have what they require and it should always be said, "Christ lives, and to Him in the person of His ministers--is always given of the gold of Sheba."

It is a terrible thought to me that although God's Word says, "Owe no man anything," yet that the Church should be more in debt than any corporation in England! I do not think that the debts of all the people put together would equal the debts of professing Christians--debts which they have entered into often on account of religion. I would stand fast by the practice of owing no man anything and if I did not see the means of doing anything for my God, I would stop till I did.

"Owe no man anything," is a Christian principle, and one that we are bound most decidedly and continually to observe. Therefore should the Churches be in debt? Why should there not be money to send forth missionaries abroad? It is just this--there is not enough of the love of Christ in the Church and there is not enough of preaching Christ--otherwise there would be more of Christian giving! Where Christ is exalted, there will be a willing, generous people.

I do not believe it is so much the fault of Christians that they have not given more to the cause of God, as it has been the fault of ministers that they have not more fully preached Jesus Christ. They have not extolled His name. They have kept back His Doctrines and put them in the background. This is why God has allowed His Church to become poor and suffered her funds to dwindle down. And it serves her right, for if she does not love her Husband, she ought to be poor! And if she does not extol Jesus, there ought to be no funds! But can you find a Christ-exalting people, among whom the Gospel is preached in all its fullness, whose necessities God does not supply? There may indeed be some cases where it is so, when God tries them for their good. But I believe, as a rule, that once let our pulpits have the clear Gospel sound in them. Once let the good old Doctrines of the Puritans come forth. Once let the Gospel be preached in all its fullness-- none of your shams, for we have abundance of them--but the blessed Gospel of Christ! Once let this fidelity prevail and God will provide the funds, God will open the hearts of the people to pour the money into your coffers. The silver and the gold are His and the cattle on a thousand hills--and it is the fault of the Church herself that she has become poor! When God restores to her the language of Canaan. When Christ is exalted in His people's hearts and they can hear the sweet and savory notes of Jesus Christ preached, then they will say, "Can we refuse to

do anything for such a Gospel as this?" Half-hearted preachers beget half-hearted professors! A lukewarm Gospel has made people's hearts lukewarm! We must have a reform--a lasting reform by the help of God's Spirit--otherwise, who knows whereunto this bankruptcy of Christendom shall tend? And who can tell what shall eventually become of the Church? Once let Jesus be preached thoroughly, here, there and everywhere, and then "to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba," and as much as ever His Church shall need shall be continually offered as a willing tribute!

Thus much, then, about money have I felt constrained to say, for I do believe that many of my Brothers are half ashamed to speak out about the temporal claims of religion. For myself, I always deem it one of the noblest things we can do to give to the cause of God. Everyone knows what value we attach even to some little flower given by the hand of a friend, and God loves the little gifts of His people. As one of our old divines says, "It is not the value of the gift so much as the intention of the giver that is prized. For we should keep an old cracked sixpence if given to us by a friend--not because we think much of the sixpence--that, perhaps, we would scarcely have stooped to pick up--but because a friend has given it to us and for his sake we never spend it or give it away." So the little that we give to God is of great esteem in His sight. Every little gift we give to Him is remembered and at last He will take us and say, "My child, on such-and-such a day you gave Me this." "Why, Lord, I scarcely thought of it! I found such a cause requiring help, and I assisted it." "Ah, My child! Here is your gift--I have stored it up here to show to you when you came to Me. Have I forgotten your little acts of affection? No, I have stored them up in the cabinet of My memory--they are tokens of your love to Me, even as you have had numberless tokens of My love to

you." But what few memorials of your love some of you will have to look upon when you get there! You only give a trifle now and then--that is all. God grant that you may have the heart to give unto Jesus "of the gold of Sheba" in far greater abundance!

II. Then comes the second offering. The gold first, and THE PRAYER afterwards--not because the gold is the more valuable, but because, in some respects, gold, when it is given with a true heart, is the better test.

"Prayer also shall be made for Him continually." Notice those words again, "Prayer also shall be made for Him." Now we all know that prayer is continually made unto Jesus Christ. We are accustomed to address the Second Person of the Trinity as God in the form of prayer and, more frequently, prayer is made through Him when we address the First Person of the united Godhead through the mediation of the Son. But the Psalmist says, "Prayer also shall be made for Him." We can understand how Jesus Christ should pray for us but, at first, it does seem to stagger us that we should be allowed to pray forHim. That He should be our Intercessor, that He should bend His knees on our behalf and point to our names engraved on His breastplate is a Truth of God so frequently mentioned in Scripture that we receive it unhesitatingly.

But for us to become intercessors forChrist, to bind the breastplate on our breast, to wave the censer on His behalf, to plead for Him, pray for Him and beg for Him--this does somewhat astonish us! And yet our surprise is due rather to the expression than the fact, for it is a thing we are doing every day. Prayer is made for Christ continually.

Let me tell you that you virtually pray for Christ, Beloved, whenever you pray for one of His people. Will you understand me if I say that Jesus Christ has gone through a great many editions? Every one of the Lord's people is but another copy of their blessed Master. They are, as

it were, particles of Christ beaten out into humanity again--pieces of that mighty wedge of gold beaten out into plate afterwards. They are partakers of Christ's Nature, they are part of His fullness. And whenever we do a kindness to one of them, we do it unto Him. Whenever we pray for one of His servants, we pray for Christ! You prayed for that poor miserable looking penitent who was afraid to call himself a Christian, though he was so in deed and in truth. Do you know that you then prayed for Christ? You interceded for that simple-minded woman who did not know the way to Heaven and who asked you to put up a prayer to God that she might be taught. Do you know that you then prayed for Christ, for she was part of His flesh and blood and was afterwards brought into His family. Do you know that whenever you put up a petition, even for the weakest and most despised of His little ones, you are praying for Him? What a physician does to the remotest member of my body, is done to the entire frame. Whatever is done to any part of my flesh is done to myself. And when we pray for Christ's people, the members of His body, we are really praying for Christ.

We pray for Christ, also, when we pray for the spread of the Gospel and for the increase of His Kingdom. When we implore of God, at our Missionary Prayer Meetings, that all His mighty promises may be fulfilled--that the people may fall under Him as willing captives--that the idols may be hurled from their thrones--that the Mother of harlots and abominations may receive her sudden doom and the merchandise of her seven-hilled city cease forever--that

Mohammedanism and all false superstitions may be overturned--when we pray in the simple words which our Savior taught us, "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done, in earth, as it is in Heaven"--then we are praying for Christ in full sympathy with all saints, by whom prayer is made for Him continually! And, best of all, when we bend our knees and

cry out for His Second Coming--when we beg of Him to cleave the skies and come to Judgment--or when, with other and more literal expectations, we ask Him to come and reign upon the earth and make His people kings and princes unto Him--when we ask the Ancient of Days to come and reign gloriously on earth with His ancients, then we are praying for Christ!

We ought to do so. Recollect, O Christian, in your prayers, whatever you forget, always to pray for your Redeemer! It is your privilege to have your name written in the list of those for whom He pleads and it is your honor to be allowed to plead for Him. Stop a moment--a worm pleading for God? The finite asking a blessing on the head of the Infinite? Less than nothing begging that the Eternal All may be blessed? Oh, were it not told you in Scripture, it would be blasphemy to attempt it! You may pray to Him with the most dread and solemn awe--and you may prostrate yourself at His feet. But to pray for Him, to beg on His behalf, how amazing this seems! For Jesus to take your petition to His Father gives a glory and a dignity to your very poorest prayer--but for you to turn petitioner to the King of kings on behalf of His own Son--do you not admire the condescension that permits that? I think I see you coming, poor, weak, helpless one, and God says, "For whom do you plead?" You say, "I plead for Jesus." "What? You, a poor beggar? What? You, full of sin, littleness, nothingness--do you plead for My eternal Son? Are you making supplication for Him?" Do you not, yourself, think it amazing that you should be allowed to ask for a blessing on His head? Yes, then never slight this privilege! Never forget it--with your prayer, continually mingle His name.

III. Now comes the last point and here we must be somewhat longer, for we shall have, we hope, more thoughts-- "Daily shall He be PRAISED." Jesus is not only continually to have gold and prayer, but He is to

have daily praise ascribed to Him. Let me go over the list of things which prove that Jesus Christ shall daily be praised.

First, I think, Jesus daily shall be praised as long as there is a Christian ministry. There have been professed ministers who have never exalted Christ at all. There have been some who took upon themselves the office for a morsel of bread, not being called by God--but has there ever been a time when there have not been faithful men of God? Has there ever been a season when God has not sent His Prophets throughout the land to speak in living words, from burning hearts and fervid souls, the very Word of God? No and there never shall be! If God should now put out those lights that shine in London or elsewhere--if He were now to say to the Churches, "Your candlesticks shall be removed out of their places, I will take those ministers away," by tomorrow He would send others! And if the enemy should come and cut off the heads of all those who now speak God's Word, would that be able to stop the perpetual thunders of the Gospel? No, for God would tomorrow find men who should rise up and even in the palaces of kings should yet dare to speak the name of God!

Men have thought they could put down the Gospel. They have used the rack and brought forth the stake, but what have they accomplished? They have but spread it more! All they have ever done to stop that mighty stream and bank it up has failed. It has retarded it a little while till, with overwhelming might, the stream has swept away the rock, dashed down the hillside and carried everything before it! They have attempted to amalgamate the Gospel with free will, carnal reason, natural philosophy and such-like doctrines of men, which would, if it were possible, frustrate the counsels of God. They have spoken ill of the Gospel, they have given hard names to those who preach it--but have they been able to stop it, or shall they? No, never, while there is a

God, He shall have His Calvins and His Luthers! He shall have His Gills and His Scotts, He shall have His devoted servants who are not ashamed or afraid of the Gospel of Christ! There never shall come a day when the Church shall be bereft of mighty champions for the Truth, who shun not to declare the whole counsel of God, but continually, to the latest period of time, men shall be raised up to preach Free Grace in all its Sovereignty, in all its Omnipotence, in all its perseverance, in all its Immutability! Until the sun grows dim with age and the comets cease their mighty revolutions--till all nature does quake and totter with old age and, palsied with disease, does die away--the voice of the ministry must and shall be heard, "and daily shall He be praised."

Men cannot put out the light of Christianity! The pulpit is still the Thermopylae of Christendom and if there were but two godly ministers, they would stand in the pass and repulse a thousand, yes, ten thousand! All the hosts of mankind shall never vanquish the feeble band of Christ's followers, while He sends forth His ministers. On this we rely as a sure

word of prophecy, "Your teachers shall not be removed into a corner anymore." And we believe that, by this ministry, Christ shall be praised daily!

But suppose the pulpit were to fail? We still have other means whereby Jesus Christ's name would still be praised. The ordinances that He has instituted will always continue to perpetuate His praise. There are two Scriptural ordinances, in both of which Jesus Christ is very much praised. There is, first, that holy ordinance of Believers' Baptism in which Jesus Christ is much honored, for it has a special relation to Him. "Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead

by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." When you descend into the pool at Baptism, you hear these sacred words pronounced, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." And you are especially reminded there that unless you have believed in Jesus with all your heart, you have no right to this sacred avowal of fellowship with Christ, but are sinning against God in so doing. The Scriptures have taught us that whoever dares to administer that ordinance to any but those who believe with their heart and profess with their mouth, dares to touch with sacrilegious hands, God's own institution, and is guilty of breaking down the hedges of the Church and throwing open to the world that which was never intended but for the Lord's own family! We solemnly admonish you to have an eye to Jesus Christ in that blessed ordinance! We bid you, before you come, to examine yourselves whether you are in the faith. And when you are there, we remind you that afterwards you are bound to live unto Christ--you have now passed the Rubicon of life--you have now come on the other side of the flood that divides the world from the Church! You have now, as it were, taken the veil and renounced the world--you are dead with Christ, you have been buried with Him by Baptism into death. By that very ordinance you honor the name of the Savior--and while that ordinance lasts, Jesus Christ shall be praised! Nor less at the blessed Supper of the Lord shall the name of Jesus be praised. I think the moments we are nearest to Heaven are those we spend at the Lord's Table. I have sometimes looked at your faces, my Brothers and Sisters, at the Lord's Table, and if anyone wanted to see men's faces when they looked as if angels themselves were smiling in their eyes, such have your faces been when I have broken the bread and the wine has been passed to you! When those morsels have been in our lips, simple as the sign was--and when we have drunk the wine, simple

and unceremonious as the whole affair was--what a sweet and holy influence it has had upon our hearts and how we did feel that we could praise God! I have thought, sometimes, that I could almost have leaped from the Table and have said, "Oh, let us praise the glorious Redeemer!" When we have seen Him on the Cross and beheld Him as our Substitute, we have felt our hearts were burning hot, that they could scarcely be held within our bodies and we wanted all to rise up and sing--

"All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall-- Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of All!" Even if the pulpit is gone, there still remain these two ordinances in each of which Jesus Christ "shall be praised."

But suppose that these were to cease? Suppose it possible that we could not meet together in our public assemblies to celebrate these sweet memorials, or to hear the Word of God? Yet there is another opportunity for praising God--there is the family of Christians--and while there is a family on earth where Christ's name is named, it shall be daily praised. I trust there is no Christian here who has a house without a family altar. If I came into your house and heard that you had no fireplace in the winter time, I would certainly advise you to build one. And if I heard that any of you had not a family altar, I would say, "Go home and lay the first brick tonight--it will be a good thing if you do so, I am sure." We had some beautiful instances, last night, at our Church Meeting, of young persons who, even though their parents were not godly, boldly started family prayer in the house. And we heard, in many cases, that the parents felt that they had no objection, and never wished to have it stopped! After they have once had the incense smoking in their house, they do not want to have it put out. My Brothers and Sisters, I cannot make out how you Christians live who

have not family prayer in your houses! When I step into a Christian's house in the morning and we have a passage of Scripture, and a little prayer to God, it seems to put the heart and mouth into play for the whole day--there is nothing like it! And when we sit and talk of what Jesus said and did, and suffered for us here below, as old Dyer says, it is like locking the heart up by

prayer in the morning and bolting the devil out! We cannot get on half as well when we have not had that prayer in the morning.

And then, how do you get through at night? I do not understand at all how you professing Christians can get through the day without prayer and have no family prayer at night. I would feel like the good man who stopped at an inn and when he heard there was no family prayer, said, "Get my horses out! I can't stay in a house where there is no family prayer!" It does seem to me terrible that you should go on without prayer, that there should be no morning and evening sacrifice. I cannot make out how you live without it. I could not. I cannot understand how your piety gets on, nor what it feeds upon. I think wherever there is a Christian family, there should be daily praise in it. And mark this and solemnly hear me tonight--I do not speak unadvisedly with my lips--you will find that where sons and daughters have turned out a curse to their parents, when they have been a shame and disgrace to their parents and those parents have been Christians, it might have been set down to this--that while the parents have been Christians, they were not Christians at home! They had not family prayer, they never reared a family altar. I believe nine out of ten of such cases can be explained in that way without in the least touching the text, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Well, supposing we had no family prayer. Suppose we had no ordinances

in the house and the altar did not smoke there? Yet daily should Jesus Christ be praised, for still there would be our own hearts and we could praise Christ there. If they put us in prison and we could not speak to one another, we could still praise Him! Or if our tongues were dumb, there is a language of the heart which can be heard in Heaven. With stammering words, or with actions which speak louder than words, our hearts shall always praise Him! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, do you think you will ever have done praising Christ as long as you are alive? I knew a woman who said to me, "Sir, if Jesus Christ does save me, He shall never hear the last of it." I thought it was a good saying. And shall He ever hear the last of it from you, Beloved? The last of it? Never! When we lie dying, the last word we give Him on earth shall be praise--and the first word we begin in Heaven shall be instinct with praise. And while eternity lasts and immortality endures, we will ascribe praise, honor and blessing to Him forever! Can we who are pardoned rebels, liberated slaves--can we whose souls are quickened from the dead by His Spirit, whose sins are washed away by His precious blood--can we ever cease to praise Him? No! Surely the very stones would speak if our lips were silent, or our hearts refused to pay Him grateful homage! Daily, daily, daily, "Daily shall He be praised."--

"I'll praise Him while He lends me breath, And when my voice is lost in death, Praise shall employ my noblerpowers! My days of praise shall never be past, While life, and thought, and being last, Or immortality endures."

But, then, supposing the innumerable company of His redeemed could perish and their immortality were swallowed up in death, yet even then, Christ would be praised daily! If all of us had departed from the boundless sphere of being, look up yonder and see the mighty cohorts of cherubs and seraphs. Let men be gone and they shall praise Him! Let the

troops of the glorified cease their notes and let no sweet melodies ever come from the lips of sainted men and women--yet the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, who always chant His praise! There is an orchestra on high, the music of which shall never cease, even were mortals extinct and all the human race swept from existence--

"Immortal angels, bright and fair,
In countless armies shine!
At His right hand, with golden harps,
They offer songs Divine!"

Again, if angels were departed, still daily would He be praised, for are there not worlds on worlds, and systems on systems that could forever sing His praise?Yes! The ocean--that place of storms--would beat to His Glory! The winds would swell the notes of His praise with their ceaseless gales! The thunders would roll like drums in the march of the God of armies! The illimitable void of ether would become vocal with song and space itself would burst forth into one universal chorus, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" And if these were gone-- if creatures ceased to exist, He who always lives and reigns, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwelt, would

still be praised! Praised in Himself and glorious in Himself the Father would praise the Son and the Spirit would praise Him and, mutually blessing One Another, and rendering each Other beatified, still daily would He be praised!

Now, dear Friends, I am conscious that I have not been able to enter into this mighty subject, but here are three things which we, as Christians, are bound to give to Christ--the gold of Sheba, our prayers and our praises. It is for us to see what we have given to Him. I wish

we could keep a little book to see what our gifts to Jesus Christ come to in a year. I am afraid, dearly Beloved, that with some of you it would be a very miserable amount. I would lend you a small piece of paper out of my waistcoat pocket to put it down on--and there would be room enough. But it is not so with some of you, I know. You often pray for Christ, you often praise Him and you are often ready to give Him "of the gold of Sheba." That is well, but let me tell you this one thing--there are none of you who need be afraid of praising Jesus Christ too much! We do sometimes praise men too much--we say so much in their favor, so much in their praise and then, afterwards, we find out they never deserved it. But I will be bondsman for my blessed Master tonight that you will never praise Him more than He deserves! If you like to speak of Him in the most unmeasured phrases. If you borrow all the tongues of men and angels and talk about Him forever. If you praise Him and call Him God. If you call Him the most perfect of men, if you style Him, The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God--you will never say too much of Him!

So, Christian, begin to praise Jesus Christ now. You need not be afraid that you will be too extravagant in the praise you bestow upon Him, for when your hair begins to be white with the sunlight of Heaven gleaming on it, you will find that you never said enough about Him. Let the hoary-headed patriarch speak. Now he comes near his end. He totters and stoops and lifts his eyes to Heaven, and says, "Praise Christ too much? I thought Him lovely when I first knew Him. I knew Him to be lovely a little afterwards, when He helped me along, and I lived to prove that He was most lovely. But now I have got still further and I can say, 'He is altogether lovely, and there is none to be compared with Him.' I thought at first that each sweet mercy demanded a fresh song and I did, sometimes, feel a glow of devotion to Him. I then thought I must praise

Him more and dedicate myself more to His service. But now," he says, "could I give my body to be burned for Jesus, I feel that He deserves it! His love in times past, His manifold helpings, His continual unchangeableness render me devoted to Him forever." And, like the servant of whom we spoke on Monday night, the old Christian feels that he is ready to have his ear bored to the doorpost forever! He never wants to go away.

I have said this because many persons nowadays say, "Ah, So-and-So is young--he'll be sobered down, by-and-by." I am sure, Beloved, it is a great pity if he should be. There are very few people in the present day who need much sobering with regard to religion. There is not so much fear of religious enthusiasm as there is of religious torpor and sleep. I should like to see a few enthusiastic Christians--"not drunk with wine, wherein is excess--but filled with the Spirit." But what do men say? Why, "the man has got no moderation--he is mad!" A person, passing by here the other day, said to another, "You know who preaches there, don't you?" "No, I do not." "Why, everybody knows that fellow! Everybody goes to hear him, but, you know, he's rather touched in the brain." "Yes," said a friend of mine, "and I'll tell you another little thing, by way of a secret--he's rather touched in the heart, too--and that's better still." Well, Beloved, we do not mind what they say about our being "touched in the brain." We believe it is well to be "touched in the heart" too! We may be mad, but it is a sweet madness, it is a blessed delusion, it is a most excellent "touch." And we only pray that the Master may touch us all. "Touched in the brain!" Ah, we have precious need to be in these days, for the brains are wrong enough originally! "Touched in the brain!" Most decidedly we require it, for most men's brains are very far from what they should be. "Touched in the brain!" May God "touch" every man's brain and every man's heart!

And the more we are touched of God, whether it is touched in the brain, or touched in the hand, or touched in the purse, or touched anywhere, it is always good so long as we are touched of God!

You know it was objected against David that he must not go and fight Goliath because his brother said he had come to see the battle in the pride of his heart. He did not stop to give an answer. The best answer he could give was to go and cut Goliath's head off and bring it back in triumph! So, many of you who are young in years and full of zeal, are advised not to do this and that and the other. Do not mind what they say! Go forth in the name of your God and you shall do great exploits. If the great and trained veterans are afraid of the battle, then raw and inexperienced recruits must stand in the forefront. While it is written, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength," let it be known and proclaimed, let it be thundered forth from the skies and let earth re-echo the sound that Christ must and shall be praised! If one class of ministers will not do it, another shall! What the learned will not do, the ignorant must! What the polite and refined cannot do, the rough and untutored must, for, verily, it must and shall be done! If those who stand up with all their boasted prestige among men cannot exalt Christ, He will raise up humble but devoted followers and by the weak things of the world, confound the mighty! Of old He raised up a shepherd to be a king, a herdsman to be a Prophet and a fisherman to be an Apostle! Those who dishonor Him shall be lightly esteemed--but those who honor Him, He will honor! Go, Christian, and exalt Christ! Love Him and exalt Him! Love your Master, talk about your Master, preach of your Master and, by the help of the Spirit, you shall yet come off more glorious than your foes, if not here, yet in that day "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

Chapter 28

A Plain Talk Upon An Encouraging Topic

(No. 3101)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple." Jonah 2:7.

THE experience of the saints is the treasure of the Church. Every child of God who has tried and proved the promises of God, when he bears his testimony to their truth, does, as it were, hang up his sword and spear on the Temple walls and thus the house of the Lord becomes "like the tower of David built for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men." "The footsteps of the flock" encourage others who are following their track to the pastures above. Every preceding generation of saints has lived and suffered to enrich us with its experience. One great reason why the experience of saints in olden time is of such use to us is this--they were men of like passions with ourselves. Had they been otherwise, we could not have been instructed by what they suffered. They endured the same trials and pleaded the same promises before the same God who changes not in any measure or degree, so that we may safely infer that what they gained by pleading may also be obtained by us when surrounded by the same circumstances. If men were different, or if the promises were changed, or if the Lord had varied, all ancient experience would be but an idle tale to us. But now, whenever we read in Scripture of what happened to a man of faith in the day of trial, we conclude that the same will happen to us--and when we find God helping and delivering His people,

we know that He will even now show Himself strong on our behalf, since all the promises are yes and Amen in Christ Jesus unto the Glory of God by us. The Covenant has not changed--it abides firm as the eternal hills. The preacher, therefore, feels quite safe in directing you to the experience of Jonah and in inviting you to make its lessons a practical guide to yourselves.

We shall use the lesson of the text, first, for the child ofGodand, secondly, for the sinner awakened and aroused.

I. OUR TEXT HAS AN EVIDENT BEARING UPON THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD, for such was Jonah. With all his mistakes, he was a man of God. And though he sought to flee from the service of his Master, yet his Master never cast him off--He brought back His petulant messenger to his work and honored him in it--and he sleeps among the faithful, waiting for a glorious reward.

Think, then, of the saints' condition. In Jonah's case, as set forth before us, the child of God sees what a plight he may be brought into--his soul may faint in him.

Jonah was certainly in a very terrible condition in the belly of the fish, but the position itself was probably not so dark as his own reflections, for conscience would say to him, "Alas, Jonah, you came here by your own fault, you had to flee from the Presence of God because in your pride and self-love you refused to go to Nineveh, that great city, and deliver your Master's message." It gives a sting to misery when a man feels that he, himself, is responsible for it. If it were unavoidable that I should suffer, then I could not repine. But if I have brought all this upon myself, by my own folly, then there is a double bitterness in the gall. Jonah would reflect that now he could not help himself in any way. It would answer no purpose to be self-willed now--he was in a place where petulance and obstinacy had no

liberty. If he had tried to stretch out his arm, he could not. He was immured in a dungeon which imprisoned every sense as well as every limb and the bolts of his cell, his hand could not draw! He was cast into the deep in the midst of the seas, the waters compassed him about even to the soul, the weeds were wrapped about his head. His state was helpless and, apart from God, it was hopeless.

Children of God may be brought into a similar condition and yet be dear to His unchanging heart. They may be poor and needy and have no helper. No voice may speak a word of sympathy to them and no arm may be stretched out to succor them. The best of men may be brought into the worst of positions. You must never judge of character by circumstances. Diamonds may be worried upon the wheel and common pebbles may bathe at ease in the brook. The most wicked are permitted to clamber to the high places of the earth while the most righteous pine at the rich man's gate, with dogs for their companions. Choice flowers full often grow amid tangled briars. Who has not heard of the lily among thorns? Where dwell the pearls? Do not the dark depths of the ocean conceal them amid mire and wreak? Judge not by appearances, for heirs of the Light of God may walk in darkness and princes of the celestial line may sit upon dunghills.

Men accepted of God may be brought very, very low, as Jonah was.

Let me remark that the hearts of God's servants may sometimes faint within them--yes, absolutely faint in them and that, first, through a renewed sense of sin. In this matter my tongue will not outrun my experience. Some of us have enjoyed for years a full assurance of our pardon and justification. We have walked in the Light as God is in the Light, and we have had fellowship with the Father and with the Son--and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, has cleansed us from all sin. We have often felt our hearts dance at the assurance that "there is

therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Jesus Christ." We have stood at the foot of the Cross and seen the records of our sins nailed to the tree, as the token of their full discharge. Yet, at this time, we may be suffering an interval of anxious questioning and unbelief may be lowering over us! It is possible that our faith is staggered and, therefore, our old sins have risen up against us and are threatening our peace. At such times, conscience will remind us of our shortcomings, which we cannot deny, and Satan will howl over the top of these shortcomings, "How can yoube a child of God? If you were born from above, how could you have acted as you have done?"

Then, if for a moment we look away from the Cross. If we look within for marks of evidences, the horrible bog of our inward corruptions will be stirred and there will pour into the soul such dark memories and black forebodings that we shall cry, "I am utterly lost, my hope is hypocrisy! What can I do? What shall I do?" Let me assure you that under such exercises, it is no wonder if the soul of the Christian faints within him. Be it remembered, also, that soul-fainting is the worst form of fainting. Though Jonah in the whale's belly could not use his eyes, he did not need them. And if he could not use his arms or his feet, he did not require to do so. It mattered not if they all failed him! But for his soul to faint-- this was horror indeed! So is it with us. Our other faculties may go to sleep if they will, but when our faith swoons and our confidence staggers, things go very hard with us. Do not, however, my Brothers and Sisters, when in such a state, write yourself down as a hypocrite, for many of the most valiant soldiers of the Cross know by personal experience what this dark sensation means--

"What though Satan's strong temptations Vex and tease you day by day? And your sinful inclinations Often fill you with dismay? You shall conquer,

Through the Lamb's redeeming blood! Though ten thousand ills beset you,
From without and from within, Jesus says He'll never forget you, But
will save you from Hell and sin! He is faithful
To perform His gracious word!
Though distresses now attend you
And you tread the thorny road,
His right hand shall still defend you,
Soon He'll bring you home to God!
Therefore praise Him,
Praise the great Redeemer's name!" The same faintness will come over us, at times, through the prospect of prolonged pain or severe trial. You have not yet felt the cruel smart, but you are well aware that it must come and you shudder at the prospect. As it is true that "we feel a thousand deaths in fearing one," so do we feel a thousand trials in the dread of one single affliction. The soldier is often braver in the midst of the battle than before the conflict begins. Waiting for the assault is trying work--even the
crash of the onslaught is not so great a test of endurance. I confess that I feel an inward faintness in the prospect of bodily pain. It creates a swooning sickness of heart within me to consider it for a moment and, beloved Friend, it is no strange thing that is happening to you if your soul also faints because of difficulties or adversities that lie before you. May you have wisdom to do what Jonah did--to remember the Lord--for there and only there lies your great strength. Faintness will also come upon true Christians in connection with the pressure of actual sorrow. Hearts may bear up long, but they are very apt to yield if the pressure is continuous from month to month. A constant drip is felt even by a stone. A long day of drizzling rain is more wetting than a passing shower of heavy drops. A man cannot always

be poor, or always be sick, or always be slandered, or always be friendless without sometimes being tempted to say, "My heart is faint and weary; when will the day break and the shadows flee away?" I say again, the very choicest of God's elect may, through the long abiding of bitter sorrow and heavy distress, be ready to faint in the day of adversity.

The same has happened to earnest Christians engaged in diligent service, when they have seen no present success. To go on tilling a thankless soil, to continue to cast bread upon the waters and to find no return has caused many a true heart to faint with inward bleeding. Yet this is full often the test of our fidelity. It is a noble thing to continue preaching, like Noah, throughout a lifetime, amid ridicule, reproach and unbelief--but it is not every man who can do so. The most of us need success to sustain our courage and we serve our Master with most spirit when we see immediate results. Faint hearts of that kind there may be among my fellow soldiers, ready to lay down the weapons of their warfare because they win no victory at this present. My Brothers, I pray you do not desert the field of battle but, like Jonah, remember the Lord and continue to abide by the royal standard!

It may be that enquiries will be made as to why we should thus enlarge upon the different ways in which Christians faint. Our reply is, we have been thus particular in order to meet the temptation so common among young Christians, to fancy that they are singular in their trials. "Surely no one has felt as I feel," says many a young Christian. "I don't suppose another person ever hung down his head and his hands and became so utterly overcome as I am." Do not listen to that suggestion, for it is devoid of truth! Faintness is very common in the Lord's hosts--and some of His mightiest men have been the victims of it. Even David himself, that hero of Judah, in the day of battle

waxed faint and had been slain if a warrior had not come to the rescue. Do not give way to faintness! Strive against it vehemently, but at the same time, should it overcome you, cast not away your confidence, nor write yourself down as rejected of God or one fatally fallen.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, we will notice the saints'resort. Jonah, when he was in sore trouble, tells us, "I remembered the Lord." What is there for a faint heart to remember in the Lord? Is there not everything? There is, first, His Nature. Think of that. When I am faint with sorrow, let me remember that He is full of pity and full of compassion. He will not strike too heavily, nor will He forget to sustain. I will, therefore, look up to Him and say, "My Father, break me not in pieces. I am a poor weather-beaten boat which can scarcely escape the hungry waves. Send not Your rough wind against me, but give me a little calm that I may reach the desired haven." By remembering that the Lord's mercies are great, we shall be saved from a fainting heart.

Then I will remember His power. If I am in such a strait that I cannot help myself, He can help me! I have needs and sharp pinches, but there are no such things with Him. There are no emergencies and times of severe pressure with God. With Him all things are possible! Therefore will I remember the Lord. If the difficulty is one which arises out of my ignorance, though I know not which way to take, I will remember His wisdom. I know that He will guide me. I will remember that He cannot make a mistake and, committing my way unto Him, my soul shall take courage. Beloved, all the Attributes of God sparkle with consolation to the eyes of faith. There is nothing in the Most High to discourage the man who can say, "My Father, my God, in You do I put my trust." None who have trusted in Him have ever been confounded. Therefore if your soul sinks within you, remember the Nature, Character, and Attributes

of God!

When you have remembered His Nature, then remember His promises. What has He said concerning souls that faint? Think of these texts if you think of no other--"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be." "My Grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." When we get upon this strain and begin to talk of the promises, we need hours in which to enlarge upon the exceeding great and precious words, but we mention only these--we let fall this

handful for some poor Ruth to glean! When your soul is faint, catch at a promise, believe it and say unto the Lord, "Do as You have said," and your spirit shall speedily revive.

Remember, next, His Covenant. What a grand word that word, "Covenant," is to the man who understands it! God has entered into Covenant with His Son, who represents us, His people. He has said, "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed." Truly, we may say with good old David, "Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." When everything else gives way, cling in the power of the Holy Spirit to Covenant mercies and Covenant engagements, and your spirit shall be at peace--

"With David's Lord, and ours,
A Covenant once was made

Whose bonds are firm and sure,
Whose glories shall never fade!
Signed by the Sacred Three in One,
In mutual love before time begun--
Firm as the lasting hills,
This Covenant shall endure,
Whose potent shalls and wills
Make every blessing sure!
When ruin shakes all Nature's frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same." Again, when we remember the Lord, we should remember what He has been to us in past times. When any of us fall to doubting and fearing, we are indeed blameworthy, for the Lord has never given us any occasion for doubting Him. He has helped us in sorer troubles than we are passing through at this time. We have tested His faithfulness, His power and His goodness at a heavier rate than now--and though greatly tried, they have never failed us yet! They have borne the strain of many years and show no signs of giving way. Why, then, are we distrustful? Many saints have proved the Lord's faithfulness for fifty, sixty, or even 70 years--how can they be of doubtful mind after this? What? Has your God been true for 70 years and can you not trust Him a few more days? Has He brought you to 75 and can you not trust Him the few months more that you are to remain in the wilderness? Call to remembrance the days of old, the love of His heart and the might of His arm when He came to your rescue and took you out of the deep waters, and set your feet upon a rock, and established your goings! He is still the same God. Therefore, when your soul faints within you, remember the Lord and you will be comforted.

Thus I have shown you the saint's plight and the saint's resort. Now observe the success of his prayer. Jonah was so comforted with the

thoughts of God that he began to pray and his prayer was not drowned in the water, nor choked in the fish's belly--neither was it held captive by the weeds that were about his head, but up it went like an electric flash, through waves, through clouds, beyond the stars, up to the Throne of God--and down came the answer like a return message! Nothing can destroy or detain a real prayer. Its flight to the Throne of God is swift and certain. God the Holy Spirit writes our prayers, God the Son presents our prayers and God the Father accepts our prayers--and with the whole Trinity to help us in it, what cannot prayer perform? I may be speaking to some who are under very severe trials-- I feel persuaded that I am--let me beg them to take this promise to themselves as their own. And I pray God the Holy Spirit to lay it home to their hearts and make it theirs, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." God will not fail you though you fail yourself! Though you faint, He faints not, neither is weary. Lift up your cry and He will lift up His hand. Go to your knees, you are strongest there! Resort to your chamber and it shall be to you none other than the gate of Heaven. Tell your God your grief--heavy to you, it will be light enough to Him. Dilemmas will all be plain to His wisdom and difficulties will vanish before His strength! Oh, tell it not in Gath that Israel cannot trust in God! Publish it not in the streets of Askelon that trouble can dismay those who lean upon the eternal arm! With Jehovah in the van, O hosts of Israel, dare you fear? "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." What man's heart shall quail, or what soul shall faint? "Lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees." Say unto the feeble in heart, "Be strong. Fear not. God is with you. He will help you, and that right early."

II. Now we must change the subject altogether. Having addressed the people of God, we feel very anxious to speak to those concerning whom

the Lord has designs of love, but who are not yet made manifest. THE SINNER, WHEN GOD COMES TO DEAL WITH HIM, IS BROUGHT INTO THE SAME PLIGHT AS JONAH. His soul faints in him. What does that show?

It shows very much what we are glad to see. When a man's soul faints within him, it is clear that his carelessness is gone. He used to take things very easily and as long as he could make merry from day to day, what cared he about Heaven or Hell? The preacher's warnings were to him so much rant and his earnestness fanaticism! But now the man feels an arrow sticking in his own loins and he knows that there is a reality in sin--it is to him in very deed an evil and a bitter thing. Now the cup of gall is put to his own lips and he feels the poison in his own veins. His heart faints within him and he remains careless no longer--which is no small gain in the preacher's estimation!

His faintness also shows that he will be self-righteous no longer Once he hoped he was as good as other people and perhaps a little better. And for all that he could see, he was every whit as excellent as the saints themselves. They might speak about their trusting in Jesus Christ, but he was working for himself and expected by his regular habits to win as good as place in the world to come as the best of Believers! Ah, but now God has dealt with him and let the daylight into his soul and he sees that his gold and silver are cankered, and that his fair linen is filthy and worm-eaten! He discovers that his righteousnesses are as filthy rags and that he must have something better than the works of the Law to trust in, or he must perish. So far so good. Things are hopeful when there is no more self-reliance left in the sinner. The worst of human nature is that though it cannot lift a finger for its own salvation, it thinks it can do it all--and though

its only place is the place of death and it is a mercy when it comes to burial, yet that same human nature is so proud that it would, if it could, be its own redeemer! When God make man's conscience a target for His fiery arrows, then straightway he feels that his life is no longer in him and that he can do nothing. And he cries out, "God be merciful to me." Oh, that the two-edged sword of the Gospel would slay all our spiritual self-reliance and lay us in the dust at the feet of the Crucified Savior!

Perhaps I speak to some who faint because, though they have given up all self-righteousness now, and relinquished all self-dependence, they yet have not laid hold upon Christ and His salvation. ' 'I have been trying to believe," says one, "but I cannot succeed." Well do I remember the time when I labored to believe. It is a strange way of putting it, yet so it was. When I wished to believe, and longed to trust, I found I could not. It seemed to me that the way to Heaven by Christ's righteousness was as difficult as the way to Heaven by my own, and that I could as soon get to Heaven by Sinai as by Calvary. I could do nothing--I could neither repent nor believe. I fainted with despair, feeling as if I must be lost despite the Gospel, and forever driven from Jehovah's Presence, even though Christ had died. Ah, I am not sorry if you also have come to this condition! The way to the door of faith is through the gate of self-despair. Till you have seen your last hope destroyed, you will never look to Christ for all things, and yet you will never be saved until you do--for God has laid no help on you, He has laid help upon One that is mighty, even Jesus only, who is the sole Savior of sinners. Here, then, we have before us the sinner's plight--and I will venture to call it, though it is a very wretched one, a very blessed one--and I heartily wish that every unconverted man were brought into such a condition that his soul fainted within him.

Now hear the Gospel! Incline your ear to it and you shall live! The way of salvation to you is the way which Jonah took. When his soul fainted, he remembered the Lord. I beseech you, by the living God, to remember the Lord! And if you ask me what it is you should remember, I will tell you in a few words. Remember the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of sinners. Remember Him who suffered in the place of the guilty. Know assuredly that God has visited upon Him the transgressions of His people. Now, the sufferings of such an One as Jesus must have power to cleanse away sins. He is God and if He deigns to die, there must be such merit in His death that He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. You are bidden, at this moment, in God's name, to trust your soul in those hands that were nailed to the Cross and rest your life with Him who poured out His soul unto death that you might live! In yourself you may well despair, but remembering His name, coupled with the names of Gethsemane and Golgotha--remembering all His pains, griefs and unutterable woes --remembering these by faith, there shall be salvation for you at this moment! Do I hear you sigh, "Oh, but I have nothing good within me"? Know, then, that all good is in Him for you--and go to Him for it. "But I am unworthy." He is worthy--go to Him for worthiness. "But I do not feel as I should." He felt as He should--go to Him for all that you should feel. If you bring a rusty farthing of your own, God will not have it--it would only insult the precious gold of Ophir which Jesus freely gives you--if He should allow your cankered counterfeits to be mixed therewith. Away with your filthy rags! Would you add them to the spotless garment which Christ has woven? The Apostle says our best works are dross and dung if we venture to put them side by side with the merits of our Redeemer! None but Jesus can save--remember Him and live!

"But," says one, "I have tried to remember the Lord. But I find that while I can trust Him to pardon my sins, yet I have such a hard heart and so many temptations, and I am so weak for all that is good, that I still despair." Listen, then, yet again--remember the Lord. At this time remember the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended on high, the Holy Spirit was given and He has never been recalled. The Holy Spirit is here in this assembly right now, and in the Holy Spirit is your hope against indwelling sin! You complain that you cannot pray, but the Spirit helps our infirmities. You mourn that you cannot believe, but faith is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. A tender heart, a penitential frame of mind, a right spirit--these are the works of the Holy Spirit in you! You can do nothing, but the Holy Spirit can work everything in you! Give yourself up to those dear hands that were pierced, and the power of the Holy Spirit shall come upon you! A new heart will He give you and a right spirit will He put within you. You shall learn His statutes and walk in His ways. Everything is provided for the Believer that He can possibly need. O young Man, anxious to be saved, the salvation of Jesus Christ precisely suits your case! O seeking Soul, whatever it is you crave to make you fit to dwell where God is forever, it is all to be had and to be had for the asking, for it is all provided in the Covenant of Grace! And if you will remember Jesus the Lord, and the Holy Spirit--the Indweller who renews the mind--you will be cheered and comforted!

Yet let me not forget another Person of the sacred Majesty of Heaven--remember the Father as well as the Son and the Spirit! And let me help you to remember Him. You, trembling Sinner, must not think of God as severe or stern, for He is Love. Would you be glad to be saved? He will be still more glad to save you! Do you wish to return to your God tonight? Your God already meets you and bids you come! Would you be

pardoned? The absolution is on His lips! Would you be cleansed? The Fountain of atoning blood was filled by His mercy and filled for all who believe in His Son! Come and welcome, come and welcome! The child is glad to be forgiven, but the Father is still more glad to forgive. Jehovah's melting heart yearns to clasp His Ephraim to His breast. Seek Him at once, poor Souls, and you shall not find Him hard and cold, but waiting to be gracious, ready to forgive, a God delighting in mercy! If you can thus remember God, the Son, the Spirit and the Father, though your soul faints within you, you may be encouraged.

And so I close by bidding you, if such is the case, to imitate Jonah's example and send up a prayer to Heaven, for it will come up even to God's holy Temple. Jonah had no prayer book and you need none. God the Holy Spirit can put more living prayer into half-a-dozen words of your own than you could get out of a ton weight of paper prayers! Jonah's prayer was not notable for its words. The fish's belly was not the place for picked phrases, nor for long-winded orations. We do not believe that he offered a long prayer, either, but it came right up from his heart and flew straight up to Heaven. It was shot by the strong bow of intense desire and agony of soul and, therefore, it speeded its way to the Throne of the Most High. If you would now pray, never mind your words--it is the soul of prayer that God accepts. If you would be saved, go to your chamber and rise not from your knees till the Lord has heard you. Yes, where you now are let your souls pour out themselves before God and faith in Jesus will give you immediate salvation!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JONAH2.

Verse 1. Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly. What a strange place for prayer! Surely this is the only prayer that ever went up to God out of a fish's belly! Jonah found himself

alive--that was the surprising thing, that he was alive in the belly of a fish--and because he was alive, he began to pray. It is such a wonder that some people here should continue to live that they ought to begin to pray. If you live with death so near and in so great peril, and yet you do not pray, what is to become of you? This prayer of Jonah is very remarkable because it is not a prayer at all in the sense in which we usually apply the word to petition and supplication. If you read the prayer through, you will see that it is almost all thanksgiving--and the best prayer in all the world is a prayer that is full of thankfulness. We praise the Lord for what He has done for us, and thus we do, in effect, ask Him to perfect the work which He has begun. He has delivered us, so we bless His holy name and by implication we beseech Him to deliver us. Notice that it says here, "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God."He was a runaway--he had tried to escape from the Presence of God--yet the Lord was still his God. God will not lose any of His people--even if, like Jonah, they are in the belly of a fish, Jehovah is still their God--"Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly."

2. And said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the LORD, and He heard me. You see that this is not praying, it is telling the Lord what He had done for His disobedient servant. Jonah had prayed, and the Lord had heard him, yet he was still in the fish's belly. Unbelief would have said, "You have lived so long, Jonah, but you cannot expect to live to get out of this dreary, damp, fetid prison." Ah, but faith is out of prison even while she is in it! Faith begins to tell what God has done before the great work is actually accomplished! So Jonah said, "I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me."

2. Out of the belly of Hell cried I, and You heard my voice. He was like a man in the unseen world among the dead. He felt that he was

condemned and cast away, yet God had heard him, and now he sings about it in the belly of the fish. No other fish that ever lived had a live man inside him singing praises unto God!

3. For You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas. The word Jonah used implies that God had violently cast him away into the deep. "Cast me not off," prayed David, but here is a man who says that God did cast him out like a thing flung overboard into the vast deep. "You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas."

3. And the floods compassed me about "They rolled all over me, beneath me, above me, around me. 'The floods compassed me about.'"

3. All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Jonah had evidently read his Bible. At least he had read the 42nd Psalm, for he quotes it here. It is a blessed thing to have the Bible in your mind and heart so that wherever you may be, you do not need to turn to the Book because you have the Book inside you! Here is a man inside a fish with a Book inside of him--and it was the Book inside of him that brought him out from the fish again!

4. Then I said, I am cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple. What grand faith Job displayed when he said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." And here is another splendid manifestation of faith, "'I said, I am cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.' If God does not look at me, I will still look towards the place where He dwells. As I am being flung away from Him, I will give one more look towards His holy Temple."

6. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul They seemed to get right into his spirit--his heart became waterlogged. "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul."

6. The depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my

head. Like his winding-sheet--as if the cerements of the grave were wrapped about his mouth, ears and eyes--and he was consigned to a living tomb. This narrative is a graphic description of the natural motion of the great fish which had swallowed Jonah. When the fish found this strange being inside him, the first thing that he did was to plunge as deep as he could into the waters. You will see that Jonah did go down very deep, indeed. The next thing was for the fish to make for the weeds--as certain creatures eat weeds to cure them when they feel very ill, this fish went off to the weedy places to see if he could get a cure for this new complaint of a man inside him.

6. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. To the very roots and foundations of the mountains, where the big jagged rocks made huge buttresses for the hills above. "I went down to the bottom of the mountains."

6. The earth with her bars was about me forever.Down went the fish, as deep as he could go! And, of course, down went Jonah, too, and he might well imagine that he was in a vast prison from which there was no way of escape!

6. Yet have You brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. And, dear Friend, God can bring you up, however low you may have gone! Though in your own feelings, you feel as if you had gone so low that you could not go any lower, God can, in answer to prayer, bring you up again. O despairing one, take heart and be comforted by this story of Jonah! God is dealing with you as He was with him. There may be a great fish, but there is a great God as well. There may be a deep seas, but there is an almighty God to bring you up out of it!

7. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD. It is a blessed memory that serves us faithfully in a fainting fit. Mostly, when the heart faints, the memory fails, but Jonah remembered the Lord

when his soul fainted within him.

7. And my prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple. Think of Jonah's prayer going right within the veil, and reaching the ear and heart of God in His holy Temple. He said that he was cast out of God's sight, yet his prayer went into God's Temple. Oh, the prevalence of a bold believing prayer! "My prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple."

8. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. If you trust anywhere but in God, you will run away from your own mercy. God is the only really merciful One who can always help you. But if you trust in your own righteousness, if you trust in priestcraft, if you trust in any superstition, you are observing lying vanities and forsaking your own mercy! God is the source of your mercy--do not run away from Him to anyone or anything else.

9. But I will sacrifice unto You. "I long to do so. I cannot do it just now, but I would if I could. And I will do it when You shall grant me deliverance from my present peril."

9. With the voice of thanksgiving, I willpay that that Ihave vowed. Salvation is of the LORD. That is one of the grandest utterances that any man ever made! "SALVATION!" Write it in capital letters. It is a very emphatic word in the Hebrew and I might read it, "Mighty salvation is of Jehovah." This is real, old-fashioned Calvinistic Doctrine spoken centuries before John Calvin was born! The whale could not endure it and he turned Jonah out and directly Jonah said, "Salvation is of the Lord." The world does not like that Doctrine and there are many professing Christians who do not like it. They say, "Salvation is of man's free will! Salvation is of the works of the Law! Salvation is of rites and ceremonies" and so on. But we say, with Jonah, "Salvation is of the Lord." He works it from beginning to end and, therefore, He must

have all the praise for it forever and ever!

10. And the LORD spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. God has only to speak and even sea monsters obey Him! I know not how He spoke to the fish. I do not know how to talk to a fish, but God does. And as the Lord could speak to that fish, He can speak to any sinner here! However far you may have gone from all that is good, He who spoke to that great fish and made it disgorge the Prophet Jonah, can speak to you, and then you will give up your sins as the whale gave up Jonah! God grant that it may be so this very hour! That is the prayer of an ancient mariner--may it be ours, as far as it is suited to our circumstances--and may we be brought by God's Grace to cry with Jonah, "Salvation is of the Lord"!

Chapter 29

The Forerunner

(No. 3102)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Where the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." Hebrews 6:20.

THE Jewish high priest went within the veil once a year and represented the people there, but he was never their forerunner, for no one followed him into the Most Holy Place. His entrance within the veil did not admit another human being--and when he came forth, the veil again concealed the secret glories of the Most Holy Place even from him for another year and from all others at all times--so that neither Aaron, nor any other high priest of his line could ever be called a forerunner within the veil. This is one of the many instances in which our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great Antitype, far excels all the types. They do, as it were, represent the hem of His garment, but the glorious majesty and fullness of His high priestly office, they are not able to set forth.

Moreover, this title of Forerunner is peculiar to the passage before us. The fact that Christ is the Forerunner of His people may be found in other words in the Scriptures and again and again in this Epistle. But it is only here that we have the exact expression that Jesus Christ within the veil has gone to be the Forerunner of His people.

Now, what is peculiar and unique usually excites curiosity and attention. And if it is something peculiar and unique with regard to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself peculiar and unique, we should

look at it as closely as we can and bend our whole minds and hearts to the consideration of it.

I. I am going to speak, first, upon THE NAME WHICH IS USED CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST AS THE FORERUNNER. Our Lord is sometimes spoken of as the Master, the Messiah, the Son of Man and so on, but here He is simply called Jesus. "Where the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

I do not pretend to know why this title was selected, but at least it may be suggested that Jesus is the name which His enemies despise--Jesus of Nazareth, "the Nazarene," as His fiercest foes cry to this day. About the name, Christ, there is always a measure of respect, for even those who do not believe Him to be the Christ, yet look for a Christ, a Divinely-anointed One, a Messiah sent from God. But, "Jesus," is the personal name of Him who was born at Bethlehem, the Son of Mary, to whom the angel said before His birth, "You shall call His name JESUS." It is "the Nazarene" who is "the Forerunner, even Jesus," and it is that name of Jesus that has caused His enemies to gnash their teeth and speak and act against Him, even as Paul confessed to king Agrippa, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." It is by that name which His enemies abhor that He is known within the veil! They speak of Him there as the Savior, the Joshua, the Jehovah-Jesus of His people--and by that name we know Him as our Forerunner.

Moreover, Jesus is not only the name which is hated by His foes, but it is the name which is dearest to His friends. How charming is its very sound! You know how our hymn writers have delighted to dwell upon it. Dr. Doddridge wrote--

"Jesus, Ilove Your charming name, 'Tis music to my ear. Gladly would I sound it out so loud That earth and Heaven could hear!"

And Charles Wesley sang--

"Jesus, the name that charms our fears,

That bids our sorrow's cease 'Tis music in the sinner's ears, 'Tis life, and health, and peace! Jesus, the name high over all, In Hell, or earth, or sky, Angels and men before it fall And devils fear, and fly."

Out of all our Savior's names--and they are all precious to us and, at certain times each one has its own peculiar charm--there is not one which rings with such sweet music as this blessed name, "Jesus." I suppose the reason of this is that it answers to our own name, the name of sinner. That name needs, to cover it, the names of Him who saves His people from their sins. The sound of this confession, "I have sinned," is like that of a funeral knell. But the music of the sentence, "Jesus saves me," is like that of a marriage peal! And, as long as I am a sinner, the name of Jesus will always be full of melody to my soul. To the Old Testament saints, it was comforting to read of Him who was to be born--"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"--and we still delight to repeat those majestic sounds. But in our quiet and calm moments, and especially in times of despondency and depression of spirit, the music of the harp sounds most sweetly when this is the note which the minstrel evokes from it, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." And it is very pleasant to me to think that this is the name that we shall remember best even in Heaven. He has gone there, as Jesus, to be our Forerunner, so Dr. Watts was right when he sang--

"Jesus, the Lord, their harps employs-- Jesus, my Love, they sing! Jesus, the life of both our joys, Sounds sweet from every string." II.

Now I want to show you IN WHAT SENSE JESUS IS OUR FORERUNNER. The word used here means a person running before--a herald, a guide, one who precedes. Such terms would correctly interpret the Greek word used here, so it means, first, one who goes before to proclaim, or to

declare. A battle has been fought and the victory won. A swift young man, out of the ranks of the victors, runs with all speed to the city, rushes through the gate into the marketplace, and proclaims to the assembled people the welcome news, "Our country is victorious! Our commander is crowned with laurels." That young man is the forerunner of the victorious host. The whole army will be back, by-and-by, the conquering legions will come marching through the streets and all eyes will gaze with admiration upon the returning heroes--but this is the first man to arrive from the field of conflict to report the victory!

In that sense, Jesus Christ was the Forerunner to report in Heaven His own great victory. He did much more than that, as you well know, for He fought the fight alone and of the people there were none with Him. He was the first to report in Heaven His own victory. On the Cross He had met Satan and all the powers of darkness--and there had He fought and overcome them and shouted the victor's cry--"It is finished!" Who shall report the victory in Heaven? Shall some swift-winged angel, one of the many that had hovered round the Cross and wondered what it all could mean, fly like a flame of fire, pass through the gates of pearl and say, "He has done it"? No, Jesus must Himself be the first to proclaim His own victory and the eternal safety of all for whom He died! They tell out this good news through the streets of Heaven to this day, but He it was who first certified it! When He ascended up on high leading captivity captive. When He entered within the veil and stood before His Father, the First-Begotten from the dead. When He declared by His majestic Presence that all was finished. When He proclaimed the justification of all His elect--in that proclamation He was our Forerunner--the first to proclaim that glorious Truth of God, "It is finished!"

A second meaning of the word, forerunner, will be found in this sense

of possessing, for Christ has gone to Heaven not merely to proclaim that His people are saved, but to possess Heaven on their behalf. Representatively, He has taken possession of the heavenly places in the name of those for whom He died. Christ had paid the purchase price of our eternal inheritance. We as yet have not entered upon possession of it, but He has and He has taken possession of it in our names. All the elect are summed up in Him who is their Covenant Head--and He being there, they are all there in Him. As the burgesses of a town sit in the House of Commons represented by their member, so we sit in the heavenly places represented by our Leader who sits there in our name. He has taken seizin, as they used to say of old--taken possession of all the Glory of Heaven in the name of His people! Why is Heaven mine tonight? Because it is His--and all that is His is
mine! Why is eternal life yours, Beloved? Why, because "your life is hid with Christ in God" and He has in Heaven for you, eternal life, and all its accompaniments of joy and blessedness! And He is sitting there enjoying them because they are His and yours. You are one with Him, so He is your Forerunner in that sense.

Christ is also our Forerunner in the sense of preceding us. The Forerunner goes first and others must come afterwards. He is not a forerunner if there are not some to run behind him. When John the Baptist came, he was the forerunner of Christ. If Christ had not come after him, John the Baptist would have come for nothing. As Jesus is the Forerunner to Heaven, rest assured that those for whom He is the Forerunner will in due time follow Him there. The least pledge of the glories of the saints in Heaven is the Glory of Christ there. The surest proof that they shall be there is that HE is there, for where He is, there must also His people be. I delight to think of Jesus Christ as our Forerunner because I feel sure that the mighty Grace which

worked so effectually in Him, and made Him run before, will also work in all His people and make them run behind till they enter into the same rest that He now enjoys!

And once again, Christ is our Forerunner within the veil in the sense that He has gone there to prepare aplace for us. I do not know what was needed to make Heaven ready for us, but whatever was needed once is not needed now, for Heaven has been ready for us ever since Christ went to prepare it. We have sometimes arrived at a house when we were not expected--our friends have been glad to see us, but we could hear the bustle of preparations and we almost wished that we had not gone, so to put them into such a flutter in getting ready for us. But no unexpected guest shall ever await at Heaven's gate! They are watching and waiting for us. They know just when we shall get there and Christ has gone to make everything ready for His long-expected and greatly-loved ones. "I go to prepare a place for you," said Christ to His disciples--and that place He has prepared. We have not to go into an undiscovered country, for however glorious the new world might be, the first man to enter it would tread its soil with trembling feet, for he would not know what he might find there. It was a brave thing to be a Columbus to discover a new world, but it is a happier thing to go to a country that has been discovered many hundreds of years, where civilization has provided for the supply of all our needs. Christ was the Columbus of Heaven and He has made it ready for us who are to follow Him there when our turn shall come to emigrate to the better land!

III. Now I want to answer this question, INTO WHAT IS CHRIST OUR FORERUNNER? He is our forerunner

within the veil. Where is that?

Well, first, it is where all our hope is fixed. Our hope is fixed on things invisible, mysterious, spiritual, sublime, immutable,

Divine--which are where Christ is. Paul tells us that the anchor of our soul is "within the veil, where the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

Within the veil is, also, the place of the greatest possible nearness to God. Under the old dispensation, it was an awfully solemn thing for a man to be allowed to enter within the veil. Anyone who ventured in there uncalled would have been instantly destroyed. To stand within the veil was a joyous, blissful privilege, yet it involved enormous responsibility. But you and I, Beloved, stand there in the closest possible nearness to God because Christ has gone there as our Forerunner. He is not merely our Forerunner so that we may enter there in 20 or 30 years' time, or whenever we die, but that we may now boldly enter into the heavenlies where He has gone! Where He is, we are bound to go. Well then, as Christ is there, at His Father's side--

"The Man of Love, the Crucified"-- let us not fear to enter where we have the right to go! It is very sad that when some of us pray, we do not dare to enter within the veil. Even the outer court seems to be too holy a place for us! If we do venture into the court of the priest, we are all in a tremble. But, Brothers and Sisters, we are permitted to enter into that which is within the veil, for Jesus is there and He bids us come to Him--therefore let us come boldly. There is a measure of holy familiarity which the devout man may enjoy in the Presence of God. It is a blessed privilege to know God as your Father and to be as bold with Him as a child is with a father--with the boldness of a love which does not dare because it deserves, but dares because God loves and which, while it humbles itself into the very dust, yet grasps the feet of God even there, clings to Him and delights in its nearness to Him! Is it not a cause of untold joy to us that Jesus Christ is within the veil now as our Forerunner, that we may daily go where He always

is? This is the right position for a child of God in prayer! He must not stand at the foot of Sinai. He must not stand in any unclean place, but he must go where the blood has been sprinkled on the Mercy Seat--brought near by the precious blood of Jesus!

Let us also remember that this place of nearness to God, into which Christ has gone, will mean nearness to God in a higher sense, by-and-by. You cannot conceive of anybody being nearer to God than Christ is "within the veil." In that nearness He is our Forerunner if we are truly in Him by faith. Is not that a wonderful thought? We might have thought that in that wondrous nearness to God which the Mediator enjoys, He would be alone, for He is so very near, but it is not so. He has Himself said, "To Him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My Throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father on His Throne." It is not only true that we are to behold Christ's Glory, but even while on earth He said, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory"--as if they would never fully see that Glory till they were with Him where He is. To whatever heights of Glory He has gone--to whatever raptures of joy He has ascended, He has gone there as the Forerunner of His people!

I may seem to be uttering truisms, but I cannot help it. These are the sort of Truths of God upon which one cannot give allegories, illustrations, or fine sentences. The Truths themselves are so glorious that it would be like painting the lily and gilding it with pure gold to try to adorn it. We must not attempt it, but just leave the Truths as they are for the Spirit of God to apply them to your souls--and so I mean to do after I have mentioned a few practical inferences from the Truth which I have been trying to set before you.

The first is, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this--let us each

one endeavor by faith to realize our nearness with Christ. He has entered within the veil, but He has entered as our Forerunner. Remember that although you are imperfect, feeble, sorrowing, yet you are one with Jesus Christ! You believe that as a Doctrine, but I want you to realize it now as a fact. If you had a rich friend who had given you an equal share with himself of all that he possessed, even if you had not entered upon the possession of it, you would think, "I have not to depend upon charity for my daily bread, for my rich friend has made me as rich as he is, himself." Now, whatever joy that might give you, it ought to give you far more to think that you are one with Christ and that Christ is one with you! When you suffer, Christ is suffering in one of the members of His mystical body. And when He rejoices, it is His desire that His joy may be in you, that your joy may be full. He has married you and He means you to take His riches as well as Himself and to reckon that all He is and all He has is yours. If the Holy Spirit would cause you to realize this, it would make your soul leap within you and bless the Lord and magnify His holy name! "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine." No, more, I am a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Our interests are one, for we are one and Christ up there, in the heavenlies, is but myself there, for I am in Him and I shall soon be actually and literally where He is, as I now am in the Person of Him who is there as my Representative and Forerunner.

That is the first practical thought. And the second is this--is He your Forerunner, Beloved? Then, run after Him. There can be no forerunner, as I have said before, unless somebody follows. Jesus is our Forerunner, so let us be His after-runners. "Ah," says one, "but He is so different from us." The beauty of it is that He is not different from us, for He was a Man like ourselves. "Forasmuch then, as the

children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." Though in Him was no sin, yet in all other respects He was just such as we are--and it cost Him as much to run as it will cost us to run--yes, more, for His race was more arduous than ours is. "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," therefore "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." Your road may be full of crosses, but they are not such crosses as the one He carried. You have suffered bereavements. Yes, and "Jesus wept." You have to endure poverty. And He had not where to lay His head. You are often despised. And He is still "despised and rejected of men." You are slandered. But as they called the Master of the house, Beelzebub, what wonder is it that they speak ill of those who are the members of His household? Jesus Christ ran the very race that you have to run and He ran it perfectly! And that same power which worked in Him to run until He entered within the veil, and so passed the goal, will help you to run till you reach the same spot. If He is your Forerunner and He has run the race, it is essential that you should run it, too, and should also win the prize. Courage, Brothers and Sisters--nothing is too hard for our poor manhood to accomplish through the power of the ever-blessed Spirit! As Christ has conquered, so can we. Sin's assaults can be repelled, for Christ repelled them. The Holy Spirit can lift up "poor human nature"--as we call it--into something nobler and better, transforming it into the likeness of the Human Nature of the Christ of God, till in that Human Nature, purity and holiness, shall dwell even to perfection!

Follow, Brothers and Sisters, the mighty Runner who has gone before you within the veil! And the best way to follow Him is to put your feet into His footprints. It may seem as if you might get to the goal either

this way or that, but the best Christian is he who does not wish for any other path than that which his Master trod. I would like--oh, that I might realize it--to "follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Not to say, "This is not essential, and that might be dispensed with," but, like the Master, Himself, to say, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." Good writing, I think, depends very much upon the little letters. If you want to read a man's letter easily at the first glance, he must write legibly, and mind his Ps and Qs, and all the other letters of the alphabet, especially those that are nearly alike, such as C and E, or I and L. O Christian, there may be very little difference, to the eye of man, between this letter and that of the Believer's alphabet, but you will do best if you follow your Master exactly in all points! No hurt comes of doing that, but great hurt comes of even the least laxity. Follow closely your great Forerunner! Follow at His heels, as a dog follows his master. Just as Christ ran, so may the Holy Spirit help you to run with endurance the race set before you, "looking unto Jesus."

The next thing I have to say is this--let us love our Lord intensely. He has gone to Heaven, but He has not gone there for Himself alone. He has got so into the habit of sharing with His people all that He has that He has not left off that habit now that He has got into Glory! He says, "I am here for My people. I was on the Cross for them and I am on the Throne for them." It is marvelous that even the reward that is given to Him, He shares with His own beloved ones, for there is nothing that He has that He keeps to Himself! It was a blessed marriage day for us, His people, when He took us to be His--for with all His heavenly gifts He did us endow and now He has nothing but what He holds in common with His people. We are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Then must we not love Him much who has loved us so much that

He has given us Himself and all He has? Come, my cold heart, if there is anything that can warm you, surely it is the thought of such true, fond, constant, faithful love as this! Indulge a moment's thought now. Indulge it quietly. Let your soul picture Him. Come to His feet and kiss them. And if you have an alabaster box of precious ointment, break it open and anoint Him, and fill the house with the perfume of your offering of love and gratitude.

Last of all, since Christ has gone to Heaven to be our Forerunner, let us trust Him. We could have trusted Him, I hope, while He was running His race, so surely we can trust Him now that He has won it. The saints of God who lived before Christ came to dwell upon the earth, trusted Him before He started to run. His Apostles and other disciples, in their poor feeble way, trusted Him while He was running--so shall not we trust Him now that the race is finished and He has gone into Glory on our behalf? If a man says, "I will do a thing," if he is a truthful man and he can do what he says, we depend upon him. But when he has done it, it would be a shame not to depend upon him. If Christ came here tonight, never having died, and He said to us, "You poor lost ones, I mean to save you," ought we not to believe Him? If He said, "Dear children of Mine, I mean to come and run a race and win it for you," would we not say, "Lord Jesus, we trust You"? Well, He is not here in bodily Presence--He is up yonder. Do you not see Him with the crown upon His head? There He sits in Glory--innumerable angels are bowing before Him and cherubim and seraphim are praising Him day without night--and the redeemed from among men are singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain for us." Can you not trust Him, Sinner? "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Can you not trust Him? He is within the veil, pleading for us, and pleading for all who come unto

God by Him--and setting His people the example of coming there to plead, too.

As He is there, can we not all trust Him? The dying thief trusted Him when His hands were nailed to the Cross. Can we not trust Him now that His hand grasps the scepter of Sovereignty? The dying thief trusted Him when men ridiculed Him and thrust out their tongues, and railed at Him--can we not trust Him now that Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of His Glory? Surely we must! Jesus, Master, if we never have relied upon You before, grant us the Grace to do so now! And as for those of us who have depended on You these many years, You dear, tried, precious, faithful Lover of our souls, surely we have done with doubting! We are in Your bosom--no, more--we are inside Your very heart and, therefore, we must be safe! Who can harm us there? You did say, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish."

With this assurance let us go our way, resolving to follow our Forerunner till we get where He is, "within the veil," and then forever to follow Him "wherever He goes." Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HEBREWS9:24-28; 10.

Hebrews 9:24. For Christ is not entered into the Holy Place made with hands, which are the figure of the true; but into Heaven itself now to appear in the Presence of God for us. He has gone within the veil--not the veil of "blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work," but within the veil that hides "Heaven itself from our eyes. And there He is--"in the Presence of God for us."

25, 26. Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the Holy Place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the

Sacrifice of Himself The high priest brought the blood of the animals that were slain for a sin-offering, and hence he came often. He could not bring his own blood, or he would only have come once, but our Savior has come only once, "to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself." [See Sermons #759, Volume 13--jesus PUTTING AWAY SIN; #911, Volume 16--THE PUTTING AWAY OF SIN and #2283, Volume 38--CHRIST'S ONE SACRIFICE FOR SIN]

27, 28. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, that after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. He had to suffer because of sin once, but He will never again have to do that! His Sacrifice will never need to be repeated and never can be repeated.

Hebrews 10:1, 2. For the Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect For then would they not have ceased to be offered?If the sacrifice had really put away sin, surely it would never have needed to be offered again. If one sacrifice had put away the guilt of Israel, there would have been no need to bring another.

2. Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. Once cleansed from sin, we are cleansed from sin--the great deed is done once and for all.

3-5. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Therefore when He came into the world. You know who that is, there is but one great, "HE," to us--our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the true High Priest!

5. He said, Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a body have You

prepared Me. By the work of the Holy Spirit within the Virgin Mary, the blessed body of Christ was "prepared" so that He might be God and Man in one Person and so might bring an offering acceptable unto God.

6-9. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written ofMe), to do Your wiil, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin You would not, neither had pleasure therein; which are offered by the Law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first, that He may establish the second [See Sermon #2698, Volume 46--the first and the

SECOND] That He may bring in the real Sacrifice of which the others were but types and prefigurations.

10. By that will. The will which Christ fulfilled in life and in death--"By that will."

10. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. [See Sermon #1527, Volume 26--perfect

SANCTIFICATION] Only one Sacrifice was required. The key-word here is that little word, "once." Let it not only sound in your ears, but be written in your hearts! Jesus Christ died once. He brought His Sacrifice once. He put away our sins once.

11, 12. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. Christ stands no longer to minister as a sacrificing priest. He is sitting down at the right hand of God. That is the posture of one whose work is done and who is taking his rest--"He sat down at the right hand of God." [See Sermon #91, Volume 2--christ

EXALTED]

13-18. From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their
minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Sin itself being no longer imputed to any Believer in Christ, there is neither the occasion nor the need for the offering of another sacrifice for sin. Christ's one Sacrifice has forever put away the sins of all who believe in
Him!

19-22. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance offaith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water The Jew could not personally go up to the Mercy Seat. He had to go there through his representative, the high priest, and we have Christ as our "High Priest over the house of God," so we come to God through Him. The Israelite could not pass through the veil which hid from public gaze the glory of the Shekinah, and Jesus Christ's Humanity was a veil which somewhat concealed the glory of His Deity. But the flesh of Christ having been crucified, the veil has been torn and now we may come right up to the Throne of God without trembling. No, we may come even with holy boldness and familiarity and speak to God without alarm. Having such a

privilege as this, let us not neglect it. It was denied to Prophets and kings in the olden time, but now that it is vouchsafed to us, let us avail ourselves of it and constantly, "let us draw near" unto God "with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

23. Let us hold fast the profession [See Sermon #1897, Volume 32--HOLDING FAST OUR PROFESSION] of our faith without wavering, (for He is faithful that promised). As He is faithful, let us also be faithful and hold, as with a death grip, the faith which has been revealed to us and worked within us by the Holy Spirit. Yes, and the profession of that faith, too, never being ashamed to acknowledge that we are followers of the Nazarene. And let us while we are thus faithful, ourselves, endeavor to strengthen others.

24. And let us consider one another to provoke into love and to good works. The Greek is "to stir each other up to a fit of love. There is no fear that we shall ever go too far in our love to God! Though it would cast us into a state of blessed excitement, yet would it be healthy for us to so live and to so work.

25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. For Christian fellowship is helpful to us and we are helpful to others by it. A Christian is not meant to be a solitary being. Sheep are gregarious and so are the sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not be solitary pilgrims along the road to Heaven, but join that glorious host of God's elect who march beneath the guidance of our great Master.

25. But exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching. Does not every day bring us nearer to the coming of the Lord? Are there not many signs that these are the last days? Well then, so much the more let us stir each other up to love and to good works!

26, 27. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the

knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. Here the Truth of God taught is that if a Christian apostatizes--if he renounces his faith and goes back to the world, it is impossible to reclaim him. A backslider may be restored, but anyone who should willfully, after receiving the Truth, reject it, has rejected the only Savior. He has rejected the only regeneration and, consequently, he is without the pale of the possibilities of restoration. The question is, "Will any true child of God so apostatize?" That question is answered in this very chapter, but the Truth here taught is that if he does, he goes into a state of absolute hopelessness.

28, 29. He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment. Can there be any sorer punishment than to die without mercy? Yes, there is, for there is eternal punishment--"of how much sorer punishment"--

29-31. Suppose you, shall he be thought worthy who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood ofthe Covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, andhas done despite unto the Spirit ofGrace?For we know Him who has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands ofthe living God [See Sermon #682, Volume 12--future punishment a FEARFUL THING] With what terrible sentences does Paul hedge up the way of the Believer! Leave that way and there is nothing for you but destruction. Reject your Savior, give up your hope in Him and there cannot be another name by which you can be saved, or another sacrifice by which you can be cleansed from sin.

32, 33. But call to remembrance thee former days, in which after you

were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions; partly,
while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and afflictions.
Made a spectacle to be mocked at in the theater of the world.
33-35. And partly, while you became companions of them that were so
used. For you had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the
spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in Heaven a
better and an
enduring substance. Cast not away therefore, your confidence, [See
Sermon #1263, Volume 21--HOLD FAST YOUR SHIELD] which has great
recompense of reward. You must push on! You have already defied the
foe--to turn back is certain destruction, for you have no armor for
your back. 36. For you have need of patience. Or, endurance--
36. That, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the
promise. To hold on, to continue to do God's will--this is the task. To
start and to make a spurt now and then, is easy enough--but to keep on
is trying to every spiritual muscle. And only God can enable you to do
so.
37, 38. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and
will not tarry. Now thejust shall live by faith: but if any man draws
back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. If there is a drawing back
from faith, God can have no pleasure in us. But shall we draw back?
That is the question! And here is the answer.
39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition. We who have
believed in Jesus. We who have sincerely committed ourselves to His
care. We who have been born-again of the Holy Spirit, we in whom there
is the real work of Grace which God has pledged to carry on--"we are
not of them who draw back unto perdition."
39. But of them that believe to the saving of the soul What a blessed
Truth of God is this! O Christian, as you see the danger that lies

before you if you did prove to be an apostate, bless that Sovereign Grace which will not allow you so to do, even as Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Chapter 30

A Pastoral Visit

(No. 3103)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 30, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Church in your house." Philemon 1:2.

SOME interpreters have supposed that a small congregation met for worship in a room in Philemon's house and there is a tradition that such was the case for some considerable time. The Churches established by Paul were, at their commencement, for the most part small. Obliged--for the sake of peace and to avoid persecution--to meet in out of-the-way places where they were not likely to be seen by foes, the retired house of some well-known friend, perhaps that of the minister, if it had a room conveniently large, would be the natural place for Believers to gather together in those early Churches. Philemon, therefore, might literally have had a Church in his house and a congregation might have gathered there. It strikes me that there would be a great deal of good done if persons who have large rooms in their houses would endeavor to get together little congregations. There are many, even of our poorer friends, who live in neighborhoods of London destitute of the means of Grace, who might promote a great blessing if they occasionally opened their houses for a Prayer Meeting or religious assembly. We need no consecrated places for the worship of God--

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found, And everyplace is hallowed ground."

Certainly our text does not give any countenance to the calling of certain buildings "Churches." Buildings for worship, whether erected by Episcopalians or Dissenters, are frequently called "Churches." If I ask

for "the church" in any town, I am forthwith directed to an edifice, probably with a spire or a steeple, which the inhabitants call "the church." Why, they might as well point me to a signpost when I asked for a man--a building cannot be a Church! A Church is an assembly of faithful men and it cannot be anything else. I cannot see how such a piece of architecture as we now call "a church" could very well have been in Philemon's house--it must have been a large house if it had such a thing in it for an ornament. The fact is, it is a misnomer, a misuse of language, and we must mind that we do not get into it. For my own part, I like the good old-fashioned name of "Meeting House" as well as any. It is a place where the people of God meet and although "Meeting House" does not sound very smart, nor fine, nor fashionable--and that is everything, nowadays, with many people--yet it is far better than misusing language as it is misused when bricks, stones and mortar receive a tittle belonging exclusively to godly men and women!

However, it appears that Philemon had a Church in his house--a Church largely, if not exclusively, composed of his own family. He was privileged to possess a godly wife--the beloved Apphia--their sons and daughters walked in their parents' footsteps. And their servants and even their visitor, Archippus, were members of this Church which was in the house of Philemon.

I. Now let me attempt to describe A CHURCH IN A HOUSE, meaning, all the while, to be asking you WHETHER YOU HAVE A CHURCH IN YOUR HOUSE.

A Church, according to the New Testament, consists of converted persons, or persons who profess to be converted. No visible Church is absolutely pure. A Church must be taken upon its own profession, consisting as it does of persons who avow themselves to be followers of and Believers in Christ, having been converted from darkness to light

by the Spirit of God. Well, then, I see, in a family where there is a Church, a godly father and a godly mother rejoicing over converted sons and daughters--and glad and able to entrust their household affairs to Christian servants. It cannot be a Church, whatever profession may be made, unless there is the Grace of God there. It may be nominally such, but it cannot be really so. A family is not born a Church and the little ones born into the family are not born into the Church. They must be born-again before they can be members of the Church--there must have been the work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the members of the family before they can form a Church in the house.

But it strikes me that a number of converted people are not necessarily a Church. In order to form a Church, they must worship together. Happy is the household which meets every morning for prayer! Happy are they who let not the evening depart without uniting in supplication!

Brothers and Sisters, I wish it were more common--I wish it were universal, with all professors of religion--to have family prayer! We sometimes hear of the children of Christian parents who do not grow up in the fear of God and we are asked how it is that they turn out so badly. In many, very many cases, I fear there is such a neglect of family worship that it is not probable that the children are at all impressed by any piety supposed to be possessed by their parents!

Family prayer in our old Puritan households was a matter of very great importance. Let me tell you what Philip Henry used to do. He was a minister and of course had more time to give to it than many of you in business have. But he went through the whole Bible in course, expounding it, chapter by chapter, and accompanying it by prayer and singing. One reason he gave for singing was that it was like Rahab's tying the crimson line in the window--everyone who went by would know what she had done--and he said that the sound of singing at family

prayers was a distinct confession that that family loved and worshipped God! He called his children together on Thursdays and catechized them upon the General Assembly's Catechism and upon the lessons through which they had gone during the week.

Perhaps you will think that this was very dreary work, but what will you say when I tell you that that good man's son, Mr. Matthew Henry, wrote his famous Commentaryfrom the notes which he took of his father's expositions at morning and evening prayers? Young lads do not take notes of dreary things, you may depend upon it! Catch them at that, if you can. We do not find our boys taking down heavy sermons, but they have no objection to putting down anything which strikes and interests them. That family of Mr. Henry, to which I have referred, was so well ordered that very often visitors to the house who were unconverted when they went there, were converted during their visit! Now I do not suppose that you could, all of you, expound the Scriptures like that! And you could not all, perhaps, sing. But I do think we might, all of us, manage to come together once a day at least--twice, if possible--for the worship of God in the household. Remember what Matthew Henry says--"They who pray in the family, do well. They who read and pray, do better. But they who sing, and read, and pray, do best of all." If we want to bring up a godly family who shall be a seed to serve God when our heads are under the clods of the valley, let us seek to train them up in the fear of God by meeting together as a family for worship. I do not see how there can be a Church without worship--and I do not see how there can be a Church in a house unless there is constant worship in the family.

But there must be something more than this before there can be a Church. A Church is not merely a company of people meeting for worship--there must be some bond of unity. A load of bricks is not a

house--the bricks must be fitly framed and cemented together--and then they grow into a house. So a Church is fitly framed together and grows into a holy temple for the Lord. Now, dear Friends, there must be a knitting of hearts among Christians in families. Of course, they will love each other from the ties of the flesh, but they should also love each other from the higher ties of the Spirit. There is no reason why, without breaking through any of the gradations that must necessarily exist in society, there should not be a bond of unity taking in the whole family--master, mistress, children and servants. In the olden times, in the days of such men as Abraham, the servants were a part of the family. Nowadays, people change their servants once a month and there are some servants who stay too long even then! But it strikes me that good masters and good mistresses make good servants--and where love and kindness are shown, it will not always, nor often, be the case that the servants will be a social evil. Instead of that, they will be a great benefit. And a wise, prudent, Christian servant becomes as much a part of the household as even a child. To make a Church, there must be a feeling of union. I should like to see the clan-feeling in our families in which every servant would stand up for the master's honor, and everyone would seek the good of the entire family--and even when the children were grown up and scattered, it would be well to see them still duly respecting the ties of Christian kindred and seeking to promote the good and the unity of the whole.

And to make a Church, there must be oversight. A Church is not a complete Church without a pastor, its elders and its deacons. A Church in the house will have its elders. There need not be any election of these because they are already elected. The parents will naturally take the oversight of the little Church that is in the house. If you want a pastor, the father should be the priest in his own house. He is the

most fitting teacher, expounder and example. Then who are to be your deacons? Why, those who have to go out to the factory, when the bell rings in the morning, and who help to provide food for the household! And there is another we must not forget--that gentle one who goes so noiselessly about the house to see after her husband and children, and who produces a thousand happy thoughts by that kind way of hers. Sometimes the oversight of the household will fall to the lot of the eldest son, or daughter, but sometimes some long-abiding servant, some old housekeeper virtually becomes the presiding genius. There must be oversight and God sometimes graciously sends to families those who are more advanced in spiritual things who become, as it were, the officers of the Church in the house.

A Church in the house must, of course, be furnished with instruction. One of the first reasons why there is a Church at all is to teach the members. We are formed into Churches for mutual edification. Ah, dear Friends, how much youthful piety receives edification in those households where the parents set a godly example! Wonderful is the influence of the mother upon her son. You recollect the case of the mighty Byron, who seems to have been a sort of fallen angel who flew across the sky like a thunderbolt from a Satanic hand. What was his mother? Why, a very passionate woman who frequently threw the tongs at her own son in her passion! Of course she had a wild and passionate son. Look, on the other hand, at the meek and gentle bard of Olney, pouring forth notes that were almost fit for Heaven. What sort of mother had Cowper? You know her character well, as her son has described it in the lines beginning--

"Oh, that those lips had language!" Let Christian parents, forming a Church in their house, look to the formation of the character of their children, especially their converted children--and let them not

overlook their converted servants! With an ardent and a longing desire, strive to build them up in the faith and help them to grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. You Christian fathers ought to take care, as far as your means allow, to provide your children with instructive books. I do not mean dull books, but good, interesting books, at once instructive and attractive, that may teach them the way of God more perfectly. Whenever you have the opportunity, let drop a word which will strike the child's attention and remain in its heart.

Just as I, as a preacher, would never miss an opportunity of saying anything here which I met with in the week, and which I thought you ought to hear, so let the Christian father be studying each day how he may instruct the Church in his house in the fear of the Lord more perfectly!

I think I have now described the Church so far as its organization is concerned, but I cannot very well describe it all. You must go and live in the midst of such a Church to understand thoroughly what it is like. Mr. Talkative, in "The Pilgrim's Progress," was a very fine fellow abroad and had a great deal to say about religion. But what was he at home? Ah, nothing could be said of him there worth the hearing! Where there is a Church in the house, every member strives to increase the other's comfort, all seek to promote each other's holiness, each one endeavors to discharge his duty according to the position in which he is placed in that Church. And when they meet together, their prayers are earnest and fervent, and all their actions are not the actions of a worldly family, but of those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious!

One thing more. A Church is really worth nothing at all if it does not try to extend itself And a Church in a house is no true Church if it is satisfied without endeavoring to bring in every member of the family.

If you have half a dozen converted, but there are seven of you, never

leave off praying till you have the seventh! And if, in God's mercy, He has given you ten out of eleven, there are ten reasons why you should be in earnest for the conversion of the eleventh. Plead with the Master till your little Church shall have swallowed up the whole of your congregation! A happy day will it be for us when the Church in the Tabernacle fills every pew, but you may come at your results sooner than we can come at ours. May the day soon come when the Church in your house shall include every person in the family, not one being left out! What a happy world it would be if there were such a Church in every house! It would be Heaven begun below! The angels might then mistake earth for Heaven and linger so long that they would need to be recalled to Paradise, making the mistake that they were already in Paradise! Oh, may we live to see the day when walking down a street in London, we shall hear, at the appointed hour in every house, the song of praise and know that no door will be locked for the night till first the Lord has been asked to keep watch and ward over the slumbering household!

II. Having thus described a Church in a house, I propose what I cannot often accomplish among you, though I wish I could, and that is TO PAY YOU A PASTORAL VISIT.

I am going to knock at your door, take a chair and sit down, and ask you a few simple questions. The first is, Have you a Church in your house? "No," says one, "I am the only converted one in the house." Ah, dear Friend, I can understand the difficulty of your position, but I can also rejoice in the hopefulness of your being there, trusting that it is a token for good to the house! Now that the Lord has sent one spark of fire there, may there soon be a flame! "Well," says another, "we have several Christians in our house, but I cannot say that there is a Church here." I like your honesty, my Friend, but may I tell you what I suspect is the reason why there are so many houses that have

Christians in them, but no Churches? It often is because those Christians are inconsistent. Why, if some of you were not professors of religion, you would be very decent sort of people--but being professors, the way in which you act and speak is detestable! You may think this strong language, but I know it is true. There are some families where the father, instead of exhibiting the gentleness and kindness of a Christian, well-near scares the children from the very thought of godliness! There are some households where the wife is a gadding busybody, whose slovenliness and dirt might well disgust her husband at the very thought of going to the House of Prayer. There are some children professing godliness who have not yet learned the Commandment which tells them to obey their parents! And there are some professedly Christian servants who are eye-servers, not remembering what Paul has said to such. One of the worst evils we have to deal with, as Christians, is the evil of inconsistency at home! Whenever I see a professed Christian walking among his household as though he were a tyrant, letting no one come near him, without affection or kindness and simply a domineering master, I ask--Where is the Grace of God in that man? And I ask the same question with respect to other faults. O Beloved, do make your households happy! You cannot make them holy if you do not shine with genial cheerfulness. And you Christian people in households, do seek to act so that you may not be a disgrace to your profession, but may form a true Church in the house where you dwell together.

While I thus speak, perhaps you will say that I am exposing too much of that domestic economy over which you judge it convenient to drop a veil. It is my duty to tell you the truth plainly, so listen to it attentively. "Well," someone says, "I thank God that I have a Church in my house." Then I thank God, too, and we will together praise and bless

Him for His great mercy. But I must now ask you, Who are the members?' 'Well, there is Father." Oh, I am so glad, because your father has so much to do with the management and if he who holds the reins cannot drive, there will be some mistakes. I am glad your father is converted. "Ah!" says one, "but my father is not converted." Then, I am sorry. O Father, I beseech you, let your child's prayer come into your ears as well as into God's ears! You will be a curse to your family if you are not a blessing! And I know you do not want to be a bane to your offspring. But with some of you, the father is converted and the mother is converted, too. I am glad of that, because parents--and mothers in particular-- have a sweet influence on the family and the little ones. Well, then, let us see. Is John converted? Is the eldest son yet made a partaker of Divine Grace? "Yes." Oh, then that is a mercy, because elder brothers have so much to do, by their example, in inclining younger brothers rightly or wrongly. And Emily--is she converted? That is a happy thing, if it is so, for she, also, will have a great influence for good upon the younger ones. Now where does it stop? I hope it does not stop at the servants--are they converted? Happy is the master who has Christian servants! And I speak experimentally when I say this. It is a great comfort to you to have those about you who really do fear God.

Yes, but we must not forget any who are in the household. I must ask you, Who are they who are not converted?The very little ones, of course, are too young to understand, so we will leave them in the hands of a Covenant God and plead with Him for them. But are there not some who can understand, but who are not yet converted? "Ah," says the mother, "do not ask me about that," and she brushes away a tear. And the father says, "It is a painful subject." Yes, it is a painful subject, but we must mention it, because some of them are here tonight.

You would not willfully give your parents pain, young man, would you? I know your desire is to comfort them and there can be no greater joy to them than to know that their children are walking in the Truth of God.

And among the servants, there is the nursemaid--is she brought in? And there is the kitchen-boy--do not leave him out! A Church in a house is not complete till it comprises everybody in the house, from the dishwasher up to the master. Yes, and if there is a friend staying there, the Church is not complete till the friend is also converted.

Now, I cannot expect you all to answer me, but I still hope that you will do it quietly to yourselves. How many members are there in the Church in your house? Who are members and who are not?

Then, by your leave, I shall ask you another question, and that is, As you have a Church consisting of so many members, what are you doing for Christ?It is no use having a Church that is not doing anything. As a family, are you

seeking to extend the bounds of Messiah's Kingdom within your own sphere? Dr. Guthrie advocates Territorial Missions and a very admirable scheme it is to advocate. And I give him all honor for it, but I will tonight take the liberty of advocating Home Missions. I do not mean missions that have to do with anything outside, but missions to the kitchen, the parlor, the drawing-room and every room up to the attic--missions in which every single one in the family shall be concerned. I hope that, as a Church in the house, you will not have a neglected district in the house. Some of you go out tract-distributing--begin at home! Some of you preach--begin to preach at home. Hard work that, because those to whom you preach know how you practice! If you cannot preach at home because your practice runs counter to your preaching, do not preach at all--for a man has no right to talk and instruct others it he cannot, at least in some measure,

live out what he teaches!

III. Before leaving, however, I venture to GIVE A LITTLE ADVICE AS TO THE WAY OF HAVING A CHURCH IN A HOUSE.

It must be brought about, of course, by Divine Grace. The Holy Spirit is the great Agent, but still He uses means. You young woman--yes, you--you are thinking about being engaged to that young man. You are a professed Christian, but he is a worldling. Now, do you ever expect to have a Church in your house at that rate? And may I ask you--do you know what you are doing? I see some of you are smiling. Well, you may smile as much as you can now, for you will never have much smiling after, I can tell you that! If you want to wither your happiness forever, you have only to go and be yoked with an unbeliever. I have known some Christian women who have forgotten the Divine precept and have been married to ungodly men. And I have seen godly men married to ungodly women. And mark this--my experience has not been very long, but it has been very wide--I never knew any good come of it. I have always seen misery as the result and in nine cases out of ten, backsliding has followed--often final, too--proving that the person committing that sin had no Grace at all! We do not often talk about these things when we are preaching, but we ought to talk about them a great deal more than we do. I do beseech you, young Christian people, if you hope to have God's blessing, take care that you do not get "unequally yoked with unbelievers."

Then, supposing the house is already started, I have this advice to give. If you want to bring in others of the family who are not converted, make them happy. There are a great many more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and there are a great many more persons brought to God by love than there are by pitiless declamations. "The

love of Christ constrains," not only after we are saved, but it is often the constraining means of bringing us to be saved. Let us imitate Puritan theology in its soundness and Puritan living in its holiness, but not in its gloom--if, indeed, it was gloomy, which I very much question. Let the Christian family be the most cheerful household anywhere! And if I might venture on the advice, let me say, never make Sunday doleful and sad. Some people do. Why, I think Sunday should be to the household the bright day of the week--the day when the father is at home--the day when the mother is not at work-- the day when John comes home to spend a few hours--the day when they all go to the House of God and sing--

"I have been there, and still would go 'Tis like a little Heaven below." Oh, make your households to be like flower gardens--plant no thorns and root out all ill weeds of discontent! Depend upon it, household happiness is a great means of promoting household holiness! And let me entreat you, dear Friends, to be much in prayer for those who are not converted.' 'Yes," says the mother, "my unconverted boy is gone away from home." Well, but your prayers can follow him! See the case of Philemon and

Onesimus. [See Sermon #1268, Volume 21--THE STORY OF A RUNAWAY SLAVE] Onesimus had run away with some of his master's money, but his master sent his prayers after him and, by-and-by, there came a sheriff's officer to arrest him--not one of Caesar's officers, but one of God's. It was the Apostle Paul who, in the preaching of the Word of God, arrested the runaway servant and he went back to his master saved! How do you know but that your son will come home converted? How do you know, Mother, but that you will yet see your daughter rejoicing in Christ? Never cease praying for them till the breath is out of their bodies, but continue in supplication till they are brought into the

Church in your house!

But O you Christians who wish to make a Church in your house, do not let your own inconsistencies mar any good work in others! Above all, do not have any disagreements among yourselves. Talk not in such a way that good impressions, once happily made, become wretchedly marred. I have heard of a wife walking home with her husband from a place of worship. He was an ungodly man. She had often prayed for him and he went with her to hear the sermon. She had been praying that he might be blessed and yet, in walking home, she was foolish enough to begin criticizing the sermon. She asked him how he liked it and he made no answer. She began pulling it to pieces, till at last he stopped her and said, "My dear wife, you have often prayed to God that I might be blessed. God has blessed that sermon to me this morning and I cannot bear to hear you speak of it as you have been speaking." I know this is a fault with many Christians--not that we ministers care at all what you say about us, except for the evil you often do in spoiling to others that which does not happen to suit your fastidious taste, for you may in that way be doing the devil's work. IV. The last thing I want to say to you is this. LOOK ONWARDS A MINUTE.

When Halyburton lay a-dying, he said, among other joyous expressions, "I bless God that I have a father in Heaven! I bless God that I have a mother in Heaven! I bless God that I have ten brothers and sisters in Heaven! I am the last of the family and I shall be in Heaven within an hour!" This was a glorious thought! What a happy meeting theirs would be! Spirits "are neither married nor given in marriage," nor are social ties respected there, but still, I cannot conceive of Halyburton's family but as making up a constellation like the Pleiades, all meekly and gently shining together to the praise of God!

I saw in a house, the other day, a very singular picture of the

Resurrection. It was supposed to represent the resurrection of a Christian family. The artist was not very imaginative, but still he had done it pretty well. The big stone that covered the tomb was just broken in halves and you saw coming up at the top some of the little ones, those latest buried. There were three or four of them stretching their wings upwards. Of course, this represented as much the resurrection of the soul as of the body in the artist's mind, it was rather a complicated metaphor. Then there were the father and mother, and a number of grandchildren--and I was glad to see that there were the grandfather and grandmother, both coming up from one tomb, and going up together to the Throne of God. I only hope that, though some of us may be buried in distant lands and--

"Our graves are scattered far and wide, By fount, and stream, and sea"-- yet, practically, we may rise together when the last trumpet sounds, an unbroken family!

I may be excused, perhaps, for referring to God's singular mercy to my own household. What a blessing it is to my father and mother now that they can rejoice in six of their children walking in the Truth of God who have given themselves up to the Lord Jesus! The Lord has been graciously pleased to bring them in, one by one, and all who have now reached years of discretion, so as to be able to understand the Gospel, have believed in Jesus Christ! And in generations that have gone by, my grandfather could say the same, and his father could say the same of his house! We have been a race of those whom God has blessed. May it be your privilege, also, beloved members of this Church! I cannot wish you a greater blessing. If I knew how to bestow the greatest blessing upon you, I think my knowledge would not amount to more than this, that, being yourselves saved, you might have all your families walking in the Truth of God and, speaking after the manner of men, why should it not

be the case with you? Prayer, earnest and mighty prayer, gets no denial from the Throne of God!--

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees," and claims its fulfillment, "for the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." God's eternal purpose stands fast and fixed, we know, but when He moves His people's hearts to pray, He intends to bless. We will be more earnest in praying for one another than we have been. We will be more earnest in praying about our children than we have been. And may God grant us Grace so that we may, all of us, be able to say that we have a Church in our house! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"--this is the foundation of the Church and they who have believed are members of Christ's Church and so see His face in the midst of the one family in Heaven and earth, which is named by Him as "the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven." God grant that, of this Church, both we and ours may all be members!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PHILEMON.

Verse 1. Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ This is one of Paul's private letters, though it has the stamp of Inspiration upon it. It was not written concerning Church business, nor to teach some great doctrinal Truth of God, but there was a runaway slave who had come to Rome and who had been converted under Paul's ministry. Paul was sending him back to his master--and this was the letter which he was to take with him, to make some sort of apology for him and to ask his master to receive him with kindness and to forgive his fault. Every word of this Epistle is very wisely put. Paul begins by calling himself "a prisoner of Jesus Christ." Who would not grant him his desire when he was wearing a chain for Christ's sake? If a letter were to come to you from some beloved minister whom you knew to be lying in a dungeon and likely soon to die,

you would be greatly touched if you noticed the traces of the rust of his chains on the letter. "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

I, 2. And Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the Church in your house. He joins Timothy with himself to give double weight to the message. Probably Timothy was well known to Philemon and much respected by him, so he puts Timothy's name that there might be two to plead with him. Then, notice the loving titles with which Paul addresses Philemon--"our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer." Probably the person whom Paul called, "beloved Apphia" was Philemon's wife, so he writes to her, also, for perhaps the wife was the more tender-hearted of the two, so she might put in a good word for Onesimus--and her husband would all the more readily grant Paul's request. He also mentions Archippus, who was either the pastor of the Church at Colosse, or an Evangelist who stayed occasionally at the house of Philemon. So he mentions him with all the rest of the household who met there for worship and so made up the Church in the house.

3-7. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of your faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in your love because the hearts of the saints are refreshed by you, Brother.Paul recalls how much Philemon had done in the comforting of persecuted and poor saints. And when you are about to ask a favor of anyone, it is well to show your gratitude for what you or others have already received from him.

8, 9. Therefore though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin you that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech you, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now, also, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He says in effect, "I am an Apostle and I am your spiritual father, so I might have spoken with authority to you and have said, 'It is your duty to do this.' But I am not going to do anything of the kind. I am going to plead with you and beseech it of you as a kindness and a favor. Pay a loving tribute to my old age and, besides that, I am a prisoner shut up in the dungeon for Christ's sake--hear the clanking of my chains, and grant my request for love's sake.'"

10. I beseech you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds. "He came to hear me preach in the prison. He has been listening to me while I am still a captive and he has been given to me, as another son in the Gospel, to be a comfort to me in my bonds. I beseech you for him."

II, 12. Which in timepast was to you unprofitable, but now profitable to you and to me: whom Ihave sent again. "He was your slave, and therefore I have sent him back to you."

12. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart. "Look upon him as though he were my very heart and receive him as you would receive me if I could go to you."

13, 14. Whom I wouldhave retained with me, that in yourplace he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the Gospel: but without your permission would I do nothing; that your benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly."I would have kept him," says Paul, "for I need someone to be my companion, to comfort me in my distress. But I would not do it without asking your permission, lest I should seem to take advantage of you. Though I know that you would willingly consent to it, yet, nevertheless, that it might be perfectly voluntary

on your part, I have sent him back to you, that you may do as you will with him."

15-17. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that you should receive him forever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a beloved Brother, especially to me, but how much more unto you, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If you count me therefore a partner. "If you have true fellowship and communion with me"--

17. Receive him as myself How beautifully this is put all through! It very much reminds me of our Lord Jesus Christ, who seems to say to the Divine Father, "This poor child is in fellowship with Me. Receive him, therefore, as Myself." And this is just what God does in the case of repenting and believing sinners--He receives them just as if He could see Christ in them.

18. If he has wronged you, or owes you anything, put that on my account How generously this is put by this poor prisoner at Rome and how gloriously, in this, he is like our Master who stands as Surety for us!

19. I Paul, have written it with my own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to you how you owe unto me even your own self besides. Paul had been the means of Philemon's conversion, so he was immeasurably in debt to the Apostle. But Paul only gently reminds him of the fact as a reason why he should deal kindly with Onesimus for his sake.

20. Yes, Brother, let me have joy of you in the Lord: refresh my heart in the Lord. "You have refreshed others, then, surely, you will not now let me be without refreshment! You have been very kind to all sorts of saints, then you cannot be unkind to the man who is your own spiritual father."

21. Having confidence in your obedience I wrote unto you, knowing that you will do more than I say. This is delicately yet forcibly put, and we feel certain that Philemon must have done as Paul wished, even

though we have no record of the fact.

22-25. But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. There salute you Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Chapter 31

Binding Up Broken Hearts

(No. 3104)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 19, 1874.

"He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." Isaiah 61:1.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon this text, is #1604, Volume 27--HEART DISEASE CURABLE]

THESE are some of the words of the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, the Messiah, which He read in the synagogue at Nazareth and then said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." One of the worst calamities that can happen to anyone is to have his spirit broken. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?" All the water in the sea will not hurt the vessel one thousandth part as much as that which comes into it. When trouble gets into the heart, every other trouble seems to be magnified and it is hard to bear up against even the ordinary trials of daily life. Save us, O God, if possible, from the terrible affliction of being entirely broken down in life's battle!

Yet, very closely allied to this great calamity is one of the greatest spiritual blessings, namely, a spiritually broken heart, broken on account of sin and, sometimes, the brokenness of spirit which arises from physical sorrow, mental anxiety, or temporal trouble leads up to the contrition of heart which is most acceptable to God. Oftentimes He sanctifies a lower form of affliction and makes it conducive to the higher form of brokenness of spirit. I am not going to give you any

descriptions of spiritual brokenness of heart--I want rather to address myself to broken hearts of any sort and of every sort. There is no particular description of broken hearts given in the text, but simply Christ's declaration, "He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." There is no descriptive epithet limiting the declaration to the spiritually brokenhearted--and what is not in the text I will not put into it. I am the more glad not to make these distinctions and discriminations because they would only lead the troubled ones to look within to see whether their hearts were spiritually broken and that is just where I do notwant them to look! I want them to look away from themselves to Jesus Christ the Healer of broken hearts. Descriptions of spiritual experience and character are sometimes useful, but I fear that quite as often, they turn the poor sinner's eyes upon himself, whereas his hope lies in his eyes being turned towards Him who was lifted up upon the Cross! To look at self is likely to humble us, but when that humbling has already taken place, then is the time for the Lord's command, "Look unto Him and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

I. So, making no distinction, but speaking to all the brokenhearted, my first remark is that GOD HAS PRACTICALLY REMEMBERED THE BROKENHEARTED, FOR HE HAS SENT A SAVIOR TO HEAL THEM.

This simple remark ought to be a great comfort to those who are broken in spirit and desponding, because they are generally very apt to say, "No one cares for us. Now that we are in trouble, everybody avoids us. They were merry enough with us in our merriment, but they have no sympathy with us in our sorrow. They could dance with us in our days ofjoy, but they will not go with us to the grave of our hopes to weep there. They are like the swallows that are with us in summer and forsake us in winter. And like the leaves that are green and plentiful

when the sun is with us, but fade and wither when winter is approaching." Still, my brokenhearted Friend, suppose that all men forsake or forget you? God does not! His eyes see you, His heart feels for you and His hand is able to deliver you. You are not friendless, nor will you be till the God of all consolation dies--and that can never be.

Christ's declaration should cheer the brokenhearted, again, because they often conclude that their case is beyond all help. ' 'Ah," says one, "even if I had a friend, he could not help me, for my case is beyond all succor. If I had 50 friends, they would not know how to minister to such mental disease as mine. I am too far gone for relief." But listen, my brokenhearted Friend! You dare not say that anything is too hard for the Lord! Though your despair would make you go a long way, yet it would not make you go so far as to say that God cannot help you! He it is that turns the night into morning, that stills the roaring of the sea, that puts a bit into the mouth of the tempest. Then what can He not do? You cannot be in so forlorn a condition that God cannot help you! To Omnipotence nothing can be a difficulty, much less an impossibility! So, then, let me whisper in your ear that there is still hope for you, for you have a true Friend who is both able and willing to help you.

This ought still further to comfort the poor desponding one because he often concludes that certainly God is against him. "I would not be in this sad state of mind," says one, "if I were not abhorred by the Most High. He has set me as a target for His arrows and He shoots at me, and grievously does He wound me. He has filled my cup with sorrow mingled with gall and put it to my mouth that I may drink it to the dregs. God has utterly abhorred me and cast me away from His Presence." It is not

so! If it were, then might the great bell toll out your knell--but my text says that the Lord has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to bind up the brokenhearted. He is no enemy to you, or He would not have sent His Son to heal you! Do you not remember what Manoah's wife said to him? Her husband said to her, "We shall surely die because we have seen God," but she was wiser, so she answered, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would He at this time have told us such things as these." So say we to you, poor brokenhearted one! If the Lord meant to destroy you, why did He send His Son to heal the brokenhearted? And to what end is the Gospel sent and why are you here to be tenderly wooed and assured that the Lord has deep designs of love toward just such troubled souls as you are? I believe that you will yet dance for joy of heart! That you will yet take down your harp from the willows and, like Miriam with her timbrel, that you will yet rejoice over the Egyptians whom you have feared, but whom you shall see no more forever! II. There is much consolation, also, in the second Truth of God which we find in the text, which is that GOD HAS

SENT A SUITABLE HELPER FOR BROKENHEARTED PEOPLE. Christ says, "He has sent ME to bind up the

brokenhearted."

See, then, dear troubled one, what a suitable Helper God has sent to you, for He has sent you One who was well acquainted with sorrow of all kinds. There are some people who cannot comfort others, even though they try to do so, because they never had any troubles themselves. It is a difficult thing for a man who has had a life of uninterrupted prosperity to sympathize with another whose path has been exceedingly rough. Even though that successful man should try to sympathize, he

does it very awkwardly. He is like a person who never was trained as a nurse, yet who tries to make up a pillow for a sick man. Such people always make harsh lumps in our pillows, especially if they have not themselves been ill. But when you have suffered from the very complaint with which your friend is afflicted, it is amazing what sympathy that gives you with him. "Stuff and nonsense!" says a strong man to some poor suffering one--"you are too nervous! Try and exert yourself." That is often one of the most cruel things that can be said to the sufferer. But if the man has been through a similar experience, he uses another tone of voice altogether. He knows that even if it is nonsense to the strong, it is not so to the weak--and he so adapts his remarks that he cheers where the other only inflicts additional pain. Broken-hearted one, Jesus Christ knows all your troubles, for similar troubles were His portion. Thorns are found in your pillow, but sharper thorns pierced His blessed brow. More than this, He knows your temptations as well as your sorrows, and the temptations which are peculiar to your sorrow and which very often cause great sin.

Best of all, as the Healer of broken hearts, God has chosen One whose own heart was broken. I think it is conclusively proven that Jesus died of a broken heart. The most careful investigation of the symptoms preceding His death appears to lead to that conclusion. He could say, with an emphasis that was not possible even with David, "Reproach has broken My heart and I am full of heaviness." The brokenhearted Savior is the Healer of brokenhearted sinners! Christ will not allow sorrow to abide in His Presence without attempting to relieve it. You must have noticed how often He used to say, when here upon earth, "Be of good cheer," or, "Be of good comfort." He could not pass by a sorrow-stricken heart--He must stand still and put forth His power to heal it. And He is the same now as He was then! He still cares for

those who have broken hearts and contrite spirits--and even in our common, ordinary sorrows, He sympathizes with us.

Let me also tell you, O you brokenhearted ones, that God has sent One to heal your hearts who has already healed multitudes of others. We like an experienced doctor. I knew a very clever surgeon who could not, for a long while, get

many patients because he looked so young. People like a man of experience for the healing of the body and experience is just as valuable for the healing of the soul. Jesus Christ has bound up millions of broken hearts, so He knows how to heal yours! He knows precisely where the malady is and what remedy to apply.

The Lord has also sent One who will not be discouraged or get irritated in His work of comforting you. Sometimes when we try to comfort a mourner and he will not be comforted, we get impatient and do more hurt than good. There is many a man who has gone with the best intentions to try and cheer a diseased mind, who has inflicted fresh wounds through his own impatience with the patient. But Jesus Christ "can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way." He bears and forbears and is as gentle as a nurse with the children under her charge, and far more so. He will drive your sin out of you and then He will take your sorrow away from you, or else give you the Grace to enable you to bear it. There never was anyone else who was like Jesus as the Healer of the brokenhearted! There are some people whom other people always like to trust. But it is a very serious matter to be a man in whom other folk believe a good deal because your heart has to become a kind of common receiving office for the troubles of all who are round about you. And the heart of Jesus is like this on the largest possible scale. If you could see Him here, in bodily Presence, you would say, "That is the One to whom I can tell all my troubles." You

know how it is recorded of Him that He "healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." You may always come to Jesus--He will always be willing to hear your sad story, always be able to solve your difficulties and always be able to relieve your distresses. This ought to comfort you, but I cannot make it do so. I am not sent to bind up the brokenhearted in the same sense in which Christ was--I am sent to be an instrument in His hands--He must do the work--for only He can do it!

III. This fact brings me to the third reflection from the text which is that THIS SUITABLE HELPER IS

COMMISSIONED BY GOD, HIMSELF, TO "BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED." He is not sent to tell you how your heart got broken and to scold you about it, l ike the schoolmaster who saw the boy drowning and lectured him upon his imprudence in getting out of his depth. There are many who act like that. If a man is very poor, they say, "Ah, you always were extravagant." Or, "You should not have gone into that speculation. You should not have put your hand to that bill to oblige your friend--you must now pay for your folly." There are many who are quite able to tell you that you ought not to have fallen into the ditch, but I think that their homilies had better be saved up till we have helped you to get out of the ditch! The Apostle James tells us that God "gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not," and it is a blessing for the brokenhearted that Jesus heals them freely and does not upbraid them for their sin and folly!

Notice, also, that Christ is not sent to bring to broken hearts remedies that we are to apply. If a man has a bad wound and there is an ointment that will heal his wound, he has to put it on. But suppose the wound is in some part that he cannot reach? He says, "Here is the

ointment, but what is the good of it? How can I put it on?" He has broken his arm and it is to be strapped up. "Here is the strapping," says he, "but how am I to strap my arm up? I need somebody to do it for me." I remember once being with an old sea captain who was in trouble of mind. I was telling him of the promises of God and he said, "Yes, those promises are something like the great posts by the side of the river to which you can moor your vessel. You have got a rope with a loop to it, but the job is to get it over the post. It will hold your vessel if you can, but," he said, "I cannot get the loop over the post There are the promises, but I cannot get a hold of them." We are so weak and feeble that the Lord Jesus has not merely come to bring the ointment, but He has come "to bind up the brokenhearted." I think that one of the grandest passages in the whole Word of God is Psalm 147:3, 4--"He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names." Does it not seem to be a great stoop from marshalling the stars to bending down over poor broken hearts and closing up their wounds? Yet God delights as much in displaying His Grace as in displaying His power! So you see, dear brokenhearted ones, that Jesus Christ has come to bind up the broken in heart--that is, to bring to you the consolations of His Grace, and to apply them to you. And for this purpose we read in the verse in which our text is found, that the Spirit of the Lord God is upon Him because it is the Spirit of God who applies the Word to the heart and, therefore, the Spirit is put upon the Lord Jesus Christ so that when He speaks, the Word may be with power. So, dear Friends, we have a Savior sent, upon whom the Spirit of God has been poured out and Who, therefore, speaks effectually--not to ears that are closed, for He opens the ears and conveys the Truth through the ear right into the soul--and so makes us know the blessing and power of it!

I will not enlarge further upon this very important point except to say that when the Lord Jesus binds up the brokenhearted, He does it so gloriously that the more trouble there was before, the more joy there is afterwards. Perhaps there are no people in the world so happy as those who were once most sad. Find me those who have the most joy and I think you will find that they are those who have been brought up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay--whose feet are now upon a Rock and whose goings are established--and in whose mouths a new song has been put, "even praise unto our God."

IV. My fourth remark is that THE LINIMENTS WHICH JESUS USES ARE SUCH AS SUIT EACH BROKENHEARTED ONE. I will take each case briefly.

There are some broken hearts that are the hearts of saints who have fallen into gross sin, as David did. God save me, God save you, my Brothers! God save you, my Sisters, from ever being allowed to sin a great sin against the living God! But if we ever do so sin, we shall be, of all men, most miserable, for having sinned against Divine Love and Mercy, and so much of it--and against Divine Light--and that Light so clear and abundant! There may have come into this place, tonight, someone who is a child of God, but who has been suddenly overthrown by a great temptation to which he has yielded. Brother, I know that you do not excuse yourself and that you do not want me to make an excuse for you. Sin is an exceedingly bitter thing and you may have to taste the bitterness of it as long as you live. But, for all that, do not despair! The Lord may sorely chasten you, but He will not give you over to death. The Lord Jesus knows how to set your broken bones and you may now pray, as David did in the 51st Psalm, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You." The usual liniment that the Lord Jesus applies to such a broken heart as

that is this--"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you." He assures the penitent soul that, notwithstanding all its faults and follies, He still loves it with an everlasting love that will not give it up! This is a blessed balm to a heart that is wounded through having fallen into great sin.

There are others who have not gone into any one gross sin, but they have done what is perhaps worse--they have gradually backslidden until they have come to neglect Divine things altogether They are not easy about it, for the Spirit of God has made them realize the misery of the state into which they have fallen. Some of you used to live in the country where you were members of little village Churches and very earnest in the Lord's service. But you have come to this wicked London and you find that your neighbors do not go to a place of worship, so many of you seldom attend the House of God. There are good women who have ungodly husbands and, to please those husbands they have, by degrees, got weaned away from outward ordinances--and though there is a little love to God still left in them, so that they cannot quite give up private prayer and the reading of the Word--they have fallen very low. I do not wonder, when the Holy Spirit convinces them of their sinful state, that they get broken hearts! They ought to have broken hearts and to repent bitterly for having so grieved the Lord and backslidden from His ways. If I am now addressing any backslider, let me remind him or her that the Lord Jesus has been sent "to bind up the brokenhearted." Return to your first love, poor Backslider, for it was better with you, then, than it is now!

There are other broken hearts besides these. There are sinners who were never converted, but who have broken hearts on account of a sense of sin. They never were, consciously, children of God, but they are now

awakened to see their danger and their lost condition. I wish that all in this congregation who are not converted, had broken hearts--it would be worthwhile to stay up all night to preach to a congregation of broken-down sinners! When the Lord has broken their hearts, it is an easy task to preach the Gospel to them--it is like feeding people who have healthy appetites! They are not very particular about the carving, or the pattern of the plates on which their dinners are brought to them--and they are not squeamish about the food that is set before them, for "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." O you great sinners, Jesus Christ knows how to pardon you! He knows how to lay home to your hearts such texts as these--"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," even you, O you greatest of sinners!

There are, also, broken hearts that are caused by great trouble. I have known men who have been living simply to make money, but there has come a sudden panic, or a turn in the market, and they have lost everything. Now, if there is such a man here, I charge you, my Friend, before the living God, not to despair, for Christ still lives "to bind up the brokenhearted." If you will but trust in Jesus, the day will come when you will bless God for permitting you to become a bankrupt--and you will say, "When I was rich, I lived for this world alone, but I was brought down to poverty, and then I looked to Christ as my Savior, and in Him I have found untold riches that will be mine forever." It would be a great mercy for some rich people if they had their gods of gold all broken and were made to look to the living God, and put their trust in Him!

Further, some hearts are broken through severe bereavements. "Ah," says one, "I shall never be able to look up again, for I have lost the husband whom I loved with all my heart--and my dear child is gone, too." "Ah," says another, "the darling of my heart has been taken from me! All my earthly hopes have been buried beneath the sod. I shall never rejoice anymore." Won't you? There is One who heals just such broken hearts as yours, for He once wept at a graveside and comforted the mourners there. And He will let you see that even your bereavement shall be for your good. Whoever they may have been whom you have lost, the Lord is teaching you that these losses are meant to bring you nearer to Himself, that you may find all your heart's love centered upon the only One who deserves to have it all! Oftentimes the Lord Jesus Christ loves His people so much that He gets jealous of them--and when they love others more than they ought, He takes away those whom they thus love so that He may have all their hearts for Himself! And we ought to think it a high honor that Christ should think so much of us as to want to have the whole of our hearts for Himself.

Besides that, there are some broken hearts that are broken through poverty and oppression. Women work very hard for a very small wage and what they get seems as if it would hardly keep body and soul together. They have to stitch, stitch, stitch, from morning to night, till their brain whirls with their constant toil amid the daily pinch of poverty. Well, dear Friend, the Lord knows how to make you spiritually rich and to give you such fullness ofjoy in your soul that you shall be content even in your poverty--and sing God's praises even though you are clothed in rags!

Perhaps I am speaking to one whose brokenness of heart consists in being utterly forsaken and forlorn through a false step taken in life. Strange people come into this Tabernacle and strangely does God guide

my words to them. I sometimes feel as if my hair must stand on end when I am told, after a service, of remarks which I have made which have laid bare the secrets of men's hearts and made them see their own history as clearly as though a Prophet spoke to them, though I am no Prophet nor the son of a Prophet! There may be someone here who has come to London to try to hide away in this crowded city. The young man never wants to be seen at his home again. He says, "I only hope I may be forgotten by everybody. I would go to the ends of the earth if I could." Go back, my dear young Friend! Go back to your father and mother and make glad their aching hearts, for there is hope for you yet! You are brought down very low, but you will get up yet--you will be a man yet and, what is better, you will be a Christian and you will serve the Lord! There is hope for you, for there is One who can heal your broken heart.

And you, poor fallen woman, wherever you may be, though nobody gives you a good word and though all pass by you in the streets for very shame, there is one who binds up even harlots' broken hearts and has mercy upon them! Therefore be not driven utterly to despair. Above all, do not lay violent hands upon yourself, for I am sent as a messenger from God to declare to you that Christ heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds! O sons of misery, you need not be any longer in misery! Your sins are the roots of your sorrows, so if you do but go to Jesus to have your sins forgiven, your sorrows will quickly vanish! There will still be burdens for you to bear, but if you are forgiven they will sit lightly upon your shoulders and then turn to wings which will help you to mount to your God! Even though you have made a covenant with death, and a league with Hell, the Lord says, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand." Though you are in Giant Despair's deepest dungeon,

Jesus will cut the bars of iron in sunder and set the prisoners at liberty!

Only believe in Him, the Son of Man, your Brother and yet the Son of the Highest. Fall at His feet, for they were pierced for you! Look up to His almighty hands, for they were once nailed to the Cross for you! Bring your poor broken heart to the heart that was once pierced by the soldier's spear and find sweetest rest in Jesus! I know what despair means. I knew something of its bitterness in my early days, when I was under conviction of sin, but since the day when I saw the star of Bethlehem amidst the black darkness and tempest of my soul, and especially since I looked to the Christ of Calvary, all has been well with me! So I say to you poor waifs and strays upon the dark and stormy sea of life, look up, for there shines "the bright and morning Star."

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief of them! Look to Him, poor storm-tossed mariner, and He will guide you safely to the Port of Peace. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: EZEKIEL 37.

Verse 1. The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the LORD. God's servants learn nothing until they have an experience similar to that of Ezekiel. They must be led by the Spirit of the Lord and they must have their eyes and mouths opened by Him--and then they can both see the vision and tell the vision to others.

1. And set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. Like a huge grave, or morgue, or battlefield where the slain had not been buried. No servant of God would go without being sent to such a place, yet it was necessary that Ezekiel should be there in order that he might understand and speak the message of God.

2. And caused me to pass by them roundabout He had to make a thorough

survey of this grim and ghastly place.

2. And, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry. They had lain there so long that the wind had dried up the juices of the bones, and they were turned to dust.

3. And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? God did not ask this question for His own information, but for the Prophet's. The Lord wanted him to realize the difficulties of the work to which he was called that he might be driven the more completely to rely upon God and not upon himself!

4. And I answered, O Lord GOD, You know. Again He said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O you dry bones, hear the Word of the LORD. We have heard of a Romanist who had, as a penance from his priest, to go and water a dry stick. Ezekiel's task of preaching to dry bones seemed to be as useless as that, yet if God bids us do the same, we need no other justification for doing it. What is foolish in the sight of reason, is wisdom in the judgment of faith.

5. 6. Thus says the Lord GOD unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD. He had to tell these bones the unconditional purposes and promises of God--"I will" and, "you shall." This is the way in which God works out His eternal purposes concerning the sons of men. He bids His servants proclaim His message and then He fulfills His own purposes and promises.

7. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and asIprophesied, there was a noise. A rustle--

7. And behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.Here was Divine Power bringing the bones to their proper position

in the various bodies and forcing the separated anatomy to re-form itself.

8. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.So there was no very great improvement so far--there were only dead bodies instead of dry bones! There was something more to look at, but nothing more agreeable--and really no more of life than there was before.

9. Then said He unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, "Prophesy unto the wind." That seems a very absurd thing to do, but there are no absurdities where God gives His commands.

9, 10. And say to the wind, Thus says the lord GOD, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So Iprophesied as He commanded me. Ezekiel was very obedient. He only needed to know his Lord's will and then he raised no question, but did at once just as he was told to do. "So I prophesied as He commanded me." It is a prime qualification in a servant of God that he should do exactly as he is bidden--not to think how he would like to do it, nor to follow the plan that his own wisdom suggests, but just to do as he is told, as Ezekiel did. "So I prophesied as He commanded me."

10, 11. And the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole host of Israel: behold they say, Our bones are dried, and our

hope is lost: we are ourselves are cut off."There is no hope for us. We are dead and, worse than dead. Our case is hopeless. there is no possibility of restoration for us."

12. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel There was to

be a house of Israel after all. The nation seemed to be dead and buried, but God would revive and restore it. This is a promise which may apply to a Church when she gets into a very low spiritual state and it looks as if she could never do any more good. "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves." And to you, dear Friends, who are very heavy of heart, full of despair and who seem as if you were as good as dead and buried, God speaks in this promise! Therefore believe His Word as though it had been directed to you, personally, "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel."

13. Andyou shall know that Iam the LORD, when Ihave openedyour graves, O Mypeople, and brought you up out of your graves.Great deliverances and almighty quickening reveal God to us and make us know how gloriously great Jehovah is!

14. And shall put My Spirit in you, andyou shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall you know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, says the LORD. When the Jews get back to Canaan--as they will-- they will then not only know that Jehovah is God, but also that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah! May the Lord hasten that blessed consummation in His own time!

15. 16. The Word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, you son of man. Notice how the Lord constantly calls the Prophet, "son of man." When God uses His servants much and greatly honors them, He always takes care to keep them humble by reminding them of what they are in themselves. So, Ezekiel, you have prophesied to the dry bones, and they have lived through your prophecy, but it was not by your own power that you did this. You are nothing but a son of man, God must have all the Glory of this wondrous work!

16. Take you one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the

children of Israel his companions: then take another stick Or rod.
16. And write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions. They were divided into separate companies. They first wandered away from God and then they wandered away from one another.
17. And join there one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in your hand. As he held them in his hand, they were to grow into one and, when all the Churches get into the hand of Christ, there will be perfect unity between them. Things that are near to the same thing are near to one another. But until the Lord shall come and take His divided Judah and Ephraim into His own hands there will be no true unity between them--but there will be then.
18. 19. And when the children ofyourpeople shallspeak unto you, saying, Willyou not show us what you mean by these? Say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and wiil put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hands. No Church will long continue in the enjoyment of the blessing of unity unless it continues in nearness to Christ. Communion with Christ means the communion of Christians with one another--we can only get true union and true communion in that way.
20-22. And the sticks whereon you write shall be in your hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, where they have gone, and wiil gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all When Christ comes, there shall be this true unity in

Israel. Where Christ has already come, there is this true unity in His Church. And as Christ comes to all of us, He will take away the evil that divides us from Himself, and divides us from the rest of His people, and so we shall be one in His hands.

23. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I willsave them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be My people, and I will be their GOD. This applies first to literal Israel, and then spiritually to all the chosen. What a weighty and comprehensive promise it is! We are to be saved from our idols, to be saved from the most loathsome sins--"detestable things." To be saved from our household sins--"I will save them out of all their dwelling places wherein they have sinned." Where do we go, may Brothers and Sisters, without finding sin? Sin in our bed and sin at the board, sin in the shop, and sin in the street, sins when we are in company and sins when we are alone in the field, sins everywhere! Yet the Lord Jesus Christ is able to meet us in every place and to cleanse us. "So shall they be My people, and I will be their God." What a wonderful declaration this is--we are the Lord's people, He is our God! We are His portion and He is our portion. Oh, that everyone of us might have a share in this double blessing!

24. AndDaviddMy servant shall be king over them; and they allshall have one shepherd: they shallalso walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them. Oh, for the one King to reign over the one people, who shall keep the one Law, and walk in holiness and humility before the one Lord!

25. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob, My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children forever:

and My servant David shall be their prince forever.Surely God does not treat the saints now worse than he treated Israel in the days of old, so we may go to Him in prayer for our children and for our children's children.

26. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them. Oh, that blessed word, everlasting! A salvation which is not everlasting is not worth having--any promise that is not fulfilled, any Grace that can fail--is not God's promise or God's Grace.

26, 27. And I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore. My promise was, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God." And here Divine Grace seems to ring the changes by reversing the order--"I will be their God, and they shall be My people." God is evidently so pleased with this declaration that He repeats it, only turning the sentences round the other way.

28. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them forevermore.

: yes, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. In the 23r verse, the Lord's

Chapter 32

The Search after Happiness

(No. 3105)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"There aire many who say, Who will show us any good? LORD, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon us." Psalm 4:6.

THIS is a text which, by the rich assistance of the Holy Spirit, may serve as a touchstone to try our state. See, here are two classes of men--the many panting after the good of this world--and the few turning the eyes of faith to their God and begging that He would lift up the light of His Countenance upon them.

I. Let us contemplate with sadness and with searching of heart, THE MANY--trembling lest we should find ourselves among the number!

"THE MANY." What multitudes of thoughts cluster around these two words! The million-peopled city, the populous town, the wide-spread country, this isle, kingdoms, empires, continents, the world--all seem to issue forth like armies from the hundred-gated Thebes, at the mention of those two words, "The many." Here we see the toiling peasant and his lordly squire, the artisan and the princely merchant, the courtier and the king, the young and the old, the learned and the unlearned all gathered within the compass of a word.

And all that form this vast gathering of human souls are joining in one cry and moving in one direction! This is a thought at which the faithful may well weep, for their cry is SELF, their course is SIN.

Here and there are the chosen few struggling against the mighty tide, but the masses, the multitude, as in the days of David, are hurrying

along their mad career in search of a fancied good and reaping the fruit of their futile search in disappointment, death and Hell! O my Hearer, are you like the dead fish floating with the stream--or are you, by constraining Grace, drawn onward and upward to the bliss prepared for the elect? If a Christian, I beseech you to pause and admire the Grace which has made you to differ. If your heart is right with God, I know you will confess that there is no intrinsic natural goodness in you, for, like your friend the speaker, I doubt not that you are made to groan over a strong propensity within which often tempts you to join in the world's chase and leave "the fountain of Living Waters" for the "broken cisterns" of earth and, therefore, you will join with the preacher in singing--

"'Tis all of Free Grace we were brought to obey, While others were allowed to go The road which, by nature, WEE chose as our way, Which leads to the regions of woe."

Come then, with me and behold the evil and the folly of the world. Listen to their never-ceasing cry, "Who will show us any good?" Mark, first, its sensual character "Who will SHOW us any good?" The world desires something which it may see, taste and handle. The joys of faith it does not understand. We, by Divine Grace, do not walk by sight. But the poor sons of earth must have visible, present, terrestrial joys. We have an unseen portion, an invisible inheritance--we have higher faculties and nobler delights. We need no carnal showman to bid the puppet joys of time dance before us. We have seen "the King in His beauty" and, spiritually, we behold "the land which is very far off." Let us pity the worldling who is seeking water where there is none, in a salt land, a thirsty soil. Let us earnestly intercede for poor, short-sighted man, that he may yet have "the wisdom that is from above," and the eye-salve of Divine Illumination--then

will he no more seek for his happiness below, or look for pleasure in things of time and sense.

Take care, my Hearer, that you do not suffer under the same delusion! Always pray that you may be kept from hunting in the haunts of sense and fixing your affection on earthly things for, be sure of this--the roses of this world are

covered with thorns! And her hives of honey, if broken open, will surround you with stinging remembrances, but not a drop of sweetness!

Remember to lay to heart the words of a holy poet--

"Nor earth, nor all the sky

Can one delight afford.

No, not a drop of real joy,

Without Your Presence, Lord." Notice, next its indiscriminating nature. "Who will show us ANY good?" The unregenerate mind has no discernment in its choice. One good is to it as desirable as another. Men easily allow toleration here. The intoxicating cup is the "good" of the winebibber. The indulgence of lust is the object of the voluptuary. Gold is the miser's god and fame or power the choice of the ambitious. To most men, these are all "good" in their way--if not esteemed good morally, they are looked upon as forbidden fruits, only untasted because of the penalty and not abhorred because of a real distaste. O my Hearer, have you sufficient judgment to see that any good will not suit you? Have you made an election of "solid joys and lasting pleasures," and are the dainties of time tasteless to you? You are not like the bee, which can find her food in nettles and poisonous weeds. "The Rose of Sharon" is the flower of your choice and, "the Lily of the Valley" is to you the perfection of beauty. No longer can you ask for ANY good, for you have found the one, the only good and in HIM is such a fullness, such an abundance, that your song will always be--

"God is my all-sufficient good,

My portion and my choice.

In Him my vast desires are filled

And all my powers rejoice."

Remark attentively the selfish nature of the question, ' 'Who will show US any good?" Here the poor man of this world is seeking for himself and his fellows, but not for God or the good of others. He has no fear of God, nor any love, nor reverence for Him. Let but his barn be stored, his purse filled, his body fed, his senses gratified and the great Maker and bounteous Giver may be forgotten! What does he care whether there is a God, or whether He is worshipped or not? To him Venus, Brahma, Woden and Jehovah are all alike gods! He cares not for the living and true God--he lets others have religion--to him it would be a weariness and a labor. Or, if he puts on the outward guise of religion, he is but a Gibeonite in the Temple, "a hewer of wood and drawer of water." He is selfish in his worship, selfish in his praises and his prayers.

But we, Beloved, are, we trust, no longer lovers of self. We have become adorers of God and purely from gratitude we pay our glad homage at His Throne! We do not now put self foremost--we wish to experience a self-annihilation, a death to self. We have learned to sacrifice our own desires on the altar of Divine Love and now one passion concentrates our power and truly we exclaim--

"Christ is my light, my life, my care, My blessed hope, my heavenly prize! Dearer than all my passions are, My limbs, my heart, or my eyes."

Observe, also, the futility of the enquiry--"WHO will show us any good?" Echo might answer, "Who?" Where lives the fortunate discoverer, the man who has stumbled on this pearl of price unknown? Ah, Sinner,

call again, like the priests of Baal, for there is neither hearing nor answering! Go to those Arcadian groves of poetry and find them a fiction! Taste the nectar of the epicure and find it gall! Lie on a bed of down and loathe the weakness which effeminacy engenders! Surround yourself with wealth and learn its powerlessness to ease the mind! Yes, wear a royal crown and mourn a king's uneasy head. Try all--like the preacher of wisdom, open each cabinet in the palace of pleasure and ransack each corner of her treasure house! Have you found the long-sought good? Ah, no! Your joys, like bubbles, have dissolved at your touch! Or, like the schoolboy's butterfly, have been crushed by the blow which won them!

Pause here and realize the emptiness of sublunary joys. Entreat the Spirit of all Grace to reveal to your soul the hollowness of terrestrial baubles. Take earth and, as Quarles has it, "Tinnit inane"--it sounds because it is empty. Despise the world, rate its jewels at a low price, estimate its gems as paste and its solidities as dreams. Think not that you shall thus lose pleasure, but rather remember the saying of Chrysostom, "Despise riches and you shall be rich. Despise

glory and you shall be glorious. Despise injuries and you shall be a conqueror. Despise rest and you shall gain rest. Despise earth and you shall gain Heaven!"

Here may you and I close our review of the foolish multitude by learning the three lessons spoken of by Bonaventure, "The multitude of those that are damned, the small number of the saved and the vanity of transitory things."

II. A happier sight now awaits us. Yonder is a company whose constant utterance is widely different from the enquiry of the many. These are THE FEW--not so many as the moralist and formalist believe them, but at

the same time not so few as Bigotry in her narrowness would make them, for God has His hidden thousands whose knees have never bowed to Baal! These seek not a good, for they have found it! They ask not a question, but they breathe a prayer! They apply not to mortals, but they address to their God this petition, "Lord, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon us."

Let us tarry on the very threshold of these words and devoutly ask for Divine searching, lest we should be deceived in our belief that this is our prayer. Let us not take the words lightly on our unhallowed lips, lest we ask for our own damnation. Perhaps, my Hearer, if the light of God's Countenance were at once to shine upon you, your heart is so far from God, so full of hatred to Him, that it would suddenly destroy you, for remember, He is "a consuming fire."

Let us, however, if the answer of conscience and the inward witness are agreed to give us hope, behold the Countenance of our God.

For, first, it is a reconciled Countenance. "Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me." "I have sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." The anger of God towards Believers in Jesus is forever appeased! They are so perfect, in the righteousness of Christ, that He sees no spot of sin in them. Though of "purer eyes than to behold evil," He does yet regard poor sinners with affection and towards you, my Christian Brother or Sister, He has no sentiments but those of unmingled love. Think of your glorious condition-- reconciled! Beloved! Adopted!

Next, it is a cheering Countenance. The smile of a fond friend will nerve us to duty. The approving glance of a wise man will give us courage in trial. But the looks of God, the smiles of our Father who is in Heaven--these are better than the applause of a colossal audience, or the shouts of an empire of admirers! Give me the comforts of God and

I can well bear the taunts of men. Let me lay my head on the bosom of Jesus and I fear not the distraction of care and trouble. If my God will always give me the light of His smile and the glance of His approval, it is enough for me. Come on, foes, persecutors, fiends, yes, Apollyon, himself, for "the Lord God is a sun and shield." Gather, you clouds and cover me--I carry a sun within! Blow, wind of the frozen North, I have a fire of living coals within! Yes, Death, slay me, but I have another life--a life in the light of God's Countenance!

Let us not forget another sweet and precious consideration. It is a peculiar Countenance from the fact that it is transforming, changing the beholder into its own likeness. I gaze on beauty, yet may be myself deformed. I admire light and may yet dwell in darkness. But if the light of the Countenance of God rests upon me, I shall become like He--the lineaments of His visage will be on me and the great outlines of His attributes will be mine. Oh, wondrous mirror which thus renders the beholder lovely! Oh, admirable mirror which reflects not self with its imperfections, but gives a perfect image to those that are uncomely! May you and I, Beloved, so fix our contemplations upon Jesus and all the Persons of the Godhead, that we may have our unholiness removed and our depravity overcome! Happy day when we shall be like He! But the only reason of it will be that, then "we shall see Him as He is." Oh, could we look less to the smile and favor of man and more to the regard and notice of Heaven, how far would we be in advance of what we are! Our puny spirits would become gigantic in stature and our feeble faith would, through Grace, wax mighty! We would no longer be the sport of temptation and the pliant servants of our corruptions. O our God, amid our folly and our sin, we turn to You with strong desire, crying out, "Lord lift up the light of Your Countenance upon us!"

We will only note, in concluding our brief but instructive musings,

that God's Countenance is unchanging. The light may seem to vary, but the face is the same. Our God is the Immutable Father of Lights. He does not love now and cast away in the future. Never did His love begin and never can it cease. It is from eternity and shall be to eternity.

The things of time are mutable, confessedly and constantly so, but the things of eternity are always the same. Away with the horrid suggestion that God may forget and forsake His own children! Oh, no! The face which was once radiant with love is not now clouded with wrath--the heart which overflowed with affection is not now filled with anger!

Great as my sins have

been, they are not so great as His love! The file of my backsliding shall not be permitted to divide the golden links of the chains of His mercy. If my gracious Lord and Savior has assured me that my name was always enrolled among the sons of Zion, then "the powers of darkness" cannot "erase those everlasting lines." Go, poor menial of Satan, pursue your weary drudgery. Go seek the unsteady will-o'-the-wisp of carnal delights, but I have a surer joy, a substantial happiness beyond your reach. My Hearer, it will be well with you if you can pity the many, and join with the few, singing--

"Turn, then, my Soul, unto your rest. The merits of your great High Priest Have bought your liberty-- Trust in His efficacious blood, Nor fear your banishment from God, Since Jesus died for thee."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 66; ROMANS 8:1-9.

PSALM 66:1, 2. Make a joyful noise unto God all you lands: sing forth the honor of His name! Make His praise glorious. In a company of advanced saints, silence may be sometimes profitable. The first verse of the previous Psalm should read, according to the Hebrew, "Praise is silent for You, O God, in Zion." Full-grown saints may have their times of waiting in silence before the Lord, but when the heathen are to be

brought in--and when new hearts are to be taught new songs--then there must be a noise! And not merely a noise, but a noise that is full of joy--"Make a joyful noise unto God all you lands." This should be the chief point about it, that it should be a joyful noise. Many of the newly invented tunes which have put the good old tunes out of favor appear to have been made to rattle through the hymn as quickly as possible, as though the composer had written, "Let us praise God at express speed and get it done. And the quicker, the better." But I prefer those tunes in which we can sometimes repeat the words and roll them under the tongue until our heart gets thoroughly saturated with the spirit of them.

"Make a joyful noise unto God all you lands," but let that joyful noise be orderly, not like the shouts of those who cry around the car of Juggernaut. Let it be joyful singing unto the Lord! "Sing forth the honor of His name." God is worthy of the highest honor, so let our praise of Him be given in such a way that it shall really honor Him. "Make His praise glorious." It is only giving back to God what rightly belongs to Him when we give Him glory, and it is our highest earthly glory to be giving glory to God. We are never so near to the condition of the glorified saints above as when we are, with heart, and soul, and voice, glorifying God!

3. Say unto God, How terrible are You in Your works!Our praises should be directed to God--"Say unto God." Our hymns should be a form of speaking unto the Most High, and an ascription unto Him of His own Glory. The first attribute of God that influences men is the attribute of power--which fills them with terror of His awful majesty and might. Afterwards, they perceive more of His love, goodness, wisdom and other attributes. But, at first--yes, and perhaps at last--there is a time in which there is much solemn stately music in this utterance, "How

terrible are You in Your works!"

3, 4. Through the greatness of Your power shall Your enemies submit themselves unto You. All the earth shall worship You and shall sing unto You; they shall sing to Your name. From the marginal reading of the 3rd verse, it appears that God's enemies will only "yield feigned obedience" to Him. But whether the submission is feigned or real, it shall not be possible for any man or any power to finally resist His Omnipotence--and the day shall come when all the earth shall worship Him and sing unto Him!

4, Selah. Here is a little pause for the lifting up of the heart and of the strain, and well there may be, for what a joyful thing it is to think of all the earth worshipping God and singing unto Him! I know of no topic that is more calculated to excite the admiring gratitude of God's servants than the prospect of the universal supremacy of our God and of His Christ!

5, 6. Come and see the works of God: He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land. You must often have noticed that the sweet singers of Israel are never singing very long unto God without

mentioning that wonderful deliverance that He worked at the Red Sea. What God did when He brought His people out of Egypt will be the subject of joyous and grateful song unto God forever, for even in Heaven "they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." The Red Sea as the grand type of redemption and the Lamb as the great Worker of redemption are joined together in that triumphant song of "them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name." Here the Psalmist sings of what God did for His people at the Red Sea--"He turned the sea into dry land."

6. They went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in Him.

Perhaps some of you say, "But we were not there." No, we were not personally there, but do you not remember what the Prophet Hosea says about God meeting with Jacob at Bethel? It is written, "There He spoke with us." We were not personally there, yet Believers have been everywhere in the Bible where other representative Believers have been before them! "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." What God spoke to any one of His people, He has spoken to all of whom that one was typical. Paul tells us that the Lord has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," yet it was to Joshua that He said that. But, as He said it to Joshua, He virtually said it to me, for I am a Believer even as he was. All the promises belong to us who are in Christ Jesus, for the heavenly inheritance is left to all the spiritual seed. And if we are in the Lord's family, we shall share alike with all the rest of the children.

"There did we rejoice in Him." Then if we rejoiced in the Lord there, let us rejoice in Him here! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us rest assured that when our turn to go through the sea shall come, we shall find that the Lord has "turned the sea into dry land" for us, whether it is a sea of troubles or the sea of death. "They went through the flood on foot" and so shall we! The God who made a way for them through the sea, virtually made a way for us, also, for the army of God is one and when the first ranks of the innumerable host passed through the flood, the army itself began to pass through, and that army can never be divided. So we are passing through the flood at this moment and rejoicing in the God who cleaves the sea in two to make a highway for His people.

7. He rules by His power forever What He did in the past, He is still doing in the present and He will do in the future.

7. His eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. The rebellious may, for a while, exalt themselves, but they will, sooner or later be pulled down. These eagles may fly as high as they will, but God's arrow can always reach them. The Lord pulled down the haughty Pharaoh from his throne, but He lifted up the people whom the proud monarch had trodden down and oppressed. The Lord overthrew the hosts of Egypt, but as for His people, He led them forth like sheep and guided them through the wilderness, even as He is doing at this very moment.

7. Selah.That is, pause again and lift up the heart and the sacred strain, too. And when all the strings of your heart and of your harp are tightened, then go on with your music again.

8, 9. O bless our God, you people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard: which holds our soul in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved. I bless God for this verse and as many of you as have found it true should also praise and bless Him. Observe the two things that are mentioned here--living and standing. "Which holds our soul in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved." There are some who have a certain standing in the Church and who keep up their reputation among their fellow members, yet they are not spiritually alive. It is a dreadful thing to be standing and yet not living--like those in Sardis who were only living in name. Then there are those who are living, but not standing--at least not standing fast. They are often caught tripping, falling and wounding themselves. They go with broken bones on their way towards Heaven by reason of their many falls. But what a blessing it is to be kept both living and standing, and what reason there is to bless God for this great mercy--not congratulating ourselves on our steadfastness and being exalted and proud, but magnifying the Lord for His Grace in granting to us this double blessing--living and standing!

10. For You, O God, have proved us: You have tried us, as silver is tried. That is, with fierce furnaces, and with carefully graduated heat, for silver needs delicate refining. Christ still sits as the Refiner of silver, patiently watching until the process is complete.

11. You brought us into the net.Did not our enemies entangle us? Oh, yes, but God often uses our enemies to carry out His Divine purposes! He rules over allthings. So, when you are caught in the net, do not sit down and say that such-and-such a person did it, or that the devil did it. No, but look to the Great First Cause. If You strike a dog with a stick,

he tries to bite the stick because he does not know any better. But you are not a dog, so do not look at the second cause of your troubles, but learn to sing, as the Psalmist does here, "You brought us into the net."

11. You laid affliction upon our loins. Not merely upon our backs, where we might be better able to bear it, but right on our loins, so that we were pressed and squeezed almost out of our very life.

12. You have caused men to ride over our heads.And when they mount their high horse, they vow and exalt themselves over God's afflicted servants.

12. We went through fire and through water.They were subjected to a double test, for what fire does not burn, water will drown, yet God's people "went through fire and through water." There is no fire that can burn them. Nebuchadnezzar tried it and failed. And there is no water that can drown them. Even though their bodies may be burned or drowned, their real selves shall still survive and stand upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, triumphant over both fire and water!

12. But You brought us out into a wealthy place. That is to say, the Lord brought the Israelites out from all manner of oppression under

Pharaoh and brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey. Nothing that Pharaoh could do could destroy the chosen nation. He tried to kill all the male children that were born, yet the Israelites still increased and multiplied, and they came at last to Canaan! It will be just so with God's people in all times and all climes, they shall not die, but live and shall ultimately come into that most wealthy of all places, even the heavenly and better Canaan! We cannot fully tell what joy awaits us there. We cannot measure the height of our joy by the depth of our sorrows, for, after all, our sorrows are shallow, but the Glory of God, which the saints are to share, is a depth unfathomable, a height that no man can measure. O Lord, bring us into that wealthy place right speedily if it is Your holy will!

13. I will go into Your house with burnt offerings. Here is one worshipper breaking away from the rest--a child of God who is not satisfied by merely joining in the general praise of the whole assembly, so he brings his own personal thanksgiving and thank-offering to God. Dear Brother, dear Sister, try to do this! Break away from all the rest of us, and say to the Lord, "I will go into Your house with burnt offerings."

13-15. I will pay You my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth has spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto You burnt sacrifices of fatlings. "I will give You the best that I have."

15. With the incense of rams. Not only one of the best, but the best of two kinds of offerings.

15. I will offer bullocks with goats. "I will present to You great services and smaller sacrifices. I will obey You in the great ordinances and in the lesser ordinances, also. I will bring both bullocks and goats. I will make an all-round offering. I will try to do all that I can for You, my God, since You have done so much for me."

15. Selah. Here the Psalmist pauses again while the smoke of the sacrifice ascends. Let us also pause and meditate upon the better Sacrifice which Christ offered for the sins of all who put their trust in Him.

16, 17. Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul I cried unto Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. "I mixed crying and singing together. I cried when I was in trouble, and I extolled the Lord as soon as He delivered me from it. No, by faith expecting to be delivered, I began to extol Him even while I was yet crying unto Him!"

18, 19. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: but verily God has heard me. It is a blessed thing to be able to say that. And if you can truthfully say it, I pray you to say it--"Verily God has heard me." Some people tell us that there is no such thing as an answer to prayer. They say that it is a piece of superstition on our part. Well, I believe that I am as honest a man as anyone who denies the power of prayer, and I can truthfully say, "God has heard me." There are scores of us--there are hundreds of us--there are thousands of us who can stand in the witness box and each one of us can say, "Verily God has heard me." If our testimony is not accepted by unbelieving men, we cannot help that. We know what we know, and we know that God has heard and answered our prayers again and again!

19, 20. He has attended to the voice of my prayer Blessed be God, which has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me.

ROMANS 8:1. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit My Hearers, we are, each of us, by nature, under the condemnation of God. We are not only subject to condemnation, but we are condemned already! And, on account of sin, there is judgment recorded in God's book

against everyone of us, considered in our fallen state. But if we "are in Christ Jesus," if we are made partakers of Jesus, if we have hidden ourselves in the cleft of the Rock, Christ, and if our trust is solely in Him, oh, precious thought, "there is therefore now no condemnation" for us! It is blotted out. The old judgment that was recorded against us is now erased and in God's book of remembrance there is not to be found a single condemnatory syllable, nor one word of anger written against any Believer in Christ Jesus! Glorious freedom from condemnation! How may I know whether I have been thus set free? This is the question that should enter into each of our hearts. The answer is, "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." My Hearers, after which of these are you and I walking? Are we following the flesh? Are we seeking to please ourselves--to indulge our bodies, to gratify our lusts, to satisfy our own inclinations? If so, we are not in Christ Jesus, for those who are in Christ Jesus "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," and everyone of you who is fleshly and carnal is not in Christ, but is still under condemnation!

2, 3. For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the Law of sin and death. For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. He did accomplish it. The Law could not condemn sin so truly and so thoroughly as God did when He condemned sin in the Person of Christ. O Believer, let not your sins grieve you--however great or however tremendous they may have been, weep over them, but do not be distressed about them, for they have been condemned in Christ Jesus! They may have been enormous, but if you are in Him, Christ was punished for you and God's justice asks not for a second punishment for one offense. Christ offered once a complete Atonement for all Believers, and if I am a

Believer in Him, there is no possible fear of my ever being condemned. There cannot be, for Christ was condemned for me--my sins were laid upon His head--and in the awful moment when He sustained the stroke of His Father's vengeance, those sins ceased to be and, "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

4. That the righteousness ofthe Lawmight be fulflledin us, who walknot after the flesh, but after the Spirit Mark, again, how Paul brings us to this as the great evidence of our being in Christ Jesus--the not walking after the flesh. Now, every man, as he is born into the world, left to himself, is sure to "walk after the flesh." It is only the man who has the Spirit of God put into his soul--who has the heavenly gift from on high--who will "walk after the Spirit." It is not talkingafter the flesh, but it is walkingafter it, that condemns us, and it is not talking after the Spirit that will save us, it is walking after the Spirit that is the evidence of salvation--not talking, but walking! How many of you are there who are talkative, who can talk religion and give us as much as we like of it, but whose life and conversation are not such as become godliness? "Be not deceived! God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." If you sow to the flesh, you "shall of the flesh reap corruption," but if you sow to the Spirit, you "shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

5-7. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things ofthe flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God. That mind with which we are all born is enmity against God! And however much refined or polished a man may be, however amiable or polite, however he may shine among his fellow creatures--if he has not had a new heart and a right spirit--he is at "enmity against God" and he cannot enter Heaven

until there has been a Divine change worked in him. Some of you suppose because you have never been guilty of any vice, because you have not indulged in any great transgression, that therefore you do not require the work of regeneration in your hearts. You will be mightily mistaken if you continue under that delusion until the Last Great Day. "For to be carnally minded," even though that carnal mind is in a body that is dressed in silks and satins, "To be carnally minded is death," even though it is whitewashed till it looks like a spiritual one. "To be carnally minded," even though you sow the carnal mind with a few good garden seeds of the flowers of morality, will still be nothing but damnation to you at the last. "To be carnally minded is death"--only "to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God."

7. For it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. The opponents of the Free Grace Gospel, which it is our delight to preach, assert that men can be saved, if they will--that men most certainly can repent, can believe, can come to God of their own free will and that it is not through any defect in any powers that they have if they are not saved. Now, we are not over prone to controvert that point, but at the same time, we do not understand the meaning of this verse if what they say is correct. It says here, "The carnal mind is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." Some say that men could repent if it were their inclination. Exactly so, but that is what we assert--that it never will be and never can be their inclination, except they are constrained to do so by the Grace of God.

Rowland Hill uses a very singular and odd metaphor in his " Village Dialogues." Two parties are speaking together on this subject and one of them, pointing to the cat sitting on the hearth says, "Do you see that cat? She sits there and licks her paws and washes herself clean."

"I see that," said the other. "Well," said the first speaker, "did you ever hear of one of the hogs taken out of the sty that did so?" "No," he said. "But he could if he liked," said the other. Ah, verily, he could if he liked, but it is not according to his nature and you never saw such a thing done! And until you have changed the swine's nature, he cannot perform such a good action--and God's Word says the same of man. We do not care about fifty thousand aphorisms, or syllogisms, or anything else--God's Word against man's any day! Jesus said, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him." "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Men cannot come to Jesus unless the Father draws them to Him. We assert that from first to last, the work of salvation is all of Grace and we are not afraid of any licentious tendency of that Doctrine, or anything of the kind. God's Word, in all its simplicity, must be preached and we leave Him to take care of His own Truth. Blessed be God, this humbling Truth of God is of far more use than the other doctrine which puffs men up with pride, telling them that they can perform what most assuredly they cannot do! "It is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be."

8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. No man "in the flesh" can please God. Oh, what a sword this is--a sharp two-edged sword against many of you, my Friends! Some of you who regularly attend this House of Prayer, and others of you who stray in here in the evening, you, "are in the flesh" and you "cannot please God." Perhaps you have been attempting to do it. You have said, "I will attend the House of Prayer regularly." You cannot please God by doing that, as long as you are "in the flesh." You may be as moral as you please and we beseech you to be so, but unless you have the Spirit of God--unless you are really changed in heart and made new creatures in Christ Jesus--all that you can do, as long as you are "in the flesh, cannot

please God." Virtues in unregenerate men are nothing but whitewashed sins! The best performance of an unchanged character is worthless in God's sight! It lacks the stamp of Grace upon it and that which has not the stamp of Grace is false coin. Be it ever so beautiful in model and finish, it is not what it should be. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot praise God."

9. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Nowif any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. O Beloved, we have need, each of us, to put ourselves in this scale! Come, Preacher, be not too sure of your own salvation. Come, Church Member, do not be too certain of your own regeneration. Come, Christian, put yourself in this scale--"If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." If he has not the Holy Spirit really dwelling in him, guiding him, directing him, teaching him, comforting him, supporting him--he is none of Christ's! And if we do not exhibit the Spirit of Christ in our character--if we have not gentleness, meekness, purity, holiness, benevolence-- we are none of Christ's! Ah, this will take some of your flimsy Christians to pieces! Half of your professors, we fear, will at the last be found not to have had "the Spirit of Christ."

It is one thing to profess religion, Beloved--it is quite another thing to possess vital godliness. We may sit down at the Communion Table, but oh, if we never had the Spirit of Christ, we "are none of His." We may plead our own goodness before the Throne of God at the last, but Jesus Christ will say, "You have not My Spirit. You are none of Mine." And then, however much we may have striven to serve God, unless we have the Spirit of Christ, there shall be nothing for us but the fearful curse, "Depart! Depart! Depart!" "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Let us ask Him for His Spirit! Let us

plead with Him for His Grace and though some of you have never had it, yet if you now ask for it, our God is a gracious God, full of mercy and pity--whoever calls upon His name shall be saved! And though the chief of sinners, if you sincerely ask for pardon and for Grace, you shall receive it at His hands. The Lord help you so to pray, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Chapter 33

Freedom Through Christ's Blood

(No. 3106)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 2, 1874.

"As for you also, by the blood of your covenant Have set forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." Zechariah 9:11,12.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text, is #2839 , Volume 49-- "PRISONERS OF HOPE"]

THIS morning, [See Sermon #1186, Volume 20--THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT]. I tried to show that in consequence of the blood of the Covenant having been shed and the Covenant having so been fulfilled, Jesus Christ was brought back out of the prison of the grave, set at liberty and exalted to indescribable Glory in the highest Heaven. I then showed that Jesus Christ is the Representative of all His people-- that when He was set free, they were virtually set free, and that when He returned into Glory, He went there as their Representative, taking possession of the heavenly places in their name, so that, in due time, where He is, there they may also be. I had not time, this morning, to make a fitting application of our subject. But happily for us, here stands another text, an older one, and yet most suitable to come after the other, so I will use it now.

Jesus Christ has been delivered from the bondage of the grave and I have to remind you, first, that there are other prisoners who have been

set free through the blood of the Covenant. Secondly, that there are otherpersons yet to be set free through the blood of the Covenant. And then I shall close with a few words in honor of the secret reason of their liberation--the blood of the Covenant.

I. First, then, dear Friends, we have to notice that THERE ARE SOME PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN ALREADY SET FREE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.

This leads us to consider where they were prisoners and to what they were prisoners. We are told, in the text, that they were in "the pit." That is where all God's people were once. You know that, in the East, they did not always take the trouble to build prisons--an empty well, or a place where they had been accustomed to hide their corn, or an underground, unused reservoir would serve for a prison. The poor prisoner was let down by ropes and the mouth of the pit or well was covered with a big stone--and there he was left to die. Generally the place was noisome and foul, a living grave rather than anything else. The position of a poor captive, sitting down on a stone at the bottom of a deep, dirty pit, is a very apt picture of the state of man by nature. When he is really awakened to a sense of his true position, he finds that this is the very image of where he is. He is put in that prison by the Law of God. He feels that he has broken the Law and that the Law must punish him. Conscience builds huge walls harder than granite around him--and when he tries to find a way of escape, there is none that he can discover. He realizes that the Judge of all the earth must abhor iniquity and must punish sin. In addition to that, sin has put him in that prison, for, though he has mourned over his sin since he was even partly awakened, yet he cannot cease from sin any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots! Like the big stone over the mouth of the well, his tendency to sin and his

corruptions shut him in. He cannot lift that stone--he is a prisoner to his own evil desires and depraved heart and, at the same time, a prisoner lawfully detained, under a warrant from the High Court of Heaven by the officers of Divine Justice.

Many of you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, can recollect the time when you were in that pit. I remember being in it for years and, oh, what a happy day it was for me when I was lifted right up out of it! It is a horrible place, that pit of conviction of sin. Nothing can be more horrible, out of Hell, than to have an awakened conscience, but not to have a

reconciled God--to see sin, yet not to see the Savior--to behold the deadly disease in all its loathsomeness, but not to trust the Good Physician and so to have no hope of ever being healed of our malady! Of all the miseries that can be endured in this life, this is one of the greatest.

This poor prisoner, shut up in a pit out of which he could not escape, could find no comfort. The text says it was a pit in which there was no water. I saw the Mamertine Dungeon, which might very well be likened to a pit--the entrance to the first vault is through a narrow hole, then another narrow hole from the bottom of that vault into the second one. But in the floor of the lower dungeon, in which Paul is said to have been confined, there is a spring which continually bubbles up--and I drank of the water--as cold and fresh and clear as any I ever drank. There was at least one source of comfort there, for, in the stifling heat of that horrible dungeon, there was some water. But when we were shut up in the pit by our own sin and by Divine Justice, there was no water there. Do you remember when you tried to drink at the cistern of human ceremonies and found that it was filled with brine which increased your thirst instead of slaking it? You sought next to drink

of what you thought was the water of your self-righteousness--but you were like a pilgrim on the desert sands who sees the deceptive mirage--limpid streams and crystal fountains before his eyes, but when he presses forward to drink of them, he finds nothing there but the burning sand! Some of us were duped and deluded, for a while, with the vain hope of accomplishing our own salvation, but it all turned to nothing and we were still in the pit wherein was no water. Oh, what numerous devil's agents there are about trying to cheat poor souls who are in this pit with the notion that they can supply them with water in the pit and that they can remain there--that they can continue unforgiven and unrenewed--and still enjoy true comfort! But that is an idle tale! No, more--it is a fatal delusion! There might as well be found water in Hell as true comfort for a soul that realizes its guilt and fears the thunders of the wrath of God, yet is not reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Apart from that Living Water which Jesus came to bring, such a soul is truly in "the pit wherein is no water." And, dear Friends, there was a still worse point about our bondage. It was a thoroughly hopeless one, for we were not merely shut up in that pit for a short time, but we were shut up there to die! When a man is cast into a deep pit and the mouth of it is covered over with a stone--and his captors give him neither food nor water--he knows at once what that harsh treatment means. If they meant him to live, they would at least put him down with a crust of bread and a pitcher of water. But we were in a pit wherein was no water and we felt that there was nothing before us but "a certain fearful looking for ofjudgment and fiery indignation." I have known what it is to wake in the morning and wonder that I was not in Hell, and to go to my bed at night afraid to fall asleep lest I should sleep myself into eternity! When a man is in such a state as that, he feels that life is hardly worth living, and he

could almost say with Job, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life."

This is the position into which many who are the true children of God are brought--they are not all tried alike, for all are not made equally sensitive of sin and to some, faith comes much sooner than to others. But there are many persons who were thus shut up, but concerning whom the text now says, "By the blood of your covenant, I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Notice that expression, "I have sent forth your prisoners." That is the blessing--we who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are in prison no longer. We are trusting in the blood of the Covenant and, therefore, there are no fetters upon us now, no stone walls, or prison bars, or terrors of conscience, or convictions of sin to frighten us now, for the Lord has said, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." There are thousands in this Tabernacle who were once in this prison, but they are out of it, now, and they can say, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We are out of this pit by right. We did not break out of prison contrary to the Law of God--we have the right to be out because the debts for which we were imprisoned, are all paid--a full Atonement has been offered for the sins for which we were put in prison! There has been a complete expiation made, wide as the sin of all the Lord's people, and as vast as the demands of infinite and inflexible Justice. Every child of God is justlyas well as graciously saved! It would be an eternal injustice if any soul for whom the Savior stood as a Substitute could die by the sword of Divine Justice. But that can never be--

"Payment God cannot twice demand, First at my bleeding Surety's hand, And then again at mine."

No, my blessed Savior--

"Complete Atonement You have made,
And to the utmost farthing paid,
Whatever Your people owed--
Nor can His wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Your righteousness,
And sprinkled with Your blood." But, dear Friends, we are free by might, as well as by right, for that same Jesus who bought our liberty for us, has secured it to us. Those grim prison walls He has thrown down by His own pierced hands. Those black shades of darkness that surrounded us, He has chased away by His own glorious manifestation as our Sun of Righteousness! It is the Lord, the Liberator, who has set His people free! Therefore, if you are among them, rend the heavens with your joyful shouts, you liberated ones! By the blood of the Covenant you are set free by the almighty "Breaker" who has come to break down your prison walls and to make you "free indeed."

And, Beloved, we are now free forever, for the Lord says--"Ihave sent forth your prisoners." And when God sends us forth out of prison, who can send us back? When He says, "Let there be light," who can create darkness? When He says to me, "Be free," who can chain me up again? Let all the hosts of Hell surround me--as the Philistines surrounded poor blind Samson--my soul shall say with David, "They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." When Christ makes a man free, it is not with a temporary liberty, to last for a month, or a year--but Christ's emancipated slaves can never be enslaved again! Redeemed by His precious blood, the Redemption is not temporary, but eternal!

And, blessed be God, that freedom is freedom indeed! If you know what it is to be a Christian to the fullest, believing the true Gospel, not clouding its beauty, not putting upon yourself the old yoke of bondage,

not mixing Judaism with Christianity, not bringing in human ordinances to make you the cramped and fettered slave of man--if you are the Lord's free men, then you are "free indeed!" "O Lord," said David, "truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds." He who loves holiness and walks in the fear of the Lord all the daylong is the only true free man! He is the free man whom God's Grace makes free--all others are slaves! No earthly power can bring real freedom to the soul--it is Grace and Grace, alone, that brings it by the blood of the Covenant! And where that freedom comes, no form of bondage can make a man a slave. He may be owned by some cruel master and whipped to his work, but his soul is free! He may be shut up in a damp, dark dungeon, but he can sing there, as others have done before him--

"Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage."

I cannot further enlarge upon this tempting theme, but I want every true child of God, everyone who has been set free by the great Liberator, to act and live like Christ's free man--not to go about fawning and crouching like a slave who dreads his master's lash, but to walk uprightly, in both senses of that word, as a free man should, in the Presence of the Lord who has bought His servant's freedom at the incalculable cost of His own most precious blood. May the Lord graciously grant to you "access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God!"

II. Secondly, and briefly, THERE ARE OTHER PERSONS WHO SHALL YET BE SET FREE THOUGH THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT. Some of them are, I fully believe, going to be set free tonight! This is the favored hour in which the Lord is going to save them and set them free forever! They did not know this when they came in here, but the Lord had designs of love towards them in

moving them, by His Spirit, to enter this House of Prayer an hour or so ago.

To those who are going to be set free I have to say this. By nature, you are in the state that I have been describing, though perhaps you are hardly aware of it. You are prisoners in the pit without water If unrenewed in heart, you are in a state of alienation from God and of spiritual danger, destitution and misery! But, dear Souls, though this is the case with all of you who have not been born-again, there is this cheering Truth of God--though you are prisoners, you are "prisoners of hope." Wherever the Gospel is preached, there is hope for sinners and whoever hears it may take heart of hope. I am not now speaking merely about outwardly moral people, but I am speaking of any who have strayed in here and who have sinned grossly--drunkards, swearers, harlots--the very worst and lowest of persons. You are prisoners to your sins, but you are prisoners of hope, for you are within reach of One who sets free from sin! The Lord Jesus Christ, whom we preach to you, saves His people from their sins! And I pray that He may come to you, in all the plenitude of His liberating power and set you free from your sins this very hour!

Though you are in this prison, there is a Divine command given to you--"Turn you to the stronghold." If you would obtain liberty from your sin, both in its guilt and in its power, you must look to Jesus, who is the Stronghold to which captive sinners are to turn! "Oh," you say, "this pit is truly horrible." I know it is, but the Lord Jesus Christ has come to roll away the stone from the mouth of it and, looking down to you, He says, "Turn you to Me, your only Stronghold. There is hope for you, you prisoners of hope, if you will but turn unto Me." "But," you say, "we have looked all around, but we have found no consolation. No man cares for our souls." There is One in Heaven who

cares for your souls and who, because He does, has come to tell you that there is hope for the worst, the most hardened, the most despairing of you all! He bids you escape for your life and look not behind you, nor tarry in all the plain, but press on till you reach the Stronghold where you will be safe even when the wrath of God pursues you! "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Whoever turns to Him shall live, whoever he or she may be!

"But I am so feeble," says someone. Then turn away from your feebleness to His strength. "But I am so sinful," says another. Then turn away from your sinfulness to His blood--the blood of the Covenant which washes black sinners whiter than driven snow! You are not to turn to yourself, nor to a human priest, nor to your own works, nor even to your prayers or your tears--all these are full of sin and worthless to give you acceptance in God's sight. But the Lord Jesus Christ is Divine--so look to Him and to what He has done--and especially to His great atoning Sacrifice upon the Cross, for if you trust to that by a sincere and humble faith, you will certainly be saved!

This declaration of hope in the Gospel is for the present moment What says the Lord concerning it? "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." You are getting very old, but "even today" mercy is declared to you! You have been, perhaps, wasting the former part of this Sabbath, but "even today" is mercy declared to you. It is seldom that you go to a place of worship, but you are here tonight--and "even today" is mercy proclaimed to you! You had so provoked God that you thought He had cast you away. Well, you have probably gone to the full length of your tether, but "even today" does God proclaim that there is still hope for you--that hope which He has laid up in Jesus on whom He has laid all necessary help for you!

And what is it that He tells you today? Why, that He will render double to you! Do notice that. He will render double to you. You have committed great sin, but He will give you double mercy to wash out that double sin. But your heart is doubly hard--then He will give you a double portion of His Holy Spirit to soften it! But you feel a double tendency to sin--then He will doubly write His Law on the new heart that He will give you! But you are so desponding. Then He will give you double comfort. But you say that you feel so weak in prayer. Then He will give you double strength. But your faith is so feeble. Then He will give you double Grace to increase it. O Soul, if God says that He will give you all that you need, that ought to satisfy you! But when He says that He will give you double--double for all your sins--what wondrous Grace is that! If you put down a sin, God puts down two mercies. Put down another sin and He puts down two more mercies. "Ah," you say, "but I can keep on putting down sins forever, they are so many!" And my Lord can put down mercies forever and ever for, however many your sins may be, they can be counted--but His mercies are innumerable! I know that your sins can be counted, for they are all written in a book, but God's mercies cannot be written in a book--they are altogether countless. His mercy is immeasurably greater than your sin. David laid hold of that great Truth of God when he prayed, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." I tell you, Sinners, if you are lost, it will not be for lack of mercy! If your sins destroy you, it will not be because the blood of the Covenant has not power to wash away your sins. If you perish, it will not be because Jesus Christ is not able to save you. Why will it be, then? It will be because you have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, for "he that believes not is condemned already, because he has

not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

I do pray the Lord that you may have reason enough and Grace enough given you to know that your eternal interests depend upon your believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. You have not to go and spin a righteousness which you are so fond of doing, but to come and take the spotless robe that Christ has woven. You have not to bring the money for

your own ransom, though you would like to do that, but you are to take the liberty which has been bought by Christ's precious blood and which is freely presented to every believing sinner, "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We who have escaped from the noisome pit, would, if we could, tempt you to also escape--we long that you may share the blessed liberty that we enjoy! Dear children, will you not follow your father and mother into Gospel liberty? Dear husbands, do you not desire to experience the holy joy that throbs in your wives' bosom? Good wives, do you not wish to have your husbands' Christ to be your own Christ? Brothers, would you like your sisters to be without you in Heaven? Will you not share with them in the blessings of eternal life? Oh, that we might all together come to Christ right now! For after all, whatever God has done for us, saints are still sinners, so we will come down to your level and each one, taking the hand of some poor fellow sinner who has never come to Christ, we will try to come together, now, and look up to Him. There is the Cross of Calvary and there is the Savior who hung there. O You blessed Jesus, we have no hope but in You! And these poor souls whom we have brought along with us, Lord, help them to look to You just now, even as we ourselves looked to You long ago! Clear their eyes even more than ours are cleared and may they, as they look unto You, find that--

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One"-- life for them, life for them just now, life from the death of sin, life from condemnation, life to be had at once, by a glance at Your wounds and by simple faith in You! You wear the thorn-crown and it seems to us as if all Your thoughts were hedged about with thorns that they might be fixed on sinners. And Your hands are fastened wide open, as if You would never close them again, but hold them always open to welcome poor sinners! And Your feet are fastened as if You would always graciously receive all who come to bow before You. Yes, and Your dear heart was opened by the soldier's spear as if to make a way for guilty souls into Your inmost affection. Jesus, by Your Grace we come to You! Spirit of the living God, draw this whole houseful of sinners and saints and enable each one of us to say--

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immmanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!
I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me,
That on the Cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free."

III. My last words--and they shall be very few--are to be IN HONOR OF THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.

To you who have believed in Jesus and who are now coming to His table, let me say--As we come to the Communion, let us think of the blood of the Covenant. If we are free men and women in Christ Jesus, it is because the blood of Jesus ratified the Covenant of our liberty. It is because God saw the blood and delivered us. Let me remind you of that beautiful verse in the Book of Exodus, from which I have preached more

than once. [See Sermon #228, Volume 5--the
BLOOD and #1251, Volume 21--THE SACRED LOVE-TOKEN] The blood of the paschal lamb, as you know, was to be sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of the houses of all the children of Israel. And what did God say about it? Did He say, "When you stand outside your house and look up at the blood I will save you"? No, He did not say that, but, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It is God's sight of the blood of Christ which, at bottom, is the reason for the salvation of the redeemed! How I rejoice to think that although my faith-sight of the blood gives me peace, still, if that eye of mine ever gets dim, it does not imperil my salvation, for God's eye is not dim and it is always fixed on the blood of His Son! In sacred contemplation the Father surveys the Sacrifice of His Son with supreme satisfaction--and as He sees the blood, He spares us for His Son's sake!

But, then, dear Friends, the blood of the Covenant is also to be extolled because it is our sight of it that brings us peace. When we realize that Jesus died for us, there is peace in our soul. I do not know whether you are like me in this respect, but there are times when I, as it were, take the fact of my eternal safety for granted. But there comes a severe sickness, or deep depression of spirit. There comes a time when death has to be looked in the face and the sense of past sin rises vividly before me--and then it is a blessed thing to stand once more at the foot of the Cross and to look up to Jesus hanging there, and to say--

"My faith does lay her hand
On that dear head of Yours, While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

And as I meditate upon that theme, despondency goes, pain is forgotten and I say, "Yes, yes, yes! I am safe! I am saved by the precious blood

of Jesus! I do love Him and I would fall down at His dear feet and weep with mingled repentance and gratitude--repentance because I have sinned--gratitude because I have such a gracious Savior to put my sin away." Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us praise the blood because God sees it--and praise the blood because we also see it by faith! Praise the blood, too, because when we really trust in it, it gives us liberty If you get away from the blood of the Covenant, you get into slavery. But keep close to that and you are at liberty. In prayer, mind that you plead the blood, for that is the way to get the "double" spoken of in the text. The double blessing comes by the blood of the Covenant. If you need more Grace, plead the blood for it. There is one talisman that will open every vault in the treasury of God--the blood of the Covenant! You cannot be denied if you plead the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Knock at Heaven's gate with the crimson token in your hand and as surely as God loves Jesus Christ--and He loves Him more than all of us put together love Him--He will honor His Son's great Sacrifice and He will say to you, "According to your desire and your faith, so be it unto you." There are some preachers who cannot or do not preach about the blood of Jesus Christ--I have one thing to say to you concerning those--Never go to hear them! Never listen to them! A ministry that has not the blood in it, is lifeless, "for the blood is the life thereof--and a dead ministry is no good to anybody! Leave out the atoning Sacrifice and it would be better for the people that the places in which a Christless, bloodless Gospel is preached, should be all burnt to the ground, for the atoning Sacrifice is the soul and life and marrow of Christianity! Rest in that and you are saved! But get away from that and you have wandered where peace and life and safety can never come! God Almighty bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS2:14-43.

Verse 14. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dweel at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and listen to my words. A great crowd had gathered in the street and the Apostles, under Divine Inspiration, addressed them in different tongues. Peter, as the leader, coming prominently to the front--"Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice." They were 12 witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, for they had seen Him after He had risen and had eaten with Him. They constituted a jury of 12 honest and true men. And Peter, as their foreman, "standing up with the eleven," gave their verdict!

15. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day At nine o'clock in the morning, it was not to be supposed that they had become drunk.

16-18. But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shallprophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I wiilpour out in those days My Spirit; and they shall prophesy. Every member of the Christian community would be anointed by the Holy Spirit. The blessing would not simply be given to one here and another there, but there would be a wonderful outpouring that should fall upon the whole multitude of Believers.

19-21. And I will show wonders in Heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before that great and notable day of the coming of the Lord: and it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is a wonderful

connection in which to find such a promise as this--a darkened sun, a blood-red moon--yet "whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." When the worst comes to the worst, prayer will still be heard and faith will lead to salvation! O matchless Grace of God! Is there not someone here who will call upon God's name, now, before that evil day comes in all its fullness? "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Oh, that everyone of you would lay hold of that promise! It is said that drowning men will catch at a straw. This is no straw, but a gloriously strong life buoy! Only get into it and it will float you to Glory!

22. You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know.Note that Peter does not begin with the Deity of Christ. He will get to that soon. But, like a wise speaker, he commences with points upon which they were all agreed, or which they could not deny. He therefore calls Christ "a Man approved of God," and he reminds them of the "miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him" in their midst. They knew that God had thus attested His mission, so he appealed to them for confirmation. "As you yourselves also know."

23. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. There is a wonderful blending in this verse of the predestination of God and yet the responsibility of man. I suppose our finite faculties cannot yet discern where these two things meet, but faith, in the absence of every other power, believes them both! The predestination of God does not alter the moral quality of the acts of wicked men. Man acts freely, as freely as if there were no Divine predestination--yet the free agency of man does not affect the foreknowledge and

predestination of God.

24. Whom God has raised up, having loosed thepains of death: because it was notpossible that He should be held of it It was possible for Him to die, but it was not possible for Him to be held in the bonds of death!

25. For David-- Speaking of Christ in the Psalm which, at first sight, might seem to refer to David, himself, but which was even by the Rabbis believed to also refer to the Messiah, and which we know did, indeed, refer to the Messiah!

26-27. Speaks concerning Him, I foresaw the lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because You will not leave my soul in Hell---Hades, the world of separate spirits.

27. Neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. David was speaking of Someone who, though He should die, would never in His body feel the natural effect of death, namely decay.

28, 29. You have made known to me the ways of life; You shall make me full of joy with Your Countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Peter craves liberty to speak with freedom and then he very shrewdly gives to David the high title of Patriarch, which is not generally given to him, so as to win their attention and approval--"Let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day." And therefore he did not speak about himself in the words Peter was quoting!

30-32. Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before

spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Peter points to the eleven around him. There they stood, steadfast in the midst of the surging crowd, assenting to the bold declaration of their leader.

33-35. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this which you now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he says himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit You at My right hand until I make Your foes Your footstool See how he builds up his argument with clear and cogent reasoning?

36. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.How those men must have started when he came to that which was the finale of his address, the point at which he had aimed all along!

37. Now when they heard this, they were picked in their heart The pointed Truth of God had gone home to their heart and they were wounded by it.

37. And said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do.?These may have been the same people who mockingly said, "These men are full of new wine." They began badly, but they ended well. I hope none of you have come here to mock. But if you have done so, and then go out pricked in your heart by the Truth of God you have heard, it would be better than coming in an attentive frame of mind and then going out unimpressed as so many do. God prevent it!

38. Then Peter said unto them, Repent "Change your mind entirely. Be sorry for what you have done. Repudiate what you have done by a holy repentance of it. 'Repent'--

38. And be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for

the remission of sins. Peter urged them to repent and bade them confess their faith by being baptized in God's appointed way.

38. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "You shall be sharers in this wonderful manifestation which has so astounded you."

39. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. What promise did Peter mean? Why that promise in the 21st verse, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That promise is also given to you, my Hearers, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even in the most distant heathen land, for the " whoever" in the promise applies to everyone who "shall call on the name of the Lord." Do not, therefore, shut yourselves out, or try to shut others out, but believe the promise--call upon God and you shall be saved!

40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Peter first bore witness to the Truth of God and then pleaded with his hearers to receive his testimony. All true ministers will both "testify and exhort." Some are always exhorting--they cry, "Believe, believe"--but they do not tell their hearers what is to be believed. Others are always testifying. They preach good doctrine, but they do not like to exhort sinners to repent and believe the Gospel. Each of these is a one-legged ministry! We must have two legs to our ministry and, like Peter, "testify and exhort saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." "Come out from those who crucified Christ! Quit the generation that is guilty of the blood of the Son of God! Put your repentance between you and them! Put your public Baptism between you and them--avow that you belong not to them, but to Him whom they crucified, and whom God has exalted!"

41. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same

day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. They not only believed what he said, but they were glad to believe it, acknowledging that they had greatly sinned. And they rejoiced that there was a promise which covered even their sin--"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Then, having repented and believed, they were baptized upon profession of their faith, according to the true Scriptural order.

42. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breakkng of bread, and in prayers. They believed the doctrine that was taught by the Apostles and they had fellowship with them and with all other Christians with whom they were associated. They did not try to go to Heaven by some underground railway without confessing Christ, but having confessed their faith in Christ, they further manifested their devotion to Him "in breaking of bread, and in prayers." I do not know how many Prayer Meetings they had--they must have kept on praying, praising and preaching pretty well all day long.

43. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles.

Chapter 34

Christ and His Table Companions

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"And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him." Luke 22:14.

THE outward ordinances of the Christian religion are but two--and those two are exceedingly simple--yet neither of them has escaped human alteration. And, alas, much mischief has been worked and much of precious teaching has been sacrificed by these miserable perversions! For instance, the ordinance of Baptism, as it was administered by the Apostles, represented the burial of the Believer with Christ and his rising with his Lord into newness of life. Men had to exchange immersion for sprinkling and the intelligent Believer for an unconscious child--and so the ordinance is slain! The other sacred institution, the Lord's Supper, like Believers' Baptism, is simplicity itself. It consists of broken bread and wine poured out--these items being eaten and drunk at a festival--a delightful picture of the sufferings of Christ for us and of the fellowship which the saints have with one another and with Him. But this ordinance, also, has been tampered with by men. By some, the wine has been taken away altogether, or reserved only for a priestly caste. And the simple bread has been changed into a consecrated host. As for the table, the very emblem of fellowship in all nations--for what expresses fellowship better than surrounding a table and eating and drinking together? This, indeed, must be put away and an "altar" must be erected! And the bread and wine

which were to help us to remember the Lord Jesus are changed into an "unbloody sacrifice," and so the whole thing becomes an unscriptural celebration instead of a holy institution for fellowship!

Let us be warned by these mistakes of others never either to add to or take from the Word of God so much as a single jot or tittle! Keep upon the foundation of the Scriptures and you stand safely, and have an answer for those who question you. Yes, and an answer which you may render at the bar of God! But once allow your own whim, or fancy, or taste, or your notion of what is proper and right to rule you, instead of the Word of God, and you have entered upon a dangerous course! And unless the Grace of God prevents, boundless mischief may ensue. The Bible is our standard authority--none may turn from it. The wise man says in Ecclesiastes, "I counsel you to keep the King's commandment." We would repeat his advice and add to it the sage precept of the mother of our Lord, at Cana, when she said, "Whatever He says unto you, do it."

We shall now ask you in contemplation to gaze upon the first celebration of the Lord's Supper. You perceive at once that there was no "altar" in that large upper room. There was a table. A table with bread and wine upon it, but no altar! And Jesus did not kneel--there is no sign of that--He sat down. I doubt not, after the Oriental mode of sitting, that is to say, by a partial reclining, He sat down with His Apostles. Now, He who ordained this Supper knew how it ought to be observed. And as the first celebration of it was the model for all others, we may be assured that the right way of coming to this Communion is to assemble around a table--and to sit or recline while we eat and drink together of bread and wine in remembrance of our Lord!

While we see the Savior sitting down with His 12 Apostles, let us enquire, first, what did this make them? Then, secondly, what did this

imply?'And, thirdly, what further may we legitimately infer from this?

I. First, then, we see the Great Master, the Lord, the King in Zion, sitting down at the table to eat and drink with His 12 Apostles--WHAT DID THIS MAKE THEM?

Note what they were at first. By His first calling of them they became His followers, for He said unto them, "Follow Me." That is to say, they were convinced by sundry marks and signs, that He was the Messiah and they, therefore, became His followers. Followers may be at a great distance from their leader and enjoy little or no communion with him, for the leader may be too great to be approached by the common members of his band. In the case of these disciples, their following was unusually close, for their Master was very condescending. But still, their communion was not always of the most intimate kind at first and, therefore, it was not at the first that He called them to such a festival as this Supper. They began with following and this is where we must begin. If we cannot enter as yet into closer association with our Lord, we may at least know His voice by His Spirit and follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd. The most important way of following Him is to trust Him and then diligently to imitate His example. This is a good beginning and it will end well--for those who walk with Him today shall rest with Him hereafter--those who tread in His footsteps shall sit with Him on His Throne!

Being His followers, they came next to be His disciples. A man may have been a follower for a while and yet may not have reached discipleship. A follower may follow blindly and hear a great deal which he does not understand, but when he becomes a disciple, his master instructs him and leads him into truth. To explain, to expound, to solve difficulties, to clear away doubts and to make truth intelligible is the office of a teacher among his disciples. Now, it was a very blessed

thing for the followers to become disciples, but still, disciples are not necessarily so intimate with their Master as to sit and eat with Him. Socrates and Plato knew many in the Academy whom they did not invite to their homes. My Brothers and Sisters, if Jesus had but called us to be His disciples and no more, we would have had cause for great thankfulness. If we had been allowed to sit at His feet and had never shared in such an entertainment as that before us, we ought to have been profoundly grateful. But now that He has favored us with a yet higher place, let us never be unfaithful to our discipleship! Let us daily learn of Jesus! Let us search the Bible to see what it was that He taught us and then, by the aid of His Holy Spirit, let us scrupulously obey! Yet there is a something beyond.

Being the Lord's disciples, the chosen ones next rose to become His servants which is a step in advance, since the disciple may be but a child, but the servant has some strength, has received some measure of training and renders somewhat in return. Their Master gave them power to preach the Gospel and to execute commissions of Grace--and happy were they to be called to wait upon such a Master and aid in setting up His Kingdom! My dear Brothers and Sisters, are you all consciously Christ's servants? If so, though the service may at times seem heavy because your faith is weak, yet be very thankful that you are servants at all, for it is better to serve God than to reign over all the kingdoms of this world! It is better to be the lowest servant of Christ than to be the greatest of men and remain slaves to your own lusts, or be mere men-pleasers. His yoke is easy and His burden is light! The servant of such a Master should rejoice in his calling--yet there is something beyond even this.

Towards the close of His life, our Master revealed the yet nearer relation of His disciples and uttered words like these--"Henceforth I

call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." This is a great step in advance. The friend, however humble, enjoys much familiarity with his friend. The friend is told what the servant need not know. The friend enjoys a communion to which the mere servant, disciple, or follower has not attained. May we know this higher association, this dearer bond of relationship! May we not be content without the enjoyment of our Master's friendship! "He that has friends must show himself friendly," and if we would have Christ's friendship, we must befriend His cause, His Truth and His people! He is a Friend that loves at all times--if you would enjoy His friendship, take care to abide in Him!

Now note that on the night before His Passion, our Lord led His friends a step beyond ordinary friendship. The mere follower does not sit at table with his leader. The disciple does not claim to be a fellow commoner with his master. The servant is seldom entertained at the same table with his lord. The befriended one is not always invited to be a guest. But here the Lord Jesus made His chosen ones to be His table companions. He lifted them up to sit with Him at the same table, to eat of the same bread and drink of the same cup with Himself. From that position He has never degraded them--they were representative men and where the Lord placed them, He has permanently placed all His saints! All the Lord's believing people are sitting, by sacred privilege and calling, at the same table with Jesus, for "truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." He has come into our hearts and He sups with us and we with Him! We are His table companions and shall eat bread with Him in the Kingdom of God!

II. So now we shall pass on, in the second place, to ask, WHAT DID THIS

TABLE COMPANIONSHIP IMPLY?

It implied, first of all, mutual fidelity. This solemn eating and drinking together was a pledge of faithfulness to one another. It must have been so understood, or otherwise there would have been no force in the complaint, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." Did not this mean that because Judas had eaten bread with his Lord, he was bound not to betray Him, and so to lift up his heel against Him? This was the seal of an implied covenant--having eaten together, they were under bond to be faithful to one another! Now, as many of you as are really the servants and friends of Christ may know that the Lord Jesus, in eating with you at His table, pledges Himself to be faithful to you. The Master never plays the Judas--the Judas is among the disciples. There is nothing traitorous in the Lord--He is not only able to keep that which we have committed to Him, but He is faithful and will do it. He will be faithful, not only as to the great and main matter, but also to every promise He has made! Know then, assuredly, that your Master would not have asked you to His table to eat bread with Him if He intended to desert you! He has received you as His honored guests and fed you upon His choicest food and thereby He does as good as say to you, "I will never leave you, come what may. And in all times of trial, depression and temptation, I will be at your right hand and you shall not be moved--and to the very last you shall prove My faithfulness and truth." But, Beloved, you do not understand this Supper unless you are also reminded of the faithfulness that is due from you to your Lord, for the feast is common and the pledge mutual. In eating with Him, you pledge your faithfulness to the Crucified. Beloved, how have you kept your pledge during the past? You have eaten bread with Him and I trust that in your hearts you have never gone so far aside as to lift up your heel

against Him--but have you always honored Him as you should? Have you acted as guests should have done? Can you remember His love to you and put your love to Him side by side with it--without being ashamed? From this time forth may the Holy Spirit work in our souls a jealous fidelity to the Well-Beloved which shall not permit our hearts to wander from Him, or suffer our zeal for His Glory to decline!

Again, remember that there is in this solemn eating and drinking together, a pledge of fidelity between the disciples, themselves, as well as between the disciples and their Lord. Judas would have been a traitor if he had betrayed Peter, or John, or James. So, when you come to the one table, my Brothers and Sisters, you must henceforth be true to one another. All bickering and jealousies must cease and a generous and affectionate spirit must rule in every bosom! If you hear any speak against those with whom you have communed, reckon that as you have eaten bread with them, you are bound to defend their reputations. If any railing accusation is raised against any Brother in Christ, reckon that his character is as dear to you as your own! Let a sacred Freemasonry be maintained among us, if I may liken a far higher and more spiritual union to anything which belongs to common life. You are members, one of another--see that you fervently love each other with a pure heart. Drinking of the same cup, eating of the same bread, you set forth before the world a token which I trust is not meant to be a lie.

As it truly shows Christ's faithfulness to you, so let it as really typify your faithfulness to Christ and to one another!

In the next place, eating and drinking together was a token of mutual confidence. They, in sitting there together, voluntarily avowed their confidence in each other. Those disciples trusted their Master. They knew He would not mislead or deceive them. They also trusted each other, for when they were told that one of them would betray their

Lord, they did not suspect each other, but each one asked, "Lord, is it I?" They had much confidence in one another and the Lord Jesus, as we have seen, had placed great confidence in them by treating them as His friends. He had even trusted them with the great secret of His coming sufferings and death! They were a trustful company who sat at that Supper table. Now, Beloved, when you gather around this table, come in the spirit of implicit trustfulness in the Lord Jesus. If you are suffering, do not doubt His love, but believe that He works all things for your good. If you are vexed with cares, prove your confidence by leaving them entirely in your Redeemer's hands. It will not be a festival of fellowship to you if you come here with suspicions about your Master. No, show your confidence as you eat of the bread with Him. Let there also be a brotherly confidence in each other. Grievous would it be to see a spirit of suspicion and distrust among you. Suspicion is the death of fellowship! The moment one Christian imagines that another thinks badly of him, though there may not be the slightest truth in that thought, yet straightway the root of bitterness is planted! Let us believe in one another's sincerity, for we may rest assured that each of our Brothers and Sisters deserves to be trusted more than we do. Turn your suspicions within and if you must suspect, suspect your own heart! But when you meet with those who have communed with you at this table, say within yourself, "If such can deceive me and, alas, they may, then will I be content to be imposed upon rather than entertain perpetual mistrust of my fellow Christians."

A third meaning of the assembling around the table is this, hearty fraternity. Our Lord, in sitting down at the table with His disciples, showed Himself to be one with them, a Brother, indeed. We do not read that there was any order of priority by which their seats were arranged. Of course, if the Grand Chamberlain at Rome had arranged the

table, he would have placed Peter at the right hand of Christ--and the other Apostles in graduated positions according to the dignity of their future bishoprics! But all that we know about their order is this--that John sat next to the Savior and leaned upon His bosom. And that Peter sat a good way off--we feel sure he was because it is said that he "beckoned" unto John. If he had sat next to him, he would have whispered to him--but he beckoned to him--and so he must have been some way down the table, if, indeed, there was any "down" or "up" in the arrangement of the guests. We believe the fact was that they sat there on a sacred equality--the Lord Jesus, the Elder Brother among them--and all else arranged according to those words, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." Let us feel, then, in coming to the table again at this time, that we are linked in ties of sacred relationship with Jesus Christ who is exalted in Heaven, and that through Him our relationship with our fellow Christians is very near and intimate.

Oh, that Christian brotherhood were more real! The very word, "brother," has come to be ridiculed as a piece of hypocrisy and well it may, for it is mostly used as a cant phrase and, in many cases means very little. But it ought to mean something. You have no right to come to that table unless you really feel that those who are washed in Jesus' blood have a claim upon the love of your heart and the activity of your benevolence! What? Are you to live together forever in Heaven and will you show no affection for one another here below? It is your Master's new command that you love one another--will you disregard it? He has given this as the badge of Christians--"By this shall all men know that you are My disciples"--not if you wear a gold cross, but--"if you have love, one to another." That is the Christian's badge of his being, in very truth, a disciple of Jesus Christ! Here, at this table,

we find fraternity. Whoever eats of this sacred Supper declares himself to be one of a brotherhood in Christ, a brotherhood striving for the same cause, having sincere sympathy, being members of each other and all of them members of the body of Christ! God make this to be a fact throughout Christendom even now, and how will the world marvel as it cries, "See how these Christians love one another!"

But this table companionship means even more--it signifies common enjoyment. Jesus eats and they eat the same bread. He drinks and they drink of the same cup. There is no distinction in the food items. What does this mean? Does it not say to us that the joy of Christ is the joy of His people? Has He not said, "That My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"? The very joy that delights Christ is that which He prepares for His people! You, if you are a true Believer, have sympathy in Christ's joy--you delight to see His Kingdom come, His Truth advanced, sinners saved, Grace glorified, holiness promoted, God exalted--and this also is His delight! But, my dear Brothers and Sisters and fellow professors, are you sure that your chief joy is the same as Christ's? Are you certain that the mainstay of your life is the same as that which was His meat and His drink, namely, to do the will of the Heavenly Father? If not, I am afraid you have no business at this table! But if it is so and you come to the table, then I pray that you may share the joy of Christ. May you joy in Him as He joys in you and so may your fellowship be sweet!

Lastly on this point, the feast at the one table indicated familiar affection. It is the child's place to sit at the table with its parents, for affection rules there. It is the place of honor to sit at the table. "Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table." But the honor is such as love and not fear suggests. Men at the table often reveal their minds more fully than elsewhere. If you want

to understand a man, you do not go to see him at the Stock Exchange, or follow him into the market, for there he keeps himself to himself--you go to his table and there he reveals himself. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ sat at the table with His disciples. 'Twas a meal, 'twas a meal of a homely kind--intimate communion ruled the hour. I am afraid, Brothers and Sisters, we have sometimes come to this table and gone away again without having had communion with Christ--and then it has been an empty formality and nothing more. I thank God that coming to this table every Sabbath, as some of us do, and have done for many years, we have yet for the most part enjoyed the nearest communion with Christ here that we have ever known, and have a thousand times blessed His name for this ordinance!

Still, there is such a thing as only eating the bread and drinking the wine and losing all the sacred meaning thereof. Do pray the Lord to reveal Himself to you. Ask that it may not be a dead form to you, but that now, in very deed, you may give your heart to Christ while He shall show to you His hands and His side, and make known to you His agonies

and death wherewith He redeemed you from the wrath to come! All this, and vastly more, is the teaching of the table at which Jesus sat with the twelve. I have often wondered why the Church of Rome does not buy up all those pictures by one of its most renowned painters, Leonardo da Vinci, in which our Lord is represented as sitting at the table with His disciples, for these are a contradiction of the Popish doctrine on this subject! As long as that picture remains on a wall and as long as copies of it are spread everywhere, the Church of Rome stands convicted of going against the teaching of the earlier church by setting up an "altar" when she, herself, confesses that before it was not considered to be an altar of sacrifice, but a table of fellowship at which the

Lord did not kneel, nor stand as an officiating priest, but at which He and His disciples sat. We, at least, have no rebukes to fear from antiquity, for we follow and mean to follow the primitive method! Our Lord has given us commandment to do this until He comes--not to alter it, but just to "do this," and nothing else, in the same manner, until He shall come again!

III. We will draw to a close by asking WHAT FURTHER MAY BE INFERRED FROM THIS SITTING OF CHRIST WITH HIS DISCIPLES AT THE TABLE?

I answer, first, there may be inferred from it, the equality of all the saints. There were here 12 Apostles. Their Apostleship, however, is not concerned in the matter. When the Lord's Supper was celebrated after all the Apostles had gone to Heaven, was there to be any alteration because the Apostles had gone? Not at all. Believers are to do this in remembrance of their Lord until He shall come. There was no command for a change when the first Apostles were all gone from the Church. No, it was still to be the same--bread and wine and the surrounding of the table until the Lord came. I gather, then, the equality of all saints. There is a difference in office, there was a difference in miraculous gift and there are great differences of growth in Grace, but still, in the household of God, all saints, whether Apostles, pastors, teachers, deacons, elders, or private members--being all equal--eat at one table. There is but one bread, there is but one juice of the vine here!

It is only in the Church of God that those words, so politically wild, can ever be any more than a dream--"Liberty, Equality and Fraternity." There you have them where Jesus is--not in a republic, but in the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ where all rule and dominion are vested in Him! And all of us willingly acknowledge Him as our glorious Head and all we are brethren! Never fall into the idea that

older Believers were of a superior nature to ourselves. Do not talk of Saint Paul, Saint Matthew and Saint Mark unless you are prepared to speak of Saint William and Saint Jane sitting over yonder--for if they are in Christ, they are as truly saints as those first saints were! And I think there may be some who have even attained to a higher "saintship" than many whom tradition has canonized! The heights of saintship are, by Grace, open to us all and the Lord invites us to ascend! Do not think that what the Lord worked in the early saints cannot be worked in you. It is because you think so that you do not pray for it--and because you do not pray for it, you do not attain it! The Grace of God sustained the Apostles--that Grace is not less today than it was then! The Lord's arm is not shortened! His power is not straitened. If we can but believe and be as earnest as those first saints were, we shall yet subdue kingdoms and the day shall come when the gods of Hinduism and the lies of Mohammed and of Rome shall as certainly be overthrown as were the ancient philosophies and the classic idolatries of Greece and Rome by the teaching of the first ministers of Christ! There is the same table for you and the same food is there in emblem--and Divine Grace can make you like those holy men, for you are bought with the same blood and quickened by the same Spirit! Only believe, for "all things are possible to him that believes."

Another inference, only to be hinted at, is that the needs of the Church in all ages will be the same and the supplies for the Church's needs will never vary. There will still be the table--and the table with the same items upon it--bread, still bread--nothing more than bread for food. Still wine, nothing less than wine for drink. The Church will always need the same food, the same Christ, the same Gospel. Out, you traitors who tell us that we are to shape our Gospel

to suit this enlightened 19th Century! Out, you false-hearts who would have us tone down the everlasting Truth of God that shall outlive the sun, moon and stars to suit your boasted culture which is but varnished ignorance! That Truth of God which of old was mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, is still mighty, and we will maintain it to the death! The Church needs the Doctrines of Grace today as much as when Paul, or Augustine, or Calvin preached them! The Church needs justification by faith, the substitutionary Atonement, regeneration and Divine Sovereignty to be preached from her pulpits as much as in days of yore! And by God's Grace she shall have them, too!

Lastly, there is in this Truth, that Christ has brought all His disciples into the position of table companions, a prophecy that this shall be the portion of all His people forever. In Heaven there cannot be less of privilege than on earth. It cannot be that in the celestial state, Believers will be degraded from what they have been below. What were they, then, below? Table companions. What shall they be in Heaven above? Table companions and blessed are they that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God! "Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God." And the Lord Jesus shall be at the head of the table! Now, what will His table of joy be? Set your imagination to work and think what will be His festival of soul when His reward shall be all before Him and His triumph all achieved! Have you imagined it? Can you conceive it? Whatever it is, you shall share in it--I repeat those words--whatever it is, the least Believer shall share in it! You, poor working woman, oh, what a change for you, to sit among the princes of Christ's palace of Glory, near to your Lord, all your toil and needs forever ended! And you, sad child of suffering, scarcely able to come up to the assembly of God's people--and going back, perhaps, to that

bed of languishing--you shall have no pains there, but you shall be forever with the Lord! In the anticipation of the joy that shall be yours, forget your present troubles, rise superior to the difficulties of the hour and if you cannot rejoice in the present, yet rejoice in the future which shall so soon be your own!

We finish with this word of deep regret--regret that many here cannot understand what we have been talking about--and have no part in it. There are some of you who must not come to the table of Communion because you do not love Christ. You have not trusted Him. You have no part in Him. There is no salvation in what some people call "sacraments." Believe me, they are but delusions to those who do not come to Christ with their heart! You must not come to the outward sign if you have not the thing signified. Here is the way of salvation--"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." To believe in Him is to trust Him. To use an old word, it is recumbency--it is leaning on Him, resting on Him. Here I lean on this platform rail. I rest my whole weight on this support before me. Do so with Christ in a spiritual sense--lean on Him. You have a load of sin, lean on Him--sin and all! You are all unworthy, weak and, perhaps, miserable. Then cast on Him the weakness, the unworthiness, the misery and all! Take Him to be All-in-All to you--and when you have thus trusted Him, you will have become His follower! Go on by humility to be His disciple, by obedience to be His servant, by love to be His friend and by communion to be His table companion!

May the Holy Spirit so lead you, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE22:7-54.

Verses 7-13. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat And they said unto Him, Where will You

that we prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters in. And you shall say unto the good man of the house, the Master says unto you, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover The hour of Christ's humiliation was drawing near, but He was still "The Master." He had but to send His servants and His request was at once obeyed--just as He might have asked for more than 12 legions of angels and they would have been immediately placed at His disposal. 14-22. And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of Him that betrays Me is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goes as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! What consternation those sentences must have caused in that little company! Christ and His 12 Apostles alone present, yet one of them was about to betray his Lord! 23, 24. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest How strange that such a

quarrel should be going on just then! Their Master was going out to betrayal and crucifixion for them, yet they were disputing about which of them "should be accounted the greatest."

25-30 And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve. For which is greater, he that sits at the table, or he that serves? Is not he that sits at the table? But I am among you as He that serves. You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table, in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel What folly and sin to quarrel about earthly precedence when such heavenly honors were awaiting them!

31, 32. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but Ihave prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren. Trial would be general to all the Apostles--"Satan has desired to have you"--but the danger would be special to Peter on account of his tendency to presumptuous zeal. "'I have prayed for you.' Your danger will be that after having transgressed, your faith will fail, so I have especially prayed about that. Where your greatest danger lies, there have I planted My batteries of prayer 'I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.'"

33. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death. And I have no doubt that he thought he was ready to do all this! He spoke out of the fullness of his heart, but he did not know the weakness of his flesh. We are all too apt to promise great

things and to fail in the fulfillment of them.

34-36. And He said, I tellyou, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that you shall thrice deny that you know Me. And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.At first our Savior had great popularity among the people and, under the cover of this, His disciples were received with respect and kindness so that, though they went forth without purse or scrip, they lacked nothing. But now Christ warns them that there is to be a very different state of things. Jesus is about to die and people will not be ready to entertain them. They will need to have a purse and scrip of their own. They will constantly be in peril of their lives and they will now need the sword and the scrip. This is all that the Savior meant.

37. For Isay unto you, that this which is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end. "They are drawing to their close. I am about to be put to death as a transgressor and you will be treated as though you were the off-scouring of all things and were not fit to live because you are My followers."

38. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough.A smile must have passed over the Savior's face as He saw how they had misunderstood Him! He did not mean that they should literally carry swords, but that they should now have to go through an alien world and to meet with no friends or helpers. He evidently did not mean that they were to defend Him with the sword, for two such weapons would not have been "enough" against the Roman legionaries who were sent to seize Him! How apt they were to misconstrue and take

literally that which He was accustomed to speak in figures, just as, to this day, some will have it that the bread on the Communion table is Christ's body and the juice of the vine is His actual blood!

39. 40. AndHe came out, and went, as He was known to do, to the Mount ofOlives; andHis disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that you enter not into temptation."There is a peculiar temptation coming upon you. I have taught you to pray every day, 'Lead us not into temptation,' but tonight make very special use of that petition--'Pray that you enter not into temptation.'"

41-44. AndHe was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Was He heard? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, He was indeed heard! And especially in that part of His prayer, "nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done." And that was the most vital part of His prayer for, as much as He shrank from that bitter cup, still more did He shrink from any thought of going contrary to the will of His Father! That ought to be the heart of all our prayers--whatever we are asking for, chiefly and above all else this should be our cry--"nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."

45, 46. And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation. There must have been some very peculiar temptation about that night, that Christ's disciples should have needed to be again and again commanded to pray this prayer!

47-50. And while He yet spoke, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betray you the Son of Man with a kiss? When they who were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

No doubt he meant to cut his head in two, but the sword slipped and merely took away his right ear.

51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer you thus far. And He touched his ear and healed him. There was no lasting mischief done, but, on the contrary, another instance given of the Divine Power of Christ. No other miracle of this kind is mentioned in Scripture--I mean the healing of a wound received by violence, the restoration of a member which had been cut off--and Luke is the only Evangelist who mentions it! It has been thought that because he was a physician and had a quick eye for acts of healing, that he mentions that Christ touched the ear of Malchus and healed him.

52-54. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the Temple, and the elders, which were come to Him, Have you come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the Temple, you stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Then they took Him and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off

Chapter 35

The House of Mourning and The House of Feasting

(No. 3108)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1854.

"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting." Ecclesiastes 7:2.

THE maxim that happiness lies between two extremes is, I believe, the dictate of prudence and has the sanction of God's Word. The ancients always spoke of this as being the most happy state of life. Somewhere between the two extremes of ecstatic joy and doleful melancholy lies the thing we call, "happiness." Ancient poets used to sing of the via media, or the middle way. We know that Agur, an Inspired writer, prayed to God that He would give him "neither poverty nor riches," that he might walk in the middle way of life. And as the medium with regard to wealth is to be preferred, so I believe the middle way is to be chosen with regard to happiness. In the green plains between two high hills is the place where happiness generally resides. The man who is not often lifted up with joy, nor often depressed in spirit through grief--who walks through the world in a calm and quiet atmosphere, bearing about with him a holy complacency, a calm serenity and an almost uniformity--that man is a happy man! He who journeys along without mounting up as an eagle, or without diving down into the depths of the sea--he who keeps along the even tenor of his way to his death is entitled to the name of a happy man.

But, my Friends, I think it falls to the lot of very few of us to

always stay there. I know it does not fall to my portion to always walk between the two extremes. I cannot always sing in the vale, like Bunyan's shepherd boy--I wish I could live there, but I cannot. There is a high mountain on that side of the valley, and another on this side--and I have to climb the steep sides of both those mountains. On the brow of the hill on that side there stands a fantastic structure, very much like those fairy palaces which we fabricate in our dreams by the aid of the architect of fancy. And this is called "the house of feasting." On the other side of the valley of mediocrity stands a gloomy castle overhung with damp weeds and moss. It looks like one of those desolate places where superstition has fabled that old giant used to live--it is called "the house of mourning." We have, most of us, to go alternately to each of these houses. Sometimes we are rejoicing in "the house of feasting." At other times we are weeping in the castle of mourning, hanging down our heads like bulrushes and crying, "Alas, alas!"

Standing thus, in the middle of the plain, as I profess to do this morning, I am about to speak to you of both those places--of that fantastic structure there and of the gloomy castle here. And though bright-eyed cheerfulness would prompt me to say that "it is better to go to the house of feasting than to go to the house of mourning," with the Word of Inspiration before me I trust to be able to show that "the Preacher" spoke the Truth of God when he said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting."

In order that I may set this Truth of God in as clear a light as possible, I shall first invite you to go with me to "the house of feasting"' Then to "the house of mourning"' And after that we will examine two or three verses which succeed the text and look at the wise man's reasons for preferring "the house of mourning" to "the house of

feasting."

I. First, WE WILL GO TO "THE HOUSE OF FEASTING," and I am sure that I shall have abundance of company if I invite you to go there!

You never need go alone to a feast. Simply blow the trumpet of announcement. Simply tell the people we are going to "the house of feasting" and they are all ready to go there! There is a joyous spark in every man's breast which at once ignites his soul and he says, "If you are about to go to a feast, I will go with you! If there is joy in any cup, let me drink of it!" I am going to "the house of feasting" and I shall take you to it in three steps. We shall go to the house of sinful feasting, first of all. Then to the house of innocent feastingand, after that, we will go to the house of spiritual feasting.

I trust that we shall find something good in some of those houses, but we shall find nothing as good as in "the house of mourning."

We are going, first of all, to the house of sinful feasting. No, we are not going inside, but we will look at the outside of the house and hear a little of its history. I would have none of you cross the threshold of that place! But we are going together up the side of the hill to that "house of feasting." What a crowd I have around me and I seem to be half ashamed of myself! There is the low drunkard and here comes the vile profligate--and they are going to the same house. "Where are you going, Drunkard?" I ask. "I am going to the house of feasting," he says. "And you, bloated one, where are you going?" "I am going to the house of feasting." I begin to be ashamed of my company. I fear that whatever the house may be, the people going there are not very choice spirits, and I hardly like to proceed further. I begin to think that the gloomy "house of mourning" is better than "the house of feasting" after all, considering the company that frequent it. I fear that I must turn back at once--I cannot enter there, for I love good company. I

would rather go to "the house of mourning" with the children of God! I would rather be chained in a dungeon, wrist to wrist with a Christian, than I would live forever with the wicked in the sunshine of happiness! The company I meet makes me suspect that it is true that "the house of mourning" is better than "the house of feasting."

Now I have got to the gate of this palace. I have climbed the hill and stand there, but before I enter, I want to know something of the history of those who have gone there. I will not go in until I know whether there is any hope of my returning. The house is comely and good outside, but I want to know whether it is all that it seems. I want to know if there is that happiness there which it professes to have--and I ask them to bring me out the records of the house. They bring me out the roll wherein is kept a record of the persons who have gone there. I turn it over and I resolve that I will never go into the house, for the list of persons who have gone there is a catalog of woe!

I will just tell of you one or two cases of persons who went to this house of feasting. Or rather, let me tell it to you in another way by reminding you that most of the awful catastrophes that have ever happened in this world have happened

to men when they have been in "the house of feasting."[A reference to the first page of this Sermon will show that it was preached when Mr. Spurgeon was only just 20 years of age. Readers may be interested in a list of later Sermons by him upon some of the incidents here mentioned. They are as follows--NOAH--See Sermon #823, Volume 14--NOAH'S FLOOD. SAMSON--See Sermon #224, Volume 4--SAMSON CONQUERED and #1939, Volume 33--SHAVED AND SHORN, BUT NOT BEYOND

HOPE] It is a fact which I will prove in a moment or two, that the most terrible calamities that have ever come upon man, or on the world, have happened in the house of mirth. Where was the world when

Noah entered into the ark? Where was it when God rent the clouds and opened the windows of Heaven and sent down waterfalls from the skies? Is it not written, "They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark"? What were the Israelites doing when the plague came and smote them, so that their carcasses fell in the wilderness? Is it not written, "While the flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague"? Where were Job's sons and daughters when the great wind came from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house? They "were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house." Where was Samson when he lost his strength? He was in the house of sinful pleasure, lying asleep with his head in Delilah's lap. What had Nabal been doing when "his heart died within him and he became as a stone"? Inspiration says that he had been feasting--"he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk." Who slew Amnon? Did not Absalom's servants slay him at a feast? Turn to the melancholy catastrophes that you find recorded in Holy Writ and you will find that almost every one of them happened at a feast!

So, throughout the whole history of nations, I might tell you instance after instance in which a feast has been a real funeral, for the most terrible calamity has followed. There is, however, one instance which I must not pass by without describing it more fully than those at which I have briefly hinted. There was a feast, once, such as I think was scarcely ever seen before or since. Ten thousand lamps lit up the gorgeous palace! The king sat on his lofty throne and around him were his wives and concubines, and the princes and lords of his realm. They ate, they drank--the bowls were filled to the

brim and emptied again and again! And merrily the hours danced on--wild was the Bacchanalian shout, and loud the lascivious song. They drank yet more deeply and invoked curses upon the God of Jacob. The king sent for the gold and silver vessels from the Temple at Jerusalem and they poured into them their unhallowed liquors. They drank and drank again, and the merry shout rang through the hall!! The violin and harp were there, and all sorts of music sounded loud and long. But listen! Listen! Listen! This is the last feast that Babylon shall ever see! Even now her enemies are at her gates. They come! They come! O Belshazzar, read the writing on the wall! "You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting. [See Sermon #257, Volume 5--THE SCALES OF JUDGMENT] Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." O Belshazzar, stop your feasting! Look, the shaft of God! The death-shaft is whizzing through the air! It has pierced his heart--he falls dead--and with him great Babylon falls! That feast was a feast of death! It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of such "feasting" as that! Here is a melancholy proof of the assertion I made, that most of the terrible calamities that have ever happened to men have happened in "the house of feasting."

Here is another house. I have read your record, O mistress of the house! I say, Woman, I have read your record and it is enough for me--I need not cross your threshold! I do not want to see your magnificent temple. I never wish to sit in your splendid halls. Rather would I sleep nightly in my shroud and sit on my coffin--and have my gravestone in the wall of my study and live in a vault forever--than I would enter that "house of feasting." O God, may I be kept from sinful mirth! May I be kept from the house of sinful feasting! May I never be tempted to cross that threshold! O young men who are enchanted by its gaiety,

charmed by its music, stay away, stay away, for every plank in the floor is rotten, every stone that is there is dug from the quarries of Hell! And if you enter into that woman's mansion, you shall find that her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death! "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting"--the house of sinful feasting.

But, my Friends, there is a "house of feasting" to which every Christian may go. You heard my prayer, just now, that I might never cross the threshold of the house of sinful feasting. But there is a "house of feasting" to which I would invite all Christians.

Christianity never was intended to make men miserable. On the contrary, it has a tendency to make them happy. There are feasts in which Christians may indulge! There are times of feasting when Christians may eat and drink and may make their soul merry within them. Rejoice, O Christian, that you are not shut out from all banquets! Though yonder door is marked with a plague spot, there is another where you may go--start not back, for Christ Himself went there. One of the first houses that we know that Jesus entered was "the house of feasting." He was at "a marriage in Cana of Galilee," and there He turned the water into wine, [See Sermons #225 and #226, Volume 5--satan's banquet and THE FEAST OF THE LORD and #1556, Volume 26--THE WATERPOTS AT CANA] so there are feasts to which Christians may go. There are bowls out of which they may drink. There are meats of which they may eat. There are places where they may rejoice! Christians are not bound to give up pleasures that are innocent, but pleasures that are sinful! There are pleasures they may enjoy, there are feasts where the drugged cup of the drunkard is never found, where the song of lust is never heard, where the obscene word is never uttered--I have seen such feasts, feasts of which God, Himself, approves--feasts where every heart was full of love

and every soul was full ofjoy! We were mirthful, we were happy and yet we sinned neither in our hearts nor with our lips.

Let me notice one or two feasts that are not sinful, but in which we may indulge. There is the family feast. Ah, the family meeting is a pleasant thing when, once in the year, the father, who has his sons far away in business, invites them all to come to his house. There is a happy family, whether it is great or small! They meet around him and the old man blesses God that he is spared to see his children. Oh, what hallowed mirth that is, when each is there and sees his brothers and sisters all around! Perhaps there may be grandchildren, but that only increases the joy. Such feasts I have seen and I trust I may live to see many, when I can meet my brothers and sisters and can sit with them, and my father and mother, and feel that scattered as we have been, there is yet a home where we can all come and meet together and be happy! Such feasts as these are allowable.

Again, there is the feast of brotherly kindness. Such a feast as Joseph made for his brothers in Egypt. I wish there were more brotherly kindness in some families. It is hard when brother hates brother, when families are severed from each other. Born of the same mother, how can you quarrel? Having had the same father's instructions, having been rocked in the same cradle, having played under the same roof, and run in the same garden, how can you differ now? Oh, it would be better if there were more brotherly love and such feasts as Joseph made, which are allowable, when we can meet together and pour our hearts into each other's and talk of Jesus!

Then again, there are feasts of hospitality--and such feasts are not only allowable but commendable--such as Abraham made when he saw three men standing by his tent door. He had a calf killed, cakes prepared and spread a banquet for them to eat and, thereby, "entertained angels

unawares." Feasts such as we find Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, made when Jesus came to their house at Bethany--such feasts of hospitality are good things! They must not come too often. They must not be misused, but it is well to entertain the children of God! It is well to receive the wayfarer. This Christians ought to do more than they do now--and so be "given to hospitality."

There are, again, feasts of charity, such as Matthew made when he invited a great number of publicans and sinners [See Sermon #2889, Volume 50--CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS] to meet Jesus at his house. And I am sure that where my Master went, I never need be ashamed to go! I have gone into some persons' houses, before I came to London, that I should have felt ashamed to enter if they had not invited me on a Sabbath. I have stepped in there for the purpose of giving them religious advice. Some have said, "What? Going into thathouse?" Yes, and quite right, too! "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." I have gone after "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and I have won their hearts because I went there. I have talked to them of their sins but, had I stayed away, there would have been something of this spirit, "Stand by, for I am holier than you! I cannot enter your house because you chanced, on such-and-such a day, to sin." But when I go and talk to a man and lay my hand on his shoulder and ask him questions, he does not mind telling out his state of mind when I am under his own roof--and when I am gone, he says, "That man is not ashamed to speak to his fellows, after all, though he is a preacher." Make feasts of charity, sometimes, and invite the poor to them. I will tell you the best dinner party that you can have. If you have "the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind," sitting around your table, you do more honor to your dining room than you would by having a company of princes and nobles!

But, Beloved, good as "the house of mourning" is, excellent as its shades may be, mark well that Solomon does not say that, "the house of mourning" is morallybetter than "the house of feasting," or that there is more virtue in weeping than in rejoicing! Yet he does say that "it is better to go to the house of mourning"--it is better to sit by the side of the widow, it is better to take the fatherless child on your knee, it is better to sit down and weep with those that weep than it is to go to the pavilion of happiness and rejoice with those that rejoice. With such hearts as ours, it is better. Were we perfect, it would be equally good, but since we are inclined to evil, it is better that we should "go to the house of mourning." God has made man upright, but the hand of sin has pushed us from the perpendicular and we stand like the leaning tower of Pisa, inclined to the earth and threatening to fall! It is right, then, that, as we are inclined to sin, we should likewise be made to bend to sorrow.

Now, Beloved, we must very hastily make a third visit "to the house of feasting." And it will be better than either of the other two--better than the first because it is not sinful--better than the second because it is more spiritual. Have I not often gone to the spiritual "house of feasting," and there feasted on the dainties of eternal love? Have I not soared, as on the wings of eagles, far beyond the clouds, beyond that glowing firmament where the stars are glittering, beyond that house where the sun strips himself of his garments and like a giant, starts upon his race? Have I not looked into Heaven, itself, and gone near the very Throne of God in ecstasy of joy, mounting up beyond all the troubles and trials of this mortal life? Yes, and so have you, Beloved! Sometimes when God has given you the spirit of rejoicing, you have "rejoiced with unspeakable joy and full of glory." The spouse said of her Beloved, "He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner

over me was love." Have not you also been to that banqueting house? Have you not tasted the delicious food and other delicacies which God alone prepares? Have you not had a share of the choice things that are stored up for the saints of God and tasted the "wines on the lees well refined"? Yes, doubtless you have--and you have said, just as Peter did, "Master, it is good for us to be here." Look at that passage of Scripture, (Luke 9:33), for it is added, directly afterwards, "not knowing what he said." And you and I have said, "O God, it is good to be here! It is sweet to dwell upon the top of the Delectable Mountains! It is blessed to sit in such places of security!" And we have said, "Lord, let not this joy be merely for a week, but for a year! Yes, let me have yearsof the sunshine of Your Countenance--no, more--let me have an eternity of it!" Yet, like Peter, you know not what we say.

Yet, Beloved, it really does seem a strange thing that I should have to say, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting," for I am sure that I do not like "the house of mourning" half as well as this "house of feasting." I would sooner meditate on the name of Jesus and drink drops of honey from this well of sweetest nectar! I would sooner live on Calvary's summit, or sit forever on the top of Tabor, or dwell on Pisgah and see the--

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood."

I would rather live forever in ecstasy of delight and see the river Jordan rolling there and, far beyond, the Everlasting City with its pearly gates and its shining golden streets! But, Beloved, it must not be. We would rather have it so, but it is better for us "to go to the house of mourning" than it is to live forever in, or even "to go to the house of feasting."

II. Now, we are to leave "the house of feasting" and "GO TO THE HOUSE OF MOURNING."

There it is--a gloomy place up a steep rock covered with moss--and we MUST go there. The great fisher, Destiny, stands there and, with hook in each man's flesh, he drags us on where he pleases. There is an iron chain that links us all together and binds us in the bonds of everlasting destiny--and go we must where that chain drags us! We cannot resist and we must "go to the house of mourning." Therefore, O child of mirth, lay aside your merriment and come with me into the valley of tears and wait a little while in "the house of mourning."

Some of you, my dear Friends, have been in "the house of mourning" this week. And I have been called to go with you. You have been there, personally, because of the loss of your friends. You have been into the deep caverns of "the house of mourning." How often have the mourners gone about the streets and we have seen the solemn funeral march through our crowded thoroughfares! So often have I seen it that it begins to be a common thing--so often have I seen it, during the last month or so, that it seems almost an old thing and it looks as if earth were going to wrack and ruin--and all the bonds of society were about to be dissolved. I say that some of you may be suffering the loss of your friends and may be saying, "No others have suffered as we have." Say not so--there have been others who have been quite as sorely bereaved as you have been. The path of sorrow has been well trodden. Princes have been there. Nobles have been there-- earls and dukes have jostled in the crowd with the poor man who had nothing to lose but his one child and his yet unburied wife! Death has touched, with his impartial hands, the palace of the prince and the cottage of the peasant. Say not, therefore, that God has dealt harshly with you. The gravel and the wormwood may be in your mouth, but others, as well as you, have had to eat those gravel stones and to drink that wormwood. You are not alone. Alas, far from it!

Many of us have gone "to the house of mourning" simply as visitors to console others. And I can say from the deepest recesses of my soul, that I think I have sorrowed, at certain periods this week, almost as much as if I had been myself the real mourner when at different hours I have been with the dying. Only last Friday, just before the clock struck twelve at midnight, I was in a cottage, by the bedside of a dying woman. And often have I gone direct from one deathbed to another. It is not a pleasant thing, but it is my duty and I find a reward in it. Let me say, do not fear "to go to the house of mourning" as visitors--go and comfort those who are distressed. Why should we tremble? Go, everyone of you! There is an imperative duty on every member of this Church to visit the sick. We do not do that as much as we ought to do. You must all help me in this matter. I met a man in the street only yesterday who complained that I had not been to see his wife, but he excused me, for he said he knew that, single-handed, I could not visit everybody. You must go and help the mourning and give them comfort in every way that you can!

Now, we are going, for a minute or two this morning, "to the house of mourning." Let me, first of all, before we enter that house, do as I did with "the house of feasting"--let me ask for the record roll and see whether it is true that this house is better than the other. Where is the roll? Bring it out, sad maiden, you who are clad in black, with weeping eyes and arching eyebrows. There is the list. There are some names there of those who have not been much profited by adversity. I see the name of Ahaz, [See Sermon #2993, Volume 52--"THAT KING AHAZ"] and I read, "In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord." I see another name there, the name of Jonah, who said to the Lord, "I do well to be angry, even unto death," because his gourd had been taken away. I see the name of Israel, to

whom God said, "Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more." And there is Ephraim, of whom the Lord said, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." [See Sermon #1140, Volume 19--LET HIM ALONE] There are names of others in that catalog who have not profited by bereavement. I see some such here this morning. O ungodly men and women, God has spoken not only once, but twice! No, more--He has taken out His rod--He has bruised you, yet you have not kissed the hand that has smitten you. He will say next, "Angel of Justice, you have used My rod upon that incorrigible wretch, but he yields not! Now draw your sword and cut down the rebel! He who spurns My rod shall feel My sword." What do you think of yourselves? Have any of you laughed at God's rod? Are any of you as hardened as you were before you were afflicted? Are you still resolved to go on in your wicked ways and to persevere in your transgressions? If so, assuredly the sword of the Lord "is sharpened and also furbished," and it shall cut through soul and body to your everlasting destruction unless you repent!

How I rejoice to see, on the other hand, that there are some who have been profited in this "house of mourning." There is the name of David, who said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Your Word." Further down there stands the name of Manasseh, of whom we read, "When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." I find many names of others who have been benefited by going "to the house of mourning." There is the name of Job, to whom the Lord gave twice as much as he had before. That is a good list. And when I look at it, I think that it is better to go to this house than to "the house of feasting."

Before I leave that matter entirely, I must make one brief remark, and

that is that there is a "house of mourning" to which I would have you go every day. Oh, it is indeed a place of woe! It is indeed a place of agony! It is indeed a place of suffering! That spot is called Gethsemane. This is a place of mourning to which I would have you often go. It is the Garden of Gethsemane, [See Sermon #693, Volume 12--THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL] where the mighty Jesus, the Son of God, bent His knees in agony and wrestled with His Father. He said to His disciples, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death." And "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground."--

"Gethsemane, the olive press! And why so called let Christians guess."

Gethsemane, with its gloomy olive shades and its dark brook--truly, the King Himself has gone over the Brook Kedron--O Gethsemane, your bitter herbs are sweet to me! I could dwell in your gloom forever--

"You are Heaven on earth to me, Lonesome, dark Gethsemane." I have been there and I still love to visit that sacred spot. I never feel so holy, so really happy, as when I sit in that "house of mourning" and see my Savior wrestling for my sins. It is better to go to Gethsemane, "the house of mourning," than to any place of feasting in the world!

III. Now, dear Friends, time will only permit me just to mention THE ARGUMENTS OF THE WISE MAN HERE I find that I have a very large subject, and I might preach a much longer sermon, but I never like to detain you beyond the usual time.

Let us read what Solomon says. "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting." First, "for that is the end of all men." Secondly, "the living will lay it to his heart." Thirdly, "by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." And fourthly, "the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning."

"It is better to go to the house of mourning" then, first of all, because that is the end to which we must come. We must die. There is no

discharge in this war. The decree is determined in Heaven, it is written like the laws of the Medes and Persians so that it cannot be altered--that each must go to the house of mourning--and must die. "It is greatly wise for us to talk with our last hours." We have heard of a man who had a skeleton in his bedroom--he was a wise man if he used it wisely. We know that the Egyptians, at every feast, had a skeleton at the end of the table--and they were wise men if they thought rightly of it. It is great wisdom to make Death our everyday companion. The horses that they use in war are, at first, very much afraid of the smoke and the noise, but I am told that they take those horses into the barrack-yards, first, and fire into their faces with powder until they are so used to it that they will easily go into the battle. So we ought often to accustom our souls to the thought of death, to make death a familiar thing, to talk with it every day. How can we do it better than by going to "the house ofmourning" where our friends lie dead?--

"Our dying friends come over us like a cloud,
To dampen our brainless ardors and abate
That glare of life, which often blinds the wise.
Our dying fiends are pioneers to smooth
Our rugged pass to death--to break those bars Of terror and abhorrence nature throws 'Cross our obstructed way--and thus to make Welcome as safe yon port from every storm."

So says Young, and he says well. It is well to think of our lost friends and to "go to the house of mourning."

Again, the wise man says, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart " If you go to the "house of feasting," there is nothing there to lay to heart. It is all froth--it is lighter than vanity--it is a bubble. Touch it and it vanishes. But

in "the house of mourning," there is something solemn which will bear to be touched and still endure. In the darkness there seems to be something more solid than in sunshine. I feel that when I "go to the house of mourning," I get something to bring away and lay to my heart. If I "go to the house of feasting," it does not touch my heart. I wear the festal garb--I put on those things that are seemly on such occasions and there it ends--I have learned nothing to lay to heart.

Yet again, the wise man says, "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."It is positively a good thing for us to be sad. When the springs that bind heart to earth are cut, then we can soar. We are chained to earth, but there is a water in these eyes, which, like aquafortis, can eat away the iron and set us free. The heart is made better by sorrow because it is made more free from earth. It is made better by sorrow, again, because it becomes more sensitive, more impressed with the lessons of God's Word. We can shut our ears to the voice of God in mirth, but in "the house of mourning" we can hear every whisper. It is better to hear of Him in this "house of mourning." The noise of the song drowns the still small voice of God, but in "the house of mourning" you can hear every footfall, even the voice of time, the ticking of the clock which says, "Now, now, now!"

Now to conclude, Solomon says, "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning." There are some places we ought to go just as many people go to Church and Chapel. They go to Chapel and leave their hearts at their shop. If you have done so this morning, you had better send for your hearts before you go home, my Friends. But there are some places, I say, to which we ought to go without our hearts, and we ought to do so whenever we go to "the house of feasting." Perhaps, in some sense, we may have our hearts there, but we had better not have them there, or they are sure to get somewhat contaminated. But when we "go to the

house of mourning," we may take our hearts there because we are sure to bring them back. When we "go to the house of feasting," we are inclined to say, "Stay here, my heart. This is a pleasant place." But when we "go to the house of mourning," we say, "We will not leave our hearts in that gloomy place." When I get to "the house of mourning," I can speak out--but in "the house of feasting," I hold my tongue as with a bridle. In "the house of mourning" I can speak with a bereaved Brother and Sister. I can talk freely with them. I can talk my heart out there, I can speak my soul out there and need not hold it in. I can speak my Master's dear name and tell of the wonders of His Grace and enlarge upon His wondrous preciousness.

Finally, take this Truth of God home. You had better "go to the house of mourning" than to any place of feasting. Better to be clad in the drapery of woe and sit in the weeds of sorrow. Better to be girt with sackcloth and cover your head with ashes than to be feasting and dancing, or even enjoying the rightful and lawful pleasures of this world. "It is better to go to the house of mourning." God has said it, so let not unbelief deny what God positively declares. Unto all of you who know not how soon any one of you may be there, I speak in the name of the Lord and I say, "Go to the house of mourning." In a little while, Death may be again in our midst, as he has often been of late. Even now he is flapping his dark wings around this gallery and looking in each pew to see who is there. He is floating across the pews and saying, "Where is the man or woman I am to have?" If God points Death to the man, the man surely dies. In any event, you may be called "to go to the house of mourning" very soon in some way or other--but say, when you get there, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting." If you get an invitation to a wedding and an invitation to a funeral, lay the funeral note on the top! Do not

disdain to go there, O child of God, for the Holy Spirit will so reveal Jesus by the bedside of the mourner that it will be to you a Bethel! O Sinner, ungodly and impenitent, neither "the house of mourning" nor "the house of feasting" can benefit you by itself! It is the power of the Holy Spirit, alone, that can give you life! It is Jesus alone who can make you a forgiven sinner! May this discourse be blessed to your souls and to the Triune God be Glory! Amen.

8 The House of Mourning and the House of Feasting Sermon #3108

Sowing and Reaping

(No. 3109)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7.

I FIND, on reference to Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, and to Calvin's Commentary on this passage, that both those learned expositors consider that this refers to the treatment of ministers by their people in the matter of their financial support. They very properly point out the connection between the 6th verse and the 7th--"Let him who is taught in the Word share with him who teaches in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." I suppose that there was a need for such an injunction in Paul's day--and there is a need for it now. There were some hearers of the Gospel, then, who contributed generously towards the maintenance of the preacher and the Apostle says that what they gave would be like sowing good seed in return for which God would give to them an abundant harvest. But there were others who gave sparingly and who would, therefore, have a proportionately small return.

But I feel sure that the Apostle had a wider range than that and that these words express a general principle-- "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." So I begin my discourse by reminding you that our present lives are of the utmost possible importance, for on these

winged hours hang eternal issues. Our present actions are not trifles, for they will decide our everlasting destiny. Everything we do is, to some extent, a sowing of which eternity will be the reaping.

I. So I pray you to notice, first, that our text tells as that GOD IS NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

Some trifle with God by holding, practically, if not theoretically, that there will not be rewards for virtue, nor punishment for sin--that one end will come alike to all--that whatever the dignity or the degradation of character may be, we shall all go to the same place and sleep there in oblivion. Or that if there isany future life, it will be common to us all and that, in fact, the whole question concerning the hereafter is a matter so utterly unimportant that we can afford to regard it with complete indifference!

But, dear Friends, it is not so. There is an Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent God--and He is the moral Governor of the universe. He will not see His laws broken with impunity, His name deferred, His Gospel despised, His Son rejected. He is intensely sensitive to the actions of mankind. He is not a god of granite or of steel. He takes note of the acts, words and even of the thoughtsof those whom He has created! And if they are finally impenitent, sooner or later He will say, as He did in Isaiah's day, "I will ease Me of My adversaries and avenge Me of My enemies."

Others seem to suppose that, even if there is a future, an eternity of rewards and punishments--the reaping of which this life is the sowing--a bare profession will suffice to save them. They appear to imagine that if they only compliment their Maker with an occasional "Thank God!" and utter a few words of mere formal prayer, and are not grossly licentious, but live tolerably decent lives, that will satisfy

God's requirements. Nothing can be more mistaken than such an idea as that! God in the highest heavens is Himself perfectly pure--His perfect Law is like Himself--and it is not for Him to accommodate His righteous Law to the wills of fallen man! Do not fancy that He will accept the mere external homage of your being. He must have your heart, soul, mind, and strength, or He will not be content. It is vain for anyone to attempt to mock God by supposing that anything will do for Him in place of that heart-surrender and heart-service that He demands.

There are others who seem to suppose that if they make a profession of religion, that will suffice. They think that if they attend the parish church or the dissenting chapel and subscribe regularly to religious and philanthropic societies, that is all that is required of them. That is how they mock God--that same God who came to the top of Sinai and there, amidst thunder and lightning--gave the Ten Commandments! But He is not to be satisfied by a bare profession of religion. To confess what we do not really feel is but to increase our sin--a hypocritical profession is a further aggravation of our sin. Does God accept your heartless sacrifices, your meaningless words and empty phrases? No! He is not to be mocked by mere outward religious forms and ceremonies.

Others imagine that God can be imposed upon by a formal compliment when they are near death. A man is dying and immediately the cry is, "Send for a minister!" They often send for a dissenting minister, though they have never attended his ministry! And they appear to imagine that by some sort of magic we can work wonders even for the poor creature who is probably unconscious before we get to him! And if he has not trusted in Christ before that time, no one can enable him to do it then. Yet his friends call us up in the middle of the night, thinking that we can do something for him. I am not now speaking of you who regularly hear the Gospel and who are, therefore, likely to know better--yet this

opinion is very generally held. But I loathe the idea of having anything of priestly power imputed to me. I have not an atom more power than any of you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ! I am only a preacher of the Gospel and I would gladly hear the Gospel message from any one of you! It is blasphemous to pretend that sacred unction can be imparted by a mortal man. You must yourselves repent and turn to God--I cannot do this for you. It is your own sowing, in this respect, that must bring you a blessed reaping--not anything that you can get a so-called "priest" or even a minister of the Gospel to sow for you! [See Sermon #1250, Volume 21--THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH]

II. Now, secondly, I want to remind you that GOD'S MORAL LAWS, AS WELL AS GOD, HIMSELF, ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

First, it is so in nature. If it were possible for God notto observe what man does, yet what man does is, of itself, full of a power which will be to him what the harvest is to the soil. And just what he sows, he will be sure to reap one of these days, or in eternity if not in time. If a man were to sow his field with garlic and expect to reap barley, he would be bitterly disappointed. If he were to sow tares, he might pray as long as he pleased for a crop of wheat, but he would not get it. God never so changes His Laws as to make tares come up wheat and He never will! The sowing always is, and always will be, the father of the reaping.

It is also so in Providence. A man is idle and neglects his business--he sleeps in the morning when he ought to be at work. He is dilatory and careless about his affairs and so, as the inevitable consequence, he goes from bad to worse and soon is a bankrupt. As he sows, so he reaps. Another indulges in the sins of the flesh. So, when you see him with a broken constitution and his whole being the very

incarnation of misery, you are not surprised. Another gambles and wastes all his substance and, sooner or later, he comes to beggary. As he sows, so he reaps. If a man is a drunkard, the poison he swallows will take effect sooner or later, however strong a constitution he may have.

As it is in nature, and in Providence, so it is in the general moral government of God. Does not a man's own conscience tell him to expect that what he does will come home to him? And though a man strives to lull his conscience to sleep, yet now and then it wakes up and shakes him with its thunders and causes him to be ill at ease. How is it that graceless men cannot bear to be alone? It is because conscience shakes them and makes them think of the future and dread still grater misery than they at present endure! Just suppose, for a moment, that this Law of God could be reversed and that I could now say to you, "You may sin as you like, and no evil consequences will follow." Could you imagine any proclamation which would spread such alarm and terror? Why, the very fabric of society would be shattered in such a state of things! Suppose that I had to say, "There is nothing better in being generous and noble than there is in meanness and vice." Why, it would be enough to put out the least spark of virtue that might be in existence anywhere! But we have not to talk in that immoral fashion. There is a God who judges actions, words and even thoughts--and "he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." God's Word, which is our ultimate Court of Appeal, tells us that in the great reaping time that is coming, Christ will "gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The Book of Revelation, foretelling the future, says that "the books were opened...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books,

according to their works." O you gay, light-hearted and frivolous ones, it is not we who say this, but it is the declaration of the Spirit of God that, after death, comes the judgment! And that, at that Judgment Seat you shall all appear! And for the acts committed in your lives you shall all be tried! And as your lives have been, so shall your eternal destiny be fixed!

III. This leads me to my third remark, which is that EVIL SOWING WILL BRING EVIL REAPING. "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." This is seen in the present result of certain sins. "He that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." By "the flesh" is meant our corrupt human nature in such sins as are mentioned in the 19th verse of the 5th Chapter of this Epistle, where we read, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." These are "the works of the flesh."

I am not going to expound this passage [Mr. Spurgeon's expositions of the whole passage, Galatians 5:13-26 will be found in Sermons #2632, Volume 45 and #2831, Volume 49] fully, but I want briefly to show you that there are four classes of sins mentioned here. First, Paul mentions sins of lust--adultery, which violates the most sacred ties--fornication, which defiles the body. Uncleanness, which is secret, not known to others, but which is fully known to God. Fleshly thoughts, fleshly words and fleshly acts--lasciviousness, the outward uncleanness which "society" condemns, yet often practices. He who is

doing any of these things is sowing to his flesh and he will, most surely, "of the flesh reap corruption." You who are true Christians, of course, hate all these things, as Jude says, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." But mind that you also hate all books in which these things are worked up into attractive narratives, for you cannot even casually glance at such books, much less read them, without polluting your whole being! But as for those who practice these sins, which the Apostle here enumerates, let them not dream that they can be saved while they continue to love that which God hates with a perfect hatred!

The next sins in the Apostle's black catalog are idolatry and witchcraft. Idolatry, which is forbidden by the Second Commandment--"You shall not make unto you 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: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me: and strewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My Commandments." To bow in worship before a so-called "altar," or a cross, or an image or picture of a saint, or before a real or supposed "holy" relic, or anything of the kind, is nothing but sheer idolatry! Yet multitudes are committing this great sin under the notion that they are doing God service! There is a form of idolatry which is not so gross as this, yet it is also sinful--the idolatry of loving ourselves, or our wife, or husband, or child, or father, or mother, or sister, or brother more than we love the Lord.

Then the Apostle mentions witchcraft, by which is intended all real or pretended communion with evil spirits or with the dead. Necromancy,

spiritualism and everything of the kind are absolutely forbidden to all who desire to "inherit the Kingdom of God." Then follows a third set of evils which may be classed under the head of sins of temper--"hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders"--all kinds of acts and forms of feeling which are not in harmony with Christian love. If you really want to sow to the flesh, you have only to make these things your own--if you give way to a contentious spirit, foster disagreements, are filled with hatred and envy so that you cannot bear to know that others prosper more than you, and desire to drag them down to your level--if you give way to bursts of passion, or indulge in backbiting, for that is strife--you are sowing to the flesh. I grieve to say that these evil things abound all around us but, O men and women of God, keep clear of all these things! Then, lastly, Paul mentions sins of appetite--"drunkenness, reveling and such like," for you must include gluttony with drunkenness. All who commit any of the sins in this long black catalog are sowing to the flesh and not to the Spirit! And when a man sows to the flesh what will the harvest be? "He shall of the flesh reap corruption"--putridity, rottenness, death! The sin that the sinner thought was sweet as honey turns bitter as gall to him. There are many men and women in this world who have lived in sin till it has become its own punishment. But if it is not so in this world, it will be so in the world to come!

What a dreadful thing sin is when it comes to the full! If there were no fire that shall never be quenched and no worm that shall never die, you need not need any worse Hell than that of wicked men by themselves, with nobody to control them, no public opinion to hold then in check! You need not even turn the devil in with them--just leave them to themselves, with no restraint upon their wickedness--and I can hardly imagine that Hell itself can be worse than those sinners would soon

become!

Ah, my Friend, if you go on living in sin, you will wake up, one day, surrounded by the fruition of your own guilt in all its awful enormity. On every hand the harvest of your sowing to the flesh will stare you in the face--and God will place in your hand a sharp sickle and will say to you, "Reap here! Reap there!" You will say, "I cannot do it." But you sowed it, so you must reap it! What terrible misery there will be for you there! Yet it will only be your own sin in its ripeness, your own transgression fully developed--and that awful harvesting will be infinitely more than you will be able to bear. "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." The man who gripped the widow's throat, the other day, and took away her few sticks of furniture, will look upon her tearful face to all eternity! The man who led a fellow creature to sin will see her pale sorrow-stricken face before him forever and ever! He may try to escape from it, but he will not be able to do so. Does that description fit anyone here? And does he complain that I am very personal in my remarks? That is what I am and what I mean to be, in the hope that he may repent of his great transgressions and, looking to Jesus upon the Cross, may receive forgiveness of his sins before it is too late!

IV. But now, lastly, I have something better to say, and that is that GOOD SOWING WILL BRING GOOD REAPING.

I hear someone object, "But is not that salvation by works? Do you not preach that salvation is all of Grace through faith in Jesus?" Yes, of course I do, but it is still true that good sowing will bring good reaping. But what sort of sowing do I mean? Why, the sowing that is mentioned in the verse following our text--"He that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." When a man sows to the

flesh, he deceives himself, for the flesh is his old fallen nature, and such sowing is nothing but evil! But to sow well is to sow under the influence of another Power and to sow in another manner! In fact it is, as the Apostle says, to "sow to the Spirit."

First, we must sow under the influence of another Power Sowing to the Spirit lifts our sowing altogether above the idea of human merit. He who sows to the Spirit is led and guided by the Spirit of God--led to repent of sin, led to believe in Jesus, led to a new life, led to holiness, led to sanctification and, therefore, he does not take any credit to himself for anything in him that is good, for he knows that it was all implanted there by the Holy Spirit! Ah, my dear Hearers, if we would have a good harvest, we must give up sowing to ourselves and must sow to the Spirit. And the Spirit is freely given to all who seek His aid at the foot of Christ's Cross. Jesus said to His disciples, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" May the Spirit of God come upon you and prompt you so to pray that you may truly sow to the Spirit as to be regenerated in heart and renewed in life, for then you shall most assuredly "reap life everlasting."

We are also to sow in another manner When the Jews, at Capernaum, asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" He answered, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." That is the first thing for you to do if you wish to sow to the Spirit--"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." When you have rested upon the great atoning work which Christ forever finished on the Cross of Calvary, you will begin to walk in newness of life and you will seek in all things to be conformed to God's will. So you "shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

In verses 22 and 23 of the 5th Chapter of this Epistle, the Apostle tells what "the fruit of the Spirit" is. Firstly, "love." You are not really saved if you have not a loving spirit. Secondly, "joy." Christians ought to exhibit a joyful cheerfulness, so that all around might see how happy they are. Thirdly, "peace"--the opposite of variance. Fourthly, "long-suffering"--patience under provocation. Fifthly, "gentleness"--consideration for others, readiness to help them in any way that we can. Sixthly, "goodness"--not any holiness of which you boast, but such "goodness" as other people can see and admire. Seventhly, "faith"--reliability, keeping good faith with others, so that they know that your word is as good as your bond. Eighthly, "meekness"--that does not push itself to the front and does not easily get provoked.

Ninthly, "temperance"--which keeps every passion under control, not only with respect to meats and drinks, but with regard to everything else.

Now, if you thus sow to the Spirit, you will "reap life everlasting." The Apostle does not say that you will reap everlasting existence, but everlasting life, which is quite another thing. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." That is the perfection of love and joy--you shall have that, and you shall ascend to successive stages of holiness and virtue through the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus and the sanctification of the Spirit--and one of these days you shall throw out the last trace of the slough of sin! And then your disembodied spirit shall dance before the flaming eyes of Him who is purer than the sun and, by-and-by, "the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout," and your redeemed body shall rise, purified like the body of your own dear Lord and Savior, which could not see corruption because it contained no trace of sin--and then your

perfected body and soul and spirit shall triumph and reign with Jesus here below in His millennial Glory! And after that you shall have the fullness of "life everlasting" in the Glory yet to be revealed. All this honor will be given to you, not because you have deserved it, but of the free, Sovereign Grace of God. It is only given to those in whom there is the Spirit of God and who, therefore, in their lives manifest that holiness of character, "without which no man shall see the Lord." May the Lord graciously give to all of us His Holy Spirit and may we all meet in Heaven to part no more forever, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 80; MATTHEW 9:36-38; 10.

Psalm 80:1-3. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You that lead Joseph like a flock; You that dwell between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up Your strength and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved. To whom could Israel go, in times of distress, but unto her God? It was well that her Psalmists should teach her thus to pray. Notice the form of this prayer--"Come and save us. Turn us again, O God." We cannot be saved except by being turned from the ways of sin into the path of holiness. But who shall turn us? What power can reverse the current of the human soul? As well might Niagara begin to ascend of its own accord as for man to turn to God except as God turns him!

4-7. O LORD God ofHosts, how long will You be angry against the prayer of Your people? You feed them with the bread of tears, and give them tears to drink in great measure. You make us a strife unto our neighbors and our enemies laugh among themselves. Turn us again, O God ofHosts, and cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved. Israel was evidently in very deep distress, yet still God's own. It is no

evidence of our having ceased to be God's people that we are made to drink deep draughts of tears. We are not to imagine that God has cast us off because He chastens us. No, rather are we to argue the other way, "for whom the Lord loves, He chastens."

8-15. You have brought a vine out of Egypt: You have cast out the heathen, and planted it. You prepared room before it, and did cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why have You then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood does waste it, and the wild beast of the field does devour it. Return, we beseech You, O God ofHosts: look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself'Notice how a soul, in deep distress, usually gets to God. Under some aspect or other, by some way or another, the heart gropes its way till it finds Him out. If poor Israel is as a vineyard given up to the wild boar of the woods, there is still hope through that "righteous Branch" of whom the Lord said to Jeremiah, "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely."

16, 17. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of Your Countenance. Let Your hands be upon the Man of Your right hand, upon the Son of Man whom You made strong for Yourself "If You will not hear us, yet hear Him. If You will put no honor upon us, we will ask You to put the highest honors upon Him. Save us for His sake. Deliver Your vineyard from the wild boar and restore the hedges that have been broken down, for is not this the vineyard of red wine which all belongs to Him?"

18, 19. So will not we go back from You: quicken us, and we will call

upon Your name. Turn us again, O LORD God ofHosts, cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Matthew 9:36. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. The sight that Christ saw, deeply affected His heart--"He was moved with compassion for them." The expression is a very strong one indicating that His whole being was stirred with an emotion which put every faculty into forceful movement.

37, 38. Then said He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest. Pretenders were many, but real "laborers" were few. God only can thrust out or "send forth laborers." Man-made ministers are useless, yet they abound all around us--but where are the instructive soul-winning ministries? Let us plead with the Lord of the harvest to care for His own harvest and to thrust out His own harvestmen.

Matthew 10:1. And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. They were first Christ's disciples and then He sent them forth as His Apostles, clothed with power and authority very similar to His own.

2-4. Now the names of the twelve Apostles are these. The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. The 12 Apostles linked the spiritual Israel with the 12 tribes of the literal Israel which had typified it. They are mentioned in pairs, but this last couple is not a pair, for Simon the Zealot had little in

common with the cool, cunning, calculating Judas Iscariot. There were only 12 Apostles, yet one of them was a traitor! Among the leaders of the nominal Christian Church today, is it possible that there is one traitor in every twelve?

5, 6. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter you not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This was "a mission to the Jews" only--meant for the general awakening of the chosen nation. It was a mission from Israel to Israel--not to the Gentiles, and not even to the people who were most like the Jews--"Into any city of the Samaritans enter you not." After our Lord's Resurrection, He gave the wider commission, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

7, 8. And as you go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give. They were to be medical missionaries--preaching the Gospel and healing the sick--and it was all to be done "freely."

9, 10. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.The people at that time were favorably disposed to our Lord and thus His Apostles might expect treatment of a more generous kind than can be looked for in these times. Certain of these regulations were altered on a subsequent mission, when the people were less favorably disposed.

11-15. And into whatever city or town you shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till you go thence. And when you come into an house, salute it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

And whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.Disclaim all fellowship with those who will not have fellowship with your Lord. Let them know that you leave them because they refuse to receive your Master's message. If they continue to reject the Savior, their doom will be even more terrible than that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

16. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. "Behold, I send you forth." What power there is in the word of the King of kings! "'I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.' You are like sheep, helpless and defenseless; yet 'I send you forth,' and therefore it is right for you to go even into 'the midst of wolves.'"

We might have imagined that the wolves would have devoured the sheep, yet, at the present time, there are a great many more sheep in the world than there are wolves. Sheep have always been weak and helpless, yet they have multiplied! Wolves have always been strong and savage, yet they have diminished until there is not one of them left in this land. And in many other countries the same thing has happened. So, the weak, the helpless who come under the care of "our Lord Jesus, that Great

Shepherd of the sheep," shall be preserved from all the wolves that would devour them, and even from the devil, who, "as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour."

16. Be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."Be you harmless because you are like sheep, but be you wise as serpents because you have to dwell with wolves." You, too, Beloved, ought to be very wise because of the wisdom which has been imparted to you by the Master who has sent you forth. And you ought to use your best wits in

His service, yet never use that wisdom with any ill intent, for the Christ who sends you does no harm to men, but only good.

17, 18. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. "Do not try to live on popular applause, 'but beware of men.' Expect ill treatment from them. If they can persecute you with the scourge, they will do so, but if that is out of their power, they will persecute you with their tongues. You will be misunderstood, misrepresented, maligned--expect such treatment for I, your Lord and Master, have had it before you."

19, 20. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you. It is very remarkable what wise answers many of the martyrs often gave. Illiterate men, when confronted by the learned ones of the earth, completely baffled them! And weak women nonplused their assailants and judges. A notable instance of that is recorded in the history of the brave Anne Askew. After they had tortured her upon the rack and her poor body was full of pain, she sat upon the cold slab of her prison and put such questions to the popish bishops and inquisitors as utterly confounded them! And Christ, still by His Holy Spirit, enables His faithful followers to triumph over all the craft and malice of men.

21, 22. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endures to the end shall be saved.When we give ourselves to Christ, we must do it without any reserve and be

prepared to follow Him even to the bitter end if necessary. If all men should forsake us--if death should be our portion because of our allegiance to Christ--we dare not draw back! To do that would lead to our destruction--but to endure unto the end--this is eternal salvation!

23. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for verily I say unto you, you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man has come.I suppose Christ here alludes to that wondrous coming of His in the destruction of Jerusalem. They had but a short time in which to evangelize that land, so they had to be quick in gathering out the Lord's elect before He came in that terrible judgment. This same Truth of God ought to quicken the action of every servant of Christ today. Be quick about your work, for your Master is on the road and will soon be here. You may almost hear the rattling of His chariot wheels, for long ago He said, "Surely I come quickly." The trumpets are beginning to sound and you will scarcely have gone over all the cities of the world before the Son of Man shall come unless you hasten with the great task which He has entrusted to you.

24, 25. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord. They that have called the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?I do not know what worse names they might give to us than they gave to our Master, but, no doubt, they might do so, for as the servants are worse and less than their master, the world might, if it acted upon the rule of proportion, apply much worse names to us than it has ever done to our blessed Lord and Master. Are we to be esteemed and reverenced in a world that persecuted and crucified Christ, our Lord and Savior? Be not so foolish as to think so! And when you receive scorn and contumely, accept it as being the lot of a follower of Christ.

26. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known. When men slander you, they cannot take away your good name before God. There will be a resurrection of reputations as well as a resurrection of bodies. And good men, though their good names lie deeply buried, will certainly have a resurrection. There is Wycliffe--how little, comparatively, has ever been said about probably the greatest man singe the time of the Apostle Paul! But his name and fame will yet arise and all history will ring with the praise of it. Depend upon it, no man who has faithfully served his Savior, shall miss the honor which he has truly deserved. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father"--so be content to wait.

27. What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.There must first be that quiet lonely hearing--that calm sitting at the Master's feet to learn the lesson. And then afterwards must come the brave telling of it out--speaking out though kings should hear and never being silenced because of sinful shame.

28-31. And fear not those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father's will But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear you not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. Do you not see the force of this argument? These little creatures that are of so little account among men are watched over by your Heavenly Father! They cannot die--no, they cannot even light upon the ground without your Father noting it! Can He then forget you who are worth so much more than many sparrows? Will He not deal very gently, and tenderly, and considerately with you?

32, 33. Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father who is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven. You acknowledge Christ here and Christ will acknowledge you there. Dare to bear reproach for Him and you shall be glorified together with Him, by-and-by. But if the tenor of your life is that you do not claim Christ--if you practically live as if there were no Savior, ignoring Him, depriving Him of the trust which He deserves and the honor which He has earned--then, when He comes in the Glory of the Father, He will say, "you never knew Me, and I never knew you. Depart!"

34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. That is to say, the first consequence of Christ's coming will not be that we shall lead easy and comfortable lives, but, on the contrary, He comes to enlist us in His army and to make soldiers of us--and soldiers have to endure many hardships.

35, 36. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. Many of the children of God have found this to be true, greatly to their sorrow. No foes can wound us so sorely as those of our own household. They get at our hearts and cut us to the very quick, while others can only give us flesh wounds. Well, it must be so. Wherever light comes, darkness will be opposed to it. Truth will always find error ready to devour it if it can. Expect this, and half the bitterness of it will be gone when it comes because you expected it. "To be forewarned" here "is to be forearmed."

37-42. He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy ofMe: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not his cross and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me.

He that finds his life shall lose it; and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it. He that receives you receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him that sent Me. He that receives a Prophet in the name of a Prophet shall receive a Prophet's reward, and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever shall give unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.God's great reward for little service are given, not of debt, but of Grace, "according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus."

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

Faintness and Refreshing

(No. 3110)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." 1 Kings 19:8.

[An Exposition of the greater part of the chapter from which the text is taken is given with Sermon #2828, Volume 49.]

I. My first observation upon this passage is that THE GREATEST BELIEVERS ARE SOMETIMES SUBJECT TO FAINTING FITS.

The Apostle James tells us that "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are." And this fact was very clearly manifest on the occasion to which our text refers. Otherwise he seemed, in most things, to be superior to the ordinary run of men, a sort of iron Prophet--what if I call him THE PROPHET OF FIRE--the man whose whole life seemed to be a flash of flame--a mighty, burning, ecstatic love and zeal towards the cause of God? But Elijah had his flaws, even as the sun has its spots. Strong man though he was, he was sometimes obliged to faint, even as the sun sometimes suffers an eclipse. His fainting, too, took a form which is very common among the saints of God. He cried, "O Lord, take away my

life; for I am not better than my fathers." [See Sermon #2725, Volume 46--ELIJAH FAINTING] A desire to depart, when it arises from wisdom and knowledge, and from a general survey of things below, is very proper. But when a wish to die is merely the result of passion, a sort of

quarreling with God as a child sometimes quarrels with its parents, it has more of folly in it than of wisdom and much more of petulance than of piety! It was a remarkable thing that the man who was never to die, for whom God had ordained an infinitely better lot, the man who was to be carried to Heaven by a whirlwind in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire--the man who, like Enoch, was "translated that he should not see death"--should thus pray to die!

We have here a memorable proof that God does not always literally answer prayer, though He always does in effect. He gave Elijah something better than that for which he asked, so He really did hear and answer his prayer. But it was strange that Elijah should have asked to die--and blessedly kind was it on the part of our Heavenly Father that He did not take His servant at his word and snatch him away at once, but spared him, that he might escape the sharpness of death.

There is, Beloved, a limit to the Doctrine of the Prayer of Faith. We are not to expect that God will give us everything for which we choose to ask. We know that we sometimes ask and do not receive because we "ask amiss." If we ask contrary to the promises of God--if we run counter to the spirit which the Lord would have us cultivate--if we ask anything contrary to His will, or to the decrees of His Providence--if we ask merely for the gratification of our own ease and without an eye to His Glory, we must not expect that we shall receive. Yet, when we ask in faith, nothing doubting--if we receive not the precise thing asked for, we shall receive an equivalent and more than an equivalent for it! As one remarks, "If the Lord does not pay in silver, He will in gold. And if He does not pay in gold, He will in diamonds. If He does not give you precisely what you ask for, He will give you that which is more than tantamount to it and that which you will greatly rejoice to receive in lieu thereof."

However, Elijah's faintness took this particular form of a desire to die--nor is this very uncommon, especially among the hard-worked and most eminent servants of God.

This fainting fit is easily to be accounted for. It was the most rational thing in the worldior Elijah to be sick at heart and to desire to die. Can you not see him standing alone upon Mount Carmel? There are the priests of Baal surrounding the altar. They wax warm with excitement. They cut themselves with knives and lancets, but all in vain. Then, with laughter and irony, the Prophet bids them cry aloud to their absent or sleeping god, Baal, and by-and-by the solemn testing-time comes. He bids them pour water on his altar and into the trench around it--and over the bullock and the wood on which it was laid. There he stands, a lonely man believing in the invisible God--and believing that the invisible God can do what the visible Baal cannot do! He puts the whole matter to this one test, "The god that answers by fire, let Him be God." Great must have been the excitement of his flaming soul. If one could have felt his mighty heart beating just then, one might have wondered that his ribs could hold so marvelous an enigma! When "the fire of the Lord fell," conceive, if you can, his holy rapture, his delirious joy! And think of him in the fury of the moment, when he cried, "Take the Prophets of Baal! Let not one of them escape." [See Sermon #1058, Volume 18--NO QUARTER] And think of him as he took them down to the Brook Kishon and, with his own hands, began the slaughter of the men condemned by the Mosaic Law to die because they had perverted the people of Israel from the worship of the Most High God!

And now do you see him as he goes to the top of Carmel and engages in prayer? He has conquered God once by bringing down fire from Heaven. He

has overcome Baal and his prophets--and left their dead bodies, heaps upon heaps, by the brook's side. Now he goes up to conquer Heaven once more, by asking not for fire, but for water! He prays and seven times he bids his servant go and look for the answer. At last, a little cloud is discerned--the heavens begin to blacken. Elijah sends his servant to tell Ahab the king that the rain is coming. And then he girds up his loins and runs before the king's chariot as though he were as young of heart and as active of limb as ever! With such a hard day's work, such stern mental toil, such marvelous spiritual exercises, is it a wonder that the man's reason did not reel? But instead thereof, there came on that reaction which, as long as we are mortal men, must follow strong excitement--he now feels depressed and heavy--and a woman's threat cows him who could not once have been cowed by armed hosts! He who looked to Heaven and was not afraid of all its fires, is now afraid of Jezebel because she swears that she will put him to death! It is not marvelous that it should have been so, for it is just like human nature. Peter is so bold that he cuts off the ear of Malchus and yet when a little maid comes in and accuses him of being a friend of Jesus, he denies it with oaths and curses! The boldest sometimes tremble--and it may easily be accounted for on natural principles.

Do you notice how very opportunely these fainting fits come? Elijah did not faint when God's honor was at stake at the top of the mountain. There he stands as if nothing could move him! He did not faint when it was the time to slay the priests of Baal. With quick eyes and strong limbs he dashes at them and accomplishes his mighty victory. He did not faint when it was time to pray--who faints on his knees? But he does faint when it is all over! And when it does not much matter whether he faints or not. There is no particular reason why he should not--he may well learn more of God's strength and of his own weakness. He may well

be laid aside now that his work is done. Have you never noticed, dear Friends, that God wisely times the seasons when He allows you to fall into depression of spirits? He does not touch the sinew of your thigh while you are wrestling with the angel--He makes you limp when the victory is over, but not till then! "I thank God," many a Christian may say, "that when I have been cast down and dispirited, it was at a time when it did not work such fatal mischief to me and to the cause of God as it would have done if it had occurred at another season." Is not the promise, "As your days, so shall your strength be," a very suggestive one? When you have a heavy day's work to do, you will have the needed strength. But when you have a day of rest, you will have no strength to waste. There shall be no vigor given to spend upon our own pride, or to sacrifice to our own glory. The battle is fought and then the strength to fight it is taken away! The victory is won and, therefore, the power to win it is removed and God's servant is made to go and lie down and sleep under a juniper tree, which was, perhaps, the best thing he could do.

And these fainting fits, to which God's children are subject, though evil in themselves, prevent greater evils. Elijah would have been something more than a man if he had not felt conceited and proud, or, at least, if there had not been in him a tendency to elation of spirit when he thought of the greatness and the splendor of the deeds he had worked. Who among us, at any rate, could have borne so much honor as God put upon him without lifting our heads to the very stars? So he is made to faint. He is constrained now to admit what I am sure he always knew and felt in his heart--that all the Glory must be given to God and not to the poor frail instrument which He was pleased to use.

Graciously did God send this fainting fit to check him in what would have involved him in a far more serious fall!

This depression of spirits, doubtless, taught Elijah a great lesson. It needed strong teaching to instruct him. Elijah was not a man to be taught by ordinary teachers. If he could have walked into a place where others of God's servants

were ministering, I think they would all have sat down and said, "Let Elijah speak! Who among us can teach him?" The mightiest of God's servants might be silent before him and, therefore, God Himself teaches him. Some servants of the Lord are taught by God in a way which is quite unknown to others. There is a path which the eagle's eyes have not seen and which the lion's whelp has not traveled--a path of secret chastisement as well as of secret Revelation. Those whom God honors in public, He often chastens in private. Those men who shine most as candles of the Lord's own right-hand lighting are sometimes made to feel that they would be but a snuff if the Grace of God should depart from them. God has ways of teaching all of us in our bones and in our flesh, but He specially knows how to do this with those upon whom He puts any honor in His service. You must not marvel if God should be pleased to bless you to the conversion of souls, that He should also make you sometimes smart. Remember that Paul, with all his Grace, could not be without "a thorn in the flesh." There must also be "a messenger of Satan to buffet you," lest you should be exalted above measure! So may you learn to submit cheerfully to a discipline which, though painful to you, your Heavenly Father knows to be wise!

Moreover, these fainting fits to which God's servants are subject, are not only profitable to those who have them, but to others. To compare small things with great, a foolish idea sometimes gets into the minds of our hearer that surely the minister can never be much cast down. Young converts sometimes think that old saints can never know such contentions within, such doubting, such humbling of spirit as they

feel. Ah, but whether they are dwarfs or giants, the experience of Christian men is amazingly alike! There are lines of weakness in the creature which even Divine Grace does not efface. "When the peacock looks at his fair feathers," says old Master Dyer, "he may afterwards look at his black feet." And so, whenever the brightest Christian begins to be proud of his graces, there will be sure to be something about him which will remind others as well as himself that he is yet in the body! I forget how many times it is that Ezekiel is called, in the book of his prophecy, "the son of man." I counted them the other day and I do not find the same title applied to any other Prophet so often as it is to him. Why is this? Why, there was never another Prophet who had such eagle wings as Ezekiel had! It was given to him to soar more loftily than any other! And therefore he is always called, "the son of man," to show that he is but a man after all. Your highest people, your most elevated saints are but sons of fallen Adam, touched with the same infirmities and weaknesses as their fellow creatures and liable, unless Grace prevents, to fall into the same sins as others fall into!

I think these are good and sufficient reasons why the strongest Believers often experience the most oppressive weakness.

II. Now let us turn to a second thought, which is this--WHEN BELIEVERS DO HAVE FAINTING FITS, THEY WILL RECEIVE EXTRAORDINARY REFRESHMENTS.

Elijah had often been fed in a remarkable manner. Ravens had ministered to his necessities at one time and at another time an impoverished widow had boarded him. But on this occasion he is to be fed by an angel. The best refreshments are to be provided for him at the worst season! He might well have said, "You have kept the best wine until now, when I needed it the most." The food that he ate at Cherith had to be brought to him every morning and every evening, but the food which was now given to him lasted him for 40 days and 40 nights--and though

the widow's cruse did not fail, yet he needed to apply to it constantly. But in this case, one meal, or rather a double meal, was sufficient to last him during six weeks of journeying! He was supernaturally awakened. He found food convenient for him--a cake and a cruse of water all ready at his hand--he had only to rise and take it!

Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ--for I now speak only to you--have you never found that in times when heart and flesh have both failed, you have been privileged to receive some special help from Heaven? Sometimes it has come to you in the form of a full assurance of your interest in Christ Your heart was very heavy. The work you had before you seemed to be much too arduous for you. Your spirit quailed before your enemies. The weight of your trouble was too much for you, but just then Jesus whispered softly into your ear that you were His! You had doubted before whether you really were Christ's, but you could not doubt it any longer--the Spirit bore witness with your spirit that you were born of God and you could--

"Read your title clear, To mansions in the skies!"

It is amazing how this assurance acts in two ways. It is the great cure for us when we are soaring too high. When Christ's disciples had cast out devils, He said to them, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you,

but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." And this, too, is the cure for us when we fall too low. Mourn not over this, but still "rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." Many an old saint, sitting in a chimney corner under an accumulation of aches, pains, weaknesses and sorrows, has sung--

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear

And wipe my weeping eyes!

Should earth against my soul engage,

And hellish darts be hurled--

Then I can smile at Satan's rage,

And face a frowning world."

Bless God for the full assurance of faith, for it will yield you food in the strength of which you may go on for 40 days and 40 nights. May God give us to feed on it constantly! But sometimes He gives us the richest meal of it just when we are in our weakest state and are ready to give up in despair.

We have known the Lord feed His people, sometimes, with another Truth of God, namely, the Doctrine of His own greatness and grandeur. A sight of the greatness of God is a very blessed stay to us under a sense of our littleness. There you lie, broken and bruised, like an insect that has been crushed. You look up and the light flashes through the dark cloud and you behold something of the greatness and the Glory of God and you think, "What are my troubles? He can bear them! What are all my griefs? They are only as the small dust of the balance to Him. Why should I faint or grow weary when He upon whom I lean faints not, neither is weary? Underneath me are His everlasting arms. He is mighty, though I am a thing of naught. He is wise, though I am lost, bewildered and foolish. He is faithful, though I am doubting and trembling."--

"The more His glories strike our eyes"--

the less apt shall we be to die of despair! We shall feed upon this food as Elijah did upon his cake baked upon the coals and, like he, we shall go in the strength of it for forty days!

Sometimes, too, we have known the blessedness of feeding upon the assurance that the cause of God will be ultimately triumphant. I remember when, like a broken, bruised and worthless thing, I seemed set

aside from Christian service and from my work for God which I loved. It seemed to me as though I should never return again to preach the Word. I marveled how the work of my hands under God would fare and my spirit was overwhelmed within me. I made diligent search after comfort, but found none. My soul took counsel within herself and so increased her woes, but no light came. I shall never forget the moment when, all of a sudden, these words came to me, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ
is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father." [See Sermon #101, Volume 2--THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST] This was Mr. Spurgeon's first Sermon after the Surrey Gardens catastrophe. The full story of that memorable period is told in C. H.
Spurgeon's Autobiography, Vol. II, Chapter 1, "The Great Catastrophe at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall." At once I thought, "What matters it if I, the
soldier, fall upon the battlefield, if my great Captain is safe? Jehovah reigns! Christ is exalted!" Then I seemed to look upon my own being set aside--my shame, my reproach, my death, or anything else that might befall me--as not being worth a moment's thought because the King stood yonder and the blood-red flag waved in triumph! O God, Your Truth must conquer in the end! Your foes must flee! What if they gain some petty advantage here and there along the line? What if they do make a breach here and there in the bulwarks of our Zion? They shall fly like chaff before the wind in the day when You appear! The battle is Yours, O Lord, and You will deliver them into our hands before long! Let the ultimate triumph of the Truth of God solace you when you are

discouraged because you have seemed to labor in vain and spend your strength for naught. Be of good cheer--the Conqueror who comes with dyed garments from Bozrah, is still in the midst of His Church! This cake baked on the coals has often given food to poor fainting Elijahs. A conviction, too, of the sympathy of Jesus Christ with them has often been very dainty food and a precious cordial to mourning spirits. This is, perhaps, the very first Doctrine we teach the bereaved and sick saints. We tell them that "in all their afflictions He was afflicted." And probably there is no verse that is sung more often and with greater sweetness than this one--

"How bitter that cup no heart can conceive, Which He drank quite up, that sinners might live! His way was much rougher and darker than mine-- Did Christ, my Lord, suffer and shall I repine?"

It makes pain so glorious when you think that the very same pain shoots through Him as through you, that there is not so much pain truly in the finger as there is in the head, that the head is indeed the true seat of all the sensitiveness. It is not so much Christ's people who suffer, as it is Christ, Himself, suffering in them. Does it not make the Cross glorious when you bear it with the thought that it is Christ's Cross you are carrying? To suffer poverty for Christ's sake is a very different thing from suffering poverty in the abstract. To be despised for the Gospel's sake is a different thing from being despised for any other reason for, to be reproached for Christ is honor--and to suffer for Christ is pleasure! A mother will sit up night after night to nurse her darling child. She would not do it for anyone else for any money you could offer her--and though she grows very weary, she goes to her work and does for her child what she would not and probably could not do for any other child. So some of us would do for love what we would not think of doing for gain. And when we know that we are doing and

suffering for Christ--and feel that Christ is with us in it all, it
becomes a very blessed cordial and we--
"Rejoicein deep distress"--
since Jesus Christ is with us!
And how often has God given much comfort to His people when they were ready to give all up, by a vision of Heaven? Did you ever have such a vision? Softly will it sometimes steal over your spirit, especially in severe sickness, when heaviness and uneasiness seem to bring you to the very gates of the grave. You do not hear the bells of Heaven with your ears, nor do stray notes of angels' harps salute you, nor do you see the white-robed hosts with your natural eyes, but your soul sees and hears it all! God sometimes brings His people into "the land of Beulah" before they fairly reach it in the order in which John Bunyan puts it in his allegory. Some of us have been to the very gates of Heaven. We have had such foretastes of Heaven that we feel that we can now fight the fight and cheerfully wait--
"Our threescore years and ten"-- if the Lord pleases to spare us so long, because the crown at the end is so glorious! And that we can journey through the wilderness because the Canaan is so worthy of all that we can do or suffer that we may enter it. Beloved, a vision of Jesus Christ and a vision of Heaven will be enough to solace the most downcast among you! And where you gladly would hang your harp upon the willows, if Jesus Christ shall appear to you and His Father shall smile upon you, and His Spirit shall actively work upon your hearts, and Heaven's gate shall be opened to you--then will you snatch up your harp and wake it to the sweetest melodies in praise of Sovereign Grace! You Elijahs who are now saying, "Let me die," change your note, for there is a cake baked on the coals provided for you--so arise and eat it!
III. Let us observe, in the third place, that WHENEVER GOD THUS GIVES

TO HIS CHILDREN VERY

REMARKABLE ENJOYMENTS, IT IS IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY GO ON IN THE

STRENGTH OF THOSE

ENJOYMENTS FOR A LONG TIME.

Elijah was not fed that he might get strong and then waste his strength. There are no sinecures in God's service! All His true servants are real workmen and when they have strength given to them by Him, it is not that they may show what fine fellows they are, but that they may toil on in their Master's cause. The soldier is a smart-looking fellow on parade in days of peace--and long may it be before he shall have cause to do anything more than show himself at such times--but God's soldiers are always on active service and as sure as ever the Master gives them a double round of ammunition, He means them to fire it all! If ever He gives them a new sword, it is because they will soon need it! And whenever He is pleased to furnish them with fresh armor, it is because He knows that they will require the sacred panoply. There are no superfluities in the provisions of God's Grace! What had Elijah to do? Having fed upon this angels' food, he had to go a long solitary journey I wonder whether you can imagine it--a journey of 40 days and 40 nights! It does not seem to me, from what I gather from the story, that he ever stopped. Certainly he did not stop to take refreshments, but went right away into the wilderness, having probably left his servant at Beersheba the whole time. He never saw the face of man all the while. He fasted more wonderfully than Moses did, who fasted on the mountain in peace and quietness! This mysterious Prophet fasted and at

the same time he was taking giant strides in the lonely wilderness, startling the beasts of prey, treading the unfrequented tracts of the wild goats and the gazelles with ever-onward feet! On through the day's

burning heat and the night's black shade, never pausing for 40 days and 40 nights! A strange march was that, but sometimes God calls His people to something very much like it. Strange, weird-like and solitary is your soul--and nobody can walk with you where you have to go--you have to take strides that will suit no one else. You have to go a way that has not been trodden before by any others. The Master has called you to special suffering, if not to special service. You have no pioneer and no companion. I suppose every person who is called to serve God in a remarkable manner, or to suffer for Him in a particular way, must have noticed the solitariness of his own life. Do not tell me about solitude being only in the wilderness--a man may have plenty of company there--the worst solitude is that which a man may have among millions of his fellow creatures. Look at that solitude of Moses. When Moses had his heaviest cares upon him, with whom could he hold any real communion? With the 70 elders? As well might an eagle have stooped to have communion with so many sparrows! They were far beneath him--they had not hearts large enough to commune with the great-souled Moses. You will say, perhaps, that Aaron might have done so. Yes, truly, a brother's heart is a very cheering one when it beats to the same tune as your own, but Aaron was a man of altogether different spirit from Moses and nobody would think of comparing the two men! Moses is like some of those colossal figures that are cut in the Egyptian rocks, or that stand amidst the ruins of Karnak--he seems to have been one of those great spirits of the grand olden time before the stature of men had declined--and he is all alone. He bears the people on his bosom and throughout his life is a solitary man.

Such, too, was Elijah. Now, perhaps you will have special feasting upon Christ because in your trial or in your labor you will have to learn that there is a secret you cannot tell to any but your God--that there

is a bitterness with which no other heart can intermeddle--that there are heights and depths through which you will have to pass and will have to pass alone. Do not wonder, dear Friends, if these words should come true to you in days to come. Do not marvel if that verse we sometimes sing should happen to be suitable to you on this quiet, peaceful evening--

"We should suspect some danger near, When we perceive too much delight." If God feeds us with angels' food, He means us to do more than man's work.

But I meant you to notice, in the next place, that while Elijah was thus fed that he might go a long and lonely journey, that he was sent on that journey that he might be brought into more sympathy with God than before. Why did he have to journey "forty days and forty nights into Horeb the mount of God"? It is said that it was not more than 80 miles and certainly does not appear to have been a hundred. Such a long time was not necessary for the distance--why, therefore, did Elijah take it? Do you not see that it is a day for a year? "Forty years long," says Jehovah, "was I grieved with this generation" in the wilderness. Forty days and nights, therefore, must the Lord's servant walk over the very tracks where Israel had pitched their tents. And God seemed to say to him, "O Elijah, do you lose your temper and turn away from Israel, and ask to die, when I had to bear with My people forty years and yet, notwithstanding that, they now inherit the goodly land and have come to Lebanon?" Beloved, the servants of God must frequently meet with ingratitude, unkind treatment, harsh words and cruel speeches from those whom they try to serve! And sometimes God's own people are a greater plague to God's ministers than are all the rest of the world besides. Well, what of that? Does not the Lord seem to say, "Now I will teach you what My compassions are. I will teach you what My patience

must be. You shall have forty days' walking in the wilderness to make you understand something of what I felt when, for forty years, I bore with the ill manners, rebellions and idolatries of this crooked and perverse people"? Is it not a grand thing, my Brothers and Sisters, to be made to have sympathy with God? I do not think the most of Christians understand this-- to be made to feel as God felt so that you are enabled, as it were, to see things from God's standpoint and to begin to understand why He is angry with the wicked--and to magnify that matchless Grace which bears so long with the sons of men! It may possibly happen, my Brothers, that the Master has been feeding you upon some special and dainty food at His table, or under the ministry, or in earnest prayer, or in communion, or in meditation in order that, in the future, you may have greater sympathy with Himself by treading, in your measure, the same path that He trod in years long gone by!

There is always a special reason when there comes a special mercy, and so, to conclude, I ask you to note that the Lord gave His servant this special benefit because He intended to give him a very special rebuke. ' 'What are you doing here, Elijah?" was not the sort of language that Elijah had been accustomed to hear from his God! He could use such language, himself, to his fellow men, as he did when he spoke to Ahab, but he was not accustomed to hear such words spoken to him by God! Softer sentences had greeted his ears, but now God is about to rebuke him for running away from his work, for playing the coward and for setting an example of unbelief! But before He rebukes him, He supplies all his needs and gives him 40 days' strength. The Lord does not chasten His children when they are weak and sickly, "without," as one says, "sustaining them with one hand while He smites them with the other." He will give you comforting Grace as well as the privilege of chastisement. You cannot do without the rod, but you shall be enabled,

on the strength of the food which He will give you, to bear up under it without your spirit utterly fainting.

Possibly God may have in store for some of us a special rebuke. He may intend to make some thundering passage in His Word come with terrific power to our souls. He may mean to lay us upon a bed of sickness and, therefore, now, by giving us strengthening food, He is preparing us for it, that even when in the furnace we may be enabled to sing His praise! I leave these thoughts with those of you who know the way of the wilderness. Those of you who do not will not care much about them, but I may pray God that the sinner who knows nothing of these faintings, may be made to faint utterly till his soul dies within him with spiritual despair! And when he so dies, then the Lord who kills will make him alive! When you have no power left, if you can throw yourself beneath the shadow of the Cross, though your flesh may make you sleep there as Elijah did under the juniper tree, yet you shall hear a voice which shall bid you arise--and in the great Atonement of the Savior you shall find a cake baked on what hot coals I will not now undertake to say. You shall find it such food to the weary spirit that when you have partaken of it, poor Sinner, you shall dare to go to the mount of God, even to Horeb, and face the terrible Law of God and ask, "Who shall lay anything to my charge?" Feeding on Jesus, mysteriously sustained by trusting in the efficacy of His precious blood, you shall go on till you shall see God face to face in His holy mount in Glory, in the strength of Him who said, "For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed."

God bless every one of us, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM143.

Verses 1-3. Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness. And enter not

into judgment with Your servant for in Your sight shall no man living be justified. For the enemy has persecuted my soul; he has smitten my life down to the ground; he has made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. This is a very graphic description of David's sorrow. And those who have ever come under the power of Satan so as to be crushed in spirit and see all their hopes blighted and withered know what David meant when he penned these words. Only think of a soul dwelling in darkness like a body that has been long dead and shut up in the grave.

4. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. What a sad expression that is! It would be difficult to bring out all its meaning. "My heart within me is desolate"--lonely, deserted, desponding, despairing, almost destroyed.

5. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. This is a gracious exercise which tends greatly to the comfort of mourners, yet it does not always succeed, for God's works cannot satisfy us if God hides Himself from us.

6. I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You, as a thirsty land. Selah. "My soul seems scarcely such a living thing as a thirsty stag panting for the cooling stream, but as the parched earth that cannot call to You, and yet does gape with open mouth as if she silently implored the rain, so is it with me." God sends the dew to the grass which cannot call to Him for it! Then how much more will He send the dew of His Grace to us who do cry to Him for it and with anguish thirst after it!

7. 8. Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit fails. Hide not Your face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Your loving kindness in the morning; for in You do I trust cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul

unto You. What a dead "lift" it is sometimes! Yet we must not let our soul lie
in the gutter. By God's help, we must lift it up and the nearer the soul is lifted up to God, the more it comes into the light--and the more sure it is yet to obtain its liberty.
Volume 26--AT SCHOOL] for You are my God: Your spirit is good.
"Make my spirit good!"
10, 11. Lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O LORD, for Your name's sake. Do not these prayers fit you, my Brothers and Sisters? Do you not feel as if you were being taught how to pray by the reading of this Psalm? I think it must be so at least with some of you.
11, 12. For Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. And of Your mercy cut offmy enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am Your servant. We cannot join in the prayers in this verse just as it stands, for we live in another dispensation in which we are taught to pray for our enemies, not against them, but as far as this verse relates to our spiritual enemies--our sins, temptations and Satanic foes--we do pray that they may be utterly cut off and that the very name of them may be blotted out from under Heaven! May God hear that prayer and answer it, for His dear son's sake! Amen.

Chapter 38

Warning and Encouragement

(No. 3111)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING,

SEPTEMBER 13, 1874.

"And Esau said unto his father, Haveyou but one blessing, my Father?
Bless me, even me, also, O my Father. And Esau lifted up his voice and
wept." Genesis 27:38.

You know the story of Esau and Jacob. [See Sermons #239, Volume
5--JACOB AND ESAU and #1718, Volume 29--CERTAIN SINGULAR SUBJECTS] Esau
Was the elder of the twin sons of Isaac and
Rebekah. The birthright was his by right, but he despised it. He was a
profane person who did not prize the hereditary privilege which was
really his. He actually sold his right to it to his younger brother,
Jacob, for a mess of "pottage of lentils." Time rolled on and Isaac,
feeling the infirmities of age creeping upon him, determined to give to
Esau the blessing to which, as his elder son, he was entitled. Rebekah
wanted the blessing to be given to her younger son and, therefore,
resorted to a stratagem in order to make the poor blind father believe
that Jacob was Esau--and in that way Jacob gained the blessing by
fraud. When Esau came in and found that the blessing was given to
Jacob--and that it could not be revoked--he cried bitterly and besought
his father to give him "but one blessing."

The whole story reflects no credit upon any of the persons concerned.
It certainly brings no credit to Isaac--he was a true Believer in God,
but he was a man of an easy-going, gentle spirit who did not control

his household as he ought to have done. And it appears that in his later days he craved dainty dishes to tempt his appetite--"savory meat," such as he asked Esau to prepare for him--and so he did not wait upon God for guidance as to the bestowal of his paternal blessing but, in direct opposition to the Divine purpose, determined to give the blessing to the son whom God had not chosen. It was a bad thing for the household to be divided as it was--the husband and wife at cross purposes--Rebekah seeking the blessing for her favorite son and Isaac preferring the bolder spirit of the wilder man. I cannot excuse either Rebekah or Jacob. They were acting very wickedly in trying to get Isaac's blessing by fraud and falsehood. Neither can I justify Esau, for he was trying to keep what he had sold to his brother and what he had despised and contemptuously called, "this birthright."

One thing is certain--God's Providence, notwithstanding their sin, carried out God's purpose! It was no business of theirs, as it is no business of ours, to try to fulfill God's decrees. God would have managed the whole affair far better without Rebekah's meddling--and the foolish mother would not have had to send from home her darling son, nor would he have had to go away as an exile to endure all that he had to endure at the hands of the grasping Laban! Still, God overruled the evil and His design was accomplished, as it always is and always will be.

My special purpose at this time is to take this exceedingly bitter cry of the disappointed Esau and use it for two purposes. First, by way of warning and, secondly, by way of encouragement, taking it then out of its immediate context.

I. First, I am going to use Esau's cry BY WAY OF WARNING.

Beware, my dear Hearers, first, of ever giving up spiritual benefits for anything that is carnal, or bartering eternal blessings for

anything temporal. Esau came in from the chase hungry and faint. Jacob's mess of red pottage smelt delicious to him and when he begged for it as a starving man craves food, his crafty brother sold it to him in exchange for his birthright as Isaac's elder son. Esau's sin consisted in his willingness to sell the Covenant blessing at such a price as that--yet how many nowadays are selling their souls just as cheaply as Esau sold his birthright!

Some sell their souls for what they call "pleasure." They say that they wish to be saved, but a little transient gaiety exercises more fascination over their minds than all eternal joys or the delights of present fellowship with God. The time will come when they will rue their fatal choice and call themselves a thousand fools. But just now they sneer at anything like self-denial with a view to eternal blessedness and count that man wise who makes the moments fly most merrily, who is satisfied with the passing "pleasure" of the hour. Foolish creatures of the day, I would to God that you were only creatures of a day that would die like the insects of a summer's evening! But for immortal souls to barter eternal happiness for present joys is folly indeed!

We have known some sell their souls for gain. They are making money in a dishonest or disreputable way. To become Christians, they must give up their business--and they frankly say that they cannot afford it. Their shop would never "pay" if it were closed on Sundays! Their trade would never "prosper" if it were conducted on Christian principles! Possibly it is an evil trade and the gain from it comes out of the vices of men. There are such trades--God save all of us from having anything to do with them! But with many, the glitter of the 30 pieces of silver is more fascinating than the Christ of God and, Judas-like, they take the silver, deliberately reject the Savior and so commit

spiritual suicide.

We have known some sell their souls for the sake of the love of their friends. They laughed at you because you frequented a place of worship and expressed some anxiety about your eternal welfare and made some little reform in your outward life. And because of that laughter, you have gone back like a coward. You have turned your back on Heaven and are going down to Hell merely to escape the jeers and sneers of sinners like yourself! Such conduct is unworthy of anyone who calls himself a man. And such conduct will surely bring down the just condemnation of God upon anyone who is guilty of so acting. Yet how many snatch up the mess of pottage and push away from them heavenly blessings for fear somebody or other should call them Methodists or Puritans--and sneer at them for their precision of character!

Alas, some have even sold their souls for the cup of the drunkard. The intoxicating cup which is very rarely, if ever, a benefit to anyone, even when taken in what is called, "moderation," leads to the certain damnation of many if they touch a single drop of it! It has allured thousands into the jaws of Hell! They could not resist its spell when once it fell upon them. It is, alas, only too true that men who were once honorable and loving husbands and fathers, have become brutes and monsters! No, I slander the brutes when I compare them with many men whom I have seen, who have seemed, through strong drink, to have made themselves into incarnate fiends! There is the "pure river of Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb," and there the fire-water, which has its origin among the flames of Hell--and yet, when the choice is left to men--many of them prefer the fiery liquor to that Water which would be in them "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Some of those men who are selling their souls for drink are with us here--oh, that God would give them

Grace enough to see themselves as they really are in His sight--that they might then ask for the Grace which would make them to be new creatures in Christ Jesus!

Others have sold their souls for lust--lust which I must not now describe, lest the cheek of modesty should be caused to blush. Alas! Alas, we have known some who have stood high in the esteem of their fellow men, and some who have even dared to enter the visible Church of God, who, all the time, have preferred their "mistress" to the Messiah! And as surely as they continue to do so, the day will come when they will rue it! Oh, that they had the Grace to rue it now and to escape from their Delilahs! It will need more than human strength to shake off this deadly hydra, whose cruel folds have twisted themselves so tightly around them!

Beware, next, of being content with a secondary blessing. Esau did not seem to care that Jacob had the spiritual blessing. As he could not get that, he appeared willing to be content with a temporal one. And many a man says, "Give me a prosperous business, give me plenty to eat and drink, let me enjoy myself and have my full swing in this life--and then, as for those joys of which Christians talk, I do not care a snap of the finger about them! They may have their fine country up among the stars for all that I care, if I can only have my good things here."

Yes, I know that is how you talk, my Friends, but I charge every sensible man here not to talk or act like that. Even if you could sell your soul for 50 years of intense physical or mental delight, what would become of your soul when the 50 years came to an end? And if you could have the 50 years extended to 70, or even to a hundred--what would become of your soul at the end of the century? And what would become of your soul forevefi It is forever--let men say what they will! "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous

into life eternal." "The punishment" is of the same duration as the "life"--forever and ever! Is it worthwhile to make such a bargain as that--to buy a mess of red pottage at the price of your immortal soul? I charge each one of you to buy the Truth of God, and sell it not, to lay up for yourself treasures in Heaven, to get Christ, to get peace and pardon, to get acceptance with God, to get Heaven in the way that this Book tells

you to get it! If you only succeed in getting broad acres of fertile fields, they must all be left! If you amass a great store of gold and silver, it must all be left to your heirs who will probably laugh at the thought of the fool who hoarded so much for them to scatter! Do not act so foolishly, but seek to get the chief blessing! May God graciously enable you to get it this very hour!

Remember that if you leave this world without getting this blessing, you will, like Esau, find no place of repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears. Isaac could not take back what he had said, and God will never alter what He has said. There has been spreading in this country and in other lands, also, the idea of universal salvation--and mark you, wherever that doctrine spreads, vice must and will spread as the natural and inevitable consequence! When men are taught to believe in ultimate universal salvation, their immediate and legitimate inference is, "Then we may live as we like and all will be right in the end." And they will live as they like, but all will not be right in the end! They are ambassadors of the devil who teach that lying doctrine, and they will have to answer for it at the Judgment Bar of God! I bring you no such lies as that. I tell you what God's Book of Truth tells me, which is that if you live and die without repentance, without faith and without holiness--as surely as the righteous will live forever in Heaven, just as surely will you live forever in Hell! I implore you, as

you value your immortal soul, do not imperil its eternal interest by trusting these dreams and fictions, for that is what they are. He who is righteous when he dies will be righteous forever! And he who is unrighteous then, will be unrighteous forever! So if you do not wish to have to weep and gnash your teeth in anguish and in anger at your own stupidity, fly now, I pray you, to the hope that is set before you in the Gospel and lay hold of Jesus, who alone can save you! It is no pleasure to me to have to utter this solemn message. I deliver it from an aching heart, as the burden of the Lord. And having given you the warning, I leave it with you as I pass on to the second part of my subject.

II. Now I have more pleasant work to do. And that is to use my text BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

I would that, this very hour, from many hearts there might arise this cry of Esau, only giving it a far higher meaning, "Have you but one blessing, my Father? Bless me, even me, also, O my Father." And first, unconverted men and women, is it not time that you were blessed by God? Will not each one of you say to yourself, "Is it not time that I was blessed by God? So many dear to me have been blessed--my mother has long been in Heaven. My sister is a member of the Church. Some who sat side by side with me in this pew have believed in Jesus--when will the blessing come to me? The shower has fallen all around me--am I to be left forever dry? The great tide of Grace has seemed to sweep right up to my feet--will it never cast its gracious spray over me? I am getting on in years and I was brought here as a child. And now I bring my own child, but I am not yet saved. Many of my friends have died since first I heard the Gospel and I have been to their funerals. I have lost first one relative, and then another. If I had been the one to be taken, alas, alas, what misery would my soul have been in at this moment! I

have heard a great many plain Gospel sermons. Our minister does not try to make a display of oratory--he always aims at preaching to our hearts. I know that he wants to bring me to Jesus and that he would be delighted if he heard that some word of his, or anybody else's, had brought me to trust in Christ as my Savior. It is no small privilege to hear the Gospel faithfully preached and I have at times felt the power of that Gospel and have resolved to repent, but then I have turned back, and here I am, still unsaved. It seems a strange thing that some who were morally worse than I have been have entered into the Kingdom of Heaven while I have remained outside--and that some who had not heard the Gospel half as long as I had, accepted it--while I have so far refused it." I wish you would continue talking to yourself in that strain, both here and at home. Perhaps God will bless it to you, and especially if you add to it this prayer, "O Lord, it is time that I had Your blessing. Bless me, even me, also, O my Father! Pass me not by, O You loving, gracious, forgiving God! Have mercy upon me and save me!" The next question that I have to put to you is this. Does not the plenitude of God's Grace encourage you, whoever you may be, to seek His blessing? Esau could only say to his father, "Have you but one blessing?" And, truly, his father had but one that was worth having! But you are not talking to Isaac--you are talking to Jehovah! And when you approach Him to seek His blessing, you know that He can bless as many as He wills and that if He should withhold the blessing, He would be none the richer--and if He should give it, He would be none the poorer, for He is an Infinite God, able to do for all who come to Him all that they need! God has innumerable sons and daughters--why should not you be among them? He has a blessing for each of them, for of His children it can be truly said, "If children, then heirs," all of them heirs! Then why should not you be among them? If I knew that only three

or four persons could be saved, I would not rest till I knew that I was one of them. But since God has so large a family, surely I may have good hope in coming to Him if He gives me the Grace to say, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned."

It should encourage you to seek God's blessing when you think of the plenitude that there is in Jesus Christ, God's Son. The merit of Christ was Infinite! The sheep for whom He laid down His life are innumerable as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore! All who have believed in Him and all who shall yet believe in Him belong to that redeemed flock! So why should not you be among them? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

You ought also to be encouraged to seek God's blessing by the plenitude and power of the Holy Spirit. He is able to soften the hardest heart and to subdue the most stubborn will. There is no sinful habit that He cannot overcome. He can give you the Grace to enable you to resist the strongest temptation and to conquer the fiercest besetting sin. There is almighty power in the ever-blessed Spirit, so that there is no limit to His regenerating and sanctifying work!

Well, then, with the Infinite Father, the Infinite Redeemer and the Infinite Spirit, you need not say, "Have you but one blessing?" but you may open your mouth wide so that God may fill it! We are still authorized by the Giver of the great Gospel feast to cry, "Yet there is room." The provisions of that royal banquet are not merely for the few who belong to some insignificant little sect and who reckon themselves to be all of the Lord's elect! I can, by faith, see enormous tables laden with the oxen and the fatlings that have been killed, for the great King has made a great supper in honor of His Son's marriage--and

He has bidden many to come to it! I know that Heaven is not meant for a small, select company of saints, for John saw there "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who "stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb." [Mr. Spurgeon's Exposition on this passage and the remaining verses of Revelation 7, is given in Sermon #2704, Volume 46--"FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME"] Then why should you not be among them? Ask yourself that question on your knees before God. If I were ill and there was only one physician in the whole of London, I would try to seek him out, but I could not be very hopeful of being healed by him. But the Hospital of Grace has room in it for all the patients who ever come to it! And never did the porters have to shut the door and say, "There is no room for any more." That can never be the case! God "delights in mercy." There is such a fullness of Grace in Christ Jesus that whoever comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. [See Sermon #3000, Volume 52--NO. 3000--OR, COME AND WELCOME] Then should not this encourage each one of you to believe in Jesus Christ and so to live forever, for "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life"?

Further, dear Friends, are there any valid reasons why you should not be blessed? Do you really want to be blessed by God? Someone says, "Oh, that my sins were pardoned! Oh, that I had a new heart and a right spirit! I gladly would find the Savior if I could." Is there any reason why you cannot find Him? "I have been a very great sinner." That is no reason, for many great sinners have found Christ! So why should not you? "But I have a very hard heart." That is no reason why you should not be saved, for many very hard hearts have been softened by the Holy

Spirit! And when you have a redemption which is of Infinite value and a Holy Spirit with Infinite Power to renew the heart, the greatness of past sin or the deepness of present depravity cannot be a reason why Infinite Mercy should not be shown to you! Can you find me any text in the Bible where it is written that you cannot be saved? I have heard an anxious soul sometimes say, "I know I never shall be saved." But how do you know that? I believe that it is not so! Christ Himself said that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." And even under the old dispensation, God said, by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, "Come now, and let us reason together...though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You cannot put your finger upon a single passage of Scripture which proves that you will be lost, so do not believe that it must be so till you have it from God's own mouth! Never imagine that you are excluded from His pardoning mercy till He, Himself, says that you are--and He has never said that yet.

Who is there that stands in your way? I know that the devil does, but then Christ is the devil's Master and He can enable you to overcome him! Do you know of one true minister of the Gospel who would push you back if he saw you coming to the Savior? I know one who would gladly give you a helping hand and draw you to Christ if he could! Would your godly mother be grieved if she heard that you were converted? Is anybody (except Satan) praying that you may not be saved? I never heard of a prayer of that sort--and I never shall--but day and night the Lord's elect cry unto Him, "Bring the wanderers in! Let Jesus see of the travail of His soul until He is satisfied."

Did you ever hear me preach a sermon to prove that you had no right to lay hold on eternal life? I have heard of very discouraging sermons

preached by ministers who seemed to be afraid that too many people would get to Heaven--as if it were "a close borough" for a few special favorites in the very small congregation at "Rehoboth" or "Jireh." That is dying out and I bless God that it never has been heard here. We preach to you a great Gospel and a free Gospel--and our hearts are yearning over you with a strong desire that you may be saved!

Can you point to any attribute in God, or to any action on God's part which looks like malevolence towards you? You tell me that He has dealt severely with you in His Providence. If so, it was that He might drive you to Himself. Has He broken your idols in pieces? If so, it is that you may worship the one living and true God! Are you very poor? Perhaps it is the best thing that could happen to you. How few rich folk ever enter the Kingdom of Heaven! Can you see anything in Jesus Christ that forbids sinners from coming to Him? Look at His wounds--do they say, "Sinner, stay away from Me"? Look at His thorn-crowned brow--does that say, "I do not want you to come to Me"? Look at His widely-extended arms upon the Cross--do they repel you? No, rather, are they not kept open that the biggest sinners may get at His heart and find peace and pardon there? Think of the Holy Spirit and read about what He has done--and then see if there is anything in Him to show that He does not want you to come to Christ! Why, He is the blessed Spirit who draws sinners to Christ--He does not drive them away from Christ! If the Spirit convinces you of sin, it is not in order to make you despair--except to make you despair of saving yourself--and that is a good work, for it will lead you to look to Jesus, that you may find eternal life in Him! I dare to say that there is nothing in the Father, there is nothing in the Son and there is nothing in the Holy Spirit which should make any truly repenting and believing sinner say, "Mercy is not for me." On the contrary, there is a great attraction about each

blessed Person of the Divine Trinity to draw sinners to Himself.

Now let me suggest one or two reasons why you should find mercy, if you come for it in God's way--and God's way is that you should believe in His Son, Jesus Christ--that you should trust your soul into His eternal keeping. If you do that, there are many reasons why you may expect to find mercy at His hands. First, it would be an answer to the prayers of God's people. It is certain that God hears His people's prayers. I know that many have been praying that you may be saved. So your salvation would assure them that their prayers had been heard--and surely that is what God delights to do! It would be wrong for you to rely upon other people's prayers for your salvation, but I do bid you take comfort from the thought that it would cheer the saints of God to see you saved. The happiest Church Meetings that we ever have are those when there are many converts coming forward to tell what the Lord has done for their souls! Now the Lord Jesus very dearly loves His Church--she is His spouse--and as a good husband loves to please his wife, so Jesus loves to please His Church! And nothing can please His Church so much as to see sinners saved! So I think that is one good reason why we may expect that He will save many of you.

Besides that, if you are saved, whether you are a great sinner or a smaller one, Christ will have a new servant. And if you have been a big black sinner, Christ will have an especially good servant if He converts you from the error of your ways. Whatever you do, you do it heartily--you now persecute the saints with all your might--but if you were converted, you would love Christ as Mary Magdalene did, or as Saul of Tarsus did--and our Master delights to have such a servant as you would make! I trust, therefore, that you will be encouraged by the thought that as He wants many such servants, perhaps He will have you as one of them.

And, again, if you were converted, it would make the angels glad. Fresh hallelujahs and hosannas would resound throughout high Heaven if you were born-again, a new creature in Christ Jesus! They would set all the bells a-ringing with celestial carillons because another sinner had been saved from going down to the Pit! I think God will do it, for He loves to hear the melodies of the holy angels and of the spirits ofjust men made perfect.

Besides, it would be to His own Glory in Heaven above and down here among the sons of men. Oh, if the Lord would but convert some of the cardinals and priests of the Church of Rome--and some of the great infidel philosophers of the present day, and some of the licentious "nobility," as they are called--what high honor would be brought to the name of Jesus Christ! I must not detain you longer, but I must just urge you, if you really want the blessing of God in the shape of pardoned sin and acceptance by Christ, to seek it from the Lord as earnestly as Esau sought the blessing of Isaac. He sought in vain, but you will not seek in vain. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be saved, be you who or what you may! We have God's Word for it--the Word of God who cannot lie! Esau pleaded piteously with his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father." He was a rough, wild man, yet plaintively he put his plea before his old father, Isaac--"Bless me, your elder son, your Esau, your favorite." Then, at last, he burst into tears, backing up his entreaties with his tearful appeal, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" You will not seek God's blessing in vain if you do but seek it sincerely and earnestly. Without His blessing, you are already condemned. Without His blessing, you will be condemned forever. With His blessing, there is Heaven for you--without it, there is Hell. With His blessing, there is peace and joy--without it, there is a gloomy future, ever growing darker and darker until it becomes

eternal midnight! Cry mightily to God right now for His blessing! And while you cry, look to Jesus on the Cross, bleeding out His life for the guilty. One believing look at Him saves your soul forever!

Again I quote Paul's words to the jailer at Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." I do not know what more I can say. If I have been talking to sensible men who value their immortal souls--and God blesses my message--I have said enough. If I speak to those who are besotted with their sin and bent on committing spiritual suicide, I could not say enough though I spoke till your ears could no longer hear and my tongue could no longer speak. Eternal Spirit, arrest the elect of God this very hour and bring them to see themselves as they are--and then to see Christ as their Savior and force from each one of them this cry--"Bless me, even me also, O my Father." Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HEBREWS 12.

The Apostle, having described the heroes of the faith, represents them as witnesses of the great race [See Sermon #2037, Volume 34--THE RULES OF THE RACE] which Christians in all ages have to run. All through the chapter he keeps up the idea of the great Olympic games and represents the saints as occupied with spiritual athletics in the Presence of God, the angels and glorified men.

Verse 1. Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. In those games, those who ran and wrestled wore very little clothing, or often nothing at all. A runner might lose the race through being entangled by his scarf, so he laid aside everything that might hinder or hamper him. Oh, for that blessed consecration to our heavenly calling, by which everything that would hinder us shall be put

aside, that we may give ourselves, disentangled, to the great Gospel to race!

2. Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God. His race is complete. His wrestling is over, so He sits down with the great Judge of All as the One who has won His crown forever. Let us look to Him. [See Sermon #1073, Volume 18--A HONEYCOMB]

3. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. [See Sermon #236, Volume 5--THE SHAMEFUL SUFFERER]

.1 Think how He wrestled. Think how He ran and let your consideration of Him nerve you for your struggle, and brace up every muscle of your spirit so that you will be determined that, as He won, so will you by the Divine help of Him who is "the Author and Finisher of our faith."

4. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Paul reminds you that in yourwrestling, you may have to endure a still sterner struggle--"You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

5-7. Andyou have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise notyou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?The Apostle's intention is to harden us to any suffering that may come to us in this mortal life. He does so first by showing us that we are like wrestlers and racers and that we must expect to endure much hardship if we are to win the crown. We are to

"endure hardness." The crown cannot be won without it. You know what men will do to win an earthly crown--but the heavenly crown is an immortal, unfading one--so how much more may be expected of you in the way of patient endurance in your heart to win it. Then Paul changes the figure and says, "You are the sons of
God, and that is the reason why you are admitted to the arena where this sacred struggling takes place, and as you are
the sons of God, you must endure the chastening rod [See Sermon #48, Volume 1 --CHASTISEMENT] as a part of your training." Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, will not each one of you thankfully accept it and say, "As this is one of the evidences of my sonship, I will thank God for every cut of the rod and bless His holy name for every twig of it."

8. But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons. A man may neglect such a child as that, for he is not his legitimate child. And God does not care for
professors who, though they seem to be His children, are not His true sons, so they are pampered, indulged, spoiled and left to enjoy themselves while they are here, as the Lord well knows that they will have nothing but sorrow and misery hereafter.

9, 10. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. God is the Father of our spiritual nature, so if He pleases to chasten us for our profit, shall we not humbly yield ourselves up to Him and let Him do with us whatever He wills?

11. Now no chastening for the present seem to be joyous, but grievous. It would not be chastening if it were a joy to us! It is necessary, in

order that it may be chastening, that it should be grievous.

11. Nevertheless afterwards. [See Sermon #528, Volume 9--CHASTISEMENT--NOW AND AFTERWARDS] Oh, what melodious music there is in those two words to ears and hearts that are Divinely taught to appreciate it! "Nevertheless afterwards"--

11-14. It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby. Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men. Run after it. It will often seem to run away from you, so you must pursue it and capture it. "Follow peace with all men."

14, 16. And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the Grace of God [See Sermon #940, Volume 16--THE WINNOWING FAN] "Lest he should come short of the Grace of God and, as it were, fall back. Paul is still keeping to his illustration drawn from the wrestling at the Olympic games. Sometimes the wrestler gave his opponent a back fall and down he went, and so lost the crown. Beware lest such a fall should happen to you in your spiritual wrestling!

15, 16. Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many are defiled; lest there be any fornicator Fornication was the special sin of that age--in fact, it was so common that the heathen did not reckon it to be a sin at all! Knowing of the tendency to licentiousness in all around them, Paul specially warned the Hebrew Christians against that horrible evil.

16, 17. Or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright For you know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of

repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. His father could not transfer to him the blessing which he had given to Jacob.

18-21. For you are not come unto the Mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touched the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake)."You have come to something very different from that mountain of terror--even to a great gathering of holy beings in the midst of whom you should exceedingly rejoice."

22-27. But you are come unto Mount Zion, [See Sermon #1689, Volume 29--THE GENERAL CONVOCATION AROUND MOUNT ZION] and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God, the Judge of All, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also Heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. All that is eternal must, of course, endure forever. The Everlasting Covenant, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," the

purchase of the Savior's blood, the work of the Holy Spirit--all these shall stand fast forever, they can never be shaken." [See Sermon #690, Volume 12--A LESSON FROM THE GREAT PANIC] The Immutable Word spoken by the mouth of the unchanging God lives and abides forever!

28, 29. Therefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have Grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire. The God who gave the Law on Sinai has never changed--the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of Moses who overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, and slew Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the multitude of murmurers, idolaters and fornicators in the wilderness--"this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death."

I would again remind you of what I have often said concerning the wickedness of putting into this passage words that the Holy Spirit never inspired Paul to write. Many people say, "God out of Christ is a consuming fire." But Paul wrote nothing of the sort! It is "our God"--and He is not "our God" except as we view Him in Christ--who is "a consuming fire." How greatly we ought to reverence Him and how earnestly we ought to ask of Him that the Divine Fire may burn up everything in us that ought to be consumed--that only that may remain which will first endure the great shaking and which will afterwards endure the great burning. May the Lord graciously grant to each one of us that Grace which shall abide the fire!

Chapter 39

A Sermon and a Reminiscence

(No. 3112)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1873.

"Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious." 1 Peter 2:7.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this passage, are as follows Sermons #242, Volume 5--CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS; #2137, Volume 36--(same title as #242) and #3014, Volume 52--A SERMON FROM A SICK PREACHER]

WHEN one has a head cold, it is a very effectual hindrance to thought. You may do what you will and select what subject you may, but somehow or other the mind has lost its elasticity. I frankly confess that for this reason I selected this text for my discourse. I thought that, perhaps, if the head would not work, the heart might, and that if the thoughts came not, yet the emotions might. Emotions may well be stirred in the preacher, if not in the hearer, by the memories awakened by this passage. For I remember well that, more than 22 years ago, the first sermon that I ever attempted to make was from this text. I had been asked to walk out to the little village of Teversham, some little distance from the town of Cambridge, in which I lived, to accompany a young man whom I supposed to be the preacher for the evening, and on the way I said to him that I trusted God would bless him in his labors. "Oh, dear!" he said, "I never preached in my life. I never thought of doing such a thing! I was asked to walk with you and I sincerely hope that God would bless you in your preaching." "No," I said, "but I never preached and I don't know that I could do anything of the sort." We

walked together till we came to the place, my inmost soul being all in a tremble as to what would happen. When we found the congregation assembled, and no one else there to speak of Jesus, though I was only 16 years of age, as I found that I was expected to preach, I did preach, and this was the text.

If a raw recruit could speak upon anything, surely this theme would suit him. If one were dying, this would be the text. If one were distracted with a thousand cares, this would be the text because its teaching is experimental--its meaning wells up from the inner consciousness and needs neither a clear brain nor an eloquent tongue. To the Believer, it is not a thing which somebody else has taught him--it is a matter of fact which he knows within his own soul, that Christ is precious to him and he can bear testimony concerning it although not always such bold testimony as he could wish! I intend to let my heart run over like water from a full cup--just as the thought comes to my heart, it shall be poured out. Let us go, then, at once to our text and speak a little, first, about Believers. Then about their appreciation of Christ. And then about how they show it.

I. ABOUT BELIEVERS--"Unto you who believe."

Believers are getting to be rather scarce nowadays. Doubters have the sway--they are the men who claim to possess all the wisdom of the period. There is scarcely a single historical fact but what is now doubted. I fancy that the very existence of the human race must be a matter of question with some persons. I believe some imagine that not even they, themselves, are actually existent--certain ideas of themselves exist, but not themselves! We know not how far the human mind will go in this direction, but surely there must be a limit to doubting. Wonderful is the capacity of faith, but a hundred times more wonderful is the capacity of unbelief. The most credulous persons in

the world are unbelievers. He who refuses to swallow the gnat of Scriptural difficulty, usually swallows camels in large quantities of other difficulties of all sorts! The text speaks of Believers and, for my part, I am happy to know that a man is reckoned among Believers of any sort rather than with doubters.

But the Believers mentioned here are not mere Believers, they are spiritual Believers, Christian Believers--they believe in Christ Jesus. It is only to such that Christ is precious. In the Word of God there are many expressions with regard to believing in Christ. We read of believing in Him, believing upon Him and believing Him. Now, if I understand the Word aright, believing in Him means this--believing that He is what He claims to be. As, for instance, that He is the Sent One of God, the Messiah--that He is King in Israel, that He is the Son of God, that He is the Word that was God and Was in the beginning with God--that He is the Great High Priest making Atonement for our sins, that He is the Head of the Church and so on. That is to believe inHim, to accept Him as being what God's Word says He is, to believe God's testimony concerning His Son.

But believing upon Him goes further than that, for when a man believes upon Jesus, or on Jesus, he trusts Him, he rests himself upon Him for the pardon of his sin. He relies upon the Savior's atoning Sacrifice for eternal life. He rests upon the Savior's immortality for his resurrection. He looks to the Savior's power for everything. He looks to his Redeemer. He leans upon Him, he believes on Him. And this, mark you, is essential to salvation, for we may believe Christ to be God and yet perish! We may believe Christ to be the Great High Priest putting away sin by His atoning Sacrifice and yet perish! The faith that saves is a trustingfaith, a reliant faith, a sacred recumbency, confidence and leaning upon the Lord Jesus Christ! Dear Hearer, do you possess it?

Has the Holy Spirit given to you to cast yourself once and for all upon Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin?

If you have, surely you will, through Grace, proceed to the third form of faith, you will believe Him--His Person as well as His words. You will believe Him whatever He may say. You will believe Him whatever He may do. You will be persuaded that He is, Himself, the essential Truth of God, according to His own declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And then you will know what Paul meant when he said, "I know whom I have believed"--not "in whom"--but "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." If you could have asked a true Believer, in Christ's day, "What is your creed?" He would have pointed to His Master. He would not have repeated certain articles of faith, but He would have said, "I believe that glorious Man. My trust is in Him! I believe Him!" We have seen many books labeled upon their backs, "Body of Divinity," but of a truth, Jesus is the only real "Body of Divinity." If you want theology, He is the true Theologos, the essential Word of God! It is a grand thing when a man believes Jesus to be what Jesus is--a Savior from sin--and then believes the Christ to be what Christ is--the Anointed of the Lord and so makes Him to be his Alpha and Omega--all his salvation and all his desire!

Divide yourselves upon this question as to how far you are Believers, for we cannot assert that Christ is precious to you if you are not Believers. We know He will not be your heart's Monarch if you have no faith. He will be the very reverse! But if you are Believers in and upon Him, He will be precious to you beyond all comparison!

II. Now let us consider THE BELIEVER'S APPRECIATION OF HIS MASTER and observe, first, that every

Believer appreciates Christ Himself--His very Person--"Unto you

therefore who believe, He is precious." Some think the ordinances, which they call the "sacraments," very precious. So they are, but only for His sake. Others reckon the Doctrines to be very precious and always thrust Doctrine into the forefront. We will not deny that every Doctrine is precious, but it owes its value to the fact that Christ is in it. Dry doctrine is nothing better than a sepulcher for a dead Christ to be buried in--but the Doctrine preached in relation to His Person becomes a Throne on which He is exalted! It is a great pity when any of you Christians forget that you have a Savior who is alive and overlook the personality of Christ. Remember that He is a real Man and as a real Man on Calvary He died for you. And as a real Man He is gone into Heaven. He is no ideal personage but an actualPerson and the very marrow of Christian experience lies in the realization of the personality of the Savior--"Unto you who believe, He is precious." If you make Doctrine the main thing, you are very likely to grow narrow-minded. If you make your own experience the main thing, you will become gloomy and censorious of others. If you make ordinances the main thing, you will be apt to grow merely formal. You can never make too much of the living Christ Jesus! Remember that all other things are for His sake. Doctrines and ordinances are the planets, but Christ is the Sun! The stars of Doctrine revolve around Him as their great primal light. Get to love Him best of all. Yes, I know you do if you are truly believing in Him. You love the Doctrines and would not like to give one of them up, but still, the Incarnate God is the sum and substance of your confidence! Christ Jesus, Himself, is precious to you.

Now, as this appreciation concerns Christ, it may here be remembered that it is, in the case of every Believer, a personal appreciation. As we appreciate Christ's Person, so we each in person appreciate Him. We do not pretend to appreciate Christ because others say that they do so.

Nor do we run with the multitude, but we judge for ourselves. Unto those that believe in Him, Christ is precious on His own account, from their own personal knowledge of Him. They have not borrowed it. They do not cry, "Yes, He is precious," because their dear mother, who has gone to Heaven, used to say so. Her memory helps them, but they have a better reason than that. He is precious to them. Beloved, there is nothing like personal religion. The religion which you inherit, if at the same time it is not yours, personally, is not worth one single penny. You will not be saved by hereditary godliness. If any man should say, "My ancestors believed such-and-such, and therefore I do," that would be a reason why we should be Druids, for our ancestors were such. If our religion has come to us as an heirloom, like the family pew, or the family plate--and we have merely taken it at secondhand, [See Sermon #2624, Volume 45--SECONDHAND] it is of little or no account. You must value Christ because you have tried Him and know Him for yourself--for nothing short of a personal appreciation and a personal appropriation of the Lord Jesus, by faith, to your own case, and in your own heart--will ever bring you to Heaven! Everything short of personal godliness falls short of eternal life. Remember that nobody can be born-again for you. You yourselves must be regenerated. Nobody can renounce "the pomp and vanities of the world" for you. Sponsorship in religion is the most transparent of frauds. Nobody can love Christ for you--your own heart must beat high with affection towards His dear name! It must be a personal religion if it is to be of any value to you.

As there must be an appreciation of the Person of the Lord Jesus by our own selves, so, let me add, our experience must be the basis of that estimate. Christ is precious to us, this day, because we have proved Him to be precious. What has He done for us? He has delivered us,

first, from all the guilt of our past sins. You have not forgotten the day when--

"Laden with guilt, and full of fears"-- you crept to the foot of the Cross and looked up and saw Him suffering there for you. And when you believed in Him, the burden fell off your shoulders and you received a liberty unknown before! Christ is very precious to the man who has once felt the Word of the Law on his conscience. I wish that some people who slight Him, had been cast where some of us once lay--in spiritual wretchedness and deep depression of spirit. Oh, the misery of a tortured conscience! We trembled in anticipation of the flames of Hell when our sins stared us in the face--but in an instant, by virtue of the application of the precious blood--fear was gone, guilt disappeared and we were reconciled to God by Christ Jesus! Is He not precious if this has been the case?

Beside this, He has emancipated us from the chains of sin. Before, passions mastered us--the flesh stood at the helm and steered the vessel which way it would. Sometimes a fierce self-will, at another time the baser passions of the flesh ruled us. We could not overcome ourselves! Satan and the flesh were tyrants over us! But now the vices once so dear have become detestable, the chains of sin are broken and we are the Lord's free men--and though sin strives to get the mastery over us and we have much to mourn over--yet that same sword which has slain some sins is close at the throat of others and, by Divine Grace, we know that we shall slay them all before long! There is such a change in the character of some in this place, to my knowledge, that Christ, the Great Transformer, must be very precious to them! Once at the ale-house where sinners congregate. Once frequenting nameless haunts of vice. Once a swearer, once passionate, once dishonest, once a liar, once everything that is evil! But now washed and sanctified, you cannot

but prize your Deliverer! Oh, when I meet the reformed drunk and when I gaze into the face of the Magdalene who now rejoices to wash the Savior's feet with her tears, I know that to such He is precious! A renewed character going with pardoned sin, as it always does, endears the Savior to the soul.

And, O Beloved, beside that, He is precious to us because He has changed the whole bent and current of our thoughts. We were once selfish and cared for nobody else. But since the Lord Jesus Christ has saved us, we serve not self, but Christ. We do not now live to hoard money, or to get ourselves honor, or even to save our own souls, for that is completed--we now rise above the groveling love of self and our whole being is devoted to Jesus! He is precious beyond all price, for He has taught us to live for God's Glory and for the welfare of our fellow men.

He is precious to us by experience because He has helped us in many a dark hour of trial. I shall not tell you tonight how often He has cheered me. If any spirit here is more than ordinarily inclined to despondency, perhaps it is mine, but, ah, the sustaining influences of the Presence of Christ! I can rise even to the seventh Heaven of ecstasy when I do but fully come back to a simple faith in His precious name! Some of us could not live without Jesus Christ. It has come to this--it is Hell here if we do not have Christ with us. I remember slipping the cable of my belief once and being driven out to sea before a furious wind of doubt. At first I reveled in that speedy sailing across a sea of fierce unbelief, but, ah, when I began to see where I was going--and when I stood at the prow of the vessel and marked the dreary cloud-land that lay before me--and knew not what rocks might be ahead, I felt a horror of great darkness and cried for deliverance right loudly! And I was glad when the anchor held fast, again, and my

dreadful cruise was over. On Christ my soul has a hold as tight as the drowning man's death-grip and I cling with all my might to His everlasting love, His personal love to my poor soul and to the merit of His substitutionary Sacrifice on my behalf! Believe me, He is precious to all whose whole mental thought has come to an anchorage in Him, whose faculties feel that their utmost reach and stretch cannot go beyond being for He is All in All. Yes, the text says, "Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious."

Perhaps you imagine that I speak only of the past, as though Jesus had been precious. I meant that, but He is precious now--"Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious." When one of those saintly martyrs had been tormented by persecutors, they said to him, "What can Christ do for you now?" And he replied, "He can help me to bear with patience that which you inflict upon me." When the murdered Covenanter's head was carried by the dragoon to the poor bereaved wife and he asked her what she thought of her husband's face, now, she said that he never looked bonnier when he lived than he did now that he had given up his life for Christ. Verily, we can say, today, that Christ never looked bonnier than He does tonight, when we think of Him as slain for us! We gladly sing that hymn--

"If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now." Some people grow less lovely upon close acquaintance, but all lovers of Christ testify that His beauties bear the closest inspection. Those who lie in His bosom the longest love Him best--and those who have served Him 70 years are the most fluent and also the most sincere in singing His praises! Oh, He is a most precious Savior! Young man, do you trust Christ tonight? If you do, He is precious to you--but if He is not precious to you, then you have not believed in Him! May you be led to do so by the power of His Spirit and then Christ will be precious to you indeed!

But I must add that although Christ is precious to us now on account of past experience and present enjoyment, He is precious to us with a dash of expectation. We expect to soon enter the cold shades of death and it will be precious to have the Savior with us then. The question will sometimes come over every thoughtful mind, "Shall we, after all, die when we die? Are we like so many mites in a cheese and shall we soon be crushed out of being and cease to be?" Oh, dark and dreary thought! But, then, we remember that Jesus Christ arose from the dead and if any historical fact is certain, that is! There may be doubts about whether Caesar was slain by Brutus, or whether Alfred was ever king in England, for there are no evidences one half so positive on those points as those which prove the Resurrection of the Savior! I know not that anybody died as a witness for Caesar's death, but many shed their blood joyfully rather than deny that the Christ who was hanged upon the Cross actually rose again from the tomb! In that fact lies our hope of resurrection! A Man--a real Man who died on a tree--has risen from the dead! And we are one with that glorious Man who was also God--and because He lives, we shall also live! He is precious to us when we think of dying, and that should not be seldom. We shall soon come to it. Those who are strongest and most hale are nearing their last hour, and those who are sickly are nearer still, it may be. Oh, it is sweet to have Christ to live with, for then, let death come when it may, it will be a joyful thing for us--and once reconciled to our Maker through His Son, what have we to fear?

III. Lastly, we are to think of HOW BELIEVERS SHOW THEIR APPRECIATION OF CHRIST.

Some Christians seldom acknowledge that they are such It is a beggarly business to love Christ in a corner and to be ashamed to acknowledge Him. He was never ashamed to confess Himself the sinners' Friend, yet

there are sinners who profess to be saved by Him who are ashamed to be known as His followers. "Oh," says one, "if I were to say that I am a follower of the Crucified and join His Church and people, I would expect to be laughed at." And are you afraid of a fool's laughter? Was Christ ashamed to be laughed at for you? Oh, coward, to be ashamed to be ridiculed for Him! "Oh, but my friends would make such a hubbub at home." And did not His friends, who should have helped Him, cast Him out and reject Him? Yet He bore it for your sake. O craven spirits who will not take sides with Jesus, take heed as to what will happen to you when He comes, for those who deny Him before men shall be themselves denied before God and the holy angels! This day the royal standard floats in the breeze--let all who are on Christ's side rally to it, for the hosts on the other side are many and bold. The foes of Jesus insult Him to His face. Some deny His Deity and others thrust a human "priest" into His place--

"You that are men now serve Him Against unnumbered foes! Your courage rises with danger And strength to strength oppose."

If He is precious to you, you will never blush to be called a fool for His sake!

Those who really judge Jesus to be precious rejoice in possessing Him. I cannot understand those Christians who say, "Christ is ours," and yet go fretting and worrying through life. Dear Brother, if Christ is yours, you have no cause for fretting. "What, none?" asks one--"I am very poor." You are not poor! He who can call Christ his own cannot be poor! "But I am comfortless." How can that be when the Lord Jesus has given you a Comforter? "But I am bereaved." Truly so, but you have not lost your Lord! Come, dear Brother, if a man were to go through the streets of London with twenty thousand pounds in his pocket and when he reached the bank, found that a thief had stolen his cotton pocket

handkerchief, I think the reflection that would rise in his mind would be, "Thank God I have not lost my money." And the very loss of his handkerchief would only make him the more grateful that he had not lost his treasure. Look on all things you have here as nothing compared with Jesus, and say--

"How can I bereaved be Since I cannot part with Thee?"

If you esteem Christ as you should, you will refuse to give Him up at any cost--and under any circumstances you will hold to what you believe. You will have to suffer loss, it may be, in social position or in business. Very well, do it gladly and only wish you could suffer more for His dear sake! One might almost envy the martyrs, that they could earn that ruby crown which is not now within our reach. Let us, at any rate, be willing to take such little rebukes and rebuffs as may be given us for Christ's sake. If you love Jesus Christ, my Brothers and Sisters, you will be willing to make sacrifices for His cause. I wish this spirit were abroad throughout all the Church, that Christ was really so precious to saints that they consecrated themselves and their substance to Him. We need personal consecration! I have heard that word pronounced "purse-and-all consecration," certainly a most excellent pronunciation! He who loves Jesus consecrates to Him all that he has and feels it a delight that he may lay anything at the feet of Him who laid down His life for us!

Once more, he who really has this high estimate of Jesus will think much of Him. And as the thoughts are sure to run over at the mouth, he will talk much of Him. Do we talk so? If Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself--you will be whispering it into your child's ear, you will be telling it to your husband, you will be earnestly imparting it to your friends! Without the charms of eloquence, you will be more than eloquent--your heart

will speak and your eyes will flail as you talk of His sweet love!
Every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor--remember that you are either trying to spread abroad the Kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love Him at all! It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about Him! Of course I do not mean by that, that those who use the pen for Christ are silent--they are not. And those who help others to use the tongue, or spread that which others have written, are doing their part well. But I mean this--that man who says, "I believe in Jesus," but does not think enough of Jesus to ever tell another about Him, by mouth, or pen, or tract is an impostor! You are either doing good, or you are not yourself good. If you know Christ, you are as one who has found honey and you will call others to taste it. You are like the lepers who found the food which the Syrians had cast away--and you will go into Samaria and tell the hungry crowd that you have found Jesus--and are anxious that they should find Him too! Be wise in your generation and speak of Him in fitting ways and at fitting times--and so in every place proclaim the fact that Jesus is most precious to your soul!
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 PETER 2.
Verse 1. Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking. This is what we are to lay aside, to put away from us, to banish altogether. These are the old garments of the flesh which we are
to give up to the moths that they may devour them and leave not a fragment of the old rags for us to wear. "Laying aside all malice." Has anybody injured you? Are you angry with him because of what he has done to you? Freely forgive the injury and wholly forget it. "And all guile." That is everything that is of the nature of craftiness and deception. Be honest, simple, straightforward, transparent--this is a

trait of character which well becomes all Christians. "And hypocrisies" of all sorts. Let us not profess to be what we are not, nor pretend to know what we do not know, or talk of experiences which we have never felt. In fact, let us never be hypocrites in any respect whatever . The God of Truth loves His children to be the embodiments of truth. Hypocrisy He hates with a perfect hatred. "And envies." We must lay them all aside--all envies of men because they are richer, or more gifted, or more highly esteemed than we are. Let us not envy anybody, for envy eats a man's own heart out and slays him, as Eliphaz said to Job, "Envy slays the silly one." "And all evil speaking." We are not to be the repeaters of stories to the discredit of others, or to make up or to exaggerate any evil reports concerning anything in their lives. Let us have nothing to do with "evil speaking" of any kind. Lay all these rags aside. Is any one of them still clinging to you? Let it be laid aside this very hour!

2. As newborn babies, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby. The unadulterated "milk of the Word" is the best food for those who are, spiritually, "newborn babies." Desire this unadulterated milk of the Word not out of an idle curiosity--but that you may grow thereby, that you may grow wiser, holier, more earnest, more like your Savior--that you may grow up into the likeness of Him whose you are, and whom you serve.

3. If you have so tasted that the Lord is gracious. [See Sermons #459, Volume 8--A SERMON FOR MEN OF TASTE and #2168, Volume 36-- THE TEST OF TASTE] If you have spiritually tasted this great Truth of God, you have the flavor of it upon your palate so that it makes you long for more of it.

4. To whom coming. [See Sermon #1334, Volume 23--COMING--ALWAYS COMING] That is, unto the Lord. And that name Peter evidently gives to Jesus

Christ and, therefore, we worship Him and call Him, each one for himself or herself, even as Thomas did, "My Lord and my God." "To whom coming."

5. As unto a living stone, disallowed instead ofmen, but chosen of God, andprecious. "Chosen of God." The whole spiritual building is the result of the election, the choice of God. Jesus Christ, the great Foundation and the chief Cornerstone, is chosen of God--and all the living stones that are built upon Him are also chosen of God. The whole fabric is like the foundation upon which it is laid--"Chosen of God, and precious"--precious to God and precious to us!

5. You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual horse, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.We hear of certain persons being "ordained" first deacons and then priests, but all who are truly in Christ--whether they are men, or women, or children--are priests. We are "a holy priesthood" if we are in Christ. [See Sermon #1376, Volume 23--THE TRUE PRIESTHOOD, TEMPLE AND SACRIFICE] All the sacrifices that can now be offered are spiritual sacrifices which are to be offered, not by a few special persons set apart for that work, but by the whole company of God's chosen people--and so they are "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

6. Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded [See Sermon #1429, Volume 24--FAITH'S SURE FOUNDATION] Those who believe on Him are built upon Him. They rest upon Him, they are cemented to Him and, being living stones, they grow into Him and He grows into them--they participate in His life and so the living Temple becomes one--the chosen men and women who are the spiritual Temple in which God dwells upon earth. We need not wonder if, like the chief Cornerstone, we are disallowed of men,

but we may rejoice that, like our Lord and Savior, we are "chosen of God, and precious."

7. Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious.He is preciousness, He is an honor, He is everything that is glorious to you. You can never think highly enough of Him, or speak well enough concerning Him. All the world beside may disallow Him, but unto you He is precious!

7, 8. But unto those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient whereunto also they were appointed.The ungodly reject Him and regard Him as of no account, but God has made Him "the head of the corner." And He has done more than that, He has made Him "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" to them, "even to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." That is a terrible Truth upon which I am not going to speak just now, but I want you especially to note what an awful thing it is for men to "stumble at the Word"--to hang themselves upon Christ's Cross--to turn the heavenly medicine into poison--to make Christ, Himself, who is to others, "the Savior of life unto life," to be to them, "the Savior of death unto death." "Being disobedient." The fault lies with themselves, they willfully disobey the command to believe on Christ. "Whereunto also they were appointed." So the Divine Purpose is accomplished, although the guilt and punishment of their disobedience rest upon themselves alone.

9. But you are a chosen generation. There is the contrast between the disobedient and all true Believers. "You" have the chosen Savior to be the chief Cornerstone upon whom "you" who are living stones are to be built up into "a spiritual house," which is to be the abiding place of the Most High God.

9. A royal priesthood. "You" are to be like Melchisedec, in whom the two offices of priest and king were combined in one person. More than that, "you" are to be like your Lord in respect to His royal priesthood. That He should have "loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father," seems to be an honor which is far too high for us. It appears to bring us almost too near our Lord, yet it is not so, for Peter wrote under Divine Inspiration, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood."

9. An holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light God's Grace has been bestowed upon you in order that you may show forth His praises. Or, as the marginal reading puts it, His "virtues." Note what the Lord has done for you--He has called you "out of darkness" into light, into His light, "into His marvelous light." There are three thoughts there that are beautifully blended into one. What marvelous light that is into which God calls us! Try to measure it by the darkness in which you were! Try to measure it by the deeper darkness into which you were going! Try to measure it by the eternal darkness which would have fallen upon you if you had died in the dark. God has graciously brought you into His marvelous light! [See Sermon #2765, Volume 48--MARVELOUS LIGHT]

10. Who in timespast were not a people, but are now thepeople of God: who hadnot obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.How the Apostle delights to set forth these contrasts between the past and the present of the Lord's chosen people! By remembering what we were, we are made to appreciate and enjoy more what we now are. We may well praise Him who has worked this wondrous change in us. We were not His people, we were sinners of the Gentiles, not the chosen Hebrew race. In times

past, we were not worthy to be called a people, but we are now the people of God. We had not obtained mercy, we had not even asked for it--some of us were so blinded by our self-righteousness that we did not know that we needed God's mercy, or did not want it! But now we have obtained mercy.

11. Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul Fleshly lusts always hurt the soul. They do serious injury to the body, for they are contrary to the laws of health. But the main point for you to consider is that they "war against the soul." No men or women can ever commit an act of uncleanness of the body without grievously injuring the soul. It leaves a weakness, a defilement, a wound, a scar upon the soul--so may God graciously keep us from it altogether!

12. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers. This they are sure to do and the more holy your life is, the more they will probably speak against you. Even if you could live like an angel, some would call you a devil! But you are not to be judged by men's judgment, thank God for that, and so live, "that whereas they speak against you as evildoers."

12, 13. They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinances of man for the Lord's sake. "We are to obey kings, and governors, and magistrates, even when they may not be all that we wish them to be--"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."

13-15. Whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Ignorance, you see, is a noisy thing. An empty drum makes a loud noise

when it is beaten. And empty men, like empty vessels, often make the most sound. How, then, are we to silence this noisy ignorance? By argument? No, for it is not amenable to argument. Ignorance is to be silenced "by well doing." Holy living is the best reply to infidel talking!

16. As free. For there are no others under Heaven so free as God's servants are! "As free"--

16. And not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Not talking about liberty in order to stab at order. Not prating about liberty with the design of enriching yourself by robbing someone else. That is not God's will, but "using your liberty...as the servants of God" should use it.

17. Honor all men. Whoever they may be, be courteous, respectful, kind to all men because they are men. Whatever their circumstances, they are men. Therefore "honor all men."

17-19. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully.Not always "sticking up for his rights," as an ungodly man says, but feeling that the greatest right in the world is the right to do without your rights! To suffer wrongfully will often glorify God much better than to stand up for what you have a right to be or to have.

20. For what glory is it, if when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. It may be hard to bear, but in that very hardness lies much of the fragrance of it towards God. As spices must be bruised, so must you be pressed and

crushed to bring out your sweetness. If you want to be where there is nothing to suffer and no wrong to be endured, you are in the wrong world for that as yet--that will be in the world to come!

21. For even hereunto were you called. Called to do right and to suffer for it! Ah me, what a call is that!

21-23. Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, thatyou should follow His steps; who didno sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; and when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously: who in His own Self bore our sins [See Sermons #2790, Volume 48--
OUR LORD'S SUBSTITUTION, #2887, Volume 50--A DIRE DISEASE STRANGELY CURED and #1143, Volume 19--DEATH FOR SIN AND DEATH TO SIN] in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins,
should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Chapter 40

Gratitude for Great Deliverances

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven did the LORD behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORRD." Psalm 102:19-22.

I SUPPOSE the first sense of this passage would be just this. Israel had been carried away captive and only the poorest of the people had been left in the land. Jerusalem was a heap. Zion had been plowed with the plow of desolation. The whole country was, compared with its former state, like a desert. But in due time, God, who had peculiar favor towards His people, though He had sorely smitten them, would look down upon them. From the height of His sanctuary in Heaven, He would look down upon the ruins of His sanctuary on earth. From His heavenly city above, He would look down upon His earthly city below. And as He looked and listened, He would be attracted by the moans of His people, and especially of some who were appointed to death, or, as the margin renders it, "the children of death." Upon these He would look with tender pity and, in due time He would so come to the deliverance of His scattered people, Israel, and bring them back to their own land and work for them such wonderful mercy that, ever afterwards that

deliverance would be spoken of with praise and thanksgiving! Even in the last days when all nations shall serve the Lord, the memory of this deliverance shall not be forgotten! Still shall it be the theme ofjoyous song and the subject of holy contemplation, just as when Israel was in Egypt, the Lord heard their groaning and with a high hand and a stretched-out arm brought them up out of the land of bondage--and ever afterwards among the sweetest patriotic songs of the nation was the one which Moses and Miriam sang on the further shore of the Red Sea--"Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." And all along Jewish history, whatever of her songs there may have been, that one has never gone into oblivion. And even in Heaven, itself, "they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." So that the deliverance promised here to Israel was to be as noteworthy as that which was given at the Red Sea and it was to be forever kept in memory by the Lord's chosen people!

Now I am going to leave the more immediate sense of our text, yet still give you its meaning. It has been said that if a great crystal is broken into the smallest fragments, each piece will still be crystallized in the same form and, in like manner, the dealings of God with His Church, as a whole, will be found to be of the same kind as His dealings with the various parts of His Church and also with individuals. And in dealing with individuals, each separate act of God will have about it the same attributes and be of the same character as His dealings on a large scale with the whole of His people. So, if we break down the great Truth of the text, which is like a mass of bread, into small crumbs so that each one of the Lord's children may have a portion, it will still be bread! The Truth of God will be the same as we try to bring it home to individual experience--and that we shall now

try to do. May the eternal Spirit, the Comforter, help us in the doing of it!

I. And first, dear Friends, our text speaks of MISERY AT ITS EXTREME. You observe that it speaks of prisoners who are groaning and of those who are appointed unto death--who are evidently in chains because they are spoken of as being loosed. It has been well said that one half of the people in the world do not know how the other half lives, and it is certainly true that there are sorrows in this world of which some of us have no conception or imagination! Complaint was made, some time ago, by a hearer in a certain place of worship, that most of the sermons that he heard there were composed upon the principle that everybody was happy--and it did not appear to him that the preacher had much, if any sympathy with those who were of a sorrowful spirit, like Hannah, [See Sermon #1515, Volume 26--A WOMAN OF A SORROWFUL SPIRIT] or those who were in an afflicted and depressed condition who could not rejoice as he could. I do not think that charge could be truthfully brought against me. If it could, I would be sorry, for where the Spirit of God rests upon any man at all after the manner in which it rested upon Christ, that man will repeat, in his measure, what his Lord could say in the fullest possible sense, "He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, [See Sermon #1604, Volume 27--HEART DISEASE CURABLE] to preach deliverance to the captives, [See Sermon #2371, Volume 40--FREEDOM AT ONCE AND FOREVER] and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty they who are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." The ministry that God sends, though it will be a ministry of warning and threats to the ungodly, will be a ministry of consolation to those who are sorrowing over their sins and seeking Divine

deliverance from them! So you who are the sons and daughters of joy will pardon me if there should seem to be less than usual for you in my present discourse. When someone is sick, nobody blames the physician for giving his main attention to the invalid of the house, nor finds fault with the nurse for her assiduous attentions to the poor suffering one. There are many sorrows, Brothers and Sisters, in this world, and there are many sorrows even in the Church of God! And yet, for my part, I see much for which I can thank God, especially when I look upon the people of God. Then I say, with Moses, "Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?" Yet there are still many sons and daughters of affliction and there are many trials and tribulations for each of us to pass through before we reach that land where sorrow is unknown.

There are some sad souls who are comparable to prisoners, prisoners that groan most mournfully. And there are some who are convinced of sin, but who have not yet found the Savior--and some who, having found that Savior, have fallen into doubts and fears, or who have backslidden from Him and so lost their comforting assurances. And they are now crying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" There are also some who have experienced heavy losses and are bearing heavy crosses--some who have seen the desire of their eyes taken away with a stroke, some to whom the shafts of death have flown once, twice, thrice--each time smiting down a beloved one. There are some very dear children of God who do not always see the light of His Countenance--precious sons of God who are like fruit brought forth by the moon--those who are the bruised spices of the sanctuary all the sweeter for being bruised and just now is the time of their sorrow, when they are prisoners that cry and sigh and groan by reason of their hard bondage.

A prisoner is often a solitary man. Yet much of the sorrow of

imprisonment lies in separation from friends and in utter loneliness. Perhaps I am addressing some whose condition is that of extreme solitude. You are alone in the streets of this great wilderness of a city and there is no such loneliness as that! Or you live in a house where you wish that you could be alone in one sense, for you are sadly alone in another sense, for nobody seems to understand your case, or to enter into your experience. You wear a fetter which never fretted human wrists before--at least so you think. You are in solitary confinement and in that confinement you are in the dark. The light in which you once rejoiced has gone from you. The joyous flow of spirits and the cheery countenance which you used to possess have departed from you. Your heart is troubled and you are vexed with inward doubts and fears. It is a sorrowful case when a man is in that condition and is alone in it.

It may be, also, that you feel as if you were jailed. The power to act, which you once had, has gone from you. Your former energy has departed. You are like a man spellbound. Just as sometimes, in troubled dreams, a man tries to run but cannot even lift a foot, or seeks to grasp something, but his hands seems turned to stone, so is it with you--or so, at any rate, has it been with some of us! We were chained and in the dark, and solitary. And we have tried hard to convince ourselves of the truth of what people said to us--that it was only a matter of nerves and that we must be energetic and make up our minds to get out of that state--which is what only fools say, for wise men know that such talk as this is like pouring vinegar into open wounds, making them smart still more and never producing any healing effects! You have, perhaps, been like a prisoner who has well-near escaped, but who has been detected by the ever-watchful guards and so had to go back to his cell and to wear double chains for trying to escape! And, possibly,

your imprisonment has lasted long. Some of you young people may feel frightened when you hear me talk like this. Do not be alarmed, yet lay up in your memories what I am saying, because if these dark days never come to you, you will be all the more thankful that they do not! But if they do, you will remember that I told you about them. You will then say, "This is no strange thing that has happened to us, for the preacher said it might be so, and the preacher was a man of a cheery spirits yet he said it might be so with us. As it now is so, we need not be surprised and we may know that we may be the children of God and that God may be looking down from Heaven in pity upon us--and resolving to set us free--and yet for the present we are fettered and unable to escape from our prison."

Now observe that according to the text, there are some who are in a worse plight even than prisoners, for they are "appointed to death"--some who feel in their bodies that they will soon die, but who have not yet learned to exult in that fact. They have not looked at the heavenward side of it and said, "Ah, we shall soon be where we shall shake off every infirmity and sickness, and see our Savior face to face and praise Him without sinning forever!" But they have said, "We are appointed to death. We have sharp pains to undergo and the dying strife to endure when the clammy sweat will thicken upon our brow." And as yet, that is all that they have thought of, or, at least they think most of that. If there are any such people here, I pray God to now give them the comfort which they so sorely need--that they may even rejoice in the prospect of departing to be with that dear Lord whom they have so long loved and served! And, alas, there are some who are "appointed to death" in a far worse sense than that for "to die is gain" to us who are believers in Christ, but the ungodly feel that they are "appointed to death" in a much more terrible meaning of the word, "death!"

Their sins are standing out before them and crying out against them! They feel like a murderer who is standing under the gallows--they are afraid that the floor will fall from beneath their feet and that they will sink down to destruction! They have not yet learned the power of the precious blood of Jesus and they have not yet heard the voice of God saying to them, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you for Christ's sake." They are under conviction of sin and under that conviction they feel that they are "appointed to death" eternal--their own conscience affirms that the Divine sentence is a just one and they dare not argue with it. Such is their own sense of their condition in the sight of God that if they had to judge themselves, they would have to condemn themselves! And, perhaps, meanwhile, Satan is reminding them of the wrath to come and making them feel how certain it is that it will be their portion. They also believe themselves to be "appointed to death" because even their fellows seem to shun them. Christian people appear to have given them up as hopeless. Their old companions look upon them as though they were too far gone for the mercy of God to reach them. If there should be one such sinner in this building, I am right glad of it, for it is to him and to those like he that this text is especially sent! The Lord is, at this moment, looking down from Heaven with those piercing eyes of His which can discern the exact condition of all hearts here--and those eyes of His are gazing with Infinite pity upon the groaning prisoners who are "appointed to death." Now, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, there are some of us who are neither prisoners nor "appointed to death." Let us bless the Lord who has set us free and given us eternal life in His Son, Jesus Christ! But let us not forget what we used to be, nor forget those who are still in bonds and under sentence of death. Let us pray the Lord to bless them and to bring them out into liberty and joy this very hour! Whenever I

meet with a poor enslaved, sin-sick soul, I say, "Ah, my Friend! I can pity you. I still have the scars upon my soul where the iron fetters used to hold me fast--and the bitterness of heart that I then experienced makes me always feel a tender, loving sympathy with the weak ones among God's people and the tried ones among His saints." Those who are pushed about by many as though they were not fit to live are the very ones for whom I would gladly make a way and bring them to the softest place and say, "Be of good comfort, for it is for you and such as you that God has sent His Son and His Spirit into the world."

II. Now, secondly, in our text we notice MISERY OBSERVED.

I want you carefully to note these words, "For the Lord has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven did the Lord behold the earth to hear the groaning of the prisoner." This expression is, of course, not strictly applicable to God, for He sees all things. But, speaking after the manner of men, it describes Him as going up to the highest part of Heaven, as a watchman goes up to the top of the tower, where the widest range of vision can be obtained and looks over sea and land with keen and searching eyes. The original appears to mean, "The Lord leans from the height of His sanctuary," as if He bent down over the battlements of Heaven in order to get nearer to the object of His search and to gaze the more intently at it. And as He looks and listens, His eyes and ears are riveted upon a prison through whose dreary, grated window He sees what others cannot--a pining prisoner--and He hears a moan which others cannot bear to hear. And far off, yonder, in the place of shame and death, He sees poor wretches taken out to die. And all His heart goes out in pity towards them. We naturally look for some pleasing sight--we like to let our eyes rest upon that beautiful lake in the distance, or that forest browning with the tints of autumn, or that green hill, or that sky checkered with a

thousand hues as the sun is setting. But here is the great God looking out for miserable objects, keenly observing those who are the most miserable of men and women! We like to have our ears charmed by the sweet sounds of melody and harmony, but God opens His ears to catch the sound of a moan or a groan, and turns His eyes, not to search for a diamond, but to look for a tear! O wondrous mercy of God! How strange that the King of kings should go to the top of His castle to look for a poor wretched soul!

And yet, dear Friends, after this manner do the benevolent of the earth, who are most like their God, act. See the man whose duty it is to watch the coast--observe him going up and down the seashore and the cliffs, walking to and fro with his telescope under his arm. There is a pleasure yacht yonder, but he does not especially notice that. There is a steamer plowing the deep, but he does not notice that. Here are little rowing or sailing boats flitting about, but he does not notice them. Now it is night and presently a rocket flies up into the air. Ah, he is all attention now! There is another rocket. He calls his fellows and soon they will be off with the lifeboat in answer to the signals of distress at sea! Just so is it with God--He is looking for signals of distress. Some of you are bent on pleasure, but He does not take special note of you. Some of you are full of pride, you are rich and increased in goods, you have all your canvas spread and all your flags flying--but the Lord does not notice you except in sorrow and anger! But if there is a signal of distress anywhere about, or a poor anxious soul is crying, "O God, have mercy upon me," or one that cannot get as far as that, but whose moan is too suffocating to become an articulate prayer, (for that is what is implied in the word, groaning, here), God is sure to notice that, to hear the groaning and mark the falling tear of the penitent!

To my mind it is very wonderful that while God is Omniscient and so sees everything, there should be some special objects of His Omniscient regard. Think for a moment what concentrated Omniscience must be--each individual as closely looked upon by God as if there were not another person for Him to look upon--as if he were as much the sole object of the thought of the Most High as if He had forgotten the whole universe besides! That is really the purport of what we are here taught. God is reading you through and through, poor Soul--watching you as if He had nobody else to watch, understanding you as fully as if there were nobody else to be understood--leaning over you that He may get the better view of you, bringing all His Infinite faculties to bear upon your case, searching it from top to bottom--the origin of your sorrow, the ramifications of your grief, planning the outcome of the whole matter, what balms and what catholicons you need to heal your wounds and charm away your distresses! Why, it is really worthwhile to be a prisoner to have God looking upon one like this! It is worthwhile to feel the sentence of death in one's soul in order to know, by the testimony of Inspiration, that God is looking upon one out of Heaven in this special and peculiar sense! He can never forget His children anywhere, but if there is one place where He remembers them more specially than anywhere else, it is in the place of their sorrow!

I wonder whether you, good mother, have been especially thinking of anyone at home while I have been preaching? I should not wonder if it is so and I can guess which member of your family you have thought of more than of all the rest! Of course you have been thinking of the little one whom you left so ill. You were scarcely sure whether you might venture to steal out this evening, but you said, "I think I must go and bow before the Lord in His House." And while you have been here, you have been wondering whether the nurse has been properly caring for

your sick child. Why have you not been concerned about your big boy, John, who is away at school, or about your daughter, Mary, who is well and strong? Ah, no, you have been able to keep your thoughts away from them, but you could not keep your thoughts away from the little sick one. Now, like as a father and a mother of a family pity their children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him-- and He especially pities His poor tried and troubled ones.

III. Thirdly, keeping to the same strain, we see MISERY RELIEVED. God looks down from Heaven to hear the groaning of the prisoner and to loose those that are appointed to death. God's thoughts do not end in thoughts, nor do His words end in words. David wrote truly, "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!" So they are, but how precious also must His actions be! Our text is one of many proofs that God does really hear prayer. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I would be greatly grieved if any of you were moved in the slightest degree by the assertion that is made, in these evil days, that our prayers are really not heard by God. The persons who make that assertion do not know anything at all about the matter, for they do not themselves pray to God, so what can they know about it? If I were to contradict one of these philosophers concerning certain natural phenomena

which I have never observed, he would at once say that I was out of court! If I said that I did not believe in the result which he said he had attained, he would say, "But I have proved it and, therefore, I am able to speak positively concerning it." If I were to say, "I have not tried it and so do not believe it," he would say to me, "Negative evidence is of no use in such a case as this." I cannot help using this simple illustration, which I have used before, concerning a man who was charged with theft. They brought five persons to prove that he stole

the goods, and they all saw him do it, "but," he said, "that is nothing! I can bring 50 people who did not see me steal the goods." Just so. But the magistrate knew that there was not anything in the evidence of the 50 people who did not see the theft--the evidence of the five people who did see it was much stronger! So if there is but a very small number of us who have really proved the power of prayer and who know that we have obtained answers to our petitions, the evidence of the small number who have tested the matter is worth far more than the evidence of any number who have not tried it and who, therefore, cannot say anything about it! Some of us have been to God about great things and little things, temporal things and spiritual things--we are in the habit of going to Him all day long! There is scarcely an hour in the day in which we do not ask Him for something or other--and for us to receive answers to our prayers is as common a thing for us as breathing the air, or seeking the sunshine by day or the stars by night! It has become such an ordinary, common occurrence with us that we cannot doubt it.

Our text also reminds us that God hears the very poorest prayers, those which are the poorest in the judgment of men--the groaning of the prisoners. I do not think them the poorest prayers--I consider that they are really the most powerful prayers. The prayers of the heart are often the most prevalent with God when they cannot be expressed in words, for the weight of meaning would break the backs of the words and human language would stagger beneath the crushing load. Then it is that we often pray best of all. If a man gets up from his knees and groans, and says, "I cannot pray," he need not fret about not finding suitable words, for he has prayed! But our wordy prayers, whether in our private devotions or in public Prayer Meetings, are often so much chaff and nothing more. God does not need our words, yet we sometimes string them

together as if we were displaying our oratory before the Eternal. This must not be! God loves the heart of the suppliant to be poured out before Him. The best prayer is when a man can take his heart and turn it bottom upwards and let all that is in it run out! That is the style of praying that has most influence with God.

He does "hear the groaning of the prisoner" and with God, to hear means to answer We need not say, as many do, that "He is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God," for prayer-hearing involves prayer-answering! O mourners, still mourn before your God, but mourn with this mixture of hope--that God will not suffer the groaning that arises from your heart, in the name of Jesus, to be like the mere whisperings of the wind! He will hear them before long.

It is also said, in our text, that the Lord will "loose those that are appointed to death."fs it not wonderful that God should deliver men just when it seems as if all is over with them? I remember lying in the condemned cell--I mean spiritually. I thought I heard the bell tolling out my doom and I expected to soon be taken away to execution! But it was just then that God came and loosed my bonds. I had tugged hard at them, trying to untie the knots that Moses had tied and seeing if I could break the iron fetters of conviction and condemnation which were riveted upon me, but I could not. But the sight of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the Omnipotent might of His atoning Sacrifice broke every bond from off my soul in a single moment and I leaped into ecstatic liberty! And this is how God will deal with every soul that will but turn to Jesus on the Cross and leave itself in the hands of Infinite Love! Sinner, even if you are on the very verge of Hell, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, He will loose your bonds and set you at liberty! Even though your death warrant seems to be signed and sealed, the prey shall be taken from the mighty and the lawful captive

shall be delivered, for the Lord, your Redeemer, is almighty and none can withstand Him when He resolves to bring up His children even from their prisons! Only trust in Jesus! Rest your soul upon Him and God will yet come to your deliverance!

IV. The last thing in our text is ELOQUENT GRATITUDE. "To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord."

One of the most powerful preachers who ever lived was the Prophet Jonah. And I believe that Jonah learned to preach by going, in the whale's belly, to the bottom of the Mediterranean. That voyage was better than a university education for him and he became a good sound Calvinist before he was cast up again upon the land. He said, "Salvation is of the Lord," before the Lord told the fish to give him up and I have no doubt that he often preached that doctrine afterwards! And if some preachers whom I know, instead of having lessons in elocution, were sent for a little while down into the depths of soul-despair. If they were tried, plagued, vexed and chastened every morning, they would learn a way of speaking which would reach the people's hearts far better than any that can be learned by human teaching!

We need, dear Brothers, if we are to speak aright for God, to know something of our soul's need, the depths of it, and then something of the Grace of God and the height of it in bringing us out of our distresses! Hence, according to our text, those who are set free declare or publish the name of the Lord. You cannot keep a man quiet if he has been, spiritually, in prison and has been brought out by God! If he has been condemned to die and has had his sentence canceled at the last moment, you cannot make him hold his tongue! You may tell him that he must keep his religion to himself, but it is impossible. He is so

overjoyed about it--it has so charmed him that he must begin to tell somebody about it! You know that John Bunyan said that he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about his conversion. It seems quite natural that he should feel like that and he did tell a great many besides the crows about it! There is something in a man who gets joy and peace in believing that will not be quiet. Perhaps some of you have been very ill and a certain medicine has been recommended to you and it has restored you. Now, do you not always feel, when you meet anybody who is ill as you were, that you must tell him about the remedy that cured you? You say, "You should try so-and-so! Look what it has done for me." Why do you need to tell him? You do not know why! You do not claim any very great measure of benevolence for doing it, for you cannot help communicating the good news to others. So is it with the man who is really saved by the Grace of God! He needs to communicate it and he is the fit man to communicate it because he who speaks from the heart speaks to the heart and he who speaks experimentally is the man by whom the Holy Spirit is most likely to speak to those who are in a similar experience. Perhaps, my dear Friends, some of you are now suffering on purpose that God may afterwards fit you the better to speak to others in a similar case--I believe it is often so and trust that it may turn out to be so in your case.

These people declared the goodness of God among the saints. So ought we to do. Some Christians cannot tell their experience very readily, but I think they should try to do so. Tell your Brothers and Sisters in Christ what the Lord has done for you. If there were more commerce among Christians with their experience, they would be mutually the more enriched. But these people also declared the name of the Lord among the nations when they were gathered together. And Soul, if God has allowed you to go down into the deeps of the prison and to lie in the condemned

cell--and has brought you out to life and liberty--you will surely not blush to tell all what great things God has done for you! I think you must sometimes feel in your heart as if you wished you had a whole universe for an audience--the devils in Hell and the angels in Heaven, the saints above and the saints below--and the sinners, too, and you would like to say to them, "I sought the Lord and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." You cannot have quite so large an audience as that just yet, so, meanwhile, make use of the audience you can have and--

"Tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found!"

It is in part for this purpose that this great blessing has been given to you that you might tell all you can about it to others. I pray you not to rob God of the revenue of Glory which His Grace deserves at your hands!

Brothers and Sisters, the gist of what I have said to you is just this--Are we rejoicing in the Lord? Then let us turn our joy into praise of Him! Are we very much cast down? Then let us look up to Him who looks down upon us and let us rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, for He will yet bring us out of our prison! Are we as yet unsaved? Then let us catch at those words in the text that tell us that God looks down from Heaven "to hear the groaning of the prisoner." Will you not groan, poor prisoner? The devil tempted you never to do so any more. You yourself said, "It is no use. I have been to the Tabernacle so long and I have been to other places of worship, but I cannot get any comfort. I will give up trying." Oh, do not do so, I pray you!

Have you come to the end of yourself? Well, then, now you have come to the beginning of God! It is when the last penny of creature merit is

gone that God comes to us with the boundless treasures of His Grace! If you have one moldy crust of your own homemade bread left, you shall not have the Bread of Heaven! But when you are starved. When you have no goodness in you--nor any hope of goodness, no merit, nor hope of merit, no reliance, nor shadow of reliance upon anything that you are, or ever can be--then is the time to cast yourself upon the all-sufficient mercy of God in Christ Jesus! Everything that you can spin, God will unravel! Everything that you can do for yourself, He will throw down! Your spider webs He will break! You think to spin them into silken robes, but He will strip you and He will slay you, for it is written, "I wound and I heal. I kill and I make alive." Blessed is the man who is wounded by God, for He will afterwards heal him! Blessed is the man who is slain by God in this sense, for He will make him alive! Blessed is the man who is empty, for God will fill him! That was the theme of the Virgin's song and let it be ours as I close my discourse--"He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree." So may He do now, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM102.

Verses 1, 2. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto You. Hide not Your face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline Your ear unto me: in the day when I call, answer me speedily. Sincere suppliants are not content with praying for praying's sake. They desire to really reach the ear and heart of Jehovah. "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto You." When prayer is intensified into a cry, then the heart is even more urgent to have audience of the Lord.

3-7. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass, so that I forget

to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop. The Psalmist gives us here a very graphic description of his sorrowful condition at that time. He was moved to grief by a view of the national calamities of the chosen people and these so worked upon his patriotic soul that he was wasted with anxiety, his spirits were dried up and his very life was ready to expire.

8. My enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. Their rage was unrelenting and unceasing and vented itself in taunts and insults. With his inward sorrows and outward persecutions, the Psalmist was in as ill a plight as may well be conceived!

9-11. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping because of Your indignation and Your wrath: for You have lifted me up, and cast me down. My days are like a shadow that declines; and I am withered like grass. This is a telling description of all-saturating, all-embittering sadness. And that was the portion of one of the best of men, and that for no fault of his own, but because of his love to the Lord's people.

12. But You, O LORD, shall endure forever; and Your remembrance unto all generations. All other things are vanishing like smoke and withering like grass. But, overall, the one eternal, Immutable Light shines on, and will shine on when all these shadows have declined into nothingness.

13,14. You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yes, the set time is come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof [See Sermon #2576, Volume 44--ZION'S PROSPERITY] They delight in her so

greatly that even her rubbish is dear to them. It was a good omen for Jerusalem when the captives began to feel a homesickness and began to sigh after her.

15-17. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Your Glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer

[See Sermon #1141, Volume 19--GOOD NEWS FOR THE DESTITUTE] He will not treat their pleas with contempt. He will incline His ears to hear, His heart to consider and His hands to help.

18. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD. A note shall be made of it, for there will be destitute ones in future generations--"the poor shall never cease out of the land"--and it will make glad their eyes to read the story of the Lord's mercy to the needy in former times.

19-23. For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from Heaven did the LORD behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. Here the Psalmist comes down again to the mournful string and pours forth his personal complaint.

24-27. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: Your years are throughout all generations. Of old have You laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They shall perish, but You shall endure: yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall You change them, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall have no end. God

always lives on. No decay can happen to Him, nor destruction overtake Him. O my Soul, rejoice you in the Lord always, since He is always the same!

28. The children of Your servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before You.

Chapter 41

God's Providence

(No. 3114)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. Where they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went As for their rims, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rims were full of eyes round about them four And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them, and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up." Ezekiel 1:15-19.

IN my preaching, I am constantly talking about Providence, so I thought it would be well to devote a whole sermon to explaining what I believe are God's great wonder-working processes which we call, "Providence." In looking for a suitable text, I found this one. These "wheels" signify Divine Providence and I trust, while explaining them, I may be so assisted by God's Spirit that I may say many things to you concerning God's Government which may lift up any who are despondent and lift up the souls of many who are distressed.

I. Going at once to my divisions, my first remark will be that

PROVIDENCE IS HERE COMPARED TO A "WHEEL."

When the Prophet had "beheld the living creatures," which I take it were angels, he opened his eyes again and he saw a wonderful

illustration of Divine Providence--and this exhibition was in the figure of a wheel. You must know that this is not the only place where this comparison is to be found, for the Romans and Greeks were accustomed to compare the wondrous working of God in Providence to the revolutions of a wheel. The story goes that a certain king, being taken prisoner, was bound in chains and dragged along at the chariot wheels of his conqueror. As he went along, he kept looking at the wheel and shedding tears, and then looking at the wheel, again, and lifting up his eyes and smiling. The conqueror turned and said, "Why are you looking at that wheel?" He said, "I was thinking, such is the lot of man--just now I was here, now I am there--but soon I may be here again at the top of the wheel, and you may be grinding the dust." This was well for a heathen. The Prophet had the very same idea--he was permitted by God to see that the wheel is a very beautiful figure of Divine Providence. Let me show you that it is so.

I have just hinted at one reason why Providence is like a wheel--because sometimes one part of the wheel is at the top and then it is at the bottom. Sometimes this part is exalted and soon it sinks down to the dust. Then it is lifted into the air and then again, by a single revolution, it is brought down again to the earth. So is it with our life. Sometimes we are in humble poverty and hardly know what we shall do for bread. Soon the wheel revolves and we are brought into the comfort of wealth--our feet stand in a spacious room, we are fed with corn and wine--we drink of a cup overflowing its brim. Again we are brought low through affliction and famine. A little while and another page is turned--and we are exalted to the heavens and can sing and rejoice in the Lord our God! I have no doubt many of you here have experienced a far more checkered life than I have and, therefore, you can feel that your life has been as a "wheel." Ah, Man! You are strong,

great and rich! You may now stand at the uppermost part of it, but it is a wheel and you may yet be brought low. And you poor who are depressed and downcast--who are weeping because you know not where you shall lay your heads--that wheel may revolve and you may be lifted up!

Our own experience is never a stale thing. It is always changing, always turning round. The fly that sits now on the edge of the wheel may be crushed by its next revolution. The world may cry, "Hosanna," to its minister, today, and the next day may say, "Crucify him, crucify him." Such is the state of man. Providence is like a wheel!

You know that in a wheel there is one portion that never turns round and that is the axle. So, in God's Providence, there is an axle which never moves. Christian, here is a sweet thought for you! Your state is always changing--sometimes you are exalted and sometimes depressed--yet there is an unmoving point in your state. What is this axle? What is the pivot upon which all the machinery revolves? It is the axle of God's everlasting love towards His covenant people. The exterior of the wheel is changing, but the center stands forever fixed. Other things may move, but God's love never moves--it is the axle of the wheel! This is another reason why Providence should be compared to a wheel.

Yet more. You observe when the wheel moves very rapidly, you can discern nothing but the exterior circle. So, if you look back to history and read the story of a thousand years, you set the wheel of Providence revolving rapidly and you lose sight of all the little things that are within the circle. You see only one great thing and that is that God is working out in the world His everlasting purposes.

You sit down and take a book of history--say the History of England--and you will say of one event, "Now that seems to be out of place." You say of another, "That seems to be out of time." Another, "That seems to be adverse to the cause of liberty." But look through a

thousand years and those things which seemed as if they would crush liberty in her germ--those things which seemed as if they would destroy this, our commonwealth, in our very rising, have been those which have caused the sturdy oak of liberty to take deeper root! Take the whole together, instead of taking the events one by one--look at a thousand years and you will see nothing but one round ring of symmetry teaching you that God is wise and God is just. So let it be with you in your lives. Here you are fretting about troubles today. Think also of the past--put all your troubles together and they are not troubles at all! You will see that one counteracts the other. If you take your life--not today, alone, but look back on 40 years of it-- you will be obliged, instead of lamenting and mourning, to bless God for His mercies towards you. Let the wheel go round and you will see nothing but a ring of everlasting wisdom revolving!

I trust I have made the first part of my subject intelligible--that the Providence of God is here compared to a wheel.

II. My second thought is that THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS, IN SOME MYSTERIOUS WAY, CONNECTED
WITH ANGELS.

Look at verse 15. "Now as I beheld the living creatures." Then turn to the 19th verse. "And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up." These living creatures I believe to be angels. And the text teaches us that there is a connection between Providence and angelic agency. I do not know how to explain it. I cannot tell how it is, but I believe angels have a great deal to do with the affairs of this world. An angel cut off the hosts of Sennacherib and it is still my firm belief that angels are sent forth, somehow or other, to accomplish the everlasting purpose of God. The great wheel of

Providence is still turned by an angel. When there is some trouble which seems to stop that wheel, some mighty cherub puts his shoulder to it and hurls it round--and makes the chariot of God's Providence go on still. Angels have much more to do with us than we imagine. I do not know but that spirits sometimes come down and whisper thoughts into our ears. I have strange thoughts, sometimes, that seem to come from a land of dreams--and fiery visions that make my soul hot within me. Sometimes I have thoughts which I know come from God's Spirit--some which are glorious and some that are not so good, but still holy thoughts--and I often attribute them to angels. I have sometimes a thought which cheers me in distress--and was not an angel sent to strengthen Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane? How do you think the angel strengthened Him? Why, by putting thoughts into Christ's mind! He could not do it in any other way--he could not strengthen Him by a plaster, or by any physical means, but by injecting holy thoughts! So is it with us. There was a temptation which might have led you astray, but God said, "Gabriel, fly! There is one of My people in peril--go and put such a thought into his soul that when the danger comes, he will say, 'Get you behind me, Satan, I will have nothing to do with sin.'"

We have, each of us, a guardian angel to attend us. The meaning of the passage, "In Heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in Heaven," surely is that every Christian has a guardian angel who flies about him and holds the shield of God over his brow, keeps his feet lest he should dash them against a stone, guards him, controls him, manages him, injects thoughts into his mind, restrains his evil desires and is the minister and servant of the Holy Spirit to keep him from sin and lead him to righteousness. Whether I am right or wrong, I leave you to judge, but perhaps I have more angelology in me than most people have. I know my imagination has sometimes been so

powerful that when I have been alone at night, I could almost fancy that I saw an angel fly by me when I have been out preaching the Word. However, I take it that the text teaches us that angels have very much to do with God's Providence, for it says,

"And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them, and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up." Let us bless God that He has made angels ministering spirits to minister unto them that are heirs of salvation!

III. My third remark shall be that PROVIDENCE IS UNIVERSAL. That you will see by the text. "Behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces." The wheel had "four faces." I think that means one face to the North, another to the South, another to the East and another to the West--there is a face to every quarter--teaching us that Providence is universal, looking to every quarter of the globe. Have you ever been in a house where there was an old picture hanging? I have sometimes stood in a picture gallery and there has been a painting of some old warrior--and he has looked straight at me. If I have gone to the other end of the room, he has still looked at me. Wherever you are in the room, a well-painted portrait will be looking at you. Such is the Providence of God--wherever you are, the eyes of God will be upon you--as much upon you as if there were not another person in the whole world! If there were only one, you may imagine how much God would look upon that one, but He looks on each one of us as if there were no other created being and nothing else in the whole world! His eyes are fixed upon us at every hour and at every moment. Wherever we may be, we shall have one face of the wheel turned upon us.

You cannot banish me from my Lord. Send me to the snows of Siberia or Lapland, I shall have the eyes of God there. Send me to Australia and

let me toil at the gold diggings, there will He visit me. If you send me to the utmost verge of the round globe, I shall still have the eyes of God upon me. Put me in the desert where there is not one single blade of grass growing and His Presence shall cheer me. Or let me go to sea, amidst the howls of the tempest and the shrieking of the wind where the mad waves lift up their hands to the skies as if they would pluck the stars from their cloudy thrones--and I shall have the eyes of God upon me there! Let me sink and let my gurgling voice be heard among the waves--let my body lie down in the caverns of the sea and the eyes of God shall be on every bone! And in the day of the Resurrection shall my every atom be tracked in its wanderings! Yes, the eyes of God are everywhere--Providence is universal.

There may be some persons here who have friends far away--let me comfort them. The eyes of God are looking on them. There may be some here who are about to part with loved ones who are going to distant countries. Wherever they are, they will be as much in the keeping of God as though they were here. If one part of the world is not as near to the sun's light as another, yet they are all equally near the eyes of our God. Transport me where you please, wherever the cloudy pillar of Providence shall guide me--and I shall have God with me! That thought comforted the great traveler, Mungo Park, when he was in the desert of Sahara. He had been robbed and stripped of everything and was left naked. He suddenly saw a little piece of moss and, taking it up, he saw how beautiful it was. He said, "Then the hand of God is here, for here is one of His works! Though I call loudly, no man can hear me, for there is nothing but the prowling lion and the howling jackal--yet God is here." That thought comforted him and wherever you may be, whatever may be your case, God will be with you! Whatever period of your life you may now be in, God is with you! His eyes are at the

bridal and at the funeral, at the cradle and at the grave. In the battle, God's eyes are looking through the smoke. In the rebellion, there are God's hands managing the masses of men who have broken loose from their rulers. In the earthquake, there is Jehovah manifest. In the tempest, there are God's hands tossing the boat, dashing it against the rocks, or saving it from the boisterous waves. In all seasons, at all times, in all dangers and in all climes, there are the hands of God!

IV. My next remark is that PROVIDENCE IS UNIFORM.

It is only one Providence and always one. "Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel was on the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness." There were four wheels and four faces, yet one likeness. There was but one piece of machinery and thus we are taught that Providence is all one. Sometimes Providences seem to cross each other. One thing that God does seems to contradict another thing that He does--but it never really does so.

It is a great Truth of God, though hard for us to grasp, that Providence is one. Just look at the case of Joseph. God has it in His mind that Joseph shall be governor over all the land of Egypt. How is that to be accomplished? The first thing to be done is that Joseph's brothers must hate him. "Oh," you say, "that is a step backward." Next, Joseph's brothers must put him in the pit. "That is another step backward," you say. No, it is not. Wait a little while. Joseph's brothers must sell him--that is another step backward, is it not? Oh, no! Providence is one and you must not look at its separate parts. He is sold--he becomes a favorite. So far, so good. That is a step onward! Soon he is put in a dungeon. Wait and see the end--all the different parts of the machinery are one. They appear to clash, but they never

do. Put them all together. If Joseph had not been put in the pit, he never would have been the servant of Potiphar. If he had never been put in the prison, he would never have interpreted his fellow prisoners' dreams. And if the king had never dreamed, he would not have been called to go to the palace. There were a thousand "chances," as the world has it, working together to produce the exaltation of Joseph! Providence is one--it never clashes.

"Oh," says one, "I cannot understand that. Providence seems to be very adverse to me." I think it is Mrs. Hannah More who says that she went into a place where they were manufacturing a carpet. See said, "There is no beauty there." The man said, "It is one of the most beautiful carpets you ever saw." "Why, here is a piece hanging out and it is all in disorder." "Do you know why, Ma'am? You are looking at the wrong side of the carpet." So it is very often with us. You and I think Providence is adverse to us because we are looking at the wrong side! We look at the wrong side while we are here, but when we get to Heaven, we shall see the right side of God's dealings--and when we do, we shall say, "O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom have You made them all." You have sometimes been puzzled to think why that friend was brought into the grave, or you have said, "Why was I made sick at such-and-such a time? Why did that trouble and that calamity fall upon me?" That is no business of yours--you are to believe that all things work together for one great purpose and that one thing never crosses another! But you must not expect to see it so just yet. Here, on earth, the machine appears broken to pieces and we can only see it in confusion. But in Heaven we shall see it all put together. Suppose I go into a place where some great engineer is manufacturing a machine and say to him, "Do you mean to tell me that this is a machine?" "Yes, and an exquisite one it will be." "It does not look like it. I could not

put it together." "Oh, no, Sir, you could not, but I can! Come and see it when I have put it together and you shall see that each part fits into its proper place, that each cog on the wheel will work on the cog of another wheel, and all the spokes will move together when I adjust them. Do not find fault with it and say, 'One is too small, and another too large,' because you know nothing at all about it." So, dear Friends, you and I can never see more than parts of God's ways. We only see here a wheel, and there a wheel--we must wait till we get to Heaven--then we shall see the right side of the carpet and then we shall see that it was one piece of machinery, with one end, one aim and one objective!

V. My next thought is that, in this text PROVIDENCE IS COMPARED TO THE SEA.

Look at the 16th verse. "The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl." The word "beryl" is commonly used in Scripture to denote the ocean, because the beryl bears the greatest likeness to that deep green you sometimes see in the ocean and, at other times the blue appearance of the sea. Let us transport ourselves for a moment to the top of some high cliff and look down on the noisy ocean. It has been the theme of a thousand songs. It has borne myriads of fleets on its mighty breast yet there it is, still rolling on! If you begin to think about the ocean, though it is one of the minor parts of God's works compared with the constellations in the heavens, and the globes which He has hung on high, you begin to be lost in the vastness of your conceptions concerning the greatness of God's works. And so it is with Providence!

It is like the ocean for another reason. The sea is never still--both day and night it is always moving. In the day, when the sun shines upon it, its waves march up in marshaled order as if about to capture the

whole land and drown all the solid earth. Then again they march back as if each one is reluctant to yield up its prey. It is always moving--the moon shines upon it and the stars light it up--still it moves. Or darkness falls so that nothing can be seen--still it moves. By night and day the restless billows chant a boisterous hymn of glory, or murmur the solemn dirge of mariners wrecked far out in the depths. Such is Providence--by night and by day Providence is always going on. The farmer sleeps, but his wheat is growing. The mariner on the sea sleeps, but the wind and the waves are carrying on his boat. Providence, you never stop! Your mighty wheels never stay their everlasting circles! As the blue ocean has rolled on impetuously for ages, so shall Providence roll on until He who first set it in motion, shall bid it stop--and then its wheel shall cease, forever fixed by the eternal decree of the Almighty God!

Again, you will see another reason why the sea is like Providence. Man cannot manage it Who can rule or govern the sea? Men cannot. Xerxes made chains for the Hellespont and lashed the sea with whips because it washed away his boats, but what cared the sea about that? It laughed at him and if he had not been too great a coward to put himself on its bosom, it might have swallowed him. Canute put his chair on the beach and bade the waves retire. What cared they for him? They came and would have washed him and his chair away if he had not moved backward. The sea is not to be governed by man! A whole fleet sails over it and it is only like a feather blown by the wind across the surface of a brook! All we ever put on the sea is as nothing. It can never be restrained, nor chained, nor managed by man. Greedy man has carved the land, but the sea has no landmark. It is impetuous! It follows its own will. So does Providence. It will not be managed by man. Napoleon once heard it said that man proposes and God disposes.

"Ah," said Napoleon, "but I propose and dispose, too." How do you think he proposed and disposed? He proposed to go and take Russia. He proposed to destroy that power--but how did he come back again? He came back solitary and alone, his mighty army perished and wasted, having well-near eaten and devoured one another through hunger! Man proposes and God disposes. Providence, like the sea, cannot be directed by man--it can only be controlled by God. Let man try to stand against God's Providence and Providence will grind and crush him!

VI. Again, GOD'S PROVIDENCE IS INTRICATE.

That you will also find in the text--"The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel." I have just said that Providence is intricate. When Joseph brought his two sons up to Jacob's deathbed and Jacob was about to bless them, Jacob guided his hands wittingly--and he put his right hand on the head of the younger son, and his left hand on the head of the elder one. Joseph said, "Not so, my Father, for this is the firstborn." And Jacob said, "I know it, my son, I know it"--and he would not give the blessing in any other way but with his hands crossed--and God usually blesses His children by crossing His hands. We say, "Do not deal so with me," but God says, "It must be even so, My child. There is a blessing on your head. Do not say, 'Uncross Your hands,' for that is the way to bless you most of all. I wish to put the greatest blessing upon you and, therefore, I have crossed My hands." Providence is wonderfully intricate! You want always to see through Providence, do you not? You never will, I can assure you! You have not eyes good enough. You want to see what good that affliction was to you? You must believe it! You want to see how it can bring good to the soul? You may be enabled to do so in a little time, but you cannot see it

now--you must believe it! Honor God by trusting Him! God has many Gordian knots which wicked men may cut and which righteous men may try to unravel, but which God alone can untie! We see the wicked prosper. They flourish and great is their power, while the righteous are cast down. We say, "Why is this?" There are wheels within wheels. Do not fret yourselves because evildoers are more prosperous than the godly. There may be a nation that seems to have right on its side--that nation may be crushed and another nation, which is tyrannical, may get the victory. Do not ask, "Why is this?" You shall know the reason when you get up yonder! Do not attempt to do what Gabriel never dares to do--to ask the reason why, for God will never give it.

VII. Next, PROVIDENCE IS ALWAYS CORRECT.

I shall not detain you long on this point. The Prophet saw the wheels and he well said, "they turned not when they went." They always went straight--they never turned to the right or to the left. Such is God's Providence. Man marks out plans. He says, "I shall build this tower." He gets it half up and he finds he has not enough to finish it with--he has to pull it down, lay a smaller foundation, and build again. God never does so--He has a plan when He begins and He carries that plan out. He lays the foundation and He also lays the tombstone. There are some persons who talk about God changing His purpose--such people do not know what God is at all. How could God change!? God must either change from a better to a worse, or from a worse to a better. If He could change from a worse to a better, He is not perfect now. And if He could change from what He is to something worse, He would not be perfect then--and He would not be God! He cannot change. It is not possible that God should ever change or shift in any of His purposes. Can He change because He has not power? Why, Sirs, He could girdle this globe with mountains, or move the hills into the sea! Can He change

because He has not patience enough? What? He who from His purpose never swerves? Shall He change because He has made a mistake? Shall the Most High Jehovah ever harbor an error in His Almighty Mind? "To err is human." With the Divine Being, the whole plan goes on to completion and what He has ordained shall be! On the iron rock of Destiny it is written and it cannot be altered. God moves the wheel and the wheel goes on--and though a thousand armies stand in the way to stop it, it still goes on. "They turned not when they went."

I cannot make out what some of you do with your comfortless Gospel--believing that God loves you today and hates you tomorrow. That you are a child of God one day, and a child of the devil the next. I could not believe a Gospel like that! If I were a heathen, I could believe it at once because I could manufacture a god of mud that I could alter with my fingers, and change to any fashion. But if I once believe in the God who "Was and Is, and is to come," I know that He cannot change and I feel a constancy of faith and a firmness of hope which the cares and trials of this mortal life cannot destroy. He will not cast off His people whom He has chosen.

VIII. Another thought is, that PROVIDENCE IS AMAZING.

I shall not dwell on this point, but just remind you that the text says it is so. "As for their rims, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rims were full of eyes round about them four." Even the man who knows that every wave that dashes against the ship is washing him nearer home--that every breath of wind that rises comes to his sail and fills it and sends it to the white cliffs of his native Albion--even the man who feels that everything is working for him--even hemust say that Providence is amazing! Oh, that thought--it staggers thought! It is an idea that overwhelms me-- that God is working in all that happens! The sins of man, the wickedness of our

race, the crimes of nations, the iniquities of kings, the cruelties of wars, the terrific scourge of pestilence--all these things are, in some mysterious way, working the will of God! I cannot explain this. I cannot tell you where human will and free agency unite with God's Sovereignty and with His unfailing decrees. This has been the place where intellectual gladiators have fought with each other since the time of Adam. Some have said, "Man does as he likes" and others have said, "God does as He pleases." In one sense they are both true, but there is no man who has brains or understanding enough to show where they meet. We cannot tell how it is that I do just as I please as to which street I shall go home by and yet I cannot go home except through a certain road. John Newton used to say that there were two streets by which he could go to St. Mary Woolnoth--but Providence directed him as to which he should use. Last Sabbath I came down a certain street--I do not know why--and there was a young man who wished to speak to me. I say that was God's Providence that I might meet that young man. Here was Providence, and yet there was my choice--how, I cannot tell. I cannot comprehend it. I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes--that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit as well as the sun in the heavens--that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as surely as the stars in their courses--that the chirping of an aphid over a rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence, and the fall of sere leaves from the poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche. He who believes in God must believe this Truth of His. There is no standing point between this and atheism. There is no half way between an almighty God who works all things according to the good pleasure of His own will and no god at all. A god who cannot do as He pleases--a god whose will is

frustrated--is not a God and cannot be a God! I could not believe in such a god as that.

IX. My closing idea is that PROVIDENCE IS FULL OF WISDOM. You will see this by the last part of the 18th verse. "And their rims were full of eyes round about them four." You will say, this morning, "Our minister is a fatalist." Your minister is no such thing! Some will say, "Ah, he believes in fate." He does not believe in fate at all! What is fate? Fate is this-- Whatever is must be. But there is a difference between that and Providence. Providence says, Whatever God ordains must be. But the wisdom of God never ordains anything without a purpose. Everything in this world is working for some one great end. Fate does not say that. Fate simply says that the thing must be. Providence says that God moves the wheels along and there they are. If anything would go wrong, God puts it right and if there is anything that would move awry, He puts forth His hand and alters it. It comes to the same thing--but there is a difference as to the objective. There is all the difference between fate and Providence that there is between a man with good eyes and a blind man. Fate is a blind thing--it is the avalanche crushing the villages down below the mountain and destroying thousands of lives. Providence is not an avalanche, it is a rolling river, rippling at the first like a rill down the sides of the mountain, followed by minor streams, then it rolls in the broad ocean of everlasting love, working for the good of the human race. The Doctrine of Providence is not that what is, must be-- but that, what is, works together for the good of our race and especially for the good of the chosen people of God. The wheels were full of eyes--they were not blind wheels!

Let us close with the thought that there is the greatest wisdom in the workings of Providence. You were recently in great distress and you

could not see why it was so with you. The next time you are in distress, you must say, "The wheels of Providence are full of eyes--I have but two eyes, but God's wheels are full of eyes. God can see everything. I can only see one thing at a time. I see it looks good for me now. I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I see what the plant is now. I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I know not what kind of flower that herb will yield. This affliction is a cassava root, full of poison and would soon destroy me, but God can put that in the oven so that all the poison shall evaporate and it shall become food for me to live upon. This trouble of mine seems to me to be destructive, but God can take all the destroying power out of it and so it shall be made into food for my soul." Now, you tried one, groaning down in the valley, up with your heart! Away with your tears! Put your hand on your breast and make your heart stop its hard beating. Poor Soul, dash the cup of misery from your hand--you are not condemned--you are a pardoned Christian! Remember that God has said, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." Oh, how I would like to make your hearts like flint and steel against trouble! We cannot bear the winds of trouble--we are soon cast down and brokenhearted. When we are in prosperity, we are giants--we think we can do like Samson did--that we can take hold of the two pillars of trouble and distress and pull them down! But once tell us that the Philistines are upon us and we have no power.

He who has faith is better than the stoic. The stoical philosopher bore trial because he believed it must be. The Christian bears it because he believes it is working for his good. The next time that trouble comes, or disease comes, or pestilence comes, smile at it and say--

"He that has made his refuge God
Shall find a most secure abode,

Shall walk all day beneath His shade

And there at night shall rest his head." Let this be your shield to keep off the thrusts of distress and this be your high rock against all the winds of sorrow! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM103.

Verse 1. Bless the LORD, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. [See Sermons #1077, Volume 18--the LORD BLESSING HIS SAINTS; #1078, Volume 18--THE SAINTS BLESSING THE LORD and #2121, Volume 36--THE KEYNOTE OF THE YEAR] Come, my Heart, be down in the dumps no longer! Take your harp from the willows, tune its strings and begin to pour forth its music to the praise of Divine Love!

2-4. Bless the LORD, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. This is a better crown than any emperor ever wore, unless he, also, was a child of God. Priceless and rare gems and jewels adorn this wondrous coronet--"who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies."

5-9. Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children ofIsrael. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, andplenteous in mercy. He willnot always chide. [See Sermon #1171, Volume 20--THE LORD CHIDING HIS PEOPLE] Are you suffering His chiding just now? They are good for you, but they will not last forever. "He will not always chide."

9, 10. Neither will He keep His anger forever He has not dealt with us after our sins. It is all of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. "He has not dealt with us after our sins."

10-12. Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us[See Sermon #1108, Volume 19--PLENARY ABSOLUTION] Then surely He will also remove our troubles from us! But if not, as He has removed our transgressions so far away that they can never be brought back again, we have real cause for joy whatever happens to us here.

13. Like as a fatherpities his children, so the LORDpities them that fear Him. [See Sermons #941, Volume 16--the tender PITY OF THE LORD; #1650, Volume 28--GOD'S FATHERLY PITY and #2639, Volume 45--OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S PITY] The very best of them are only objects of pity. Though they are the best, they need that He should look down upon them with Infinite Compassion.

14-19. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are asgrass: as a flower ofthe field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His Commandments to do them. The LORD has prepared His Throne in the Heavens and His Kingdom rules over all. What a comfort this is for us! Over the great as well as over the little, over all parts of the earth, as well where war rages as where peace reigns, "His Kingdom rules over all." Nothing happens without His permission! Even the little things of life are ordered by Him! The foreknown station of a rush by the riverside is as fixed as the place of a king--and the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as surely as the stars in their courses, for to God nothing is little and nothing is great.

20, 21. Bless the LORD, you His angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts. "Let all the armies of Heaven break forth into one song-- "Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts."

21, 22. You ministers of His, that do His pleasure. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my Soul.

Chapter 42

Sin and Grace

(No. 3115)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING,

NOVEMBER 1, 1874.

"Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this text are as follows: Sermons #37, Volume 1--LAW AND GRACE and #2012, Volume 34-- GRACE ABOUNDING OVER ABOUNDING SIN]

THERE are two very powerful forces in the world which have been here ever since the time when Eve partook of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Those two forces are sin and Divine Grace. A very great power is sin, a power dark, mysterious, baleful, but full of force. The sorrows of mankind--from where did they come but from sin? We would have known no war, nor pestilence, nor famine, nor would anything of sickness or sorrow ever have smitten the human race had not sin sown its evil seed in this earth! Sin is the Pandora's box from which all evil has come to mankind. See what ravages death has made--its hillocks are everywhere! Its mighty scythe mows men down as the mower cuts down the grass of the field--but death came by sin and after death comes judgment and, to the ungodly, the doom that never can be described, the eternal wrath whose blackness the wildest tempest cannot imitate! Who dug this pit? It was the Justice of God on account of sin and sin must, therefore, be charged with the authorship of sorrow, disease, death and Hell. This is no mean power with which we have come into conflict--it is a veritable Goliath--stalking along and defying the whole race of

mankind!

The power that is to fight and overcome sin is never described in the Word of God as the natural goodness of human nature. Pshaw! That is but as wax before the fire, or as the fat of rams upon the altar--it is consumed in a moment in the fierce heat of sin. The force to combat sin is never described in the truthful pages of God's Word as the power of human endeavor to keep the Law. Indeed, this has been tried and it has utterly failed! The way to Heaven is not up the steep sides of Sinai--that granitic mountain is too rugged and too high for unaided human feet to climb. Not there can be found the weapons with which a man may slay his sins and fight his way to everlasting bliss.

The only counter force against sin is Divine Grace, so my text tells us, and we may learn the same Truth of God from a hundred texts besides. And what is Grace? Grace is the free favor of God, the undeserved bounty of the ever-gracious Creator against whom we have offended, the generous pardon, the Infinite, spontaneous loving kindness of the God who has been provoked and angered by our sin, but who, delighting in mercy and grieving to smite the creatures whom He has made, is always ready to pass by transgression, iniquity and sin--and to save His people from all the evil consequences of their guilt. Here, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, is a force that is fully equal to the requirements of the duel with sin, for this Grace, of which I am going to speak, is Divine Grace, and hence it is Omnipotent, Immortal and Immutable. This favor of God never changes and when once it purposes to bless anyone, bless him it will and none can revoke the blessing! The gracious purpose of God's free favor to an undeserving man is more than a match for that man's sin, for it brings to bear upon his sin, the blood of the Incarnate Son of God--and the majestic and mysterious fire of the eternal Spirit who burns up evil

and utterly consumes it! With God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit united against sin, the everlasting purposes of Grace are bound to be accomplished, sin must be overcome and my text proved to be true--"Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound."

I. To illustrate the great principle of my text, I ask you to notice, first, that the context refers us to THE ENTRANCE OF TRUE LAW. "The Law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound."

Instead of giving any historical statement concerning the introduction of the Law in the days of Moses, I am going to speak about the experimental matter of the introduction of the Law of God into our hearts. Those of you who have been converted remember the time when the Law of the Lord first entered your heart. The Law engraved on the two tablets of stone, the Law recorded in the Bible does but very little for us--but when the Law really enters our heart, is does much for us. What does it do?

The first thing the Law does to most men is to develop the sin that is in them. Paul writes, "I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, You shall not covet." But as soon as he found that there was a Law against a certain sin, by some unhallowed instinct of his unrenewed nature, he wanted to do the very thing that he was forbidden to do! It was like that with us--the first effect of the entrance of the Law of God into our hearts was to develop the sin that was already within us. "That is a dreadful thing," says one. Yes, it is, but look at the matter from another aspect. Here is a man who has within him a dire disease which will be fatal if it is allowed to remain, so the physician gives him some medicine which throws the disease out. The man used to have a beautiful complexion, but after he has taken that medicine, his face is covered with

blotches. Is that a bad thing? Yes, the blotches are bad, but the hidden disease was worse! While that disease was concealed within his system and was killing him, he probably did not even know that is was there. He knew that he was not well and, perhaps, thought that he was dying as the result of some other complaint. But now he sees what the disease is, and everybody sees it, and now that which looked like an evil thing may turn out to be for real good to the man.

So does it often happen mentally, morally and spiritually. A man's wicked heart is full of enmity against God, yet he thinks--and perhaps he is right in thinking--that he is outwardly a strictly moral man.

But, lo, the Law of God, with its requirements of perfect purity and absolute obedience, enters his heart and he rebels against it--and now the sin is apparent, even to himself! It is now likely that this man will repent of sin. It is highly probable that this development of his latent sin will lead him to form a different opinion of himself from any that he ever had before and, therefore, though the sin is evil and the development of it is evil, yet, where sin abounded, Grace shall much more abound and so good shall come out of the evil after all!

When the Law enters a man's heart, it also brings his sin out in very strong relief. He never saw his sin to be so black as he now sees it to be. A stick is crooked, but you do not notice how crooked it is until you place a straight rule by the side of it. You have a handkerchief and it seems to be quite white--you could hardly wish it to be whiter--but you lay it down on the newly-fallen snow and you wonder how you could ever have thought it to be white at all! So the pure and holy Law of God, when our eyes are opened to see its purity, shows up our sin in its true blackness and in that way it makes sin to abound! But this is for our good, for that sight of our sin awakens us to a sense of our true condition, leads us to repentance, drives us by faith to

the precious blood of Jesus and no longer permits us to rest in our self-righteousness! And so it can be said of us that, though the entrance of the Law has made our sin to abound, "Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound."

The entrance of the Law of God into the heart very generally causes great anguish. Well do I remember that experience and so do some of you. When the Law entered our hearts, it came not merely with a straight rule and with a perfect pattern of whiteness to show us our deformity and our blackness, but it also came with a heavy whip--and it laid that whip about our shoulders and every time it fell it stung us to the quick. A little while ago, I met with a Brother who said to me, "You cannot too forcibly describe the anguish of a convicted conscience, for," he said, "I remember when I reckoned how long it would be before I must, in the ordinary course of nature, be in Hell. I said to myself, 'Suppose I live to be 80 years of age, yet how short a time it will be before I must be enduring the Infinite Wrath of God!'"

Yes, that is the effect that the Law of the Lord often produces upon a man when it enters his heart. It brings a mirror before him and says to him "Look in there and see not only what you have done, but also what is the just consequence of your evil deeds." A man no longer quibbles at God's Justice when the Law once gets inside his heart--it shuts his mouth except for groans and sighs--and he has plenty of them.

It may be thought, by some people, to be a very sad thing that the Law should come into a man's heart to break it and to cause him such sorrow and anguish as I am trying to describe. Ah, but it is not so--it is a very blessed thing! You cannot expect God to clothe you until He has stripped you, nor to heal you until He has cut the proud flesh out of your wounds. When a woman is sowing with a fine white silken thread, she must have a sharp needle to go first, to make a way

for the thread to go through after it. And the anguish of spirit which the Law creates in the soul is the sharp needle which makes a way for the fine silken thread of the Gospel to enter our heart and so to bless us. Let us thank God if ever we have experienced the entrance of His Law into our hearts for, although it makes sin to abound, it makes Grace much more abound!

When the Law gets thoroughly into a man's heart, it drives him to despair of himself ' 'Oh," he says, "I cannot keep that Law!" Once he thought that he was as good as other people and a little better than most--and he did not know but that with a little polishing and a little help, he might be good enough to win the favor of God and go to Heaven! But when the Law entered his heart, it soon smashed his idol to atoms! The Dagon of self-righteousness speedily falls before the Ten Commandments of God and is so broken that it can never be mended. Men try to set the stump of it up on its pedestal again, but as long as the Law of the Lord is in the same temple with self-righteousness, self-righteousness can never be exalted again! To some people it seems to be a dreadful thing to give a man such a bad opinion of himself, but, indeed, it is the greatest blessing that could come to him, for when he despairs of himself, he will fly to Christ to save him! When the last crust is gone from his cupboard, he will cry to the great Giver of the Bread of Life, whereof if a man eats, he shall live forever! You must starve the sinner's self-righteousness to make him willing to feed on Christ--and thus the very depths of his despair, when he thinks that he must be lost forever--will only lead him, by God's abundant love, to a fuller appreciation of the heights of God's Grace!

Once more, when the Law of God enters a man's heart, it pronounces a curse upon him. That was a singular scene which was beheld over against

Mount Ebal and over against Mount Gerizim, where one company read the curses, and another company read the blessings out of the Book of the Law. Now the Law can do nothing for a sinner but say to him, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them." But the Gospel comes in and it replies to the curse of the Law with such words as these, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Let the Law curse as it may, the Gospel's blessing is richer and stronger, for the Gospel says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And, "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

II. Now I change our line of thought and come closer home to Christians, by noticing that the great principle of our text is also illustrated in THE AFTER-EXPERIENCE OF THE BELIEVER.

Some young converts imagine that as soon as they believe in Christ and find peace with God, they will be perfect and have no more sin within them. Such an erroneous idea will only prepare them for a great disappointment, for conversion is not the end of the battle with sin--it is only the beginning of that battle. From the moment that a man believes in Jesus, and is thereby saved, he begins his life-long struggle against his inbred sins. I hear that there are some Brothers and Sisters who have become perfect--and I am pleased to hear it if it is true. But I am glad they are not members of my family! I do not think I could live with them very peaceably, as I have generally found that the so-called "perfect" people are usually not at all pleasant people to be associated with those of us who do not profess to be perfect. We wish we were perfect and we wish that other people were

perfect, but up to now our investigations have led us to believe that the perfection which is claimed by certain persons is, in every case, a mistake--and in many cases is a delusion and a sham!

Our opinion is that men, after they are converted, and begin to examine themselves in the light of God's Word, if they are at all like we are, find sin everywhere within them--sin in the affections, so that the hearts lusts after evil things--sin in the judgment, so that it often makes most serious mistakes and honestly puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter--sin in the desires, so that though we try to curb them, they wander here and there, where we would not--sin in the will, so that Lord Will-be-Will proves that he is still very proud and wants to have his own way--and is not willing to bow submissively to the will of God--sin in the memory, so that the most godly people can often recollect a snatch of a bad old song which they used to hear or to sing, far more readily than they can remember a text of Scripture which they wish to treasure up in their memories, for memory has become unhinged, like all the rest of our faculties, and is quick to retain evil and slow to retain that which is good! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in what part of our body does sin not dwell? Is there any single faculty, or power, or propensity that we have which will not lead us astray if we will let it do so? Are we not obliged to be always upon our guard against ourselves and to watch ourselves as a garrison of soldiers would have to watch the natives of a country whom they had subdued, but who were anxious to throw off the yoke of the foreigners who had overcome them? In a similar fashion, Grace is a foreigner in possession of our nature and it holds by its own superior force what it has won--and only by its supernatural strength are we kept from falling back our former position!

Thus you see how sin abounds, even in the heart of a Believer. But,

blessed be God, Grace does much more abound there, for although the will is still strong, there is a higher power that subdues and controls it so that our will is being gradually conformed to the will of God.

Our affections, though they are apt to grovel here below, do soar towards Christ, for He has really won our hearts. Our desires do go astray, yet their main tendency is towards holiness. Blessed be the name of the Lord, unless we are awfully deceived, we desire to do that which is well-pleasing in His sight! Our memory, too, though I have already confessed its faultiness, does often enable us to remember Jesus Christ and it will never forget Him, whoever else it may forget.

Yes, and our whole nature, though I have truly spoken of its faults, is a new nature which God has worked within us--a nature that is akin to the Divine and in this nature Grace triumphs over sin so that where sin abounds, Grace does much more abound.

The same Truth of God may be learned in another way. Sin abounds in the Believer, not merely in the shape of the original sin in which he was born and in the tendency to sin which is always present with him, but sin mars the best thing he ever does. Did you ever examine one of your own prayers? Did you ever look at it critically after it was finished? Shall I tell you what it was like? It was like something that man had manufactured and which, when observed by the naked eyed, looked very beautiful. Put a microscope over it and look at it. Take a needle if you like, for that seems to be one of the most polished pieces of metal conceivable--and as soon as you place it under the microscope, you say, "Why, I have got a rough bar of iron here! Surely it cannot be a needle." Yes it is, but you are now looking at it with a power far beyond your ordinary sight. And, in like manner, when the Grace of God opens a man's eyes to see his best actions as they appear in God's sight, he sees that those actions are marred by sin. There is not

anything that he has done which appears to him to be what it ought to be when he looks at it aright in the light of God's Word. The most consecrated action of his life, the most devout communion with Christ, the most intense ardor after God falls far short of what it ought to be and has something in it which ought not to be there! When the Grace of God is strong within us, it makes sin appear to abound even to our own vision--we see it in every hymn we sing, in every prayer we pray, in every sermon we preach!

Not only do we see sin in our best things, but we also discover sin in our omissions. We were never troubled about that matter before, but now we recollect that what we do not do is often sinful--not merely the wrong that we commit, but the good that we omit--the good that we neglect or forget to do. There is much sin there. Then we begin to examine our thoughts and our trivial utterances. And we see them all crusted over with sin. Tested under the light of God's Word, everything seems to be honeycombed through and through with sin, so that sin, indeed, abounds. Well, what then? Why, then, this blessed text comes sweetly home to our hearts. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." And now, how gloriously Grace abounds! Now we prove the power of that precious blood which can wash us whiter than snow, so that God Himself shall say to each one of us, "There is no spot in you." Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I do firmly believe that a deep and clear sense of sin is necessary to a right estimation of the power of pardoning love. I am sure that it is a great blessing to us when we have a deep sense of our sinnership. God forbid that we should ever pray as the Pharisee did, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are." Far better would it be for us to imitate the publican, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." None but those who are lost, prize the Savior who came to seek and to save that which was lost! None

but those who feel that they are foul and vile rightly value His cleansing blood. O Beloved, when your sin abounds, then is the time to remember that Grace much more abounds! Sinner as you are, you are forgiven, you are "accepted in the Beloved," you are saved, you are a child of God, you shall be in Heaven before long, to praise forever the Grace that shall be crowned with Glory!

Once more on this point. I believe that many of you have had an experience similar to mine and that there have been times when you have been living especially near to God and walking in the light of His Countenance, when, all of a sudden, the sin that dwells in you has seemed to attack you just when you least expected it. I know that my fiercest temptations often come to me immediately after my highest enjoyment of communion with God. They seem to come like a sharp draught of cold air the moment you step out of a warm room, and you hardly know what to do--you are scarcely prepared for it. It will sometimes happen that a tempter which you thought you had quite overcome, will rush upon you like a lion out of a thicket, or a passion which you thought had been most eventually conquered, will come sweeping down upon you like a hurricane from the hills and your poor little skiff upon the lake seems well-near overwhelmed with its furious onslaught! Then, as you look at yourselves, and are surprised to find so much sin in yourselves, you know that sin abounds--what do you do then? Well, I believe that, at such times, Christians try to nestle closer than ever under the wings of God and they feel humbler--and they go to the precious blood of Jesus with a more intense desire to prove again its cleansing power! And they cry to the Strong for strength and they feel more than they ever did before, their need of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying power. Ralph Erskine said that he was more afraid of a sleeping devil than of a roaring devil--and there was good reason

for his fear--for when the devil was roaring, the saints would be more on the watch than when he was quiet. The worst temptation in the world is not to be tempted at all. But when there is a strong temptation and your soul is fully aware of it, you are on your guard against it. The wave of temptation may even wash you higher up upon the Rock of Ages, so that you cling to it with a firmer grip than you have ever done before and so again where sin abounds, Grace will much more abound!

III. Now I must close with a few general observations upon another matter. The great Truth revealed in our text is not only illustrated by the entrance of the Law into the hearts of Believers and in the after-life of Christians, but also IN ALL THE BLESSINGS OF SALVATION. It is very wonderful, but it is certainly true, that there are many persons in Heaven in whom sin once abounded. In the judgment of their fellow men, some of them were worse sinners than others. There was Saul of Tarsus, there was the dying thief, there was the woman in the city who was a sinner--a sinner in a very open and terrible sense. These and many more of whom we read in the Scriptures were all great sinners--and it was a great wonder of Grace, in every instance, that they should be forgiven! But did they make poor Christians when they were converted? Quite the reverse! They loved much because they had been forgiven much. Among the best servants of God are many of those who were once the best servants of the devil. Sin abounded in them, but Grace much more abounded when it took possession of their hearts and lives. They were long held captive by the devil at his will, but they were never such servants to Satan as they afterwards became to the living and true God! They threw all the fervor of their intense natures into the service of their Savior and so rose superior to some of their fellow disciples who did not so fully realize how much they owed to their Lord. I trust that any here present who have gone far in sin may be saved by the

immeasurable Grace of God before they leave this building and that, throughout the whole of their future lives, they may love Jesus Christ better and serve Him more than others who have not sinned as deeply as they have!

The same Truth of God comes out if we think of what sin has done for us. O Brothers and Sisters, sin has infected the nature of man with a foul leprosy, a deadly disease, but Jesus has cured the disease, and given us a life of a holier kind than we ever knew before! Sin has robbed us, but Christ has restored to us more than sin ever took away from us! Sin has stripped us, but Christ has clothed us in a better robe than our natural righteousness could ever have been. Well do we sing of Jesus--

"In Him the tribes of Adam boast More blessings than their father lost."

Sin has brought us very low, but Christ has lifted us higher than we stood before sin cast us down! Sin took away from man his love to God, but Christ has given us a more intense love to God than Adam ever had, for we love God because He has first loved us and given His Son to die for us and we have, in His greater Grace, a good reason for yielding to Him a greater love! Sin took away obedience from man, but now the saints obey to a yet higher degree than they could have done before, for I suppose it would not have been possible for unfallen man to suffer, but now we are capable of suffering for Christ and many martyrs have gone signing to death for the Truth of God because, while sin made them capable of suffering, Christ's Grace has made them capable of obedience to Him in the suffering--and so of doing more to prove their allegiance to God than would have been possible if they had never fallen! Sin, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, has shut us out of Eden, yet let us not weep, for Christ has prepared a better Paradise

for us in Heaven! Sin has deprived us of the river that rippled over sands of gold and of the green glades of that blessed Garden into which suffering could never have come unless sin had first entered, but God has provided for us "a pure river of Water of Life," and a lovelier garden than Eden ever was! And there we shall forever dwell through the abounding Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ which has abounded even over our abounding sin!

Sin has separated us from God, but Grace has brought us nearer to God than we ever were before sin divided us from Him. Until Christ became Man, there was no man on the earth and there would have been no man who was more to God than man could be to his Maker. But now there lives a Man who is more to God than any created being ever could be, for that Man is also God and He sits at the right hand of His Father and shares with Him the control of the universe! That Man has brought the human race nearer to the Deity than the mere act of creation could possibly have done. Glory be to God for Jesus Christ, the Man from Heaven, the Son of Mary and the Son of the Highest! Sin worked us untold mischief, but Grace has made even that mischief to be a gain to us, for now we are bought with blood as, otherwise, we never could have been. Now we know both sin and righteousness as we could not otherwise have done and now the whispering of the old serpent, which was a lie, has proved to have a Truth of God concealed in it, for we are indeed as gods, since we have become partakers of the Divine Nature by virtue of our union with the Christ of God! O wondrous Fall, which would have broken us hopelessly had it not been for still more marvelous Grace! O wondrous restoration which has lifted us up and made us more perfect than we were before we were broken--and elevated us to a Glory of which we could never have dreamed had we lived with Adam and Eve in Paradise and remained in innocence forever!

One practical remark I want to make before I close. It is this--if you have received this Grace which has abounded over your sin, take care that you do more for Grace than you ever did for sin. It is amazing how much people will do for sin--what they will give, what they will spend, and what they will endure to gratify their passions and serve their cruel taskmaster, Satan! I should not like to guess what some men waste on their lusts. I should not like to make a calculation as to what some people spend in a year on what they call their pleasures. Well, whatever the amount is, shall they give more, shall they do more for their god than we give and do for ours? Shall they be more intense in their adoration of Satan than we are in our obedience to God? That must never be, nor must we ever permit them to outdo us in the praises of their treasure! They make night hideous with their praises of their god, Bacchus--but we do not often annoy them with the songs of Zion! It would be as well, perhaps, if we did, but we are often cowards in not rendering due praises to our God. They are not ashamed to make the sky ring with their lascivious notes--then let us pluck up courage and solidly assert the glories of our God and the wonders of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Especially, let us never be ashamed to say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me--blessed be His holy name forever and ever. Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS5.

Verse 1. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ [See Sermon #1456, Volume 25--PEACE--A FACT AND A FEELING--Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.orgQ This verse deserves to be printed in letters of gold. If you can truthfully say this. If it is indeed true of you, you are the happiest people under Heaven. Let us

read the verse again--"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. By whom also we have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God. We are not only at peace with God, but we are permitted to draw near to Him, have access to Him, have access to His favor, to His Grace. We may come to God when we will, for He is reconciled to us, and we are reconciled to Him, so we may now think of Him with joy and gladness.

3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also. Somebody seemed to say to the Apostle, "You talk about peace with God, and access to God; but you are troubled in mind, you are sickly in body, you are poor in estate, just as other people are." So Paul replies, "Yes, we know that it is so, 'but we glory in tribulations also.'"

3. Knowing that tribulation works patience. It is sent for our good. We accept our trials as a part of our estate and in some respects, the very richest part of our estate! We get more good out of our adversity than out of our prosperity. Our troubles have made men of us, whereas our joys might have unmanned us. Trials have braced us up and we glory in them, "knowing that tribulation works patience."

4. And patience, experience; and experience, hope. The longer we wait, the brighter do our eyes get. Our very trials, when they have passed over us, leave us stronger and happier than we were before. Our experience works in us hope.

5. And hope makes us not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. [See Sermon #829, Volume 14--THE PERFUMING OF THE HEART] What a blessed thing t is that when troubles are shed abroad outside us, the love of God is shed abroad inside us--when we are tried without, we are comforted within--and so we are made strong and we have

no cause to fear!

6. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. [See Sermons #1191, Volume 20--for whom DID CHRIST DIE?; #13345, Volume 23--FOR WHOM IS THE GOSPEL MEANT? and #2341, Volume 39--THE UNDYING GOSPEL FOR THE DYING YEAR] And as He died for us when we were ungodly, what will He not do for us now that He has sought us as His own? He gave the highest proof of His love to us when we were most unworthy of it, so will He leave us now? God forbid!

7. For scarcely. Now the Apostle goes away from his theme, carried away by the still greater subject of the love of God in Christ Jesus and the way of reconciliation by Christ--he goes on to that theme--"For scarcely."

7. For a righteous man will one die. However "just" Aristides might be, nobody would die for him! However "righteous" a man might be, he would not, by his justice or righteousness, win enough affection to induce anybody to die for him.

7. Yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. There might possibly be some who would die for a John Howard, or a man of that ilk.

8. But God commends [See Sermon #104, Volume 2--LOVE'S COMMENDATION] His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. When we were not even just, much less good, "Christ died for us."

9. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. As He died for us, He will certainly save us. He who died for the ungodly will never cast away those whom He has justified. The death of Christ for His own people is the guarantee that He will love them even to the end!

10. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His

life.Did He love us when we were His enemies? Then most assuredly He will love us now that we are His friends. Did His death save us? Then, will not His life also save us? As He took such pains to reconcile us to His
Father, will He not take equal pains-no, "much more [See Sermon #2587, Volume 44--"MUCH MORE"] to preserve us safe to the end?
11. And not only so. Paul seems to go up a ladder and when he gets to the top of it, he sets up another on the top of that one and proceeds to mount that! This is the second time that we have read, "And not only so."
11. But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement. Christ has made Atonements for us, and God has accepted that Atonement on our behalf. We also have received it ourselves and now we are glad in God--glad that there is a God, glad that there is such a God, and glad that He is our God and
Father in Christ Jesus! [See Sermons #1045, Volume 18--JOY IN A RECONCILED GOD and #2550, Volume 44--JOY IN GOD]
12. Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. It was by one man's sin that we all fell through the first Adam. Does anyone object to the justice of that? I pray you, do not object to what is your only hope! If you and I had each one sinned for himself or herself apart from Adam, our case would probably have been hopeless, like the case of the fallen angels who sinned individually and fell, never to be set up again! But inasmuch as we fell representatively in Adam, it prepared the way for us to rise representatively in the Second Adam, Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior! As I fell by another, I can rise by another! As my ruin was caused by the first man, Adam, my restoration can be brought about by the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven! 13, 14.

(For until the Law, sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no Law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that hadnot sinnedafter the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come. Infants die, although they have never sinned. They die because death is the penalty of sin--and as they die for faults not their own, so are they saved by righteousness not their own. They die, for Adam sinned. They live, for Jesus died.

15-17. But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many are dead, much more the Grace of God, and the gift by Grace which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, have abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of Grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One,[See Sermons #2544, Volume 43--THE ONE AND THE MANY and #2744, Volume 47--LOST THROUGH ONE--SAVED THROUGH ONE] Jesus Christ). Adam's fall was terribly effectual--it has brought death upon the human race, age after age. And Christ's death is wonderfully effectual, for on behalf of all those for whom He died, His Atonement so prevails as to put their sins away forever!

19. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous. That is the wonderful doctrine of "the Gospel of Christ." It is rejected in these evil days. They call it simple and I know not what besides, but here it is put as plainly as words can put it, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous."

20. Moreover the Law entered, that the offense might abound. The Law

was not given to Moses to stop sin, or to forgive sin, but to make men see how evil sin is and to make it evident to them how evil they are!

20. But where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound. There was more Grace than terror even in the Law! It has served a gracious purpose, for it was given to make us realize our guilt and so might drive us to seek the Grace of God for its forgiveness. Salvation is all of Grace! Sin cannot conquer Grace--it has had a hard struggle for it, but Grace will ultimately win the victory in all who believe in Jesus.

21. That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might Grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. The drift of the whole chapter is to comfort Believers in the time of trouble by the fact of the great love of God to them in the Person of Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior.

Preparing to Depart

(No. 3116)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 8, 1865.

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven." 2 Kings 2:11.

IT seems to me that the departure of Elijah from the world, though of course he did not "die" at all, may furnish us with a very good type of the decease of those saints who, although taken away all of a sudden, are not without some previous intimation that in such a manner they will be removed. There may be some such here. They may know that they have about them a disease which, in all probability, will terminate fatally and suddenly. Others of us may have no idea at present that there is prepared for us a sudden death and sudden Glory. We would not shrink from such a death if it were the Lord's will that it should be ours. No, some of us would gladly reach out our hands and grasp so happy a mode of departure! It has always seemed to us to be the preferable way of leaving this world, not to be long sick and disabled, a weariness to those who nurse us and a torment to ourselves, but all of a sudden to shut our eyes on earth and open them on the splendors of Heaven! So to die would be, we think, a blessed mode of resting from our labors and entering into the Presence of our Lord.

I. Taking Elijah's case as a guide, we propose tonight to say a few

words--and may God make them to edification--about PREPARING FOR OUR DEPARTURE, which is really so near that it is time we began to talk about it.

It is much nearer to us than we think. To those of you who have passed fifty, sixty, or 70 years of age, it must, of necessity, be very near.

To others of us who are in the prime of life, it is not far off, for I suppose we are all conscious that time flies more swiftly with us, now, than it ever did. The years of our youth seem to have been twice as long as the years are, now, that we are men. It was but yesterday that the buds began to swell and burst--and now the leaves are beginning to fall and soon we shall be expecting to see old winter taking up his accustomed place. The years whirl along so fast that we cannot see the months which, as it were, make the spokes of the wheel! The whole thing travels so swiftly that the axle thereof grows hot with speed. We are flying, as on some mighty eagle's wing, swiftly on towards eternity.

Let us, then, talk about preparing to die. It is the greatest thing we have to do--and we have to do it soon--so let us talk and think something about it.

And what should we do when we are preparing to die? Well, we may spend some little time in leave-taking. We have some friends who have been very dear to us and we may almost begin to bid them "good-bye." When we feel that death is really coming, we may spare a little season to say to a friend, "I beseech you now to leave me." There will be some who, like Elisha with Elijah, have been with us during life and who will not leave us till the very last moment of death. Yet, in the prospect of our departure, we must learn to hold all things with a loose hand. Why should I grip so tightly that which death must and will tear from me? Why should I set my affections so ardently upon a dying thing that will melt before my eyes? I cannot carry it with me when I am called to go.

There are, it is true, dear ones who will not leave us, but who will live in our hearts and permit us to live in their hearts till the last hour shall come and longer still. But we must begin even now to prepare for our departure by reminding them and reminding ourselves, likewise, that these friendships must be broken, that these unions must be snapped, at least for a season, hopeful though we may be that we shall enjoy them again on the other side the Jordan.

The next thing we ought to do, and as it seems to me even more important, is to go and see about our work. If we have a feeling at all that we are going Home, let us set our house in order. What did Elijah do? He went to the two colleges he had founded at Bethel and at Jericho, and of which he was their principal instructor, and he addressed the young men once more before he was taken from them. I should like to have been a student there to have listened to the Professor's last lecture. I guarantee you that it was not an ordinary one! There was nothing in it dry, dusty, dead and dreary. O Friends, I think I hear the Prophet charging them as before God and before His holy angels, to rebuke the sin of the age in which they lived. "I went to the top of Carmel," he said, "and the priests of Baal were gathered about me and I laughed them to scorn! I poured sarcasms upon their heads! I said to them concerning Baal, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god--and while they cut themselves with knives and with lancets I mockingly said to them, 'Perhaps he hunts, or he sleeps and needs to be awaked by louder cries!' I laughed to scorn their leaping upon the altar and then, when I bowed my knees and cried for fire to come from Heaven, those same skies which my faith had shut up so that no rain fell upon the sinful Israelites' land, now cast forth fire at my word! And then I took the Prophets of Baal--I let not one of them escape--I slew them by the Brook Kishon and made the brook run blood-red with their gore

because they had led astray the people of God, and had defied the name of the Most High! Now, young, men," he said, "be you faithful even unto death! Go and teach the people, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear! Pull down their idols, exalt Jehovah and speak you as men who are sent by Him."

You, dear Friends, are not called to teach students as I am, so I speak with earnest sympathy when I say that next to dying in the pulpit, the thing I would choose would be to die among those Brothers whom I often seek to stir up to fidelity in the Master's cause. But you may well desire that before you depart, all your various works should come under review. Sunday school teachers, call your children together--let your addresses to them be those of dying men and women! You who can and do conduct our Bible classes, dear and honored Brothers and Sisters, there are many souls committed constantly to your care--clear yourselves of their blood so that you may go to your beds tonight and every night, as though you were going to your tomb--and feel that you fell asleep on that bed as you would wish to fall asleep when your last sleeping hour must come! Let us, each one, see to the various works we have in hand, so that we leave nothing out of place. Is there one soul we ought to have spoken to that we have not yet pleaded with for the Master? Let us do it now! Is there any field of usefulness which we ought to have plowed and does the plowshare still lie rusting in the furrow? Let us go and begin to plow this very night, or, at least, when tomorrow's sun has risen! We have so little time to live, let us live like dying men!

A certain lady, staying in the parish of that devoted minister, Mr. Cecil, was asked by him to undertake some particular work. She answered him, "My dear Sir, I should be very glad to do it but I am not certain of being in the parish more than three months" "Ah," he said, "I am not certain of being in the parish three hours, and yet I go on with my

duty and I pray you, Madam, to go on with yours." Let us look at our time, not as having a great deal of it, but as having so little! Beza said to his scribe, as he was translating the Gospel of John, "Write fast! Write fast, for I am dying." Then when he had got to the last verse, he said, "Now shut up the book and leave me alone a minute"--and he fell back and entered into Glory! Work hard--the candle is nearly burned out, and you have not finished that garment yet! Work hard, for you have not another candle to light when that one is gone!

When Elijah had taken leave of Elisha and had addressed the students, the next thing was to cross the Jordan. With his mantle he smote the waters and passed through them, and then, as it were, they shut him out from all the world except Elisha. I think I would like, if I might have notice of the day of my dying, to get away from the world alone. What does a dying man need with business? A man who has to die had need shut up the ledger and keep open that blessed Book which shall be as God's rod and shaft to comfort him in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is a happy circumstance for some of my friends, whom I look upon almost with envy, that they have ended the activities of life before death and have now a little season in which, as it were, they have got on the verge of Jordan and are resting, except that they are doing the Lord's work diligently--resting from the world and preparing to enter into Glory! John Bunyan very graphically describes this state, when he tells us of what he calls "the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet, and pleasant, and the way lying directly through it, the pilgrims solaced themselves there for a season. Yes, here they heard continually the singing of birds and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shines night and day--therefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death and also out of the reach of Giant Despair--neither

could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight
of the City they were going to--also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof, for in this land the Shining Ones commonly walked because it was upon the borders of Heaven." They heard the melody of the upper spheres while they were still here below! This is a blessed terminus of our earthly life. Did not the Prophet indicate it when he said, "At evening time, it shall be light." When you have got home from business lately, how you have enjoyed those splendid evenings that we have been having--so fair, so calm, so bright! You know that the day must die and that the dew would weep its fall, but oh, its dying hours were so pleasant! There was no sun heat to broil you, no dust nor whirl of care to vex you--the evening seemed a beautiful preparation for your going to your beds. Well, if one might choose, one would like to have just such a season as that! And though there are but few gray hairs on the heads of some of us, I am not quite sure that we might not begin this happy time sooner than most people do. I do not mean by laying aside work, but by laying aside unbelief! Not by giving up toil, but by giving up carking care! Why should I fret and worry myself when I am young any more than when I am old? My father's God is my God and He who will make the land as Beulah to me when I come to die, can make it so even now if I have but that childlike confidence which can sing--

"All my times are in Your hand, All events at Your command."

Imitate Luther's little bird that used to sit on the tree and sing so him. Nobody else could interpret its notes, or tell what it said, but to Luther it sang--

"Mortal, cease from care and sorrow, God provides for the morrow."

Elijah teaches us another thing by which we may prepare for our departure. He said to his friend Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you."

Quick, then, Brother, quick--if you have anything you can do for your friends, do it now. ' 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." If you do not ask your friends what you shall do, think what you can do for them! Mother, you would like to pray with that dear child of yours--then do it soon, for the hour of your departure is at hand. Friend, you would like to do a kind action to that struggling Brother, then do it soon for you may be gone tomorrow. You have thought of something that you would like to do for Christ's cause. Perhaps there is a destitute village where you would like to have the Gospel preached and you want to make some provision for it--then do it soon, do it soon--or the resolve may never be able to ripen into action! How many infants that might have grown up to be spiritual giants have been strangled by our procrastination! You nurse the little child of resolve, but seldom does it grow into the man of practical action! Get about it, get about it now! You cannot help your friend when you have once gone up in your chariots of fire, so help him now and let him tell you what you shall do for him.

Then notice that Elijah and Elisha were talking as they went on--and holding communion with each other Old Bishop Hall says they must have been talking of some very solemn and heavenly subjects, or else one would have thought that they would have been on their knees praying instead of talking! But he very properly adds that "sometimes mediation is best and sometimes conversation." So was it in their case. Elijah had a great deal to say to Elisha. He was about to leave the State and the Church in very perilous times, so he talked fast to the man who was to bear the burden and heat of the day! And he poured the whole case into his ears and no doubt Elisha asked him many questions and was informed by him upon many knotty points. And so "they still went on, and talked." Let our talk always be like their talk, and then it will

be well to die talking. "They that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." Brothers and Sisters, I say, and I am afraid I may well say it with tears, that much of our conversation would not do for God to hear! And though He does hear it, yet it would not do for Him to write a Book of Remembrance concerning it, for it would be far better that it should be blotted out. Oh, when the last solemn hour shall come, may we be found--

"Wrapped in meditation high, Hymning our great Creator's praise"--

or else conversing with our Brothers and Sisters here below, so that we may go from the communion of the Church militant to that of the Church triumphant and take away our lips from human ears to begin to speak to immortal ears before the starry Throne!

These are the different methods by which we may prepare to die. Some people, when they fancy they are going to die, think the only thing they can do to prepare for death is to send for the parson--"take the sacrament," as they call it--

get upstairs, not see anybody and draw the curtain. The best way for a Christian to die is in harness. If I were a soldier, I think I would sooner die in battle in the hour of victory than I would die in the trenches doing nothing, rotting in idleness for lack of work to do. Let us just push on, and may it be said of us when we are gone, he did--

"His body with his charge lay down,

And ceased at once to work and live." So was it with Elijah. So may it be with us!

II. THIS DEPARTURE OF ELIJAH appears to me in some measure SYMBOLIC OF THE DEATHS OF

BELIEVERS.

It was sudden, though expected. They were talking, and just in the middle of a sentence, perhaps, they were parted. There was no noises,

for the wheels of that chariot moved not on earth, but its brightness shone around them. They looked back and they saw strange steeds, whose eyeballs flashed with flames and whose necks were clothed with thunder. And behind them was a chariot brighter than the golden car in which the Caesars rode, for it was a car of fire, and Elijah knew it was one of the chariots of God, which are twenty thousand, that He had sent to take His favorite servant up to the ivory palaces, where the King, Himself, dwells! It was sudden--the parting came in a moment--and I suppose that death is usually sudden. Even though persons may be, as we say, long dying, yet the actual moment of departure comes suddenly. The bowl is broken with a crash and the silver cord is loosed--the chain is snapped and the eagle mounts to dwell in the sun!

How terrible--a chariot of fire, and horses of fire. Even to a Christian, death is not a soft, dainty being. To die is no child's play. We speak of it as a sleep, but it is no such sleep as yon youngster's, when he lies down upon the sunny bank to wake again. There are solemnities about it. There are horses and there are chariots and so far there is comfort-- but they are all of fire and he that sees them need have Elijah's eyes or perhaps his own will blink. Elijah had seen fire before. He had called it from Heaven upon his enemies. He had brought it down from Heaven upon his sacrifice. He had seen fire flashing on him at Horeb--then the whole sky was bright with sheets of forked flame--but the Lord was not in that fire as He was in this. He who had looked at that former fire, and feared not, could bear to look upon the horses and chariots of fire which God had sent.

Though terrible, how triumphant!Oh, what splendor, to ride to Heaven in a chariot! No foot-passenger wading through Jordan's stream and going up dripping on the other bank to be met by the shining ones. That is bright and glorious! The good dreamer of Bedford Jail dreamed well when

he dreamed that--but this is more triumphant, still--to mount the car, stand erect and ride up to the Throne of God, drawn there by horses of fire! It is given to but few to have this experience and yet, what am I saying? Have we not all the same experience? Shall we not all have it when, in the image of Christ Jesus, we shall mount with Him to our eternal rest? Yes, He will come again and all His people with Him, and if JESUS shall ride on the white horse of victory, His saints shall ride on white horses, too, and shall enter through the gates into the City amidst resounding acclamations! Yes, to die is triumph to the Christian! It seems to me that it was an act of faith on the part of Elijah to mount that fiery chariot--and we may say of him as it was said of Enoch, "By faith he was translated that he should not see death; and he was not, for God took him."

Yes, horses of fire and chariots of fire are no bad image of the departure of the blessed when they are called to enter into the joy of their Lord. As for us, we have not got to Heaven yet. Our turn has not come, though we are ready to say--

"Oh that we now might grasp our Guide! Oh that the worst were given!
Come, Lord of Hosts, the waves divide, And land us all in Heaven!"

III. But while we remain behind, let us ask, WHAT OUGHT WE TO DO WHO HAVE SEEN ANY DIE LIKE
THIS?

If we have lost wife, or husband, or child, or friend in this sudden way, what ought we to do? You see what Elisha did. First of all, he tore his clothes, which was the Eastern mode of showing his grief Well, you may weep, for "Jesus wept." Do not think there is any sin in sorrowing over departed friends, for the Lord never denies to us those human feelings which are rather kindly than vicious. Had there been death before the Fall, I could imagine even perfect Adam weeping at the

loss of Eve. No, he would have been no perfect man if he could have lost his spouse and not have wept.

"Jesus wept." We regard Him all the more as Jesus because He wept--and you could not be like Jesus unless you wept, too. The Gospel does not make us stoics--it makes us Christians. Still, you must remember that there is a moderation in grief. The Quaker was right who, when he saw a lady fretting on the sofa some year or so after her husband was dead, still harboring grief without a token of resignation, said to her, "Madam, I see you have not yet forgiven God." Sometimes grief is not a sacred feeling, but only a murmur of rebellion against the Most High. Yes, you may tear your garments and, if you like, you may do a little more. Elisha not only tore his garments, but he cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof," and in doing this he eulogized his departed friend. He seemed to say, "He has been a father to me. I have lost one who was very tender to me, one who trained me, watched over me and fostered me as a father." Oh, speak well of the departed! You need not hold back your kind words about your dead friends. We speak little enough what is good of one another while we are living. I wish we sometimes said a little more, not by way of flattery, but by way of commendation which might cheer depressed and burdened spirits. But you need not be afraid of speaking flatteringly, so as to hurt the dead who have gone to Glory, for they will not be injured by what you say. If those who have departed were of value to the Church of God, you may say of them, "The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" You may wonder who will now lead the Church. You may question how things will go on--who will be the horses to drag the car, or where will now be the Chariot in which weary spirits may be made to ride.

Yes, you may both grieve and eulogize. Weep well and speak well, but

then, what next? Do not stand there and waste
your time! Do not stop there and let your eyes see nothing. Look, there
is something falling! What is it that is dropping
from the sky? It is no meteor. Elisha's eyes are fixed on it--he finds
that it is the old mantle that the Prophet used to
throw about his shoulders and he picks it up joyfully! And our friends,
who have gone from us, have left their mantles
too. What are these mantles? Sometimes good men leave their books and
sermons [When this discourse was delivered, in October, 1865, the
preacher could scarcely have imagined that he would leave behind him so
many books and sermons as he did when he was "called Home" in January,
1892. And it would never have seemed possible to him that, nearly 17
years after his own translation to Heaven, the weekly issues of the
Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit would still be continued, with the
prospect
of a further continuance for many years more!] behind them, but all
Christian people leave their good examples. Now, do not stand and weep
till you forget the goodness of the departed, but go and take their
mantles up! Were they earnest? Be you earnest. Were they humble? Be you
humble. Were they prayerful? Be you prayerful and so, in each case,
shall you wear their mantle! They have left their example for you to
follow--they are not gone that you may superstitiously reverence
them--but they have departed that you may earnestly imitate them. As
far as they followed Christ, you follow them and so wear their mantle.
And when you have got their mantle, do not waste precious time in
lamentations about them anymore--get to your business. There is a river
in your way--what then? Well, go to the Jordan as the Prophet Elisha
did and try to pass it. Say not, "Where is Elijah?" but, "Where is the
Lord God of Elijah?" Elijah is gone, but his God is not! Elijah has

gone away, but Jehovah is present, still! Now then, Christians, you have to take up the work of the departed--take it up in the strength of the same God who made them mighty--and strive to do the same works that they did. If they divided Jordan, you divide Jordan. You have their example to show you how to do it and their God is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Ask you now, "Where did Elisha go after he had divided Jordan?" Did he go to seek out Elijah--

"In some vast wilderness, Some boundless contiguity of shade Where rumor of"

bereavements and of death might never reach him? Not he! He went straight away to the place where Elijah used to be the head of the college and there took up Elijah's work! Were I a soldier with courage for the armor of my mind, and valor for the enterprise of my life--a soldier of that class which Baxter describes as carrying their lives in their hands and the Grace of God in their hearts--then surely when I saw a man just in front of me fall, I would step forward and take his place. That is what you should do. If there is a good man dead, fill up the gap! If there is a saint departed, be you, as it were, "baptized for the dead." Seek to have the blessing of God upon you so that you may have a double portion of his spirit and may be able to take the place in the ranks, or the council which he who is gone has vacated. Your business is not in the closet of mourning, but in the field of service! There is work to be done! There is work to be done so up and do

it!

That was a brave thing in Richard Cobden's life, at the time when his whole soul was taken up with the subject of free trade and the breaking of the chains of commerce. The young wife of his friend, John Bright,

died, and Cobden went to him and said, "Now, Bright, you have lost your wife and we will heal your sorrow by fighting the nation's battle." And the thing was indeed well and bravely done. If you have lost a dear friend, heal your sorrow by giving yourself more earnestly than ever to God's cause and to the propagation of "the Truth of God as it is in Jesus." There is nothing like activity, nothing like having your hands full to keep the heart bright and the soul happy. You are dullards, you who have nothing to do--you fret and fume and rebel instead of fighting for your Lord! But if you would only go up "to the help of the Lord against the mighty," and would bear His burdens, He would help you to bear yours and the sorrow that now seems as a knife in your bones would be as a spur to your activity. "I vowed," said one, "that I would be avenged of Death for all the damage that he had done to me, and so I smote him right and left with the fiery sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. I preached the immortality that there is in Christ Jesus and so I was avenged of Death and felt that I had conquered him." So do you--go and serve your Master, and though Elijah may depart--yet you shall fill up his place and God's horsemen and chariots shall not be wanting!

And now, dear Friends, in parting for the night, it is meet for us to say, "Farewell for this night, till we meet again in the morning." But, sometimes this parting may be very significant and, therefore, let us say, "Farewell," with the thought that some of us may never look each other in the face again. I hope we can truly say, "Farewell!" and then we shall meet in the morning, when the night is over, and the death-dews drop no more, when the chill frost of midnight shall all have been melted away by the rising sun of immortality! Yes, we will meet--we shall meet to part no more. We will make an appointment now, to meet each other then, where our hearts, in faith, have often met

before--at the Throne of Him who has washed us in His blood and made us white! And so--FAREWELL TILL THE MORNING!

But what of some of you? You can make no such appointment to meet us there, for your way is not that way--not with horses of fire to Heaven, but with chariots of flame down to Hell--down, down, down forever into the depths of grief! We dare not say that we will meet you there. If you will go there, you must go alone! If you will perish, you must perish by yourself! If you will live and die without a Savior, you cannot expect your friends to accompany you to that dreary world of woe! But why go you, why go you, O solitary traveler, where you would not have your fellow go? You would not see your child damned--let me say the word with solemn awe--you would not see your child damned, would you? Then why should you so dam yourself? "But must I be?" you ask. No, Sinner, there is no "must" for that! There hangs my Master, the Crucified Redeemer, and if you look to Him, there will be another "must" for you, namely, that you must be saved! The road to Heaven is by the Cross of Calvary. Christ Jesus marks the way to Glory by the crimson drops of blood which flowed from His pierced hands and feet. Trust Jesus! Trust Him wholly! Trust Him now! Trust Him forever and then we will meet! We will meet again in the morning, and so--GOOD NIGHT!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM62.

In this Psalm the royal singer casts himself entirely on God. Here we see the foundation of his expectation laid bare. He has no confidence anywhere but in God. The Psalm begins in the original with the word, "Only." I always call it, "The 'only' Psalm" because it harps upon that word. David had no mixed reliance--he had not built upon a foundation partly of iron and partly of clay--it was all in harmony throughout.

His trust was in the Lord alone!

Verse 1. Truly. Or, as it is in the margin, "Only."

1. My soul waits upon God: from Him comes my salvation. It is a blessed thing to truly wait only upon God. You have proved everything else to be a failure and now you hang upon the bare arm of God alone. There is certainly enough for you to depend upon there! Most people want something to see, something tangible to the senses, to be the object of their confidence, but David says, "Only my soul waits upon God: from Him comes my salvation." It is already on the road. It is coming now. It is a salvation from present trouble and from present temptation. A complete salvation is on the road for all those whose souls are waiting only upon God!

2. He only is my rock and my salvation; [See Sermon #80, Volume 2--GOD ALONE THE SALVATION OF HIS PEOPLE] He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved. "Though I have no other shelter,
yet," David says, "God, and God, alone, is my rock fortress. Though I have no other deliverer, He is my salvation, and though thousands seek to do me hurt, and none will stand up for me, yet He is my shield and my defense." Then he adds, "'I shall not be greatly moved.' I shall be like a well-anchored ship. I may suffer some tossing, but I cannot drift far away, my Grace holds me fast."

3. How long willyou imagine mischief against a man? You shall be slain, all ofyou: as a bowing wallshallyou be, and as a tottering fence.See how he laughs at his enemies. He tells them they are like a wall that leans over, bulges out, and shakes and totters--with a push it will go over! "You think that you will destroy me," he says, "but you will yourselves be destroyed."

4. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.
It is a sure proof that they delight in lies because they are guilty of

telling them. They can speak soft oily words all the while that they are harboring curses in their hearts. God save us from having a tongue that talks in a different way from that in which our heart feels! But those that delight in lies are never better pleased than when they can find a man of God upon whom they can spit their venom! And of all cruel things, slander is the worst, and it deserves the worst punishment. Well did the Psalmist ask, "What shall be given unto you? Or what shall be done unto you, you false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper." Such punishment as that, a slanderer's tongue well deserves to feel!

5. My Soul, wait only upon God, [See Sermon #144, Volume 3--WAITING ONLY UPON GOD] my expectation is from Him. First he said that his salvation came from the Lord, and now he says that his expectation comes from Him. All that he needs, and all that he wishes for, he gets from his God. "Let my foes slander me," he seems to say, "but, O my Soul, you wait upon God! Let their tongues keep on inventing their diabolical lies, but, O my Soul, take no notice of them! Sit down at Jehovah's feet and patiently wait--then He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday.'"

6. He only is my rock andmy salvation: He is my defense; I shallnot be moved. Notice how David's faith grows. In verse 2, he says, "I shall not be greatly moved." But now he says, "I shall not be moved at all." What strength faith gives to a man, and what strength prayer gives to a man! We may begin our supplication tremblingly, but as we draw near to God we become confident in Him and filled with holy boldness!

7. 8. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times.I cannot tell what "times" you may be passing through just now, yet I can repeat David's exhortation, "Trust in Him at all times." In your darkest hours, in the

most terrible times that you ever have, when all seems lost, when the dearest object of your heart's love is taken from you, or when you, yourself, are coming to the swellings of Jordan, still trust in the Lord! "Trust in Him at all times."

8. You people, pour out your heart before Him. That is the way to get rid of all your troubles--take your heart and turn it upside down--and pour out all that is in it! Do not save a drop--try not to hide one secret sorrow from your God, nor one slight grief that nestles in a corner of your spirit. "Pour out your heart before Him." It will not be wise for you to pour it out before your fellows, for they will misunderstand you and misrepresent you. But "pour out your heart before Him."

8, 9. God is a refuge for us. Selah. Surely men of low degree are vanity, There is nothing in them. They are only the very essence of vanity.

9. And men of high degree--They must surely be better! No, they are even worse--"Men of high degree"--

9. Are a lie. Their presence of being better because they are of high degree is mere pretence. Well but, if we mix them up and get some poor men and some rich ones, some peasants and some peers, can we not make something solid out of this mixture? Oh, no!

9. To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. The men of low degree alone were vanity, but when the men of high degree were put with them, they became lighter than vanity--so that there seems to be a propensity in the men of high degree to make those that are of low degree even lighter than they are by nature! And whether men are high or low, if we trust in them we shall be deceived! He who tries to base his happiness upon the good opinion of his neighbors. He whose happiness depends upon human esteem, builds not on

sand, but on mere breath-- which is no more solid than the bubbles that our children blow.

10. Trust not in oppression. An ungodly man says, "Well, if I cannot trust in others, I will trust in myself! My own stout arm shall win me the victory and I will tread others down beneath my feet." "I will get money," says another-- "somehow or other, I will get money." To both of these, David says, "Trust not in oppression."

10. And become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. If you do, they will either fly away from your heart, or else they will fly away with your heart, which would be the greater evil of the two, for, when riches carry a man's heart away from God, his greatest gains are his heaviest losses! He is poor, indeed, who prizes his gold more than his God.

11. God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongs unto God. Where ought we to put our confidence? Why, where true power is! If there were any power elsewhere, we might put a measure of confidence elsewhere, but when twice the heavenly message declares that power belongs to God, our wisdom will be shown in putting all our trust in God!

12. Also unto You, O Lord, belongs mercy. Almighty power would be terrible if it were separated from Infinite Mercy, but it is not so.

12. For You render to every man according to his work. You give him enough strength with which to do his work. You do not send him to do a work beyond his power and leave him to fail, but unto all Your children Your mercy brings Your power to help in every time of need. Your faithful promise is, "As your days, so shall your strength be." Come, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us be of the same mind as David was when he wrote the first verse of this Psalm, and let each one of us say, "Truly my soul waits upon God: from Him comes my salvation."

Chapter 44

Eyes Opened

(No. 3117)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray you, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." 2 Kings 6:17.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, on the same text, is #2215, Volume 37--YOUNG MAN! A PRAYER FOR YOU]

THE Believer in Christ sees much more than any other man sees. There is a proverb which says, "Seeing is believing," but that is not true, for there are many things that we see, which, if we are sensible persons, we shall notbelieve, since our eyes are very apt, indeed, to be deceived, and optical illusions are very common. If you turn the proverb around the other way and say, "Believing is seeing," you will often find it come true. The man who has believed has "the evidence of things not seen" as yet. He is like Moses who is described as "seeing Him who is invisible." Faith is to a man like new eyes--eyes with a far wider range of vision than natural eyes ever have--eyes which see the Truths of God, which natural eyes often do not--eyes which wax not dim, but which, as age increases, grow yet more bright and farseeing! Blessed is the man who has the eyesight of faith! Elisha had it and, therefore, when he saw the hosts of Syria, with their horses and chariots encompassing the city of Dothan, he also saw the angelic hosts

with their horses and chariots of fire which God had sent to guard him from the Syrians.

The eyesight of faith produces, in the man who possesses it, a calm and quiet frame of mind. Elisha's servant said, "Alas, my master!" but Elisha did not say, "Alas, my servant!" for there was nothing to cause him to be alarmed. The servant said, "What shall we do?" but his master said nothing of the kind--with those horses and chariots of fire visible to his eyes, he had no need to be dismayed and no reason for asking the question, "What shall we do?" It is a grand thing to have a calm, serene frame of mind, so as not readily to be put out of temper and to grow angry, or to become depressed and anxious, but to possess one's soul in patience and peacefulness. This is to be a king among the sons of men! When others are driven here and there, like the thistledown upon the hillside, this man stands like the royal oak in the midst of the tempest, too deeply rooted to be easily swept away. He is the man who is not "afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." He can say, with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." And he is of the same mind as that Psalmist who said, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea." Oh, that we all had these eyes of faith, that we might enjoy such calm, quiet patience as Elisha enjoyed! If we could see what Elisha saw, we would be as quiet and serene as Elisha was. But most men have not this calmness of mind because they have not the spiritual eyesight which would bring it to them. The narrative before us, if we use it as a kind of illustration, will help us to realize the blindness of those who as yet have not had their eyes opened. And I trust that it will also lead us to admire the rich Grace of God which has been

manifested in those of us who have had our eyes opened that we may see the things of God.

I. My first observation shall be that THE NATURAL EYES ARE BLIND TO HEAVENLY THINGS.

Man boasts that he can see, but he cannot. He sees natural things and he often sees them very clearly. His penetrating eyes have looked deep into the earth and the depths of the sea, and has peered among the stars. Scarcely anything has been able to conceal itself from the wondrous power of research possessed by the human mind. For natural things, the natural eyes are sufficient but, as the natural man understands not the things of the Spirit of God, seeing that they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned, so the natural eyes discern not spiritual things. Let me prove this, as I can very readily do.

For instance, God is everywhere, yet sin-blinded eyes see Him not When our eyes are opened, we can see God everywhere! It would be impossible to place a Christian where he would not feel the Presence of his Maker in creation. Whatever landscape his eyes gaze upon, he says at once, "My Father made all this," and he can see traces of his Father's handiwork, not merely when he looks upon the face of the earth, but also when he looks up to the stars. Not only in a calm, clear night, but amidst the hurly-burly of the tempest, the Christian realizes that God is there--he does not need anybody to point out to him the fact that God is present, for he knows it. How often have some of us walked out when the storm has been raging--and delighted to look up to the flashing lightning because we saw in it the glances of our Father's eyes--and to listen to the peals of thunder because we believed them to be our Father's voice, that voice of the Lord which is full of majesty and which "breaks the cedars of Lebanon."

Yet the natural man can go through the world and not see God at all. Yes, and he will even have the audacity to deny that God is there! And he may go further, still, and say that there is no God at all! David says that such a man is a fool, but the modern name for him is, "philosopher." In David's day, no one but fools said that there was no God, but now, those who say that there is no God claim that they are among the wise ones of the world! Yet, how can they see if they are blind? We need not think that any strange thing has happened, for Paul wrote, long ago, about those who lived in his day, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." They said, "We can see," and therefore their sin and their blindness both remained.

So blind is man that in addition to not seeing his God, he does not see the Law of God. Go into a parish church and you will usually see the Ten Commandments printed legibly before you. Yet I am speaking the truth when I say that men cannot see the Law of God with their natural eyes. You can scarcely go into a house in this country without finding a Bible--and in this Bible there are the Commandments that God gave to Moses--yet, notwithstanding that, the natural man does not see the Law of God, for even if he reads the Ten Commandments, he concludes that the mere letter of them is all that they mean. He reads, "You shall not kill," and he says to himself, "I have done no murder, so I am clear," not knowing that "whoever is angry with his brother without a cause" has broken that Commandment. He reads, "You shall not commit adultery," and he says, "I am clear," forgetting that even a lascivious look is an infringement of that Commandment. The Law is spiritualand has to do with thoughts, imaginations and secret wishes, as well as with words and actions! So who among us can stand unabashed in its awful presence?--

"No strength of Nature can suffice

To serve the Lord aright

And what she has, she misapplies,

For need of clearer light."

Instead of asking that our hearts may be inclined to keep this Law, it would be better far for us to look up to Him who has kept the Law on His people's behalf and whose precious blood can cleanse us from the stain of the innumerable infringements of that Law of which we have been guilty. Till we see Christ's face in Glory and are perfect through His perfections, the Law will be far above us and will continue to condemn us for our shortcomings. But the great reason why men do not comprehend the high spirituality of the Law, its exceeding breadth and wondrous severity, is because they are blind.

Being thus blind to God and to His Law, they are also blind to their own condition. He who has his eyes opened but for a moment will perceive that his soul is as full of sin as an egg is full of meat and that sin comes out of him as naturally as water flows from a fountain. He sees that every action he performs is stained with sin and that he is so guilty before God that condemnation has already passed upon him--so guilty that he can never make any atonement for the past and that nothing he can do or suffer can ever save him! He must feel, if once his eyes have been opened, that he is lost, ruined and undone by nature and by practice, too--and that only a supernatural act of Divine Grace can deliver him from the danger into which he has brought himself and the guilt into which he has plunged himself! We say this to men, and we have said it hundreds of times, but they cannot see it. And when they do not, we ought by no means to be surprised, but simply to say, "Of course. This proves the truth of what we have already said. The very fact that men cannot see it proves that they are blind--if they saw it, we would have spoken falsely in charging them with not haying

sight."

And inasmuch as men are not able to see their sin, and to see their danger, therefore they do not see the way of salvation. They may attend a purely Evangelical ministry and hear the way of salvation put as clearly as ever it can be put, yet they will not understand it unless their eyes are opened by a miracle which only the Holy Spirit can work. It is strange that when people are convinced of sin, though they have attended the plainest possible ministry from their childhood, we have to teach them the very A B C of the Gospel and we have the greatest possible difficulty in making them see that faith in Jesus, faith in the Divinely-appointed Substitute for sinners, does in a single moment save the soul! The inward spiritual perception of what Justification by Faith really means comes to no man except it is given him from above. And because man does not see his sin, he does not see the remedy for that sin. Not understanding his danger, he is not in a position to see the wondrous scheme by which he is delivered from that danger through the Grace of God, by the atoning Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the effectual working of the ever-blessed Spirit!

This is the reason why men do not admire and love our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ They cannot see His beauties, or they would be enamored of Him. If you tell me that any eyes have been turned to the Lord Jesus Christ and yet that the possessor of those eyes has not trusted, loved and adored Him, I tell you at once that those eyes must be blind eyes, for could they see, they would be charmed with Him. Could they really behold Him, they would be fascinated by Him! Well did our hymn-writer say--

"His worth, if all the nations knew, Then the whole world would love Him too." But man is so blind that he cannot see the light of the Sun of Righteousness! Jesus shines full in his face in all the splendor of

His Infinite Love, yet the blinded soul cannot behold that supernatural radiance!

This need of spiritual discernment makes man ignoble. Samson with his eyes open is a hero, but Samson blinded is a sorry spectacle--from a judge in Israel he sinks to a slave in Philistine. Men believe in the keenness of their intellect, but it is to them their greatest shame--though they do not know it--that they cannot see the things of God, but grope like blind men in the dark!

It is their blindness that makes them so contented to be what they are. Could they but see themselves as they really are in God's sight, they would not rest a moment without crying to Him for mercy. Could the ungodly man truly know what he is and where he is, the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" would constantly go up in every House of Prayer! And in every private house, men and women and children, too, would be found praying to God to save them! But the blind soul says that it sees and it is perfectly satisfied to remain blind even though that blindness, unless it is miraculously cured, will end in eternal death! Oh, that God, in His Infinite Mercy, would now give spiritual eyesight to any here who are thus blind!

Until He does so, this blindness of theirs will keep them proud of what should be their shame. They are covered with rags, but they think they are decked out in the choicest apparel! They are poor and miserable, but this blindness of their soul makes them boast of being princely in their riches! And, therefore, they will not come to God for the true Light, true life and true wealth, but remain self-deceived and unhumbled. This blindness of theirs places them in great danger If God, in His Sovereign Mercy, does not open their eyes, they will fall into the ditch and probably drag others down with them! Or they will go struggling on in the self-conceit of their fancied knowledge and will

never be led into the Light of God! And they will be only undeceived when, in Hell, they open their eyes for the first time to find that they are cast out from God forever and ever!

This is our first point, that the natural eyes are blind to heavenly things.

II. The next Truth of God is that GOD ALONE CAN OPEN MEN'S EYES. We may lead blind men to Jesus, but we cannot open their eyes. We can, in a measure, indicate to them what spiritual sight is and we may explain to them what their own sad condition is--but we cannot open their eyes! Neither can anyone but God alone open their eyes. There are some who, in mockery, give them artificial eyes and try to make them look as if they could see. They teach them to trust in an imitation of Christianity which has a name to live and yet is dead. But nothing less than vital godliness will avail for them--nothing but the real work of God the Holy Spirit upon the soul! It is all in vain for you to wash your eyes in baptismal water, whether it is in a few drops or in the deepest river--you must have your eyes miraculously opened by God or they never will be opened! It is all in vain for you to be orthodox in your creed and to be a member of what you believe to be the best church under Heaven, unless there has been in your soul a Divine enlightenment so that you have seen yourself, seen your Savior and seen your God with your inward eyes. Unless God opens your eyes, you must still abide in the darkness of spiritual blindness!

Why it is that God alone can open men's eyes? It is because to open the eyes of blind souls is an act of creation. The faculty to see is gone from the fallen spirit--the eyes have perished--the optical nerve has died out through sin. God will not merely clean the dust out of old eyes, or take cataracts away from them--but old things must pass away and all things must become new! He gives new eyes to those who have

totally lost all power of sight. The act of creating a soul anew is as much a work of God's Omnipotence as the making of a world!

Remember also that those who have their eyes opened by God were born blind. The man who was in that sad condition and whose eyes Christ had opened, truly said, "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." It is so spiritually--this old original sin of ours, this inwrought blindness of our nature is not superficial--it has not merely to do with eyeballs, optic nerves and the like, but it has to do with the heart, the will, the conscience, the understanding and the perception of spiritual things--and Divine Power is needed to remove such blindness as this.

We must remember, too, that man is willfully blind. Our old proverb says, "There are none so deaf as those that won't hear, and none so blind as those that won't see." It is not merely that man cannot come to Christ, but he will not come to Christ that he may have life! It is not merely that he cannot see the Truth of God, but that he loves darkness rather than light and does not want to see! You cannot convince a man who is resolved not to be convinced. If sinners were only willing to see, they would soon see, but their will itself is in bondage and utterly estranged from God. And, therefore, it is that only a Divine Power--the will of God--can overcome the desperately wicked will of man!

It must be a Divine work and, therefore, it was set down among the Covenant blessings that the Lord Jesus Christ, when He came, would open the eyes of the blind. But why it should have been put down as His special work if others can do it, I cannot tell! But no others can do it--God alone, God in the Person of Jesus Christ our Savior--by the effectual working of the ever-blessed Spirit, must come and open the eyes of those who are spiritually blind--

"If You, my God, are passing by,

Oh let me find You near!

Jesus, in mercy hear my cry,

You Son of David, hear!

Behold me waiting in the way,

For You, the heavenly Light!

Command me to be brought and say,

'Sinner, receive your sight'"

III. Now, thirdly, though we cannot open the eyes of the blind, WE CAN PRAY FOR THEM THAT THEIR EYES MAY BE OPENED.

This is what Elisha did for his servant. The young man could not see the horses and chariots of fire and Elisha could not make him see them, but he offered this prayer for him, "Lord, I pray You, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw." How often we feel our helplessness in dealing with sinners! Godly parents, have you not realized your helplessness in dealing with your own children? If you have had the notion that you could convert them, you have soon had it driven out of you. When you have gathered the little children in the Sunday school around you, perhaps you have pictured to yourself the power and influence you would have over them to lead them to Christ--but I will guarantee that you who have long been earnestly engaged in such holy service as that have learned, as the Reformer did, that, "old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon!" And you have lifted up your heart to God, finding prayer to be the only resource you had in such an emergency. It is a blessed thing to be driven to despair as to any ability of our own to do any good, for we never rely wholly on God's power as long as we have any confidence in our own. While the preacher imagines that he can do something, he will do nothing. While teachers or parents entertain the belief that there

is some innate power in themselves with which they can do God's work, they are not on the right track, for God will not work through those who believe in their own self-sufficiency. But when you say, "I can no more save a soul than I can open the eyes of a man born blind, I am utterly helpless in this matter," then it is that you begin to pray.

And beginning to pray, you are taught how to act--and God uses you as His instrument and eyes are opened--yes, opened by you, instrumentally, but God has all the Glory!

Now, when should you specially pray for those who are blind? I think this narrative teaches us that we should do so whenever we see them in trouble. This young man said to Elisha, "Alas, my master!" So that was the time for Elisha to pray for him, "Lord, I pray you, open his eyes, that he may see." Carefully watch those about whom you are anxious and pray most earnestly for them when they are under affliction or difficulty. I am sure that trials are Providentially sent to unconverted men in order to help the ministry guide their minds and hearts in the right direction. If they were left without trials, we might scarcely find a joint in their harness where the arrows of the Truth of God might enter. If they always continued in prosperity, they would become so proud and presumptuous that they would be unwilling to listen either to a rebuke or to an invitation. It is a grand opportunity for you when you visit a man in the time of sickness, or when you find him depressed in spirit, or hear him saying, "Alas! Alas!" Then is the time to speak to him about God and to speak to God about him!

It is also a good time to pray for sinners when we hear them enquiring. This young man said to Elisha, "What shall we do?" Be always ready, when you hear them asking, "What shall we do?" or, "How shall we do?" to point them at once to Jesus and also to take their case to Jesus in

prayer.

It is also a good time to pray for them when we ourselves have had a clear sight of the things of God. You ought, by the very clearness of the vision which you have enjoyed, to pity those who still sit in darkness, and to pray that they may be brought into the Light. Elisha had himself seen the horses and chariot of fire and, therefore, he prayed for his servant, "Lord, I pray you, open his eyes, that he may see." When it is well with you, speak to Christ on behalf of poor sinners. When you have good times, yourselves, remember those who are starving away from the banquet--and pray the Master of the feast to give you the Grace to "compel them to come in."

It is well to pray for sinners, too, when their blindness astonishes us. I know that, sometimes, you are quite amazed that people should be so ignorant about Divine things. It surprises you that intelligent people should have such mistaken notions concerning the very simplest Truths of God's Word. Even if you are astonished, do not be vexed at them, but pray earnestly for them. I have sometimes heard two Christian men arguing because they did not agree in doctrine. One of them has been quite sure that he held the Truth and equally certain that his friend was in error. But, instead of being thankful that he could see more than his friend could, and praying God to bring his friend to see the same, he has grown angry and struck out right and left, as if the way to make his Brother see was to smite him in the eye! But it is not so-- controversy very seldom brings any Truth of God home to the heart. We can secure that result much better by praying for others than by fighting with them. Pray, "O Lord, open their eyes." That is a far wiser thing than abusing them because they cannot see!

Let us also remember, dear Friends, that when we received our spiritual eyesight, it was mainly because others had been praying for us. Most of

us can probably trace our conversion to the intercession of a godly father, or mother, or teacher, or friend. Then let us repay those prayers which were offered for us, in years gone by, by pleading for others who still are blind--

"PTay that they who now are blind, Soon the way of Truth may find."

It will glorify God to open the eyes of the blind. Therefore let us pray for them with great confidence. When we are asking for anything about which we are somewhat doubtful as to whether it will glorify God or not, we may well speak with hesitation, but as we are sure that it is for God's Glory that men should see Jesus and rejoice in Him, let us crave this gift for them with great importunity and much holy boldness--and we shall certainly have our heart's desire.

Now father, mother, sister, brother, friend, just at this moment breathe the prayer to Heaven, "Lord, open my children's eyes! Open my brothers eyes! Open my husband's eyes! Open my wife's eyes!" Let such prayers as those go up perseveringly, eagerly, expectantly, for verily there is a God that hears prayer! Make this the burden of your daily approach to God for anyone in whom you are specially interested, "O Lord, I pray You, open his eyes, that he may see!" IV. Fourthly, there is this blessed fact, in the narrative before us, that GOD DOES OPEN MEN'S EYES. God can do it and, according to this narrative, He has done it in an instant A moment before, this young man could see no horses or chariots of fire, but as soon as Elisha's prayer was registered in Heaven, his servant could see what was before invisible to him! The processes of human surgery are often slow. Man requires time for his operations, but the great operation of the soul's salvation is instantaneous! The soul is dead and it is made alive in a single moment! The soul

is in total darkness and it is in bright light the next instant! The

moment anyone believes in Jesus, spiritual eyesight is given to him with which he can see his God! How I delight to think that whenever anyone comes into this House of Prayer and the Gospel is being preached, my Lord and Master can, at any moment, apply it with power to the soul and give to anyone present, immediate, instantaneous salvation! God's Word, like a hammer, can smite the rocky heart--and out of it the waters shall gush. The Lord touches the eyes, they look to the bronze serpent and healing is instantly given!

my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, pray fervently that the blind may have their eyes opened, seeing that God can do it, and can do it at once!

The Lord specially does this for the young. Our text says, "The Lord opened the eyes of the young man." Certainly He can give sight to the oldest, but here is comfort for those of us who are concerned about our children--He can also do this for the young. Their eyes are often blinded by the glitter and glare of the world. They say that they want to see life and to see pleasure, but God can so open their eyes that they shall be able to see life and to see pleasure in a higher and truer sense in Jesus Christ! Young people who are here now, I pray the Lord graciously to grant that you may not go any further in the journey of life being blind, but that even now He may open your eyes. If He were to do so, you would see your sin, you would see Jesus Christ as your Savior, you would see yourselves saved by faith in Him and you would then see before you a happy future and a glorious reward at the last! I pray the Lord to open the young men's eyes and the young women's eyes. He can do it and He will do it in answer to prayer! Let us go to Him and ask Him to do it now!

Dear friend, He can open your eyes. I know that you are saying, "I wish I could see Christ and read my title clear." Well, I do not know what

your character may have been and I cannot tell what scales may have come upon your eyes, but

1 know that there was a man of whom it is written, "There fell from his eyes, as it had been scales," as though there had been many scales upon his eyes. However many there may be, the Lord Jesus Christ can take them all off at once! And He can do it for all the blind people in this building right now. O God, I pray You, open the eyes of every sinner here to see Yourself, Your Son, Your Truth, Your Law, Your Gospel, Your holiness, Your Covenant! If You will do this, it will be Your work, alone, and you shall have all the Glory of it!

Do you not remember how it is written of Hagar, "God opened her eyes"? I wonder whether there is anyone like Hagar here? She had been sent away by her mistress, and she and her son, Ishmael, were famishing. She had put him under one of the shrubs, out of her sight, and she thought that all was over with both of them. But "God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water." The well was there before she saw it, but truer eyes needed to be opened that she might see it. So, the Lord Jesus Christ is nearer to the sinner than the sinner imagines, as Paul says, "The righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Sinners do not understand the simplicity of salvation until their eyes are Divinely opened. They are looking about for salvation and there it

is, all the while, close at hand!

I remember my dear old grandfather looking about his study to find his spectacles while he had them on! He was looking through the spectacles to find the spectacles and there are many who act just as inconsistently as that with regard to salvation! There is Jesus Christ Himself helping them to find Him--and they would not begin to seek Him without help from Him in the seeking! Yet they think He is far away from them. There is water close to you, yet you are dying of thirst. There is bread by your side, yet you are perishing of hunger. May the Lord graciously illuminate your understanding that you may see that you have not to doanything, or to beanything, or to feelanything, but simply to let Jesus Christ be everything to you and you yourself be nothing at all! To rest in Jesus Christ simply and entirely--that is all that is needed--but until men's eyes are opened they cannot see that. But our comfort is that God can open their eyes--may He do so this very hour!

V. My last remark is that EVEN THOSE PERSONS WHO CAN SEE NEED MORE SIGHT.

We all need to see more in the Scriptures. Each of us needs to pray to the Lord, "Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law." There are some brethren who have weighed us all up and declared that we are not sixteen ounces to the pound, as they say. And they set us down as being unsound. But as they were never appointed by God as inspectors of weights and measures, their judgments upon us cause us no alarm whatever. We do, however, confess that we are not Infallible--we do make mistakes about the meaning of Scripture--mistakes for which we are very sorry. It is well for a minister, when he is preaching, to sometimes say, "Friends, so much as this I think I do know, but there are some things which I do not know."

It might be a comfort to us to hear that the preacher did not know everything, for we would then see that he was like ourselves. Here is the Bible and if any of us imagine that we perfectly understand everything there is in it, that is proof that we know very little of it! "Oh the depths, oh, the depths!" Jerome used so say, "I adore the Infinity of Scripture!" And well he might! He who is a superficial student of Scripture picks up a few grains of gold, but he who digs in this mine gets nuggets--and he who digs still deeper finds solid beds of gold! And the further he descends into the very heart of the Truths of God, the more he discovers that the riches of it are incalculable! And he often has to stop in his search and cry, "Who can fully understand Your Word, O God? We can no more understand that than we can understand Yourself to the fullest."

We also need to have our eyes opened as to the great Doctrines of the Gospel. I meet with some who mix up the Covenant of Works with the Covenant of Grace in a most remarkable manner and talk to the children of the free woman as if they were children of the bondwoman and make salvation to depend partly upon self and partly upon Christ--which would be a salvation neither worth preaching nor believing! If we have begun in the Spirit, let us not seek to be made perfect in the flesh.

If salvation is of Grace, then it is not of works--otherwise Grace is no more Grace! But if it is of works, let us say so, for then it cannot be of Grace--otherwise work is no more work. A clear line of distinction between merit and mercy, between desert and Sovereign Grace, must always be drawn--and he who has cried to the Lord, "Open You my eyes," until he has had his eyes opened concerning that distinction, has much reason to bless and thank God. Oh, for a clear testimony, throughout all our Churches, to the grand fundamental Doctrines of Grace! Pray that you may give it yourself and that you may

hear it every day.

We also need to have our eyes opened with regard to Providence. [See Sermon #3114, Volume 54--god's providence; What blind eyes we often have with regard to that! We cry,

with poor old Jacob, "All these things are against me," at the very moment when they are all for us! We cannot see how a certain thing can be right though it would be impossible for us to prove that it was wrong! We are often unable to find any promise to sustain us even though there are thousands of promises stored up for us in God's Word! Oftentimes we need to have our eyes opened to see ourselves. We imagine that we are growing in Grace when we are really growing spiritually leaner every day. We need to have our eyes opened with regard to temptation, for we may think that we are not being tempted at the very moment when we are in the greatest danger from temptation. We need to have our eyes opened as to what is most desirable, for we often aspire after the high places when the lowest are the best-- and seek wealth when poverty would be the better soil for the growth of Grace--

"Gold and the Gospel seldom agree-- Religion always sides with poverty"-- says John Bunyan, and I think he is very near the truth. We need to have our eyes opened that we may see a great deal more of our Savior. The strangest thing of all is that though the Lord has opened our eyes and we have seen Jesus as our Savior, we know so little of Him after all. Brothers and Sisters, are we not all too much like the man who saw men as trees walking? We see things in a muddled and confused manner--not at all clearly. I pray the Lord to open your eyes and mine to see what it is to be a lost soul, that we may sigh and cry over souls that are being lost by the millions! May He open our eyes to see the true character of sin and the desperate condition of those who are steeped in it--to see the terrors of the wrath to come, that final

judgment of God which shall overwhelm the wicked! Then may He open our eyes to see the reality of His eternal love, the cleansing power of the precious blood of Jesus and the almighty efficacy of the ever blessed Spirit. And may He open our eyes in such a way that, seeing these things, we may be startled into earnestness, amazed in devotion, constrained unto consecration and may give ourselves up, from this time forth--spirit, soul and body--to serve the Lord!

O Young man over yonder, if your eyes are opened by God, you will see that what you are striving to get is not worth getting and you will begin to ask how you can live to the Glory of God! Young woman, if your eyes are spiritually opened, you will no longer find any joy in that sinful pursuit of yours--you will find that there is no true joy save in trusting Christ and living wholly for Him. Brother ministers, if our eyes are opened as they should be, they will more often be full of tears than they now are! Elders of the Church, if your eyes are opened as they should be, you will watch for souls as those that must give account to God! Teacher, if your eyes are truly opened, you will look upon your children in a very different light from that in which you now see them--they will then be very precious in your sight.

I pray the Lord that where the eyes are not opened, they may be opened now! And that where the eyes are opened, they may be opened still more till to each one of us that promise shall be fulfilled, "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Chapter 45

What Had Become of Peter?

(No. 3118)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT, NEWINGTON.

"Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter." Acts 12:18.

WE can very well understand that there would be great excitement. It was the most improbable thing in the world that Peter should escape from custody. In the innermost dungeon, securely chained, watched by a fourfold guard, with no powerful friends outside to attempt a rescue--it was marvelous that, in the morning, the bird had flown! The prison doors were closed and the guards in their places, but Peter, where was he? We marvel not that "there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter."

We will use this striking narrative as an illustration--what if we make it an allegory? The sinner fast bound in his sin is, by the mercy of God, set free and brought out from his spiritual prison into the streets of the New Jerusalem. And then there is no small stir among his old companions--what has become of him? Many questions are asked and many strange answers are given. They cannot understand it. The vain world esteems it strange--it admires much--but hates the change. The carnal mind cannot understand conversion. There is "no small stir about what has become of Peter."

We shall, first of all, dwell a little upon the escape of Peter as illustrating the salvation of certain sinners. Then upon the consequent stir about it And then upon the quiet conduct of the man who is the

object of all this stir--"What had become of Peter?"

I. First, then, THE IMPROBABLE EVENT.

Peter was in prison. It was a most unlikely thing that he should come forth from Herod's jail, but it is a far more unlikely thing that sinners should be set free from the dungeons of sin! For the iron gate which opened into the city to turn upon its hinges of its own accord was amazing, but for a sinful heart to loathe its sin is stranger by far! Who can escape from the grasp of sin? No person is more terribly shut up than is the sinner in the prison of original depravity! It is not merely around us, but in us, compassing our path whether we lie down or rise up! Stronger than granite walls and bars of iron are the forces of evil. Evil has penetrated our souls. It has become part of ourselves. Where shall we fly from its presence, or how shall we escape from its power? Vain are the wings of the morning--they cannot enable us to fly from our own selves.

O marvelous thing, that the Ethiopian should escape from his blackness and the leopard from his spots! There are some men in whom evil is more than ordinarily conspicuous. They have done violence to conscience. They have quenched, as far as possible, the inner Light of God. They have defied the customs of society, they have resolved to sin at random and they do so. What a miracle it is that such as these should be emancipated from the slavery they choose so eagerly-- that these whose feet are set fast in the stocks of vice, in the innermost dungeon of transgression, should ever be set at liberty! And yet how often this has happened! The foundations of the prison have been shaken and the prisoner's bands have been loosed. The saints of God can, all of them, bless Him for setting them at liberty from sin. The snare is broken and they have escaped! Yes, and many of them can praise Him for deliverance from very great sins, black sins, iron sins, sins which had entered

into their souls and held their spirits captive! No man can set another man free from iniquity, nor can any man burst down his own prison doors. No Samson is strong enough for that--but there is One--"mighty to save," who has come to proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and the opening of the prison to them that are bound by iniquity! And He has so proclaimed it that many of us are now free through His Grace. O that many others, now shut up in the spiritual Bastille, may be set free!

But, besides being in prison, Peter was in the dark. All the lamps had been quenched for the night in his miserable place of confinement. Such is the estate, spiritually, of every unconverted sinner--he is in the dark--he does not know Christ, nor apprehend his own condition, nor comprehend eternal realities. What a shade of darkness is he in who has never heard the Gospel! But, alas, there are some who have heard it, often heard it, and yet their eyes are held so that they cannot see the light and they are as badly in the dark as those upon whom the lamp has never shone! Does it not seem impossible to convert such darkened ones? You have held up, as it were, the very sun in the heavens before their eyes, while you have preached salvation by Christ, and yet so blind are they that they have seen nothing! Can these blind eyes see? Can these prisoners of midnight escape from the prison through its long corridors and winding passages? The thousands in this city who never attend the House of prayer--is it possible to get at them? Can the Grace of God ever come to them? Yes, we bless God that as the angel came into Peter's prison and brought a light with him, so the Spirit can come into the prison of man's sin and bring heavenly illumination with Him and then he will see, in a moment, the Truth of God as it is in Jesus which he never knew before! Glory be to God, He can lead the blinded mind in today's light and give it eyes to see and a heart to love the

Divine Truth! We can testify of this, for so has God worked upon us--and why should He not thus work upon others? But it is a great marvel--and when it is performed, there is "no small stir."

Peter's case, in the third place, had another mark of hopelessness about it. He was in prison. He was in the dark and he was asleep. How can you lead a man out of prison who is sound asleep? If you cannot enter and awaken him, what can you do for him? Suppose the doors were opened and the chains were snapped, yet if he remained asleep, how could he escape? We find that the angel smote Peter on the side. I daresay it was a hard blow, but it was a kind one. Oh, how I wish the Spirit of God would smite some sleeping sinner on the side at this moment! I would not mind how sharp or cutting the blow might be for the time being if it made him start up and say, "How can I escape from this dreadful cell of sin?" My Brothers and Sisters, how difficult it is to awaken some minds from their indifference! The most indifferent people in this world are those who have prospered in business for a long time without a break--they are accumulating money as fast as they can count it and they have not time to think about eternal things! Another very hardened class consists of those who have enjoyed good health for a long time and have scarcely known an ache or a pain. They do not think about eternity. It is a great blessing to enjoy health, but it is also a great blessing to suffer sickness, for it is often the means of awakening the slumbering heart! Many dream that because things go smoothly with them, they are all right. And yet they are peculiarly in danger. O Spirit of the living God, smite them on the side! I have known this smiting come to some by a sermon, to others by the personal remark of a friend, to others by the death of a companion, or by the loss of a dear child, or by great trouble and need. Well, if your souls are saved, you will not, in later days, be sorry for the awakening

trouble which helped to bring you to the Savior! Yes, the most indifferent have been awakened--and why should it not be so again? The Church prayed for Peter and those prayers brought the angel to awaken him--let us pray for indifferent sons and careless daughters! Let us pray for the godless, Christless population around us and God's Spirit will yet awaken them and make them cry with a bitter cry, "Lord, save us, or we perish!"

There was further difficulty about Peter's case. He was in the prison, in the dark, asleep and he was also chained. Each hand was fastened to a soldier's hand. How could he possibly escape? And herein is the difficulty with some sinners--they cannot leave their old companions. Suppose the happy young man should propose to think about religion? Why, this very night he would be ridiculed for it! Suppose he endeavored to walk in the ways of holiness--is there not chained to his left hand an unholy companion? It may be some unchaste connection has been made--how shall he break away from it? Let a man be joined to an ungodly woman, or let a woman have once given herself up to an unholy alliance and how hard it is to set them free! Yet Peter did come out of prison though he was chained to his guards--and Christ can save a sinner though he is bound hand and foot by his intimate association with other sinners as bad as himself! It seems impossible that he should be set at liberty, but nothing is impossible with God. There may be some here who have had to snap many an old connection and get rid of many an evil association, but by Divine Grace it has been done! We give God the Glory of it and do not wonder at the "stir" which it has made!

In addition to all this, Peter was not only chained, but he was guarded by soldiers placed outside the prison. And, oh, how some sinners, whom God means to bless, are similarly guarded! The devil seems to have an inkling that God will save them one day and, therefore, he watches

them. Fearful lest by any means they should escape out of his hands, he guards them day and night. When men receive a tender conscience, or have their minds a little awakened, Satan will not trust them to enter the House of Prayer, or if they do, he comes with them and distracts their attention by vain thoughts or fierce temptations! Or if they are able to hear the sermon attentively, he will meet them outside and try to steal away the good seed from their hearts. He will assail the man with temptation here and temptation there--he will assault him through some chosen instrument, and then again by another messenger of a like character so that if by any means he may keep him from being saved!

But when the Lord means to save, He makes short work of the guards, the prison, the darkness, the chains, the devil and all his allies! If the Lord means to save you, Man, Woman--whoever you are--He will overcome your old master and his guards. The Lord's eternal will shall assuredly overcome your will, the will of Satan, the lusts of the flesh and your own resolves! And although you may have made a league with death and a covenant with Hell, yet if the Eternal Jehovah wills it, He can break your covenant, set you free and lead you a captive at the wheels of His chariot of fire--for with God, nothing is impossible!

Once more, Peter was, in addition to all this, on the eve of death. It was his last night, the night before his execution. It is a very sweet thing to think of Peter sleeping. It reminds one of the saints whom we read of in Foxe's Book of Martyrs. When the jailer's wife came in the morning to call him, he was so sweetly asleep that she had to shake him to awaken him. It was a strange thing to disturb a man and say, "It is time to get up and be burnt!" But he slept as sweetly as though he would be married that morning instead of meeting a cruel death! God can give His people the greatest peace in the most disturbing times. So

Peter slept. But that is not the point I wish to dwell upon. The next morning he was to die, but God would not have him die. Perhaps someone who hears or reads these words is despairing--so despairing that he is ready to lay violent hands upon himself or, perhaps, there is one so sick that if the Lord does not appear to him very soon, it will be too late. Blessed be God, He never leaves His elect to perish in sin! He never is before His time, but He never is behind it. He comes in at the last moment and when it seems as though eternal destruction would swallow up His chosen one, He stretches out His hand and achieves His purpose! May this remark be a message from God to someone! Though you have gone far in sin and are near your end, yet the Lord, who can do anything and everything, may come to you and save you even now, at the eleventh hour--and then there will be a "stir" indeed!

We have thus remarked upon a whole series of improbabilities, but I have noticed that it is often the most unlikely people who are saved. There are many of whom I thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me," and I have been disappointed in them. And there are many others, who came to hear out of curiosity, and were the least likely to be impressed, who, nevertheless, have been met with by Sovereign Grace. Does not this encourage you to say, "Why should not the Lord meet with me?" Ah, dear Soul, why not? And what is more, He will regard you if you listen to this word of His, "He who believes on the Son has everlasting life." To believe on Jesus Christ is simply to trust Him. Then do you trust Him? For if you do trust your guilty soul entirely on Jesus, He has met with you and you are saved now. Go and sin no more--your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! That is salvation in a nutshell. Whoever reposes his trust in Jesus is saved. God grant such faith to you!

II. Secondly, in consequence of this great event, THERE WAS NO SMALL

STIR, "what had become of Peter?" When the Lord saves an unlikely individual, there is sure to be a stir about it.

The text says, "There was no small stir among the soldiers. "So, generally, the stir about a sinner begins among his old companions. "What has become of Peter? I thought he would have met us tonight at our drinking spot. What has become of Peter? We were going to the theater together. What has become of Peter? We intended to have a jolly time of it at the horse races. What has become of Peter? We had agreed to go to the dancing saloon together." Those who were his old companions say, "We did not believe he would ever have been made religious. He'll never make a saint! We'll fetch him back. He has got among those canting Methodists, but we'll make it too hot for him. We will jest at him and jeer at him till he can't stand it--and if that does not do, we will threaten him--cast doubts on his creed and set fresh temptations before him." Ah, but if God has set him free from sin, he is free, indeed, and you will never lead him back to prison again! When you meet him, you will find him a new man--and you will be glad to get away from him, for he will prove too strong for you! Often when a man's conversion is thorough, not only is he rejoiced to get away from his old companions, but his old companions are wonderfully glad to keep clear of him! They do not like his new manner. He is so strange a man to what he was before. They say, "What has become of Peter? His ways are not ours. What has happened to him?" If a dog were suddenly turned into an angel, the other dogs would be puzzled--the whole kennel would take to howling at him!

But after the soldiers came Herod. Herod wondered, "What has become of Peter? Did I not put 16 men to guard him? Did I not provide heavy chains for his feet? Did I not chain him wrist to wrist to a soldier? Did I not put him in the innermost ward of the prison? What has become

of Peter?" Herod grew very angry. He was delighted to have killed James, and he meant to have killed Peter and, therefore, he cried, in great chagrin, "What has become of Peter?" What a sight it would be to see the devil when he has lost some chosen sinner, when he hears the man who once could swear, beginning to pray, when he beholds the heart that once was hard as adamant beginning to melt! I think I hear him say to himself, "What has become of Peter? Another of my servants has deserted me! Another of my choice followers has yielded to my foe! What? Has Christ taken another lamb from between the jaws of the lion? Will He leave me none? Shall I have no soldiers? Shall none of my black guard be left to me? Am I to be entirely deserted? What has become of Peter?" Oh, it is a glorious thing to cause a howling through the infernal regions and to set devils biting their tongues because poor sinners have snapped their chains! Pray that as the prayers of the Church then set Peter free, and made Herod angry, so the prayers of the Church now may set sinners free and put the devil to shame!

But we must not forget the Jews. They had expected to see Peter die and when they found that they would have to eat the Passover with the bitter herb of Peter's escape from prison, they began to say to one another, "What has become of Peter?" They could not understand his escape. Many in these days are like the Jews. They are outsiders--they do not associate with sinners in their grosser vices, but they look on. Whenever they hear of a man converted, if he is indeed really changed, they say, "What has happened to him? We don't understand him!" They put him down as a fanatical fool. Their maxim is that if you like to go to a place of worship, all well and good. And if you like to have a religion, all well and good. But don't make a fuss about it! Don't get carried off your legs by it--keep it to yourself and be quiet about it. They think that to be lukewarm is the finest condition of mind--whereas

the Savior has said, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth." When a man becomes genuinely converted, especially if he has been a notorious sinner, these irreligious religious people cry out, "What has become of Peter?" The Lord grant that there may be much of this outcry in these days!

And surely, also, there was no small stir among God's own people. There was a great stir in that Prayer Meeting when Rhoda went back and said, "There's Peter at the gate!" "Never, never!" "But I know his voice. He has been here many times. I can't be mistaken!" "Ah," said one, "it may be his ghost--it can't be Peter himself. It is impossible!" So, sometimes, when a sinner who has been very notoriously evil, has been converted, after he had been the subject of many prayers, God's people will say, "What? Thatman converted? It cannot be!" When Paul, who had persecuted the Church, was brought to be a Christian, it was very hard to make the disciples believe it. They had heard by many of this man--how he had put the saints to death--surely he could not have become a disciple of Christ! There was no small stir what had become of Paul in those days! Christians could hardly think that his conversion was genuine. I pray the Lord, in these times, to convert some very terrible opposer of His Gospel, some notorious enemy of the Truth of God. I pray that some of those great philosophers of this learned age who are always startling us with new absurdities, may be made to feel the power of the Sovereign Grace of God! I do not know why they should not. Let us pray for it, and it will come to pass! Let us ask the Lord to save even those who brandish their silly learning in the face of the Eternal Wisdom, and they may yet be brought down to sit humbly at the Savior's feet, and then there will be no small stir in the Church! "What has become of Professor So-and-So?" O Master, for Your own Glory's sake, grant that it may be done!

III. The last point is this--THE QUIET CONDUCT OF THE MAN ABOUT WHOM THERE WAS ALL THIS STIR.

What had become of Peter? He was out of prison. Where was he? I will tell you. In the first place, he had gone to a

Prayer Meeting. [See Sermon #1247, Volume 21--THE SPECIAL PRAYER MEETING] It is a very good sign that a man has been really awakened when he goes uninvited to a Prayer Meeting. I love to see a stranger come stealing in and sit in a corner where God's people are met for supplication. Any hypocrite may come to worship on a Sunday, but it is not every hypocrite who will come to the meeting for prayer! Anybody will come to listen to a sermon, but it is not everybody who will draw near to God in prayer. Surely, when the Prayer Meeting comes to be loved, it is good and hopeful evidence. What has become of Peter? He is not at the gin-

palace. What has become of Peter? He is not at the races. What has become of Peter? He is not with his old associates at the skittle ground. No, but he is drawing near to God where humble Believers are crying to the Most High for a blessing!

The next thing was, he joined the Christians. I do not say that Peter had not done so before, but on this occasion, he went to the place where the Christians were and sat down with them. So that sinner whom God sets free from sin straightway flies to his own company. "Birds of a feather flock together," and those who bear the true feather of the white dove and have been washed in Christ's blood, "fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows." You do not love Christ if you do not love His people. If you love the Lord who has saved you, you will love the people whom the Lord has saved and you will, like Peter, find your Brothers and Sisters and join with them. See then, you who have been making a stir about what has become of the new convert, we have told

you where he is! He has joined the Church of God. He is going to be baptized and he is following Christ through evil report and good report. What do you say to that?

I will tell you yet further what has become of Peter. He has began to tell his experience at a Church Meeting. Peter did that very soon. He beckoned with his hand and told them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. What a delight it is to see a man who was just now black in the mouth with blasphemy, stand up and bless the Lord for what His Grace has done for him! "I would think it strange," says one, "if that ever happened to me." My dear Hearer, I would not think it strange, but would bless God for it! God grant that it may happen and that I may hear of it! No experience in the world is so sweet as that of a sinner who has been in captivity to evil and has been brought out with a high hand and an outstretched arm. An uncommon sinner who has been remarkably converted tells a more than ordinarily encouraging story in our Church Meetings and we delight in such glad tidings! That is what had become of Peter.

And then, lastly, it was not long before Peter was preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And oh, you who have been wondering what has become of some ungodly companions of yours, I would not be surprised if you hear them telling others what God has done for their souls! I would like to have heard John Newton's first sermon after he had been a slave trader with his life full of all manner of villainy--and God had met with him in mercy. Oh, it must have been a sweet sermon, wet with tears! I will be bound to say that there were no sleepy hearers. He would talk in a way that would melt others' hearts because his own was melted! I would like to have heard John Bunyan, though under a hedge, preaching the Gospel of Jesus, while he told what God had done for a drunken tinker, and how He had washed him in the precious blood of Jesus and saved him!

Those who know what sin is and what the Savior has saved them from, can speak "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Peter could say, "I was in prison, but I gained my liberty and it was the work of God." He could bear good testimony to what God has done for him!

I hold up the blood-red standard at this time. I am a recruiting sergeant and I want, in God's name, to enlist fresh soldiers beneath the standard of the Cross! "Whom will you enlist?" asks one. "What must their characters be?" They must be guilty! I will have nothing to do with the righteous! The Savior did not come to save those who are not sinful-- He came to save sinners! I looked out of my window last winter, when it had been raining for several months almost incessantly, and I saw a man with a garden hose watering plants. And I looked at him again and again, and to this moment I cannot understand what he was doing! It did seem to me an extraordinary thing that a man should be watering a garden when the garden had been watered by the rain for a hundred days or so with scarcely a pause! Now, I am not going to water you who are already dripping with your own self-righteousness. No, no, what need have you of Grace? Christ did not come to save you good people! You must get to Heaven how you can, on your own account. He has come to wash the filthy and heal the sick--and oh, you filthy ones, before you I hold up the Gospel banner and say again, "Who will enlist beneath it?" If you will, the great Captain of Salvation will take your guilt away and cast your sins into the depths of the sea--and make you new creatures through the power of His Spirit.

"Well," says one, "If I am enlisted, and become a new creature, what shall I do?" I will not say what you shall do, but if the Lord saves you, you will love Him so much that nothing will be too hard, or too heavy, or too difficult for you! You will not need driving, if you once receive His great salvation--you will be for doing more than you can

and you will pray for more Grace and strength to attempt yet greater things for His name's sake. A man who has had much forgiven, what will he not attempt for the service and Glory of Him who has forgiven him? May I be fortunate enough to enlist beneath the Savior's banner some black offender! That is the man for Christ's service! That is the man who will sound out His name more sweetly than anybody else! That is the man who will be afraid of no one! That is the man who will truly know the power of the Gospel of Christ! Oh, that the Lord would bring such men among us, for we need them in these days--men who will come right out, without doubt, fear, or quitting, facing all criticisms, defying all opinions and each one saying, "Sinners, Christ can save you, for He saved me! I was a drunkard and a thief, but God has forgiven and cleansed, and washed me, and I know the power of His salvation!" Pray, members of the Church, that both among men and women there may be many such conversions and that throughout this city of London there may be no small stir, "What has become of Peter," and may that stir be to the praise and Glory of God! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 PETER 1.

Verse 1. Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ Peter here uses both his names--Simon or Simeon, which was his first name and signifies, "hearing with acceptance." And happy are they who have the hearing ear and the receptive heart. And then there is what I may call his Christian name, the name which Christ gave him, Petros, or Cephas, a rock or stone. Those who learn to hear well, since faith comes by hearing, may hope to obtain even greater stability of character than Peter had. Observe that Peter calls himself, "a servant of Christ." There is no higher honor than to be a servant of God. "To serve God is

to reign." An ancient philosopher was the author of that maxim and Christianity fully endorses it. He is a true king who is a servant of God. In this respect, all Believers are on a level with Peter, but here is his distinguishing title, "an Apostle of Jesus Christ," a sent one, one who had seen the Lord and who could bear personal testimony to the fact of His existence, His death and His Resurrection. Hence the Apostleship has ceased, since there are no longer any who lived in our Lord's days upon the earth. Mark the reason why this Epistle, like the first, is called "the general Epistle of Peter," since it is addressed, not to any one Church, as Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, but to all saints. Not to the Hebrews alone, but to the Gentiles as well. It is a general Epistle, addressed to all those who have "obtained like precious faith." These words were written by the Apostle Peter many centuries ago, yet they come to us as fresh as if he had written them but yesterday! And may God grant us Grace to profit from them as they are read by us today! After the Apostle's titles comes the salutation of his Epistle.

2-5. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceedingly great andprecious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust And beside this--"Since it is God who, by His Divine energy, has made you partakers of the Divine Nature, see that you use your Grace-given energy--rest not idly upon your oars because the tide of Grace carries your ship onward."

5. Giving all diligence. It is not man's effort that saves him, but on the other hand, Grace saves no man to make him like a log of wood or a

block of stone. Grace makes man active! God has been diligently at work with you--now you must diligently work together with Him.

5-7. Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. As you have seen the mason take up first one stone and then another, and then gradually build the house, so are you Christians to take first one virtue and then another, and then another, and to pile up these stones of Grace one upon the other until you have built a palace for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

Faith, of course, comes first, because faith is the foundation of all the Graces, and there can be no true Grace where there is no true faith. Then "add to your faith virtue," which should have been translated, "courage." True courage is a very great blessing, indeed, to the Christian--without it how will he be able to face his foes? "And to courage knowledge," for courage without knowledge would be foolish rashness, which would lead you to the cannon's mouth when there was nothing to be gained by flinging away your life.

"And to knowledge temperance," for there are some who no sooner get knowledge than they are carried away with the new Doctrine which they have learned and become like intoxicated men, for it is possible to be intoxicated even with the Truth of God! Happy is that Christian who has temperance with his knowledge who, while holding one Doctrine, does not push that to the extreme, but learns to hold other Doctrines in due conformity with it. "And to temperance

patience," or endurance, so that we are able to endure the "trial of cruel mocking" or sharp pains, or fierce persecutions, or the usual afflictions of this life. He is a poor Christian who has no power of endurance. A true Christian must "endure hardness as a good soldier of

Jesus Christ."

"And to endurance godliness"--having a constant respect to God in all our ways, living to God and living like God as far as the finite can be like the Infinite. "And to godliness brotherly kindness." O dear Friends, let us be very kind to those who are our Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus! Let the ties of Christian kinship unite us in true brotherhood to each other. "And to brotherly kindness charity." Let us have love to all men, though especially to the household of faith.

8. For if these things are in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our lord Jesus Christ I am sure you do not wish to be barren. I cannot imagine that any of you will be content to be unfruitful, so seek after all these virtues and may God help you to give diligence to the attainment of them.

9, 10. But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall. He who is diligent in seeking these Graces is kept from falling. Every Christian is safe from a final fall, but he is not safe from a foul fall unless he is kept by Grace.

11. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In this life you shall enjoy all the privileges of the inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. And in the life to come you shall go into the harbor of eternal peace like a ship with all her sails full, speeding before a favorable wind-- not as one that struggles into harbor--

"Tempest-tossed, and half a wreck."

12. Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance

of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. We are not merely to preach new Truths of God which people do not know, but we are also to preach the old Truths with which they are familiar. The Doctrines in which they are well established are still to be proclaimed to them. Every wise preacher brings forth from the treasury of Truth things both new and old--new, that the hearers may learn more than they knew before--old, that they may know and practice better that which they do already know in part.

13. 14. Yes, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly Imust put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me. In the last chapter of the Gospel according to John, it is recorded how Christ prophesied concerning the death of Peter, that when he was old, he would stretch forth his hands and another should gird him, and carry him where he would not. The Evangelist adds, "This spoke He, signifying by what death he [Peter] should glorify God." The prospect of crucifixion was thus always before Peter's mind--and knowing what was to happen to him--he was not alarmed, but was rather quickened to greater diligence in stirring up the saints to make their calling and election sure. Hear behind you, O Christian, the chariot wheels of your Lord! Hear behind you the whizzing of the arrow of Death and let this quicken your pace! Work while it is called today, for the sun even now touches the horizon and the night comes when no man can work. If we knew how short a time we have to live, how much more earnest, how much more diligent would we be! Let us be up and doing! "Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober," working diligently until the Lord comes, or calls us Home to Himself.

15-18. Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed

cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and Glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount.Peter and James and John were with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and Peter here bears his witness that they were not deceived when they bowed down before Christ and worshipped Him as Lord, nor were they deluded in expecting His coming and believing in His power.

19, 20. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.Even the Prophets themselves did not always know the full meaning of their own prophecies. Many prophecies have never been completely understood until they have been fulfilled. This passage also appears to me to mean that no prophecy is to be restricted to any one event, so as to say, "This prophecy has been entirely fulfilled."

21. For the prophecy came not in old times by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.So that they sometimes spoke what they did not themselves understand. The prophecy carried its own key within itself and the key could not be found until the prophecy was fulfilled. I believe that the prophesies in the Revelation and in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel are very much of this character, and that while it is quite right to watch for and expect the coming of the Lord, we shall spend our time more profitably in preaching the Doctrines of the Gospel than in meditating upon the mysterious prophecies of the Word. They will be understood when they

are fulfilled, but we do not think they will be fully understood before that time.

Mistakes Concerning God

(No. 3119)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 26, 1874.

"You thought that I was altogether like you." Psalm 1:21.

GOD is here speaking to a bad man who had been committing all sorts of evil deeds. Even while professing to declare God's statutes, he had been casting God's Words behind him. He had been the accomplice of thieves and had been uttering falsehood and slander, yet all the while God did not interfere with him, but allowed him to run on in his wicked way. And the man gathered from that noninterference that God did not mind what he was doing and that, in fact, He was like he! But if we begin to think in a right manner about God and ourselves, it will strike us at once that there must always have been an Infinite disparity between the eternal God and the very noblest of His creatures! It is true that man was made in the image of God and that when he was in his perfect state, he could have learned more from what he then was as to what God might be than he could learn from all the rest of creation. His moral qualities, before sin had tainted his nature, rendered him akin to the Most High. Yet even then, although man was in the image of God, it must have been a very tiny miniature of the Infinite One. Manhood is not a mirror broad enough or long enough to reflect the majesty of the Eternal. We are like God as a spark of fire is like the sun, or as a tiny raindrop may be like the sea, but the resemblance cannot go any farther than that--and perhaps not as far! We

are but creatures of a day, and He is the Everlasting. Even if we had still remained as pure as the holy angels that adore the thrice Holy One, we would have felt ourselves to be less than nothing in His eyes. But now that man has fallen from his first estate, how unlike God he is! Man fallen is only the image of God so far as a miniature dashed to pieces could be said to be a likeness at all. But there are touches of the Divine about man even in his lost estate. Manhood is a palace, but it is like a palace after a siege, or a conflagration, or long decay--a ruin, like some ancient palace or temple that is now the haunt of serpents and owls-- with just enough to show us what it once was, but much more to show us how changed it has become! And if fallen man is unlike God, man further debased by gross sin becomes not merely unlike God, but the very opposite of God, so that you may sooner learn, from a man who has degraded himself by vice, what God is not than what God is! And it becomes a monstrous mistake, and far worse than a mistake, when such a man as that looks at himself and says, "God is like me." "You thought"--and it was a most blasphemous thought--"you thought that I was altogether like you."

It is my sorrowful task to have to show you that this great sin is very common among three classes of persons. First, it is very common for the ungodly to fall into this error. Secondly, returning sinners often make the same mistake. And thirdly, even the children of God are not always free from this error.

I. First, then, IT IS A COMMON THING FOR THE UNGODLY TO FALL INTO THIS ERROR--"You thought that I was altogether like you."

God is very long-suffering to men--this is not the place of judgment. Sinners are not, as a general rule, punished here. Their sentence is reserved until the Day of Judgment. Some people regard every accident as a judgment, but we do not agree with them at all, otherwise we would

have to very frequently condemn the innocent. Our Lord has very expressly told us that those upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were not greater sinners than the rest of those who dwelt in Jerusalem at that time. And that the Galileans whom Pilate slew and whose blood he mingled with their sacrifices, were no worse than the other Galileans who went up to the Temple and came away unharmed. God does sometimes startle the world with His judgments, but not often.

This is not the time of judgment--judgment is yet to come. The objective of God in thus keeping His sword sheathed when, oftentimes, we are inclined to think that it might fairly be drawn and used, is to lead those who are thus spared to repentance and salvation. "I will spare them yet a little while longer," says the long-suffering Lord.

And so the trees that only cumber the ground are not hewn down--and the inference that wicked men draw is not that God wishes them to repent and turn to Him--but that He is like themselves.

Wicked men imagine that God is like themselves in the following ways. First, in an insensibility to moral emotion. They do not care whether a thing is right or wrong. To have done right gives them no joy. To have done wrong gives their hardened hearts no pain. Some of them can curse and blaspheme--the words that make a child of God shudder with horror seem to be their usual language. In fact, you cannot now stand in our streets, where there are two or three working men, without hearing such filthy language, much of it utterly unmeaning, that you wonder how their companions can endure it! Yet none of them seem to mind it and they will commit deeds which it would be wrong for me to mention, but when they have committed them, they seem to forget all about them. And they suppose because God does not strike them dead, or punish them immediately for their transgressions, that He is just as impervious to moral emotion as they are--that He never grows angry at sin and that He

takes no delight whatever in excellence! How grossly do they mistake God in this supposition! He feels sin most sensitively. To Him it is "exceedingly sinful." It touches the very apple of His eye. It grieves Him at the heart. It vexes His Holy Spirit. Yet the ungodly think not so.

They also are utterly careless about how they perform their own duties in relation to Godand they suppose that God is equally careless as to the discharge of the office which He sustains. If these ungodly men were made judges, they would neither fear God nor regard man--and they suppose that God, the Judge of All, has no respect for His own moral government, no care for the vindication of His Law--that He lets things go just as they please and will not interfere with men, but will let them act as they like. If they are servants, they are only eye-servants and are not careful to do that which is right. If they are masters, they seek only to do the best they can for themselves. The mass of mankind seldom look round to see the general bearings of a question--they only enquire, "How will this affect me?" Each man joins that party in politics, or that particular club, or goes in for the defense of that particular Act of Parliament which he regards as most likely to advance his own interests. As to the general equity of the whole concern, only a few eclectic spirits will be found who will consider that! And that God should always be a God of equity, that He should look into the motives of men's actions and especially that He should punish every sinful action, word, thought and act with the utmost scrupulousness as a Judge--all this ungodly men do not understand! They think that God is as loose and lax as they are, that He plays battledore and shuttlecock with moralities and will let men do just as they like, never calling them to account. At least they seem to think that if there should be any account to be rendered to God at the

last, it will be a very small matter which will soon be over--and that there is for them no everlasting punishment, no dreadful terrors of the wrath to come!

They think that God is altogether like as they are and they themselves are indifferent to the condition of others. If they hear that a man has become a drunk, it does not greatly concern them. If they hear that a man has been committing an act of uncleanness, very likely they make fun of it, but it never troubles them. If they were informed that hundreds had passed into Hell within the last few days, they would regard it as no matter of concern to them--they suppose that God is just as indifferent as they are. O Sirs, why will you so defame your Maker as to think is possible that He can be like yourselves? God is concerned about the character of the poorest man and woman living on the face of the earth! The honesty of that poor work-girl, or the chastity of that young man whose name will never be published before the world is a matter of intense interest to Him. The right that is done, or the wrong that is perpetrated in every place beneath the sun is a matter of the deepest concern to Him. He knows it all, writes it all down in His Book of Remembrance and feels glad or sad concerning it all. He is not a God of stone or of wood! He is a God--I know not how to speak of Him with due honor, for He is altogether beyond the range of human imagination or description--but I know that He is a God of wondrous sensitiveness with regard to sin! He cannot bear even to look upon iniquity--His whole Being loathes it! We know that He is not indifferent to sin because the Inspired Psalmist tells us that "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turns not, He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow and made it ready."

Ungodly men also seem to imagine that God, like themselves, is easily deceived by appearances. They go to church or to chapel and they seem

to think that by doing so, they have wiped off all their old scores.

What if they have broken

God's Law in different ways for many years? Have they not been to hear a sermon? Have they not even been to a Prayer Meeting? Have they not repeated, night and morning, a prayer that their mother taught them when they were children? As for sin, they regard that as a small matter. When they are about to die, they can send for some good man to pray with them and so everything can easily be made all right. That is their notion. Ah, but God is not deceived by outward appearances--He looks at the heart and requires that there should be in the heart, purity, a love for the right and a hatred for the wrong, and these beings are never in the heart apart from the new birth which is always accompanied by faith in Jesus Christ!

We have known some go to the length of thinking, or pretending to think, that God was an accomplice in their sins. Because He sat still and did not at once interfere and smite them, they have said, after the commission of a certain sinful action, that Providence seemed to have put them in circumstances where it was necessary for them to do wrong! We have constantly heard men try to make excuse for their sins by reason of the peculiar position or the very remarkable circumstances in which they were placed. Even a murderer has pleaded his necessities as a reason why he felt that he might steal and even kill to supply his needs! Men will actually say that God has put them where they cannot help doing wrong and that "fate" decreed it and God ordained it! And so they seek to shift the blame from themselves. This is indeed thinking and saying that God is like themselves--and it is the height of impudent blasphemy when a man reaches that point! O You pure and holy God who utterly abhors everything that is evil, how far has the sinner gone in sin when, instead of confessing his iniquity with

shamefacedness and humiliation, he dares to speak as if You were as sinful as he is!

This condition of heart in which men think that God is like themselves prevents their feeling any reverence for Him. Hence, many of them render to Him no kind of worship, set apart no day especially as His and even ridicule the idea of there being any Lord's-Day in the week! They have a League of their own for the special purpose of desecrating the day that most of His people regard as His beyond all the other days of the week. This takes away from them all desire to pray to God. They say, "If we pray to Him, what profit shall it be to us?" His Inspired Word is to them no more than any other book--indeed, they even venture to criticize it with a severity which they do not show towards the works of their own poets or historians! They utterly reject both God and His salvation.

This mistaken notion concerning God also keeps sinners from repentance. As long as a man thinks that God is as bad as he is, he will never repent of his sin. It is often the holiness of God that breaks men down under a sense of their own guilt. This mistaken idea of the Character of God also prevents the exercise of faith, for a man cannot have faith in one whose character he does not respect! And if I am wicked enough to drag God down to my level in my estimation of Him, of course I cannot trust Him, for I have enough sense left to enable me to feel that I could not trust Him if He is like myself! If He is, indeed, such as my depraved imagination pictures Him, faith in Him becomes an absurdity and well may the man who thinks this of God say that it is not possible for him to believe in Him! Of course he could not believe in such a god as he sets up in his own imagination! But O, You ever-blessed Jehovah, when we know how holy, pure, good, true and perfect You are--and see how opposite to You we are in every respect,

we do, like Job--abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes and we find it easy to put our trust in You! When Your blessed Spirit has opened our eyes to see You, how can we keep from trusting You? When we know You, we must rely upon You! When we see the beauties of everlasting love gleaming in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, every power of our being seems to say, "I must trust in Him and rest in Him alone." May God bless these words to any ungodly ones who have been thinking that He is like themselves!

II. Now, secondly, I am going to speak of the same sin from another point of view and show you that RETURNING SINNERS OFTEN MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE CONCERNING GOD.

Numbers of persons are kept from peace of mind through mistaken ideas of God. They think that He is like themselves and so they do not receive the Gospel. For instance, it is not the easiest thing in the world to forgive those who have trespassed against us. There are some people who find this duty to be one of the hardest that they have to perform. Consequently, when a man with such a disposition as that is conscious of having offended God, he thinks it is quite as hard for God to forgive him as it is for him to forgive his fellow man! And judging God by himself, he says, "Surely He cannot forgive me." Looking at his innumerable provocations, thinking of the twenty, or perhaps forty, fifty, or 60 years or more in which he has hardened his heart against God, he says to himself, "I could not forgive a man who had held out so long against me, so how is it possible for God to forgive me?" Well might the Lord answer him out of the excellent Glory, "You think that I am like you, but as high as the heavens are above the earth so high are My ways above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts." I have never found a text which says, "Who is a man like unto you, that pardons iniquity and passes by transgression?" for that is not

characteristic of man! But I do find this text, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" Yes, the Lord loves to forgive! He delights to pardon. His Justice has been fully vindicated by the death of His Son, the Substitute for sinners. That was necessary, for He could not tarnish His Justice even for the sake of His mercy! But now that the righteous Judge sees that the foundations of His moral government will not be shaken by His forgiveness of repenting sinners, He can freely dispense the mercy in which He delights. His mercy endures forever and whoever confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy! It is not difficult for God to forgive though it may be difficult for us to do so.

The awakened sinner often imagines that since he would not bestow favors upon the undeserving, therefore God will not He hears of the great blessings that are promised in the Word of God to those who believe in Jesus and he says, "This news is too good to be true." Contrasting his own deserving with the fullness of this Divine promise, he says, "How can I believe this promise? That one surpasses all credence. How can I accept that other one as true?" The best reply is that given by God in our text, "You thought that I was altogether like you." What if the gift seems so be too great for you to receive? Is it also too great for God to give? What if it seems to be too lavish to be given by one man to another? It is not too lavish to be given by Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords! Like as a king gives--no, like as a God gives, does He give unto you! The greatness of the Divine promises, instead of staggering our faith, ought to be the evidence of their truthfulness! Is it reasonable to suppose that God would promise to do only little things for those who trust Him? Oh, judge not so! He "does great things past finding out; yes, and wonders without number."

His mercies are high as Heaven, and wide as the East is from the West!
The convinced sinner is also often troubled with the thought that God cannot mean what He says. ' 'What?" he asks, "can I be pardoned in a moment, be justified in a moment, be saved from Hell and made an heir of Heaven all in a moment?" He thinks it cannot really be so and he thinks so because he often says what he does not mean and he, therefore, thinks that God speaks in the same style. But, Sir, I pray you not to measure God's corn by your bushel! If you play with words, Jehovah never does! Has He spoken, and will He not do as He has said? Has He promised and shall it not come to pass?
The sinner next thinks that surely God cannot mean to give him all this mercy freely. He says to himself, "If a man had offended me, I would expect him to make some reparation before I forgave him. I would look for something at his hands--and is God's mercy to be given to the undeserving and nothing to be asked of him before it is given? How can that be?" He thinks that God cannot mean it and that the Scriptural declaration concerning the freeness of salvation cannot be meant to be taken literally as it stands. When this invitation sounds in a man's ears, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool," he says, "They are beautiful words, but they cannot apply to me, just as I am, without anything to recommend me." So he practically thinks that God talks as he does, himself, without meaning what He says. But, verily it is not so, for every promise of God is true and shall be fulfilled to the letter!
This poor convinced sinner next says, "But, surely, you do not mean to say that God will give me all this mercy now."Yes I do, for He says, "I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day

of salvation." Yet, because this sinner has himself been dilly-dallying, and procrastinating and postponing, he thinks that God will act in the same manner and will say to him, "You must wait now--you have waited for your own pleasure, now you may wait for Mine." But there is nothing in Scripture to warrant such an idea as this! It is only our trying to drag God down to the level of our narrowness and littleness that makes us think so. It is immediate salvation, instantaneous pardon that God delights to give! He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. There stands the sinner in his rags, filthy from head to foot, degraded and debased--but the command comes from the excellent Glory, "Take away his filthy garments from him," and they are gone in a moment. "Wash him from his defilement," and he is at once clean. "Array him in white garments," and he is so arrayed! "Set a fair miter upon his brow," and the miter is there! What the Lord does requires no time. We need weeks, months, years, to do what we have so do, but when Christ had even to raise the dead, He did it in a moment! He simply said,

"Lazarus, come forth," and there was Lazarus! He touched the bier on which the dead young man lay--and the young man at once sat up and began to speak! He said to the little maiden, "Talitha cumi," and she opened her eyes at once and rose from her bed ready to eat the refreshment which the Savior commanded her parents to bring her! O poor Sinners, I pray you do not doubt that the great mercy, the free mercy of Jesus Christ is to be given even now, if your hand is but stretched out to receive it!

I have known some get into their heads the notion that simply to trust in Christ cannot be the right thing for them to do. They say, "Surely, there is a great deal more to do besides that." Yes, there is much more to do after you have believed, but the Gospel command says, "Believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." One says, "I will go home and pray." Another says, "I will read the Scriptures." And there are some who, in their despair of finding peace, resolve to do nothing at all! Some time ago, a young man who had been greatly concerned about his soul, came to the conclusion that he must be lost--and he determined not to read the Bible, nor to attend a place of worship for 12 months. But this very resolve made him still more wretched and, one day, a Christian woman, to whom he told his feelings, was much grieved at his decision and she said to him, "What a pity it is that you cannot take Jesus Christ!" As he walked home, that remark stuck in his mind, "What a pity it is that you cannot take Jesus Christ!" Is that all we have to do--to take Jesus Christ? Yes, that is all. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," comprehends the whole case--and where faith is exercised by us, we are saved. But we think that there must be something behind the promise because we ourselves often keep something behind in ourpromises, so again the test is true, "You thought that I was altogether like you," but it is not so. If you come just as you are, with all your sin and hardness of heart--and just rest your guilty soul upon the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, resolved that, if you perish, you will perish trusting alone in Him--your heavenly Father will give you a kiss of acceptance, lift the burden from your weary shoulders and send you home in peace! "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," is no lie, no exaggeration, no straining of the truth! Put it to the test, Sinner! God help you to do so and He shall have all the praise!

III. Before I close, I must have a few words with you who love the Lord, for THERE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD WHO MAKE THIS SAME MISTAKE. They begin thinking that God is such an one as themselves. Now I am going to find some of you out--I know where you are for I have been that way

myself, I am sorry to say.

Sometimes, we are afraid that God will overlook us because we are so insignificant If we walk through a forest, possibly we say, "What a lonely place this is--there is nobody here!" Yet, just at our feet, perhaps, there are fifty thousand little ants. "Oh, but we do not count them!" Why not? They are living creatures and God counts them and He takes care to supply their needs as well as the needs of the people in that great city over there! And those birds in the trees, yes, and the tiny insects that hide under the bark that those woodpeckers are seeking after, or those little gnats that dance up and down in the air around you--God takes notice of them all and provides for them all--even as He provides for you! You think, because you i gnore the insects, that God also ignores them, but He does not! If the Queen were to come down Newington Butts, it would soon be reported in all the papers. But if there is a poor beggar going past our gates just now, with no shoes or stockings on, that will not be noted in "The Times" tomorrow morning. But Godtakes notice of beggars as well as of queens! You do not know that poor man who is just going into the casual ward at the workhouse--he is of no consequence to you, is he? But he is of consequence to God, for there is not a human being who is beneath God's notice, nor an animal nor an insect! If you take the tiniest insect in the world and put it under a microscope and examine is carefully, you will see that there are upon it marks of Divine skill and forethought--and if you are able to learn all about that little creature which will only live a single day, you will find that the arrangements concerning it are truly amazing! Yes, God thinks of little things, so you, little one, may believe that God thinks of you! And whenever you harbor the notion that you are too poor and to obscure for God to care about you, say to yourself, "Ah, that is because I am

thinking that God is like myself. I step on a beetle and think nothing of it--yet, though I might be far more insignificant in comparison with the great God than a beetle can be in comparison with me--God will not crush me. No, He loves me and He is continually thinking of me!"

We also are apt to grow weary of the sad and the sorrowful. "Oh," says one, "I cannot bear to talk to Mr. So-and-So! He has such a gloomy countenance and he speaks in such dolorous tones." Another says, "Really, my poor sister quite wears me out. I used to nurse her with a great deal more pleasure than I do now, for I think she has less patience than she used to have." We get weary of those who cannot cheer us, those whose lives are full of sadness and then we think that God gets as weary of us, but He never does! No, O sad ones, the Lord comforts the mourners and cheers those who are cast down. You especially who are sad on account of sin may rest assured that your sadness and dependency will never weary your God--your friends may get tired of you but your God never will!

We also sometimes forget our promises. In the multiplicity of things that some of us have to do, it is possible that we occasionally fail to keep our promise and we are very grieved when, quite unintentionally, it so happens. But God never forgets any one of His promises, so let no one of us ever say, "My God has forgotten me." It cannot be! There never was such a thing as a slip of memory with God. Every promise of His will be kept to the second when it comes due.

We also sometimes find ourselves loath to give to those who ask of us. After we have given to several, we feel that we really cannot give to everybody who asks us for help. But it is never so with God. If we have gone to Him a hundred times, let us be all the bolder to go to Him again! And if we know that He has been helping a thousand other poor saints like ourselves, or poor sinners, too, let us go to Him again and

go right boldly, for His bounty of mercy is not exhausted, nor His store of Grace diminished!

We know, too, dear Friends, that we are often unwise. What man is there on the face of the earth who does not make mistakes? The pope, who is called "infallible," makes more mistakes than anyone else! We all make mistakes and, therefore, we imagine that God does the same. When we get into a little trouble, we begin to suspect that there is some mistake in the arrangements of Divine Providence. We do not say as much as that--we would be ashamed to say it, especially if anybody heard it--but that is what we think. It seems to us that God has brought us into a difficulty out of which it will not be possible for Him to extricate us. We do not say as much as that, except in our hearts, but, Beloved, when we even think anything like that, we are really imagining that God is such an one as ourselves!

We know also that we are sometimes harsh in our judgments and that we expect more of people than we ought to and do not make allowances for their infirmities. And we fancy that God is like we are. But to His dear children He is always generous and kind, even as Jesus made allowance for His sleeping disciples when He said, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." I think that we sometimes represent God as being even worse than we ourselves are. When I was ill, some little time ago, I found that I could not keep my thoughts fixed upon any subject as I wanted to. When I tried to meditate upon holy themes, my mind rambled because the pain I was suffering quite distracted me. I said to a friend who came to visit me that I wished I could concentrate my thoughts and that I felt as a Christian, I ought to do so. He said, "Well now, if your boy was as ill as you are and he said to you, 'Father, I cannot think as much about you as I would like to do, my pain is so great,' you would say, 'My dear son, I do not expect you to

do anything of the kind.' You would sit down by his bedside and try to comfort him. And you would tell him that while his poor body was so racked with pain, you would not be so unreasonable as to expect him to act in any other way." I saw at once that my friend was right and then he said to me, "Do you think that you are kinder to your son than God is to us?" If our opinion of God is that He is harsher and sterner to us than we are to our children, it is a very erroneous notion. Some Christian people seem to be afraid to rejoice, yet we love to see our children full of joy, so we may be sure that our heavenly Father loves so see His children happy.

Further, we know that we ourselves are weak and, therefore, we dream that God is also weak. When the furnace of affliction is very hot and we feel that we cannot endure its heat, we foolishly think that God cannot uphold us under the fiery trial. If our labor is very hard and we feel that we cannot accomplish it, we are very unwise to dream that God cannot give us all the strength we need for our task. How can we be so foolish as to estimate the Omnipotence of Jehovah by our weakness, for I will not venture to call it strength?

We also know that we constantly change. We are as fickle as the weather--fair today and foul tomorrow--and, therefore, we fancy that God changes as often as we do. Some talk about His loving His children today and hating them tomorrow, but that is not true. Listen to these texts, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of burning." Judge not the Lord, then by your fickleness as if He were such an one as yourselves!

The mischief of this mistake on the part of Christians is that we

narrow the possibility of our attainments. We think that we cannot overcome sin. We think that we cannot walk in the light as God is in the light. We think that we cannot enjoy abiding fellowship with our Lord. We think that we cannot be holy. And all this is because we only think of what

we can do, not of what God can do for us and in us! Now, as far as the poles are asunder should be our estimate of ourselves and our estimate of God. Christ not only says to us, "Without Me you can do nothing," but also, "All things are possible to him that believes," to him who thus links himself with the Omnipotence of God.

And I believe, Brothers and Sisters, by thinking that God is like ourselves, we also limit the probabilities of success in His work. If we could have the management of the affairs of the Kingdom of God upon the earth, and the power to convert a hundred thousand sinners tomorrow would be put into our hands, we would be wise if we asked God to take back that power, for I am quite certain that God will save a hundred thousand sinners in a day when things are ripe for it--yes, and He will save a nation in a day when the right time comes! But if there were to be a thousand persons saved under one sermon, or three thousand, as on the day of Pentecost, in any place in London, there is not a Church on the face of the earth that would believe in the reality of the work--and the result would be that those who were converted would notbe added to the Church as the three thousand were on the day of Pentecost. Even professing Christians would say, "This is wildfire that will do more harm than good! We do not believe in it." If they were told that one person, or perhaps two, had been saved, they might believe that--possibly not the two, though they might half believe in the one! But if there were three thousand who professed to be saved, they would say, "Oh, that could not be!" The reason for this unbelief is that

members and ministers alike have the mistaken notion that God is like we are. Many ministers feel very happy if they have a dozen conversions in a year and some are quite content if there is one conversion in a dozen years. A brother minister said to me, the other day, "We have had a Baptism at our chapel this year, bless the Lord." "Oh," I said, "how many have you baptized?" "There were two," he replied, "and one of them was my own son." I said, "Yes, bless the Lord for those two, but what are we to say about those in your congregation who are not converted to God?"

When we judge the Lord by what we ourselves are, our belief is like that which prevented the Master from doing many mighty works in His own city of Nazareth! May the Lord be pleased to give us a far higher conception of what He really is, for that will enable us to do much more for Him! It is because of this mistaken notion of ours concerning God that we limit our desires, slacken our endeavors, are satisfied to have everything on the pigmy scale when it might be gigantic. We are content with pence when we might have pounds of Grace. We are satisfied with the very imperfect cultivation of a tiny plot of land when the broad acres of God's bounty lie before us. We win an inch or two of the enemy's territory and we throw up our caps, and cry, "What mighty conquerors we are!" while whole provinces lie unconquered and whole nations remain ignorant of the Gospel! Then we keep on straitening ourselves more and more, contracting our conceptions and our ideas, the older we grow, till the zealous youth gets to be a "prudent" old man, whose "prudence" consists in chilling everybody he meets, carrying wet blankets to cover up everyone who has a little life in him, snuffing everybody's candle and generally managing to snuff all the candles out. We are, most of us, conscious of this chilling process. I seem to myself to be continually feeling it. I think I am not altogether

destitute of earnestness even now, but I wish I could keep at blood heat always, for blood heat is the heat of health, the heat of true life! May God keep us up to that mark and it will help to keep us so if we have true notions of what God can do, and will do--and forever give up thinking that He is like ourselves! May God's blessing rest upon you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Chapter 47

A View of God's Glory

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"And he said, I beseech You, show me Your Glory." Exodus 33:18.

THAT was a large request for Moses to make. He could not have asked for more. "I beseech You, show me Your Glory." Why, it is the greatest petition that man ever asked of God! It seems to me the greatest stretch of faith that I have either heard or read of. It was great faith which made Abraham go into the plain to offer up intercession for a guilty city like Sodom. It was vast faith which enabled Jacob to grasp the Angel. It was mighty faith which made Elijah rend the heavens and fetch down rain from skies which had been like brass. But it appears to me that this prayer contains a greater amount of faith than all the others put together! It is the greatest request that man could make to God--"I beseech You, show me Your Glory." Had he requested a fiery chariot to whirl him up to Heaven. Had he asked to cleave the water-floods and drown the chivalry of a nation. Had he prayed the Almighty to send fire from Heaven to consume whole armies, a parallel to his prayer might possibly have been found. But when he offers this petition, "I beseech You, show me Your Glory," he stands alone--a giant among giants--a colossus even in those days of mighty men! His request surpasses that of any other man--"I beseech You, show me Your Glory." Among the lofty peaks and summits of man's prayer that rise like mountains to the skies, this is the culminating point. This is the highest elevation that faith ever gained--it is the loftiest place to

which the great ambition of faith could climb--it is the topmost pillar of all the towering structures that confidence in God ever piled! I am astonished that Moses himself should have been bold enough to supplicate so wondrous a favor. Surely, after he had uttered the desire, his bones must have trembled, his blood must have curdled in his veins and his hair must have stood on end! Did he not wonder at himself? Did he not tremble at his own boldness? We believe that such would have been the case had not the faith which prompted the prayer sustained him in the review of it!

From where, then, came faith like this? How did Moses obtain so eminent a degree of this virtue? Ah, Beloved, it was by communion with God! Had he not been for forty days in the council chamber with his God? Had he not tarried in the secret pavilion of burning fire? Had not Jehovah spoken to him as a man speaks with his friend, he would not have had courage enough to ask so large a favor. Yes, more, I doubt whether all this communion would have been sufficient if he had not also received a fresh testimony to the Grace of God in sparing the guilty nation through his intercession. Moses had argued with God--he had pleaded the Covenant--and although God had said, "Let Me alone, that I may destroy them," he had still maintained his hold. He had even dared to say to the Lord, "This people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold. Yet now if You will forgive their sin--and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of the book which you have written." He had wrestled hard with God and had prevailed! The strength gained by this victory, joined with his former communion with the Lord, made him mighty in prayer! But had he not received Grace by these means, I think the petition would have been too large even for Moses to dare to carry to the Throne.

Would you, my Brothers and Sisters, have like faith? Then walk in the same path! Be much in secret prayer. Hold constant fellowship with the

Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and so shall you soar aloft on wings of confidence! And so shall you also open your mouth wide and have it filled with Divine favors! And if you do not offer the same request, yet you may have equal faith to that which bade Moses say, "I beseech You, show me Your Glory."

Allow me to refer you to the 13th verse of this Chapter, where Moses speaks unto his God, "Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found Grace in Your sight, show me now Your way. "Moses asked a smaller favor before he requested that greater one. He asked to see God's waybefore he prayed to see His Glory. Mark you, my Friends, this is the true mode of

prayer. Rest not content with past answers, but go again and double your request! Look upon your past petitions as the small end of the wedge opening the way for larger ones. The best way to repay God, and the way He loves best, is to take encouragement from past answers to prayer and ask Him ten times as much each time! Nothing pleases God as much as when a sinner comes again very soon with twice as large a petition, saying, "Lord, You did hear me last time, and now I have come again." Faith is a mighty Grace and always grows upon that on which it feeds. When God has heard prayer for one thing, faith comes and asks for two things! And when God has given those two things, faith asks for six. Faith can scale the walls of Heaven. She is a giant Grace. She takes mountains up by their roots and piles them on other mountains and so climbs to the Throne of God in confidence with large petitions, knowing that she shall not be refused. We are, most of us, too slow to go to God. We are not like the beggars who come to the door 20 times if you do not give them anything. But if we have been heard once, we go away, instead of coming time after time, and each time with a larger prayer. Make your petitions larger and larger. Ask for ten and if God

gives them, then for a thousand! Then for ten thousand, and keep going on until at last you will positively get faith enough to ask, if it is right and proper, as great a favor as Moses did, "I beseech You, show me Your Glory."

Now, my Friends, since we have spoken a little upon the prayer itself, we shall have to see how it was received at the Throne. It was answered, first, by a gracious manifestation. Secondly, by a gracious concealment. And, thirdly, by a gracious shielding.

I. First of all, this prayer which Moses offered was heard by God and He gave him A GRACIOUS MANIFESTATION--"And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

I think that when Moses put up this prayer to God, he was very much like Peter, when, on the mountaintop, he knew not what he said. I do think that Moses himself hardly understood the petition that he offered to God. With all the clearness of his ideas, however pure his conception of the Divinity might be, I think that even Moses himself had not adequate views of the Godhead. He did not then know as much of God as he has now learned where he stands before the Throne of the Most High. I believe that Moses knew that "God is a Spirit." I think he must have been sensible that the mind of man can never conceive an adequate idea of the incomprehensible Jehovah. He must have learned that the God of Mount Sinai, the King whose feet glowed like a furnace and made the mountain smoke, could never be grasped by the sense of a mortal. Yet it is likely, with all this knowledge, that the great Lawgiver had a vague and indistinct idea that it might be possible for Divinity to be seen.

My Friends, it is hard for creatures encumbered with flesh and blood to gain a just conception of a spirit. We are so linked with the material

that the spiritual is above our reach. Surely, then, if a mere spirit is above our comprehension, much more, "the Father of spirits, the Eternal, Immortal, Invisible."

The poet sings most truly--

"The more of wonderful
Is heard in Him, the more we should assent.
Could we conceive Him, God He could not be--
Or He not God, or we could not be men.

A God alone can comprehend a God." These eyes are but organs to convey to me the knowledge of material substances--they cannot discern spirits! It is not their duty--it is beyond their province. Purer than celestial ether of the most refined nature. Subtler than the secret power of electricity. Infinitely above the most rarefied forms of matter is the existence we call a spirit. As well might we expect to bind the winds with cords, or smite them with a sword, as to behold spirits with eyes which were only made to see gross solid materialism. We find that Moses "saw no similitude"--no visible form passed before him. He had an audience. He had a vision, but it was an audience from behind a covering and a vision, not of a Person, but of an attribute. Behold, then, the scene. There stands Moses, about to be honored with visions of God. The Lord is about to answer you, Moses! God is come--do you not tremble, do not your knees knock together--are not your bones loosened? Are not your sinews broken? Can you bear the thought of God coming to you? Oh, I can picture Moses, as he stood in that cleft of the rock, with the hand of God before his eyes and I can see him look as man never looked before, confident in faith, yet more than confounded at himself that he could have asked such a petition!

Now, what attribute is God about to show to Moses? His petition is, "Show me Your Glory." Will He show him His justice? Will He show him

His holiness? Will He show him His wrath? Will He show him His power? Will He break yon cedar and show him that He is almighty? Will He rend yonder mountain and show him that He can be angry? Will He bring his sins to remembrance and show that He is Omniscient? No! Hear the still small Voice, "I will make all My goodness pass before you." Ah, the goodness of God is God's Glory. God's greatest Glory is that He is good! The brightest gem in the crown of God is His goodness! "I will make all My goodness pass before you." There is a panorama such as time would not be long enough for you to see!

Consider the goodness of God in Creation. Who could ever tell all God's goodness there? Why, every creek that runs up into the shore is full of it where the fish dance in the water! Why, every tree in every forest rings with it, where the feathered songsters sit and make their wings quiver with delight and ecstasy! Why, every atom of this air which is dense with animalcule is full of God's goodness! The cattle on a thousand hills He feeds! The ravens come and peck their food from His liberal hands! The fishes leap out of their element and He supplies them! Every insect is nourished by Him! The lion roars in the forest for his prey and He sends it to him! Ten thousand thousand creatures are all fed by Him! Can you tell, then, what God's goodness is? If you knew all the myriad works of God, would your life be long enough to make all God's creative goodness pass before you?

Then think of His goodness to the children of men. Think how many of our race have come into this world and died. We are of yesterday and we know nothing. Man is as a flower--he lives, he dies, he is the infant of a day and he is gone tomorrow--but yet the Lord does not forget him. O my God, if You should make all Your goodness pass before me, all Your goodness to the children of man, I must sit down on an adamantine rock forever and look through eternity! I should wear these eyes out and

must have eyes of fire, or else I should never be able to see all Your goodness towards the sons of men!

But then rise still higher and think of His Sovereign goodness towards His chosen people. O my Soul, go back into eternity and see your name in God's book of predestinating, unchanging Grace! And then come down to the time of redemption and see there your Savior bleeding and agonizing. O my Soul, there were drops of goodness before, but rivers of goodness roll before you now! When you saw the Son of God groaning, agonizing, shrieking, dying, buried in His grave and then rising again, you saw the goodness of God! "I will make all My goodness pass before you." I say again, what a panorama! What a series of dissolving views! What sight upon sight, each one melting into the other! Could I stand here this morning and borrow the eloquence of an angel. Could I speak to you as I might wish--but, alas, I cannot break these bonds that hold my stammering tongue! Could I loose these lips and speak as angels speak, then could I tell you something, but not much, of the goodness of God, for it is past our finding out! Since I cannot utter it myself, I would invoke all creation to be vocal in His praise. You hills, lift up your voices--let the shaggy forests upon your summits wave with adoration! You valleys, fill the air with the bleating of your sheep and the lowing of your cattle! You that have life, if you have voices, tune His praise and if you walk in silence, let your joyful motions show the thanks you cannot speak! O you trees of the field, clap your hands! You winds, in solemn harmony chant to His Glory! You ocean, with your myriad waves, in all your solemn pomp, your motion to and fro, forget not Him who bids a thousand fleets sweep over you in vain and write no furrow on your ever-youthful brow! And you, you storms, howl out His greatness-- let your thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies! Let your lightning write His name in fire upon the

midnight darkness! Let the illimitable void of space become one mouth for song and let the unnavigated ether, through its shoreless depths, bear through the infinite remote the name of Him who is always good and does good!

I can say no more concerning God's goodness. But this is not all that Moses saw. If you look to the words which follow my text, you will see that God said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you," but there was something more. No one attribute of God sets God out to perfection--there must always be another. He said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." There is another attribute of God, there is His Sovereignty. God's goodness without His Sovereignty does not completely set forth His Nature. I think of the man who, when he was dying, sent for me to see him. He said, "I am going to Heaven." "Well," I replied, "what makes you think you are going there, for you never thought of it before?" Said he, "God is good." "Yes," I answered, "but God is just." "No," he said, "God is merciful and good." Now that poor creature was dying and being lost forever--for he had not a right conception of God. He had only one idea of God--that God is good. But that is not enough. If you only see one attribute, you only see part of God. God is good, but He is a Sovereign and does what He pleases--and though He is good to all, in the sense of benevolence, He is not obliged to be good to any. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

Do not be alarmed, my Friends, because I am going to preach about Divine Sovereignty. I know some people, when they hear about Sovereignty, say, "Oh, we are going to have some terrible high Doctrine!" But as it is in the Bible, that ought to be enough for you. Is not that all you need to know? If God says, "I will be gracious to

whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," it is not for you to say that it is high Doctrine. Who told you it was high Doctrine? It is goodDoctrine. What right have you to call one Doctrine high and another low? Would you like me to have a Bible with "H" against high, and "L" against low, so that I should leave the high Doctrine out to please you? My Bible has no mark of that kind! It says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." There is Divine Sovereignty! I believe some are afraid to say anything about this great Doctrine lest they should offend some of their people, but, my Friends, it is true and you shall hear it! God is a Sovereign. He was a Sovereign before He made this world. He lived alone and this thought was in His mind, "Shall I make anything, or shall I not? I have a right to make creatures, or not to make any." He resolved that He would fashion a world. When He made it, He had a right to form the world in what shape and size He pleased. And He had a right, if He chose, to leave the globe untenanted by a single creature. When He had resolved to make man, He had a right to make him whatever kind of creature He liked. If He wished to make him a worm or a serpent, He had a right to do it. When He made him, He had a right to put any command on him that He pleased. And God had a right to say to Adam, "You shall not touch that forbidden tree." And when Adam offended, God had a right to punish him and all the race forever in the bottomless pit!

God is so far Sovereign that He has a right, if He likes, to save anyone in this Chapel, or to crush all who are here. He has a right to take us all to Heaven if He pleases, or to destroy us. He has a right to do just as He pleases with us. We are as much in His hands as prisoners are in the hands of Her Majesty when they are condemned for a capital offense against the law of the land--yes, as much as clay in the hands of the potter. This is what He asserted when He said, "I will

be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." This Doctrine stirs up your carnal pride, does it not? Men want to be somebody. They do not like to lie down before God and have it preached to them that God can do just as He wills with them. Ah, you may hate this Doctrine but it is what the Scripture tells us. Surely it is self-evident that God may do as He wills with His own! We all like to do what we will with our own property. God has said that if you go to His Throne in prayer, He will hear you--but He has a right not to do so if He likes. He has a right to do just as He pleases. If He chooses to let you go on in the error of your ways, that is His right. And if He says, as He does, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," it is His right to do so.

That is the high and awful Doctrine of DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

Put the two together, goodness and Sovereignty, and you see God's Glory! If you take Sovereignty alone, you will not understand God. Some people only have an idea of God's Sovereignty and not of His goodness--such are usually gloomy, harsh and ill humored. You must put the two together--that God is good and that God is a Sovereign. You must speak of Sovereign Grace. God is not gracious alone, He is sovereignly gracious! He is not Sovereign alone, but He is graciously Sovereign. That is the true idea of God. When Moses said, "I beseech You, show me Your Glory." God made him see that He was glorious and that His Glory was His Sovereign goodness. Surely, Beloved, we cannot be wrong in loving the Doctrine of free, unmerited, distinguishing Grace when we see it thus mentioned as the brightest jewel in the crown of our Covenant God! Do not be afraid of Election and Sovereignty. The time has come when our ministers must tell us more about them or, if not, our souls will be so lean and starved that we shall mutiny for the

Bread of Life! Oh, may God send us more thorough Gospel men who will preach Sovereign Grace as the Glory of the Gospel!

II. The second point is, there was A GRACIOUS CONCEALMENT. Read the next verse. "He said, You cannot see My face; for there shall no man see Me, and live." There was a gracious concealment and there was as much Grace in that concealment as there was in the manifestation. Mark you, Beloved, when God does not tell us anything, there is as much Grace in His withholding it as there is in any of His Revelations. Did you ever hear or read the sentiment that there is as much to be learned from what is not in the Bible as from what there is in the Bible? Some people read the Scriptures and they say, "We wish we knew such-and-such." Now you ought not to wish such a thing, for if it were right for you to know it, it would be there--and there is as much Divine Grace in what God has not put in the Bible as in what He has put there. If He had put more in it, it would have been our destruction. There is just enough and no more. Do you know how Robert of Normandy lost his sight? His brother passed a red-hot copper bowl before his face and burned his eyes out of their sockets. And there are some Doctrines that men want to know, which, if they could understand them, would be like passing a red-hot bowl before their eyes! They would scorch their eyes out and their understandings would be completely crushed. We have seen this in some ministers who have studied so much that they have gone out of their minds. They have gone further than they ought to have ventured. There is a point to which we may rightly go, but no further--and happy is the man who goes as near to it as possible without overstepping it. God said to Moses, "You cannot see My face; for there shall no man see Me, and live." There are two senses in which this is true. No man can see God's face as a sinner--and no man can see God's face even as a saint.

First, no man can see God's face as a sinner There comes a guilty wretch before the Throne of God. God has spread open His books and set His seat ofjudgment. There comes a man before the Throne of God. Look at him! He is wearing a robe of his own righteousness. "Wretch, how came you in here?" And the guilty creature tries to look at God and cries that he may live. But no, God says, "He cannot see My face, and live." Thus says the righteous Judge, "Executioner of my vengeance, come forth!" Angels come with crowns on their brows--they grasp their swords and stand ready. "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness." The wretch is cast away into the fire of Hell. He sees written in letters of fire, "No man can see My face, and live." Clothed in his own righteousness, he must perish.

Then, again, it is true that no man, even as a saint, can see God's face and live--not because of moral disability, but because of physical inability. The body is not strong enough to bear the sight or vision of God. I cannot tell whether even the saints in Heaven see God. God dwells among them, but I do not know whether they ever behold Him. That is a speculation. We can leave that till we get there--we will decide it when we get to Heaven. I hardly know whether finite beings, even when glorified, will be capable of seeing God. This much is certain, that no man on earth, however holy, can ever see God's face and yet live. Why, Manoah, even when he saw an angel, thought he should die! He said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." If you and I were to meet an angel, or a troop of angels, as Jacob did at Mahanaim, we would say, "We shall die." The blaze of splendor would overwhelm us! We could not endure it. We "cannot see God and live." All that we can ever see of God is what He called His "back parts." The words, I think, signify "regal train." You have seen kings with regal trains trailing behind them--and all we can ever see of God is His

train that floats behind Him. Yon sun that burns in the heavens with all his effulgence, you think is bright--you look upon him and he dazzles you--but all his splendor is but a single thread in the regal skirts of the robe of Deity! You have seen night wrapped in her sable mantle, woven with gems and stars--there they shine as ornaments worked by the needles of God in that brilliant piece of tapestry which is spread over our heads like a tent for the inhabitants of the earth to dwell in! You have said, "Oh, how majestic! That star, that comet, that silver moon, how splendid!" Yet they are nothing but just a tiny portion of the skirts of God that drag in the dust!

But what are the shoulders, the girdle of Divinity, the bracelets of Godhead, the crowns that adorn His lofty brow, man cannot conceive! I could imagine that all the planets and constellations of stars might be put together and threaded into a string and made into a bracelet for the arm, or a ring for the finger of Jehovah--but I cannot conceive what God Himself is! All I can ever learn, all that the thunder ever spoke, all that the boisterous ocean ever could teach me, all that the Heaven above, or the earth beneath, can ever open to my mind is nothing but the "back parts" of God. I can never see Him, nor can fully understand what He is.

III. Now, Beloved, we go to the third point and that is THE GRACIOUS SHIELDING.

Moses had to be put into a cleft of a rock before he could see God. There was a Rock in the wilderness, Moses smote it, and water gushed out. The Apostle tells us "that rock was Christ." Very well, Paul, I believe it was, but there is another thing that I believe--I believe that this rock was Christ! I know it was not Christ literally. Moses stood in a literal rock--he stood on the top of a high mountain, hidden in a cleft of a real rock. But, O my Soul, what is the cleft of the

rock where youmust stand if you would ever see God's face and live? Oh, it is the "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," where I must hide! Oh, what a cleaving that was when Jesus died! O my Soul, enter into the hole in Jesus' side! That is the cleft of the Rock where you must abide to see God--

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find. The holy, just, and sacred Three Are terrors to my mind."

But when I get into the cleft of that Rock, O my Soul, when I get into that cleft whose massive roof is the well-ordered Everlasting Covenant, whose solid golden floor is made of the solemn decrees of the Predestination of the Most High, and whose sides are called Jachin and Boaz, that is, establishment and strength, I am in a cleft of a Rock which is so enduring that time can never dissolve it! Precious Christ, may I be found in You amidst the concussion of the elements when the world shall melt away and the heavens shall be dissolved! Oh, may I stand in You, You precious cleft of the Rock, for You are All-in-All to my soul! Some of you, I know, are in that cleft of the Rock. But let me ask others, "Where are you?" Let it be a personal question. I have preached a long while about God. I have tried to mount the height of this great argument and speak of the wondrous things of God. I may have failed, but let me say to each one of you, "Are you in that cleft of the Rock?" Can you sing this verse?--

"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress!
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head." In closing, I want to draw one practical inference. What shall it be? Draw it yourselves. Let it be this--There is an hour coming when we must all, in a certain sense, see

God. We must see Him as a Judge. It becomes us, then, to think seriously whether we shall stand in the cleft of the Rock when He comes. There is a passage I would mention before closing--"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." There was Death on the pale horse--and the original says, "Hades followed with him." You know that the word, Hades, comprises both Heaven and Hell--it means the abode or state of departed spirits. Yes, Death is after me and you. Ah, run! Run! Run! But run as you will, the rider on the pale horse shall overtake you! If you can escape him for 70 years, he will overtake you at last. Death is riding! Here comes his pale horse! I hear his snorting, I feel his hot breath. He comes! He comes! And you must die!

BUT, WICKED MAN, WHAT COMES AFTERWARDS? Will it be Heaven or Hell? Oh, if it is Hell that is after you, where will you be when you are cast away from God? I pray God to deliver you from Hell. Hell is coming after you sure enough--and if you have no hiding place, woe be unto you! See that cleft in the Rock? See that Cross? See that blood? There is security there, but only there! Your works are but a useless encumbrance, cast them away and with all your might flee to the mountain! Cry to Jesus--

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling." Yes, more than this, you will need Divine aid even in coming to Christ, so cry yet again--

"But oh, for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie." And, poor helpless one, if you are but hidden in Christ, you are forever secure! Storms may arise, but you cannot be overwhelmed! Old Boreas may blow until his cheeks burst, but not a breath of wind can injure you, for in the cleft of the Rock you shall be hidden until the vengeance is gone!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HEBREWS 11:1-21.

This is the Arc de Triomphe erected to the memory of the heroes of faith, whose names are here recorded by the Apostle's Inspired pen with a brief mention of some of their most memorable actions. If it had not been for their faith, which moved them to accomplish such valiant deeds, we might not have known anything about them.

Verse 1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Though the "things" are only "hoped for" and "not seen" at present, the eye of faith can see them and the hand of faith can grasp them! Faith is more mighty than any of our senses, or than all our senses combined!

2. For by it the elders obtained a good report It is noteworthy that they obtained this "good report" by their faith. Doubt gives a man an evil reputation--it is only Believers who obtain such a "report" as even the Holy Spirit describes as "good."

3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear It is only by believing the Inspired record that we can obtain a true understanding of the wondrous work of Creation. Science and reason are of little or no use here, but the opening words of Divine Revelation explain the great mystery--"In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth."

4. 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 speaks. It was the sacrifice of the believing Abel that was well pleasing in God's sight. And though his brother, Cain, out of jealousy and malice, slew him, his good reputation continues even to this day. That is the best way of living which enables a man to go on speaking for God even after he is dead.

5. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death: and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. It was by faith, not by works, that this truly gracious man, "was translated that he should not see death." We never read of any unbeliever, "that he pleased God," but this is the Inspired testimony concerning Enoch. [See Sermons #1307, Volume 22--ENOCH; #107, Volume 3--FAITH; #2100, Volume 35--FAITH ESSENTIAL TO PLEASING GOD; #2513, Volume 43--HOW TO PLEASE GOD and #2740, Volume 47--WHAT IS ESSENTIAL IN COMING TO GOD]

6. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. No one can come to God if he does not believe that there is a God and that He justly dispenses rewards and punishments.

7. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. [See Sermon #2147, Volume 36--NOAH'S FAITH, FEAR, OBEDIENCE AND SALVATION] By which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. There is an unholy fear which is cast out by perfect love, but there is a holy fear, a filial fear, which dwells most happily with faith. So was it with Noah, who, "by faith...moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

8. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing where he went Though Abraham did not know where he was going, God knew, and that was quite sufficient for the Patriarch. As a little child is willing to be led by his parent, so Abraham was willing to be led by God, even though that meant leaving his own country and his own people and going to the distant land which God intended to give him.

9. 10. By faith he sojournedin the land ofpromise, as in a strange

country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with
him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which has
foundations, whose Builder and Maker
is God. [See Sermon #2292, Volume 39--ABRAHAM, A PATTERN TO BELIEVERS.]
He was only a sojourner in the land of promise, he knew that even the
promised land was only a tenting-ground for him and his descendants,
but he also knew that he was on his way to a Divinely planned and
Divinely built city--not like the temporary cities of earth, which
shall all perish and pass away, but a city with everlasting
foundations, a city that will last as long as God, Himself, exists.
11. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed,
and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged
Him faithful who had promised. Sarah's faith was not like Abraham's,
yet it was true faith and, therefore, her name appears among faith's
worthies.
12, 13. Therefore sprang there even of one, andhim as good as dead, so
many as the stars ofthe sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by
the seashore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received
the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of
them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and
pilgrims on the earth. Though the promises could only be seen afar off,
faith has such long arms that it embraced them, clung to them as loving
relatives cling to one another and would not let them go. So may we see
the promises, and be persuaded that they belong to us, and embrace them
as we clasp to our bosom those who are nearest and dearest to us!
14, 15. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a
country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from which
they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. True
pilgrims never think of going back--they know that whatever

difficulties and trials lie ahead of them, there are far greater ones in "that country from which they came out." Bunyan's Christian was quite resolved not to go back to the City of Destruction whatever perils he might have to face on his way to the Celestial City.

16. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city. Their desire for "a better country" has been implanted within them by God, Himself, and "He has prepared for them a city" which will more than satisfy their utmost desires.

17-19. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shallyour seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. However puzzled Abraham may have been by the command to offer up the son in whom his seed was to be called, his plain duty was to obey that command and to leave the Lord to fulfill His own promise in His own way. Perhaps he had also learned, through his mistake concerning Ishmael, that God's way of fulfilling His promise might not be his way--and that God's way was always best.

20. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. He was old and blind, so that he did not know which of his sons came for the first blessing, yet he could see into the future sufficiently to bless both his sons "concerning things to come." What wondrous power there is in faith even when it is exercised by very imperfect individuals!

21. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.That staff had been Jacob's companion on many memorable occasions, so it was most fitting that he should lean upon it while blessing his grandsons!

Chapter 48

The Necessity of Regeneration

(No. 3121)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again." John 3:7.

[See Sermon #130, Volume 3--REGENERATION.]

WE need not wonder that there are some mysteries in our holy faith, for there are mysteries everywhere. In Nature there are ten thousand things that we cannot understand. In our own bodies there are inexplicable mysteries. He who thinks for only a little while, even of so simple a matter as to how it is that food is gradually turned into flesh, knowing how impossible it would be for us to do it by any chemical process or mechanical apparatus, will see that there is a mystery in every human life--a secret chamber into which the eyes of man cannot look. There are mysteries all around us at this very moment. If we go outside this building, we shall, like Nicodemus, observe that the wind blows. We know it blows, for we hear the sound of it, but as to from where it comes, or where it goes, we know nothing. As there are mysteries in Nature, as there are mysteries in our own bodies, as there are mysteries all around us even in the most commonplace things, it is not remarkable that there should be mysteries in the Kingdom of God! Yet Christ, by using the metaphor of the wind, shows us that the mystery is a matter of fact and that the mystery can be turned to practical account, for though we do not understand all about the wind, yet we know when it is blowing. And though we cannot comprehend it, we

can make use of it. The wind has been employed in a thousand ways in the service of man and it is not necessary that we should understand it in order to make use of it. A man may be an admirable sailor and yet know nothing about the origin of the wind. If he does but understand how to hoist, or shift, or furl his sail, he will do well enough. So is it with the mysteries of the Kingdom of God--although we cannot understand them, the practical use of them is a matter of such simplicity that we shall do well to learn what it is.

I am not going to attempt to explain the mystery of the new birth--that is altogether beyond my powers. I can only explain its results. But there is one point upon which I want to fix your attention and that is that if you are ever to be saved, you must experience this new birth. "Must is for the king," we say, and it was the King of kings who said, "You must be born-again." My text belongs to the absolute necessities--this is a Truth of God that cannot be put aside! "You must be born-again." If you are ever to enter the Kingdom of God, or even to see it--if you are ever to be reconciled to the God whom you have so greatly offended--"You must be born-again."

But what is it to be born-again? I have already said that I cannot tell you how the Spirit of God operates upon the unregenerate, making them to be new creatures in Christ Jesus. I know that He usually operates through the Word-- through the proclamation of the Truth of the Gospel. So far as we know, He works upon the mind according to the laws of mind by first illuminating the understanding. He then controls the judgment, influences the will and changes the affections. But over and above all that we can describe there is a marvelous power which He exerts which must remain among the inscrutable mysteries of this finite state, even if we can never comprehend it. By this power such a wondrous effect is produced that a man becomes a new man as much as if he had returned to

his native nothingness and had been born-again in an altogether higher sphere! A new nature is created within him, although the old nature is not entirely eradicated. It will ultimately be destroyed, but it is not destroyed at first. Yet a new nature is born within the man, a nature which hates what the old nature loved, and loves what the old nature hated--a new nature which is akin to the Nature of God! That is a wonderful sentence in Peter's second Epistle, "that by these you might be partakers of the

Divine Nature." In his first Epistle, he writes concerning "being born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever." This living seed is sown within our hearts and there it begins to grow, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The new birth is the implanting of that living seed within the soul--it is the creation within us of that new, Divine, immortal life. We must have that life or we cannot see or enter the Kingdom of God.

My subject is the imperative necessity of regeneration and I want to show you, first, that the new birth is a great necessity. And, secondly, to ask, have we all experienced it?

I. First, then, I want to show you that THE NEW BIRTH IS A GREAT NECESSITY.

That it is a necessity is quite certain, because it is Jesus Himself who says,' 'You must be born-again," and Jesus cannot err. Unless we are prepared to reject Him altogether, we must believe Him to be the Infallible Teacher sent from God. Yet He says, "You must be born-again," and you may depend upon it that you must if you are ever to be saved. He was of a gentle, loving spirit. He never bound heavy burdens upon men's shoulders which they were not able to bear. He was so gentle that the little children gathered around His knees and He

took them up in His arms and blessed them. I am sure that if He could have said, "You can enter the Kingdom of Heaven without experiencing the new birth," He would have said so. He said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life," because He must speak the Truth of God. In other places, how blessedly has He set the gate of mercy wide open, saying, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." And His last Gospel invitation is, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The words of our text become all the more solemn because they drop from the lips of Him who would not exclude a single soul from everlasting happiness unless the Truth of God required Him to do so. It is the kinder, gentle, loving Christ who says, "You must be born-again," and so shuts and bars the gate of Heaven against the admission of the unregenerate!

The necessity of regeneration is universal, for Christ addressed this message to a man who was the type of a class of persons who might be exempted from the new birth if any might. Is was Nicodemus, a man who sincerely wished to know the Truth and who was truly desirous to be informed as to the way of salvation. He came to Christ, not with any traitorous design of catching Him in His speech, but keenly desirous to learn what the God-sent Teacher had to tell him. Yet Nicodemus could not enter the Kingdom of God until he was born-again, nor can the most earnest enquirer nor the keenest searcher after the Truth of God! It is an excellent thing to have an honest heart and a candid mind, but Christ says even to such men, "You must be born-again." I delight to meet with honest-minded persons even if they are opposed to the Gospel, for I have often found that their honesty compels them to yield to the claims of the Gospel when it is faithfully set before them. Several of the first followers of Christ were plain, blunt fishermen, honest after their fashion, yet they had to be born-again--it does not matter how

good a man may be, or how earnest he may be in seeking to find the Truth of God--he cannot escape from the necessity which applies to the entire human race! "You must be born-again."

Moreover, Nicodemus was a wise man, well taught in the Scriptures. To be a Rabbi required a thorough education in the Old Testament Scriptures and doubtless Nicodemus was equal to the rest of the Sanhedrim to which he belonged. But the study of Scripture, admirable as that is, will not save the soul without the new birth. It is not merely reading about Christ, but having Christ formed in us, the hope of Glory, that will really save us. The Spirit of God has written the Scriptures in this blessed Book but that same Spirit must write those Truths in our heart, or else the Truths will, so far as salvation is concerned, be valueless to us. No amount of knowledge that you can acquire, even a doctor's degree of divinity--no amount of skill in imparting knowledge to others, even though you should be a master in Israel--will enable you to enter Heaven without being born-again!

Moreover, in addition to being a wise man, and a naturally good man, Nicodemus was a very religious man. He was "a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews." The Pharisees were very specially a religious sect--they pushed their observances to the extreme point and all the minutiae of external ritual were carefully attended to by them. They were great believers in fasting, in almsgiving, and in oft-repeated prayers. They were the High Churchmen of that period, yet to the most conscientious Pharisees, Christ had to say, "You must be born-again." The Pharisee might be particular as to the tithing of mint and anise and cummin, and the straining out of gnats from the wine that he drank, or he might abstain from it altogether--but all this availed him nothing unless he was born-again! Regeneration is the universal necessity of the entire human family. This text would suit a

congregation of kings and princes, peers of the realm and bishops, quite as well as a congregation of vegetable sellers, drunks, harlots and convicts. To all of woman born, this necessity comes without a single exception--"You must be born-again."

This necessity is evident if we consult the authority of Scripture. Consider its testimony conceiving what man is by nature. The Word of God never flatters us. It tells us that "there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one." "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the soles of the feet even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Now, if this is your ruined condition, "you must be born-again" if you are ever to enter the Kingdom of God. Mending you, patching you up, revising you, reforming you will be of no avail--you must be new-created, nothing less than that will suffice for you--

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven.
The Sovereign Will of God alone
Creates us heirs of Grace--
Born in the image of His Son,
A new peculiar race."

Remember also what even the Gospel requires of men. Men can hear the Gospel, for they have ears, but they cannot understand it until the Spirit of God opens their minds and hearts to receive it. Unto this day

it happens unto men as unto the generation in Christ's day that though they have ears, they hear not, and though we speak unto them, they do not perceive, for how shall the fleshly man receive spiritual things?

The unregenerate heart can no more understand the Gospel than a horse can understand astronomy--it is altogether beyond the comprehension of the carnal man! When we use a simple metaphor, he takes it as literally, as Nicodemus did when the Lord said to him, "Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God," and he foolishly asked, "Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" When Christ talked to the woman at the well of Sychar about the living water, she said at once, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw." And, today, when Christ says concerning the bread at the communion, "Take, eat, this is My body," the carnally-minded say that the bread is turned into flesh, not having the spiritual discernment to be able to comprehend even the simplest metaphors which the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to use! Spiritual things must be spirituallydiscerned and, therefore, the carnal mind cannot discern them!

The Graces which appear at the very dawn of the Gospel in the heart are wholly above the reach of man. The Gospel says, "Repent." The unregenerate man loves his sins and will not repent of them. He presses them to his bosom and until his nature is changed, he will never look upon them with abhorrence and sorrow. The Gospel says, "Believe; cast away all confidence in your own merits and believe in Jesus." But the carnal mind is proud and it says, "Why should I believe and be saved by the works of another? I want to do something myself that I may have some of the credit for it, either by good feelings, or good prayers, or good works of some kind." Repentance and faith are distasteful to the unregenerate--they would sooner repeat a thousand formal prayers than

shod a solitary tear of true repentance! They would sooner work their way to Heaven even if they had to pass through Hell itself to get there, than come and simply receive salvation for nothing as the gift of God by Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters we must be born-again because the Truth of the Gospel cannot be understood and the commands of the Gospel cannot be obeyed except where the Spirit of God works regeneration in the heart!

As for the privileges of the Gospel, such as communion with Christ, what does the unregenerate man care about that? Access to God, acceptance in the Beloved, adoption into the family of God--he knows nothing about these things and does not want to know about them. Give him prosperity in his business and happiness in his household, and he is perfectly satisfied without the treasures of the Covenant of Grace, or a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may call him to the Gospel feast, but he will not come, for he sees nothing to come for. You may invite him, as you ought to do, but he will say, "I must go to my farm to try my new yoke of oxen" or, "I must go to my newly-wedded wife, so I pray

you have me excused." He will do anything rather than come to the banquet which eternal love has spread because, until he is regenerated, he cannot appreciate the privileges which the Gospel presents to him. And, Brothers and Sisters, "you must be born-again," because it is impossible for you to ever enter Heaven unregenerate. On earth you cannot have peace with God without the new birth. God will never be reconciled to the flesh. It is a filthy thing which must be put away. The old nature must be dead and buried. The ordinance of Believers' Baptism is meant to teach us that great Truth of God. It is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh that was done by circumcision, but in the New Covenant it is the burial of the flesh altogether! It

must be reckoned to be dead and buried with Christ and so be put right away once and for all. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would work this with each one of us! "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." And that which, in our mental nature, is called the flesh cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Is must die and be utterly put away as a corrupt thing! We can only enter Heaven through the possession of the heavenly life by virtue of having been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Do you, dear Friends, know experimentally what this mean?

I have to make this further observation, that this necessity is not to be escaped. You may do what you will, my dear Hearer, and I trust you will be in real earnest in seeking the salvation of your soul, but when you have done your best and your utmost, you must be born-again! Were you from this time to give yourself diligently to searching the Scriptures, you must be born-again. Did you ever notice the very strong light in which Christ put that matter of searching the Scriptures? Read aright, the text says, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me: but you will not come unto Me that you might have life." Many a Bible-reader is content with his Bible-reading but never comes to Christ! Yet Bible-searching alone will not suffice for salvation, "You must be born-again." If you were to become, from this time, regular in private devotion and constant in attendance upon public ordinances, this declaration would still stand, "You must be born-again." If you are to be saved, you must have a new heart and a right spirit and these you cannot get for yourself. A tree may shoot out a new branch, but it cannot change its nature. "You must be born-again, born from above," so our Savior tells us. There must be worked in you a work which is impossible to you, a work which only God, the Holy Spirit, Himself, can perform, or else you cannot see the face of God with acceptance.

Yes, and in addition to anything that you can do, ministers may do all that they can do for you, but they cannot take you to Heaven, nor make you God's child--you must be born-again. I thank God for any revival that produces any genuine results but just because I rejoice in revivals of the right kind, I tremble as I think of many of the supposed converts who are only converted to self-conceit and other delusions--and not to real faith in Jesus Christ. I charge you, by the living God, everyone of you, not to trust to mere excitement, or fancy as a ground of salvation! You must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus--your very nature must be changed--the whole bent, current and tenor of your life must be altered and that not by human arguments and persuasions, but by the Holy Spirit's power, or else into God's Kingdom you cannot come! All the praying parents, praying preachers, praying ministers and revivalists in the world cannot save a single soul! It must be born-again and when it is born-again, they do not work the miracle--God may bless their teaching, but the Holy Spirit must have all the praise for it--for He alone works this wondrous change!

Let me also say to you that there is nothing in the world that can stand in the place of your being born-again--

"Could your zeal no respite know, Could your tears forever flow," this text would still remain true, "You must be born-again." There it stands in front of the gate of Heaven and to every one of you the question is put, "Can you produce the evidences and tokens of the new birth?" If you can, you may enter. But if you cannot, you can in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This necessity is most pressing upon you all. I feel as if I could stand over some of you and weep as I say to you, "You must be born-again." I have told you again and again about judgment to come, but it does not affect you. I have preached to you about Christ's life, death and Resurrection, but it does not move you. In a short time

you will be upon your dying beds and no one will be able to help you, then, unless you are born-again! In a little while you will be in eternity--and unless you are born-again, you will be driven from the Presence of God forever into the outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth! O Sirs, "You must be born-again" or you will be damned! "You must be born-again" or you can never stand among the white-robed throngs that hymn the praises of Jesus! By the love we bear to you, we declare that you must be born-again!

A mother's tears, a father's prayers, a minister's entreaties all seem to cry to God, "Lord, our children, our hearers must be born-again. Oh, work this great miracle for Your love and mercy's sake!" I should weary you if I kept on harping upon this string, but I do want to get this Truth of God right into your souls. It does not much matter whether you remember what I say or what any other preacher says, for we may err, but our text does not err, it is the Infallible Truth of God-- write it in capital letters--YOU MUST BE BORN-AGAIN!

II. Now, secondly, I want very briefly to answer this question, HAVE WE EXPERIENCED THIS NEW BIRTH?

Perhaps somebody says, "Well, I was born-again by baptism. I am told that in my baptism, I was made 'a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.'" Yes, you were told that, but I will ask you one question, were you really made all that by your so-called baptism? I was sprinkled when I was a child, but I know that I was not thereby made a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven! I know that nothing of the kind took place in me, but that, as soon as I could, I went into sin and continued in it. I was not born-again, I am sure, till I was about 15 years of age, when the Lord brought salvation so my soul through the

regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and so I was enabled so trust in Jesus as my Savior. You say that your prayer book teaches you that you were born-again in baptism but again I ask you, "Were you?" Have you lived like one who has been born-again? Have you loved Divine things? Have you really been a child of God? Have you really hated sin and put your trust in Christ? If you have, I am not going to deny facts. But when I see myriads of persons who were said to have been born-again in baptism, turn out as bad as drunkards, swearers, adulterers and even murderers who have notbeen sprinkled, I really cannot put any confidence in such a "baptism" as that! The fact is, baptismal regeneration [See Sermon #573, Volume 10--BAPTISMAL REGENERATION--the Sermon which has had the largest circulation of any in the whole of Mr. Spurgeon's discourses!] is a lie, a wicked invention of Popery, without the slightest warrant in the Word of God! Not one has ever been born-again in baptism, nor ever can be! Regeneration, in the Scriptures, is always put side by side with faith, as anybody can see who will read the Scripture without prejudice, seeking to know the Truth of God that is there revealed. There is nothing in so called sacraments upon which a soul can rest for salvation. If you have been baptized and even if you have been immersed--which is the only true Baptism--unless the Spirit of God has regenerated you, "You must be born-again, born from above." Someone asks, "How am I to know whether I have been born-again?" Well, one of the first evidences of regeneration is faith in Jesus Christ, for wherever there is a sincere trust in Jesus Christ, the new birth must have been experienced. This belief was described by Christ as "the work of God." When He was asked, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God," He answered, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." To Nicodemus, Jesus said, "He that

believes on Him is not condemned." To the Jews who sought to kill Him, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life." So that faith is the evidence of the possession of that new life which shall last forever--that life which is imparted in regeneration.

Another evidence of the new birth is repentance. Sorrow for sin is one of the sure signs of the new Nature. The newborn Christian hates the sins he loved before and continues to hate them. And the longer he lives, the more he mourns that he ever committed them. His loathing of sin grows with his growth in Divine Grace and sin is never so hateful to a man as when he is most fully sanctified. The nearer we get to Heaven the more ashamed we shall be of ever having been guilty before God.

Sincere prayer i s another sure evidence of regeneration. What was said to Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus, as a proof that he was "a chosen vessel" unto the Lord? "Behold, he prays." It was not in a Prayer Meeting that he was praying, but all by himself--and the man who is in the habit of communing with God in secret prayer is a living man, for prayer is the vital breath of the soul. One of the signs that a new-born child is living is a cry--when a man cries to God out of his very soul, you know that he is a living child of the living God.

You may also know whether you are born-again by asking yourself another question--Do you feel a new life within you which you never had before? "Well," says one, "I never experienced any change that I know of. I always was good." Then I am afraid you have formed a wrong estimate of yourself and that you never were what you call, "good." "Well," says the self-righteous man, "I really do not think there was any necessity for any such change as you have been speaking of." Ah, but it is not a question of what you think--what says the text? "You must be

born-again." "But," say others, "we had godly parents. We had an excellent example set before us. We were taken, when we were little children, to hear
the Word of God and we have been regular attendants upon the ministry all our days." All that does not alter the fact, "you must be born-again," or else all these privileges will only increase your responsibility! Jesus still says to you, "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you," was the answer of the Apostle Peter to those who asked what they must do to so saved. Repentance is necessary in every case--there must be this radical change which shall make you loathe what you once loved and love what you once loathed. I dare not diminish one jot or tittle of the absolute necessity of the case, for I have to answer at the judgment bar of God for what I tell you. If I should flatter you into some vain hope for which there is no solid foundation, you might at the last turn round upon me and say, "You deceived us into the belief that we were saved when we were not!" I will not do that and, therefore, I say to you "You must be born-again."

Do you, then, feel this new life within you? Have you desires that you never used to have? Have you hopes you never had before? Have you fears you never had before? In fact, have you got into a new world where old things have passed away and all things have become new? Do you feel like that woman who said, "Either the world is altogether changed, or else I am"? And is this the result of the change that has taken place in you--you now love God, you now seek to please Him, spiritual things are now realities to you, now the blood of Jesus is your only trust--you now desire to be made holy, even as God is holy? If there is such a new life as that in you, however feeble it may be, though it is

only like the life of a new-born child, you are born-again and you may rejoice in that blessed fact!

"Ah," somebody says, "I fear that this kind of preaching will be very discouraging to a great many people." Well, how will it discourage them? "It will discourage them from trying to save themselves." That is the very thing that I want to do! I would like not only to discourage them from attempting that impossible task, but to cast them into despair concerning it! When a man utterly despairs of being able to save himself, it is thenthat he cries to God to save him--so I believe that we cannot do a man a better turn than to discourage him from ever resting upon anything that he can do towards saving himself!

"Well," says another, "but it is apt to make sinners look within." It is? Have I ever said a word about sinners looking within? I have not said that you are to make yourselves to be born-again, but I have said that "you must be born-again" by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. Surely that does not make sinners look within! It makes them look above to Someone infinitely higher than themselves. The fact is, dear Friends, that the preaching of the necessity of the new birth must be continued because it is true. It is in the Word of God and, as it is there, it is there for a definite purpose and it ought not to be put into the background, or must not be so treated. I believe that wherever there is the work of Grace in the soul, preaching the necessity of the new birth deepens that work. I know that a great many profess to come to Christ and I hope that they really do come to Him, although they have never felt what some of us experienced when we were under conviction of sin. Well, if they have come to Christ, it is all right and I am glad. But I am still a believer in the old-fashioned type of conversion and I do not think there are many new births without pangs, or that many souls come to Christ without alarms of conscience and much

sorrow of heart on account of sin. When I was converted, sinners used to come to Christ in this way. They looked by faith at Him whom they had pierced by their sins and mourned for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. I think I have seldom seen a conversion turn out well that had not the foundations of it laid in some measure of abhorrence of sin, loathing of self and utter despair of any salvation except by the Sovereign Grace of God. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" and nothing better, and-- "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away." It is only "the word of the Lord" and the work of the Lord that shall endure forever! Therefore I pray that if there is any work in you at all, it may be God's work and not my work, or the work of any earnest man striving to stir you up, but the real work of God the Holy Spirit from first to last.

If I were in a state of anxiety about my soul and heard such a sermon as this, it would make me feel, "Oh, how dependent I am upon the Spirit of God!" It would compel me to breathe from my inmost soul this prayer, "O Lord, save me!" I think that it would drive me, in despair of doing anything to save myself, to cast myself into the Savior's arms that He might give me of that Spirit by which I should be born-again. And remember that the moment a sinner does that, he is born-again! As soon as ever he casts himself upon Christ, he has passed from death unto life and the miracle of regeneration has been worked in him!

I think, dear Friends, that when we solemnly preach the necessity of regeneration, it has the good effect of overthrowing all that which is false in men and most, if not all of that which comes of humanity, is false. You may grow mushrooms out of almost any filthiness you choose to put down, but the Rose of Sharon needs a different soil from that!

You can easily grow men and women who say they are Christians and who are very earnest for a month or two, and then go back to the world again. It is the Holy Spirit alone who creates that life which is everlasting! In the case of those who are mere professors, a very little reproof has the effect of making them go away because they are offended, but it is not so with the true possessors of Divine Grace. That which is of our heavenly Father's planting will never be rooted up, but it will endure all tests that may so applied to it. I know that when I went to see the minister about making a profession of my faith in Christ, I hoped that he would test me, and try me, and probe me, for I wanted him to find me out if I was a hypocrite or self-deceived--and I think that every genuine convert feels very much as I did. We do not want to have any superficial work. We do not want the work to be slurred, we want it to be done thoroughly so that it will last throughout eternity! I do not want to have any peace except it is real peace through the precious blood of Jesus. To cry, "Peace, peace" where there is no peace, is a terrible thing which will be sure to end in overwhelming despair, or else in fatal presumption which is still worse.

I am sure that the preaching of the necessity of regeneration is one of the most effectual ways to injure Satan's cause, for nothing else will avail for the conversion of a big sinner, a ringleader in the devil's army. John Bunyan once said a very strange thing. He said that he had great hopes concerning the generation following his own because the young people in his time were so very wicked. He thought that if they were saved--and he expected that many of them would be--such great sinners as they had been would make great saints. He knew what he had, himself, been, and what the Grace of God had made of him--and that gave him hopes for others. It was an odd way of putting it, but he was

right. And if the Lord should take some big sinner here and transform him or her into a saint, what a grand alteration it would make in their homes! Perhaps it would affect a whole parish! I have known some leaders in sin whose conversion has really had a wonderful influence over the whole countryside where they lived--those who used to be drinking and sporting with them have said to one another, "Have you heard what has come to old Tom?" "No, what's up with him?" "Why, he says that he has been converted! I met him the other day and I said to him, 'What's the latest news?' and he said to me, 'The best news I have ever heard is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief.' I can't make out what has happened to him!" Then everybody says, "There is something in that religion which has laid hold of him."

I remember well, in my first pastorate, the time when the biggest drunk in Waterbeach joined the Church. His conversion crowded the place at once! People said, "Well, if that young man's ministry has been a blessing to such an old sinner as that, there is something in it, you may depend upon it!"And they came out of curiosity to hear the Word of God. The best gamekeepers are those who used to be poachers and the best preachers to great sinners are those who were once just such as they themselves are! They know the ins and outs of a sinner's heart and they can talk from experience instead of from theory. When a man has been in the fire and has the smell of it still upon him, he is the one to warn others not to meddle with fire and by means of such sinners, saved by Grace, God shakes Satan's kingdom to its very center and translates sinners from it into the Kingdom of His dear Son! Such conversions as these, like all true conversions, can only be worked by the Holy Spirit.

I pray you all to adore the Holy Spirit, think of Him always with the

profoundest reverence. Christian men and women who have been quickened by His power, invoke His might to rest upon you whenever you go about God's work, for without Him you can do nothing! Pray in the Holy Spirit, preach in the Holy Spirit and do not believe in the conversion of a single soul apart from the Spirit of God! Go and preach, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," as fully and as freely as you can, but remember that your preaching cannot, of itself, raise one soul out of its lost estate. This will be your comfort--that the Spirit of God will work with you and through you if you rely upon Him and depend wholly upon Him! I tell you, Sinners, all of you without exception, that if you will come to Jesus Christ and simply trust Him, you shall have salvation and shall have it at once! But my reliance upon any result of my proclamation of the Gospel is not based upon my hope that you will be so well disposed as to come, or upon my confidence that my way of putting the Truth of God will lead you to come to Christ. No! I have not a shadow of reliance, either upon you or upon myself! But I do have this confidence, that if I faithfully preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, He will draw sinners unto Himself and I believe that He will save some out of this congregation, though I know not who they may be. You are like a heap of steel filings and ashes before me--it is no business of mine to separate you. My business is to thrust in the magnet and that will do it! You who will accept Christ as your Savior may have Him--you who will not accept Him must perish in your sin!

But if you do accept Christ, it is because the Spirit of God has led you to do so and has given you the new birth which enables you to do it! If you reject Him, on your own heads be your blood forever. This is a solemn matter. I hope that what I have said will make you think that it is so and that before you go to your beds, you will shake off the

idea that this is a very small matter to be attended to whenever you like and to be trifled with as long as you please--but that, instead thereof, you will each one say, "O God, I see that You alone can save me! You can crush me, or You can save me. I have no claim upon You. If You destroy me, You will be just, yet save me, Lord, for Your dear Son's sake!" Amen.

Chapter 49

Craving the Best Things

(No. 3122)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT UPTON CHAPEL, LAMBETH ROAD, ON TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 1866.

"And David said, There is none like that; give it to me." 1 Samuel 21:9.

PERHAPS you remember the circumstances under which these words were spoken. David had been warned by Jonathan that Saul sought his life and, therefore, he left the court in a hurry and fled. He appears to have gone in such haste that he did not take proper provision with him--he did not even take his sword. Coming to Nob, where the priests dwelt, he received the sacred bread which had been offered to God as the showbread and he and the men with him ate thereof. And when he asked Ahimelech if he could furnish him with a weapon, he said there was no sword there save one, "the sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom you slew in the valley of Elah. Behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if you will take that, take it: for there is no other save that here." And David said, "There is none like that; give it to me."

I am not going to spiritualize my text. I want to do nothing unfair. Let me use it as a slogan. You will all allow that apt words may be employed at sundry times and in divers manners. I will simply say that as a general principle, the conviction of excellence leads us to desire possession. "There is none like that," is the conviction of excellence. "Give it to me"--there is the desire to possess. I shall illustrate this Truth of God in spiritual things upon some six or seven matters.

I. Speak of "the sword of the Spirit, which is THE WORD OF GOD," and you may well say, "there is none like that."

It is incomparable in its Authorship. We are persuaded that He who Inspired the Scriptures is none other than He who made the heavens and the earth, the God who cannot lie. All other books are but human at the best--let the authors be ever so refined--they cannot pretend to write as God writes. "There is none like that" for Authorship.

Nor is there any like it for style. You may read the Word of God through a hundred times, but you will like it best the hundredth time, for its stores are inexhaustible and its variety is charming. The style of any one man wearies you with its monotony till you need a change, but the spiritual mind never was and never could be wearied with the style of the Scriptures. It is sometimes simple, at other times majestic--here you have profound mystery and there the homeliest proverbs. It is all through, however, so full of holiness and of Divinity, that there is none like it for style.

And certainly there is none like it for matter. What other book contains such a Revelation as this concerning Christ, God, time, life, death, eternity, Heaven, Hell? There is more matter, often, in a single page of Scripture than there is in a whole volume of human writing! And that matter is so true, so necessary for us to know and withal so comfortable, so rich, so blessed, that when we have searched the Word and gained a knowledge of God's testimonies, we can say with regard to the matter of it, "There is none like that."

As for the effect of God's Word in quickening the soul, in fetching back the wanderer, in giving peace to the troubled conscience, in cheering the Christian, in anchoring his spirit in time of storm, "there is none like that." Whether you consider the Author, the style, the matter, or the effect--in all points the Word of God stands first

and foremost.

The conclusion, therefore, that I draw is, "Give it to me." Oh, give it to me that I may read it constantly night and day! Give it to me, that I may understand it, prying into its secrets! Give it to me! O Holy Spirit, re-write your Book upon the fleshy tablets of my heart! Give it to me, that I may call it mine, grasping it with the hands of faith! Give it to me, that I may feed upon it with the lips of love, that I may receive it into my experience! Give it to me, that I may carry it out with faith in the actions of my life! There are some who are bent on taking away the Word of God. Well, if they discard it, "Give it to me." There are some who want to put it up on the shelf, as a thing that has seen its best days. They suppose the old sword is rusty and worn out, but we can say, "There is none like that; give it to me!"

II. I shall have no time to enlarge upon this subject, so I must give you much in little. Therefore I pass on to another instance of the conviction of excellence with regard to THE SALVATION WHICH IS PROVIDED IN CHRIST JESUS.

All of you who are acquainted with the salvation that is in Christ will confess that "there is none like that." Beginning with that which always must lie at the root of all Gospel, the precious blood of Jesus--where can there be found anything like that? The blood of the Son of God, shed in so remarkable a manner, with sufferings so extraordinary, having about it a voice so loud which "speaks better things than that of Abel." The blood which, when sprinkled upon us, enables us to boldly enter into that which is within the veil. The blood which, when sprinkled upon our door posts, preserves us from the destroying angel. The blood in which, if we are washed, leaves us whiter than snow, so that "neither spot nor wrinkle" can remain on

those who have received the Atonement of our Lord--there is no blood like that! Search the world round and you will find that there is no truth so consolatory as the Truth of God of the Substitution of Christ and His suffering, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Then, as for His righteousness, which is as much concerned in our salvation as His blood, "there is none like that " The righteousness of Adam i n the Garden, with all its perfection, was still liable to come to an end, but the righteousness of Christ can never be altered. The former was only human righteousness at the best, but ours is Divine Righteousness, "the Lord our righteousness," Jehovah-Tsidkenu. Oh, the beauties of that! Saints in Heaven sparkle like the sun when they put on this glorious array. Not Christ, Himself, on Tabor's mountain shone more lustrously than will poor sinners shine when they are covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ! "There is none like that."

And then, where the blood of Christ has washed, and where the righteousness of Christ is imputed, there comes as a matter of necessity, "the peace of God, which passes all understanding." Those who are in the enjoyment of this peace will tell you that "there is none like that." The peace which comes from carelessness is without foundation. The peace that comes from ceremonies soon departs in the day of trouble. The peace that rests upon self-righteousness is based upon the sand. But the peace that rests upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ will outlast all time, endure the shock of trouble and land us in Heaven to enjoy peace forever!

Sometimes this peace breaks forth into joy and I may say especially of the joy of new converts, "there is none like that." If you ever walk down the streets of Mansoul on the day when the King Emmanuel is coming out, you will see the banners waving from every window and the bells in

every steeple making the spires to rock. You will see the people with gladness in their faces wearing "beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning," and then will you say, as you hear them clap their hands and shout together, "The King is coming." "There is no joy like that." But always in "the love of our espousals," we thank God that we find it joyous. There is no joy out of Heaven that is like the joy of pardoned sin, the joy of finding Christ, the joy of having our feet upon a rock. Then do you not say directly, "Give it to me"? Some of you have got it and I know your prayer is still, "Give it to me, give it to me to know more of it. Give it to me to enjoy it more. Give it to me every day--let me have it like the manna from Heaven every morning. Give it to me in all its fullness. Lord, there is none like that, give it to me!"

And are there not some of you who have never had it? Do you not agree with me that to be covered with Christ's perfect righteousness, to have peace with God and to rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ is a most precious thing? Do you not say, "Now, give it to me"? Well, then whisper it in the Master's ear--say to Him, "Lord, give it to me! Here is an empty hand waiting for it, fill it. Here I am, Lord, sinful and black, but You have precious blood--give it to me and make me white. I am naked, I have nothing to cover myself with--but You have a perfect robe, give it to me. Cover me with it. Here I am, Lord, heavy-laden, bowed down with grief, but You have peace to give--Lord, give it to me. Here is my heavy heart, like a broken lily, withered and dying--Lord, You can freshen it up and give me joy instead of sorrow! Lord, give it to me!" You see, this is not a prayer for a number of people--it is a personal prayer for each one to pray-- and I hope each one of you will pray it now.

III. But we must pass on to a third illustration of the principle of

the conviction of excellence which leads us to desire to possess. The third illustration shall be found in UNSTAGGERING FAITH.

Those of you who have enjoyed this will know that there is nothing like it in all the world. For, first, unstaggering faith grasps the promises. Ah, how often have I wished I could do so! I have seen some Christians taking hold of God's

Word just as they found it, being, as the saying is, "as happy as the birds in the air," and never troubled about its Providential arrangements. Now, unstaggering faith, when it gets a promise, treats it as a winepresser does the grape when he treads upon it till the sweet juice comes forth.

This mighty faith, when it comes to prayer, takes a promise with it and makes a step in advance--it gets the petition which it desires. Unstaggering faith comes down from the closet crying, like Luther, "Vici, vici. I have overcome, I have conquered!" God grants the desire of unstaggering faith. It delights itself in the Lord, so the Lord grants it the desire of its heart. There is nothing like faith to pray with--it handles the promise in a masterly manner and gets its desire.

The consequence is that unstaggering faith, in daily life, practically removes every difficulty. ' 'Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain." Where Little-Faith is stumbling over every straw, Great-Faith is not afraid to go through the river, since Christ is with it, nor afraid to climb the mountain, since God beats the mountain as small as chaff when faith uses the flail.

And, certainly, as difficulties are removed, this unstaggering faith preserves a perpetual serenity. Let--

"Earth be all in arms abroad, Faith dwells in perfect peace." It leans upon its God with a sense of His unfailing goodness when the desert around is dry, while the parched souls that lean upon an arm of flesh

become like the heath of the wilderness!

I think, if I had mentioned only these four things concerning unstaggering faith, you would say, "There is none like that." It grasps promises, wins positions, overcomes difficulties and lives in perpetual peace. What then? Why, "give it to me." O Little-Faith, do you not say, "Give it to me"? Perhaps you have been in Giant Despair's castle and you have thought he would surely devour you. But if you could get hold of this Goliath's sword, you might soon have the giant's head in your hand! If you keep better company, if your spiritual lungs take in more of the air of Heaven, there is no reason why that little trembling faith of yours should not grow into strong faith, for the promise is as true to you as to any other. You are as much a child of God as any other. God is as willing to answer your prayer as the prayer of any of His people. He is as true to you as He is to others. He "waits to be gracious." I hope before you go home you will say of this strong faith, "There is none like that; give it to me."

IV. The fourth thing is one which I think equally as precious as any I have spoken of, and that is A LIFE OF NEAR AND DEAR COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

There may not be many here who have enjoyed it, for it is not given to all God's people to live in this center of true religion. The higher life is neither known nor possessed by all the saints, but those who do know and possess it will tell you that "there is none like that." A man who gets into close communion with Christ is sure that his soul is saved. He does not sing--

"'Tis a point I long to know."

He used to sing that once, but now he knows better. He knows he is beyond that and now he can sing--

"Now rest, my long-divided heart-- Fixed on this blissful center,

rest."

He no longer has to question whether he has repented or whether he has believed. He has brought forth "fruits meet for repentance," and his belief is proved by his works. He has attained to the full assurance, not of hope, though that is a good thing, nor of belief, though that is also a good thing--but the full assurance of understanding--and there he stands, enjoying the confidence of his union with Christ.

Next to this assurance of his soul's safety, there comes the enjoyment of Christ's love. He not only knows that Christ loves him, but he feels i t. The love of God is not now like "precious ointment" within the case, but it is "shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit." It is like the ointment from Mary's alabaster box when it was broken. He can feel the love of God in his heart. He has no more doubt now of the love of God to him than of his own love for his child! At times it seems to weave itself into his very consciousness and he can say, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love." He has tasted and known, and felt the dearest communion of the Savior's love--and he can truly say, "There is none like that." Some of you have--perhaps, read the life of Madame Guyon and have said, "Ah, there is none like that." You may have read the spiritual letters of Rutherford and said, "There is no life like that," or the works of George Herbert and felt inclined to say, "There is no spirit like that; give it to me." Your spirit has often said, "Give it to me." Oh, that I might get it! I would rather lie sick upon a bed of pain from now till my Master's appearance than be employed in the preaching of God's Word if I cannot have my Master's Presence with me! I can hardly look upon some hours that I have spent upon earth as being a part of my mortal life at all. They seem to have

been fragments of my immortal existence, cropping up of the new life, little pieces of Heaven, stray notes from angelic harps allowed to wander here below as earnests of the "rest which remains for the people of God." Let us each one pray, "Savior, give it to me! There is none like that; give it to me."

V. But I must pass on. The bee is in a field that has many flowers in bloom and must fly from one to another. THE POSSESSION OF SPIRITUAL POWER--THE POWER AND INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT--is another most precious thing concerning which, I trust, we have a conviction of excellence which will lead us to desire its possession.

Do you know persons who possess this spiritual power? If you do not, I will tell you where you will observe it. There is a secret, mysterious power about their private lives. Not that they expose their private lives to observation, for they have a hidden life which they know cannot be seen and which they desire to be hid with their Master. Still, in their families, in their most private actions, there is a shadow which you can see. And if that shadow, like the shadow of Peter, has healing influence about it when it falls upon you, you will observe it and wish your influence were like it. You perceive by it that they have "been with Jesus," and have learnt of Him.

This power shows itself in their public work They may he preachers and if God has given them spiritual power, their ministry is very fruitful in conversions and generally blessed in edification. When you listen to them as they speak upon a point of Doctrine, you feel that they are dealing with a thing which they have handled and tasted, and felt. They have seen the evidence of these things in the Holy Word and they speak what they know, and testify what they have seen. If they happen to be

Sunday school teachers, if they happen to be missionaries, or whatever is their occupation, you see that while others are using little hammers, tapping the nail on the head and failing to drive it home, these have energy and might and drive the nail home almost with a single stroke, and clinch it with the second! While others are talking of what they would like to do, these men do the thing! God is with them. They are "workers together with God," and you can see the result of their work because there is power--such power as God gave to the Apostles at Jerusalem--resting upon them.

This power often shows itself in a Church. I want to get you to pray for a public blessing, for a whole Church may get this spiritual power. Look at the Prayer Meetings, how well they are attended. Look at the various societies, how earnestly they are conducted. Look how the young men and women are seeking to bring in others; how the matrons are mothers in Israel; how the old men are fathers in Christ. Oh, it is a blessed thing when a whole Church is alive! One may blow the coals so well that they may touch a Prophet's lips, but a whole mass of coals together--what a conflagration of Divine Grace may this cause throughout the world! Oh, that all our Churches had power from on high! Then would come revival seasons, true revivals, when everything would be full of holy joy and vigor and the Kingdom of Christ would grow and His arm revealed! You are sure to see the effect of this power in the Church in the blessing of the world, for the Church that is revived soon tells upon the neighborhood! If there is a great fire, you may see the blaze of it a long way off, and so if there is a fire in the Church of God, the blaze of it must be seen by the world! You bless the neighborhood where you are blessed in yourselves. With regard to this spiritual power, "there is none like that." We may preach new doctrines, or use fine music, or try to build our edifices so as to

make them attractive, but oh, when we come to spiritual power, "there is none like that." I think I can hear all the members of this Church and members of other Churches who are here, say, "Give it to us, Lord, give it to us now." I am persuaded that we might exercise this power more, but we sometimes think that this sword of Goliath is laid up before the Lord and is never to be used--that this shaking of the dry bones, this fire from Heaven running along upon the ground, is a thing to be read about and dreamt of, but not to be possessed and seen! O God, show that You have not changed Your ancient prowess! O arm of the Lord, be You made bare again! Let this be our constant prayer, "There is none like that; give it to me."

VI. I want to speak so as to touch some who are not yet converted and I think I must use another illustration of the principle which leads wise men to desire possession, namely, The PRIVILEGE OF THE CHRISTIAN. Every Christian who possesses this privilege will tell you that there is nothing like it in all the world. What is a Christian? Well, first, he is a son of God, an heir of Heaven, a prince of the blood imperial, one of God's aristocrats soaring right above the common level! He is as much above other men as other men are above brutes. He is a man of a new race--he does not belong to this world--he is an alien, a stranger! His citizenship is in Heaven! He can look up to God and say, "My Father." The Spirit of adoption is in his heart.

The Christian knows that he is "accepted in the Beloved. "He knows that whatever he does that is right, God accepts through Jesus Christ. He knows that his prayers are accepted, that his vows are accepted, that his good works are accepted, that his very sighs, groans, tears, wishes and heartbroken desires are all accepted. God accepts them all as men accept love tokens from dear friends. He takes our poor withered forget-me-nots and treasures them up. We are accepted, altogether

accepted, in the Beloved! The Christians is a man who is quite secure. There is no fear of his ever sinking into Hell. A jewel of the Redeemer's crown shall never be cast to the swine, that they may tread it under foot. Christ's blood-bought one is safe forever. Therefore he is not afraid. He believes that he has entered into the heavens with Christ and taken his seat at the right hand of Christ, his Covenant Head with whom he is in personal union. There is no life in the world like a Christian's--there is no standing like his--there is no position like his. There is no person in the world that you can imagine who has such a life as his--watched over by angels, provided for by the bounty, and guarded by the Omnipotence of Heaven--what more can he want? "There is none like that."

And now, Sinner, does not your heart say, "Give it to me. Let me be treated as You treat the rest of the family. Do unto me as You use to do unto them that fear Your name"? There is a gate to God's heart and that gate is not shut! And by the way we came into that heart, dear Sinner, you may also come! "I am the Way," says Christ. If you look to Him bleeding, suffering, bearing the guilt of man, you are accepted, for looking to Jesus is a token off your being "accepted in the Beloved." But never be satisfied with merely knowing what is the privilege of a Christian, try to get it! "There is none like that; give it to me."

VII. Only once more on this point. Mark THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE and may we not justly say, "There is none like that"?

What is the Christian hoping for? He is hoping for the Lord's coming. He is hoping that the Master will reign upon the earth right gloriously. And sometimes he thinks that perhaps he may never see death, for he knows that there are those who will remain on the earth

at the coming of the Lord and who shall not fall asleep. But if he anticipates death, yet he has a good hope that they also who sleep in Jesus will the Lord bring with Him. His hope is that his disembodied spirit will see the Savior before his body shall rise from the dead and that in the intermediate state between now and the resurrection, his soul will be in Paradise. As to his body, he has a hope that the Judge will come and the trumpet sound and he even says within himself, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." He has a hope of return for his soul, and of resurrection for his body--and after death and after resurrection comes the judgment But he has a good hope even concerning that, for he hopes to hear the Master say, "Come, you blessed!" He hopes to stand at the right hand of the Judge, and to sit with Christ upon His Throne, to dwell forever with the Lord! And his soul often sings--

"Amen, so let it be, Life from the dead is in that word, 'Tis immortality."

And I know that everyone, saint or sinner, even though he is as base as the wicked Prophet Balaam, will say, "There is none like that; give it to me." But you cannot die the death of the righteous unless you live the life of the righteous! Nor must you expect your last end to be like his unless you begin where he began--with Christ. I would to God we had half as much desire for this best of all things as we have for the things of this world. If there was an advertisement in the newspapers saying that there were guineas to be given away at a certain chapel tomorrow morning, what a crowd we would have! But now, when information has been spread abroad that salvation is to be had, though it is admitted on all hands, "that there is none like that," yet how few say, "Give it to me! Give it to me!" But oh, if you do say so from the

heart, you shall hear God's answer, "I have given it--take it and go your way!"

And now, dear Friends, will you follow me a little further while I point out that as the conviction of excellence leads us to desire possession, so SPECIAL SEASONS INTENSIFY THIS DESIRE? David particularly wished for Goliath's sword on this occasion because he had not any other. He was quite willing to take this sword because the priest very significantly said, "There is no other save that here." Therefore David was the more ready to appreciate the excellence of the sword because it was the only one there was, and to say at once, since he needed it so badly, "Give it to me."

In times of conviction of sin. In times, too, of a sense of ignorance, a man says of God's Word, "Give it to me." As long as you think you are very wise, you will do without this Book. When you begin to be wise and find out that you are a fool, then you will say, "There is none like that; give it to me." You will be satisfied with other men's books till you find out that they are false. And when you have found that out, you will turn with love towards this volume and say of this Gospel Truth of God, "There is none like that; give it to me." In times of conviction of sin, you will feel regard for the Revelation of Jesus Christ. That man who does not value Christ can never know his own condition. I say, Sirs, if God would strip you. If He would lay the terror of the Law upon you. If He would tie you up to the Halberts and beat you with the ten-thonged whip of the Law, and then scrub you with the brine of conviction of sin and make your flesh tingle with anguish, cast you into prison and break your back with Giant Despair's crab tree cudgel, it would bring you to know your own condition and you would say, "There is none like that." A naked man prizes a good suit of clothes and a hungry man has a keen appetite for a good feast. And so, when a soul

gets a sense of sin, oh, how he prizes the Savior! He then says, "Christ for me!" "There is none like that! O God, give it to me!"

In times of trial, t oo, the Christian knows the value of the faith of which I spoke to you. A man without trials may live without faith. With a good fixed income coming in, a prosperous business, the children all healthy and everything going on as you could wish it, you can put faith by in its scabbard and let it rust a bit. But when business declines, a child dies, you are sickly, troubles gather around your head and you know not where you may soon have to fly, you say, "Ah, now I must seize faith." You are glad of your umbrella when it rains--and times of trial make us cling to our faith.

If ever you get into spiritual darkness, dear Friends, it is then that you begin to prize communion with Christ. When the Lord hides His face from you, then, like the spouse, you begin to seek Him through the streets and to say, "My Beloved, where is He?" While in the enjoyment of Christ's Presence, you grow secure and when He comes knocking at the door, you say, "I have taken off my clothes," and you let Him stand outside till His locks are wet with dew. But when your Beloved withdraws Himself and goes away, then you seek Him, beating your bosom and crying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Ah saints, if we once get into the darkness, then we know the value of the Sun of Righteousness! And when the night is dreary and grim, it is then that the Star of Bethlehem becomes "our life, our light, our all," and "conducts us to the port of peace."

I think it is also in the times of labor that the Christian knows the value of spiritual power. If he has much to do and but little strength to do it with. If he does not see success attending his efforts, then he begins to cry out for the power he sees in others. "O Master," he says, "I have been sowing seed, but it never comes up." And then it is

that he cries for spiritual power. He then seems to have Baxter's disease and would like to have Baxter's power--and he would take Calvin's 70 sicknesses at once if he might have Calvin's 70 times powerful heart! He feels that he would give up all pleasures if he might but be endowed with spiritual energy. "There is nothing like that," he says--"give it to me."

And it is also in times when the soul is impressed as to the vanity of mortal things that it rejoices in Christian privileges--and those times are growing with some of us. I am young compared with many of you, but I feel old to what I was a little while ago. I have a sense of death about me every day. I do not think there have been five minutes during the past year that I have been without a sense of mortality. Then I have begun to look at everybody who goes by as a wonder that he is alive and to look upon all the world as not being worth anybody's caring for. I would not live here always. I have a strong appetite for Heaven and I think many of God's saints, as they grow in age, find it so. They care less and less for this world because they recognize that there is nothing here worth caring for! At such a time I am sure you can say of Christian privileges, adoption, acceptance, and union with Christ, "There are none like these; give them to me." There, dogs, you may have the world if you like, and snarl over that dry bone, but as for me, give me Christ! Give me to know true union with the Lord Jesus Christ! "There is none like that; give it to me." I rejoice more in the Lord my God than in all the corn, wine and oil which make the rich so glad, and the proud so happy. There is nothing like spiritual privilege! Give it to me!

It is also in the time of death, or sickness supposed to be fatal, that we begin to see the value of the Christian's hope, and to say--

"When the death-dew lies cold on my brow, If ever I loved You, my

Jesus, 'tis now!"

You cannot look forward to dying in itself without a shiver. Death is not, and never can be, congenial to our nature. We are--

"Fond of our prison and our clay."

I have heard of one of whom a minister said, "She died full of life." That is the way to die--full of life and immortality--having so much of life that it swallows up death! "Death is swallowed up in victory." One of our grand old Puritan divines, when he was close upon dying, was busy working at his book and his friends said, "You are dying," and advised him to rest. But he said, "No, I will not slip to bed to die. I will die in my chair." And he sat up and sang to the last. Haliburton seemed to be anticipating the time of his death when he exclaimed, "Have at you, Death, have at you! I have no fear of you!" It is then when we shall feel, concerning the Christian's hope, "There is none like that; give it

to me."

Well, dear Friends, many of you endorse the prayer, "Give it to me," but some of you ask the question, "Shall we get it?" Let me, therefore, put before you a few of the many ENCOURAGEMENTS THAT SUPPORT US IN THE BELIEF THAT THE DESIRE WILL BE GRANTED.

Why is it that we believe our desire will be granted? Let every Christian and every unconverted person who is seeking the Lord listen to these few remarks. Other saints have received that which you are desiring. They have received salvation, strong faith, communion with Christ and spiritual power. When another receives those blessings, that should be an argument and encouragement for you to press your suit. A man who never gives anything is the worst person in the world to beg from, but he who has given in the past will probably continue to give. There is no heart so generous as the heart that has already given--it

will still give. God has blessed millions of others--hosts beyond all counting! Then why should He not bless you? Lord, You gave to others, give to me also!

Evidently the gifts we are seeking are supplied in the Covenant of Grace. There is provision made of all the matters I have been talking about. It pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell--so that there are in Christ, not only the common gifts, but the special gifts of which I spoke just now--and they are all in Him in full measure! Then why should they not be given to you? Since they are all provided, doubtless they are not provided in vain. It is just what common sense would teach us--if a man provided a large quantity of soup in his kitchen, anybody would imagine he intended to give it away! And if a lady like Dorcas was busy making a large number of garments, you would at once infer that she did not need them for herself, but intended to give them away! Now, since there is a provision made of all these good and precious things of which I have spoken, it is to be concluded that they were made to be given to those who need them! Surely, when I pray, "Give it to me," He will give it to me, for He has provided it in order to give it! He has made a fountain and water in the fountain. What is it for? The light that is in the sun is not there for the sun's sake, but for somebody's use. And so the treasures hid in Christ must be there for those who need them! They must be there for you and me! There is provision made for as many as will receive it. Then it is for God's Glory to give me what I ask. If I am a sinner, it is God's Glory to forgive my sins--

"This is His great prerogative." If He gives us great faith, He will get the Glory of it. It is God's Glory to make us live near to Christ. "Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." Do you not think that He will give you these great blessings? His actions, ever

since He first revealed Himself to man have always been for His own Glory, and surely you have a mighty argument to encourage your confidence in this fact that to bless you with this wondrous blessing will be to His Glory!

Then, again, He has promised to do this, and that is the best of all encouragements. "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "The desire of the righteous shall be granted." Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

And as for you, Sinner, He has told you to come to Him. I spoke of rest just now as being enjoyed by those who find Him. He says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Whatever it is that your soul desires, is there not a promise for it? And if there is, there is a faithful God at the back of every promise who will make that promise good!

But we have even more than that. We have a living Savior to plead the promise on our behalf. ' 'Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." We have the promise of God and then we have the plea of Christ to make that promise effective! I remind you Believers who are asking for more Grace--and you sinners who are asking for pardon--that God has made a great supply and that supply must be intended to be used! It is to God's Glory that it should be used. He gives a promise that He will hear your prayer. Jesus Christ stands up to plead that promise! "Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find Grace to help in time of need." "There is none like that, give it to me." Give it to me now! Give it to me now, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Chapter 50

"The King of the Jews"

(No. 3123)

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"And Pilate wrote a title, and put in on the Cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." John 19:19.

IT was the usual custom of the Romans, when a man was put to death by crucifixion to affix to the cross, somewhere where it might be read, an account of his crime. His name and title would be given and the accusation that had been brought against him so that all who passed by might read the reason why he had been put to such an ignominious death. Our Savior, therefore, being numbered with the transgressors, must be treated in all respects as they were. If their accusations were published, so must He have His accusation published among the sons of men. How wondrous was the condescension that He, whom all Heaven adored as the ever-blessed Son of the Highest, should be hanged upon a tree and that He should have His accusation written up over His head just as if He had been a common malefactor!

I wish we could realize both the dignity of His Person and the shame to which He was exposed. If we could realize this we would be filled with grief for Him and with thankfulness to Him that He condescended to die the death of the Cross. I wish it were possible for us to now stand at the foot of the Cross with Mary and John and the other disciples, and to hear the ribaldry and scorn for a moment--and then to look up and see that sorrowful face and that tortured body-- and to read in Hebrew,

Greek and Latin, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It was a very remarkable thing that Pilate should have written, as Matthew and Luke say that he did, "This is the King of the Jews," and we do not at all wonder that the chief priests said to Pilate, "Write not, the King of the Jews, but that He said, I am King of the Jews." But Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." Divine Providence always has its way! It matters not who may be the persons concerned, God knows how to work His own will with them. It was His purpose that His Son should not die upon the Cross without a public proclamation of His innocence and an official recognition that He was what He had said He was, namely, the King of the Jews! Who was to put up such a notice over His head as He hung there? Peter might have been bold enough to attempt to do it, but he would certainly not have succeeded, for the Roman legionaries jealously guarded every place of execution. Even John, daring as he might have been in such a crisis, could not have achieved the task! It was best that it should be done by authority, done by the Roman governor, done with an official pen and so secured that no envious chief priest dared to pluck it down and no hand of a scoffer could be lifted up to blot out its testimony. It was privileged writing because it was written by the pen of a Roman official--and there it must stay, under the authority of the Roman Law as long as the body of Jesus hung upon the Cross. See what God can do! He can make the vacillating Pilate to become stubborn and He can make him resolve to do what one would have thought would have been the last thing he would have done! Though his motive probably was to ridicule the Savior, yet the thing was done as God would have it--and Jesus on the Cross hung there proclaimed by Roman authority as "the King of the Jews."

It may appear to you, at first sight, that there is not much importance in this fact, but I think I shall be able to show you that there is if

you will sit down now, at the foot of the Cross, and look up to your Crucified Lord and read this writing again. I shall ask you to read it in two lights. First, in reference to man. And, secondly, in reference to Jesus Christ Himself.

I. First, read Pilate's proclamation IN REFERENCE TO MAN.

This is a picture of how the world rejects the Savior. The Savior had truly come into the world. That He might be known to be a Savior, He had taken the name of Jesus, that is, Savior. That He might be known as One who was very humble and lowly, He had condescended to dwell among men of the very humblest kind and, therefore, He had chosen to dwell at Nazareth and to be called the Nazarene. Thus He was known as Jesus, the Savior--and as Jesus of Nazareth, an approachable and lowly Savior.

Jesus had come into the world to save men and He had commenced His mission by saving many from diseases which had been regarded as incurable. He had opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, given speech to the dumb, cleansing to lepers and He had even raised the dead to life! There were also many whom He had healed of spiritual infirmities, for He had given faith to the faithless and holiness and excellence of character to those who, until then, had lived in sin.

He was indeed Jesus the Savior, but how did men receive Him? Did they come and fall at His feet and kiss the very dust He trod upon? One might not have been surprised if they had done so, but they did not.

Did they gather around Him with joyful clamor, all sick ones eager to touch the hem of His garment that they might be made whole? There were a few who did so--"a remnant according to the election of Grace" who received Him--and to them, "He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name." But it was not so with the mass of mankind! Discerning in Him something strange and singular, seeing in Him no enmity, no sinful anger, no pride, no bitterness--

seeing in Him only superlative love, yet they must treat Him most foully, for His life was spent in poverty and reproach--and at last He was condemned to die on the accursed tree! The world hung Him up upon the felon's gallows and, in doing so, men said, "This is the Savior, the Nazarene, and this is how we treat Him. We do not want to be saved from sin, for we love it. We do not want to be saved from rebellion and to be brought into peace with God through Jesus Christ, so this is what we do with God's Ambassador! This is how we serve Him who comes with words of reconciliation and Grace upon His lips--we hang Him up to die, for we do not want Him." This is only a specimen of what all sinful hearts do till they are changed by Grace--they will not have the Savior to rule over them!

"Oh," says someone, "you bring too harsh a charge against me!" Is it so? Have you received Jesus? Do you believe in Him? Has He become your Savior? If not, why not? Can you give any justifiable reason for your unbelief and rejection of Him? It seems to me, and I leave your conscience to decide whether it is so, that by remaining in unbelief, you do practically say, "I prefer to be damned forever rather than believe in Jesus Christ!" At any rate, that is your choice at this present moment. And if a man will show his objection to Christ to so great an extent that he would be cast into Hell sooner than let Jesus save him, you may depend upon it that there dwells in his heart sufficient enmity to Christ to hang Him up again upon the Cross if He were here once more! Christ would be hanged tomorrow if He came here among unregenerate hearts--yes, by the very people that hang their ivory crosses about their necks and put them on their prayer books and fix them on their walls! They would cry, as their predecessor did of old, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" To this day, when Substitution is preached, and the blood of Atonement, and salvation by

simple faith in Jesus--not by "sacraments" and priests and good works--men foam at the mouth with rage, for they still hate the Christ, the only Savior of the sons of men!

Next I see here that man slays the Incarnate God--"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." Whether Pilate intended to indicate that He was the Messiah, at any rate the Jews saw that this would be the meaning attached to His inscription over Christ's head. It would be said that their Messiah was crucified, consequently they desired that the writing might be altered, but Pilate would not alter it. Now, the Messiah of the Jews was none other than God in human flesh. Did not Isaiah speak of Him as Immanuel, God with us? He was that promised "Seed of the woman" who was to bruise the old serpent's head. This was He of whom David said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit You at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool." He was David's Son, yet He was also David's Lord, and there He is--He has come among men and as God, He came to tabernacle in human flesh and dwell among men! It is a wonderful story that tells us how He was found as a Babe in Bethlehem's manger, where the shepherds came to adore Him and how He grew up among men as a Man like other men, working at the carpenter's bench in the shop of His reputed father, yet all the while He was God veiled beneath the humble form of the Son of Mary! Even when the time came for His manifestation unto Israel, He was still veiled, though His Godhead every now and then flashed through the veil of His Humanity. He bade the sea be still when its wild uproar threatened to engulf the vessel in which He and His disciples were. He worked such wonders that it was clear that all things obeyed Him. The fish came in swarms from the deep to the net which He had

bidden His disciples cast into the sea. And the loaves and fishes were multiplied in His hands and theirs, through His miraculous power. Men

could not help seeing that He was more than man and that He was, indeed, the Son of God, as He claimed to be. Yet the husbandmen, to whom He was sent by His Father, to ask for the rent of the vineyard that had been let to them, said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him and let us seize on His inheritance." In other words, they said, "This is the God-Man; let us do with Him what we would do with God if we could." So they hanged Him up like a felon, and put a label above His head, as much as to say to God, Himself, "This is what we have done to One who was more like You than any man we have ever heard of before, and One who says that He and You are One." O Sirs, this wicked world never went so far in wickedness as it displayed on that occasion! The essence of every sin is enmity against God and when any sin is analyzed, it is always found that its essence is this, "No God." Sin is a stab at the heart of God. Every time we sin, we practically say, "We do not want God's government. We do not want God's Laws--we do not want God." I once heard an eloquent divine who had been accusing men of great sin, finish his indictment by using this remarkable expression, "this deicidal world." There he reached the climax of the Truth of God, for this isa deicidal world! It cannot actually put God to death, but it would do so if it could! And in putting Christ to death it showed the enmity towards God that was really in its heart. The world would not put its own god to death, the god that men imagine, the god that their own intellects fabricate, the god like themselves, of whom I spoke this morning, [See Sermon #1206, Volume 20--heart-KNOWLEDGE OF GODj but as for the God of the Bible, there are millions of men who would be glad to put that God out of His own universe if they could! Yet He is Jehovah, the one living and true God. Thirdly, I see here that man's chief objection to Christ is His authority, for the pith of that inscription was, "Jesus the King.

"Pilate did not write, "This is Jesus the Teacher," or many might have said, "Let Him teach what He pleases, it is no concern of ours. We do not care what the Seers see, or what they say." Pilate did not put up, "This is Jesus the Priest." Many would be quite content to let Him be the great High Priest if they also might be priests. But Pilate wrote, "This is Jesus the King," and that is the target at which they shoot all their arrows! You remember that the writer of the Second Psalm says, "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." The resolve of human nature until it is renewed is always this, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Men might be willing for Christ to save them, but not for Him to reign over them. Such laws as these--"You shall love your neighbor as yourself," "You shall forgive till seventy times seven," the law of love, the law of gentleness, the law of kindness--man says that he admires them, but when these laws come home to him, and lay hold of the reins of his ambition, cramp his covetousness and condemn his self-righteousness, straightway he is offended! And when Christ says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." When He begins so teach the necessity of absolute purity and to say that even a lascivious glance of the eye is a sin, then men reply, "His rule will never do for us!" And they hang Him up to die because they will not submit to His authority.

Once more, we learn from this narrative that man ridicules Christ's Kingdom. Pilate did not hate Christ. He probably did not think enough of Him to expend any of His hatred upon Him. I have no doubt that he thought that Jesus was a poor enthusiast who had been living alone so long that He had addled His brains. He was well meaning and perhaps clever, but at the same time, not the sort of man for a Roman governor

to dispute with. He was very sorry to have to put Him to death, for there were so many good points about the poor Creature that he did not wish to let His enemies destroy Him. When the question of Christ's Kingdom came up, I can imagine how scornfully Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" How contemptuously he must have looked down upon such a poor emaciated Creature who seemed to be despised by everybody, as Christ said, "My Kingdom is not of this world," and Pilate asked, "Are You a king, then?" half laughing as he spoke. He must have felt as if he could fairly laugh Him to scorn and I have no doubt that it was in that spirit that he wrote, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," doing it in a vein of grim sardonic humor, first, towards the Jews and secondly, towards Christ Himself, as much as to say, "This is the great King that the Jews have been looking for. They are going to fight Caesar and get free--and this is the ringleader who is to help them to defeat all the legions of haughty Rome." Among the ungodly, at the present day, the idea of a piritualkingdom is quite beyond their comprehension--they cannot make out what it is. The relation between Church and State will not be settled by the statesmen of any political party. There is a very singular relation between the two, though they are as dissimilar as materialism is from spirit. The realms of the two often overlap one another--you cannot draw a line and say, "So far is the State, and so far is the Church." The fact is the true Church of God is never subordinate to the State-- it moves in another sphere altogether and rules after another fashion! A spiritualkingdom, according to some people, means certain laws and regulations that are drawn up by the bishops and synods and councils, but that kind of kingdom is no more spiritual than an Act passed by the House of Commons and the House of Lords! It is only another kingdom of the flesh, an ecclesiastical State of a similar kind to the secular

State, but as for the spiritual Kingdom of Jesus Christ, it is not a thing that you can see with your eyes or understand after the manner of men. "You must be born-again" in order to get into it, or even to see it! [See Sermon #3121, Volume 54--THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.] It is too ethereal to be checked by human legislation. It is a mighty power which Christ has set up in this world--a power mightier than all secular states combined--a Kingdom like the stone cut out of the mountain without hands which will break in pieces every other power and fill the whole earth in God's appointed time! Oh, that we saw its power more manifest nowadays in the hearts of men--the power of that Kingdom of which Christ is the King, this blessed Book is the Law, the Holy Spirit is the great Executive and each of us is a servant in the courts of the great King living and acting according to His will!

"Oh," you say, "this is ridiculous!" Yes, I thought you would say that. That is what the world always says of the Kingdom of Christ--that it is ridiculous. They can understand a kingdom in which there is a head like the Pope, and in which there are cardinals, bishops and priests. They can understand the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Archbishop of York, and all that appertains to Episcopalians, but to know that we are one with Christ, that He has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, that His saints are to reign with Him forever and that the weapons of our warfare, though not eternal, are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds"--they do not understand it, nor do they want to understand it! This is why they still hang up Christ the King and say, "If this is His Kingdom, we do not want to belong to it and we do not believe in it. Away with it! It is not worthy of our consideration, it is only a few low-minded fellows who will always be the subjects of such a Kingdom as that." This is "as it was in the

beginning" and "is now"--but not as it "ever shall be, world without end," for the King is coming, a second time, in all the splendor of His Glory and He will let the world know that although His Kingdom is not like others, and is not to be kept up by gold, pomp, rank, dignity and physical force, yet it is a Kingdom which shall last when earthly princes and thrones shall all have passed away! And everyone who belongs to that Kingdom shall possess a crown and a glory before which all the pomp of this world shall pale forever!

II. Now, secondly, I have to ask your attention to the subject in quite another way, IN REFERENCE TO CHRIST. What did that inscription over His head mean?

It meant, first, that Christ's honor was clear Look at the inscription over the head of that thief who is hanging on the next cross. "Put to death for robbery in the mountains where he was taken red-handed, having stabbed one of the guards who attempted to arrest him." You quite understand that inscription and you pass on to Jesus. You want to know about the crime of which He has been guilty--you are quite sure that they will put over His head an account of the worst thing He has ever done. There are the chief priests and scribes and a multitude of the Jews watching to see what is written--and there is Pilate wanting to excuse his own conscience. If he can write anything that will exonerate him from the guilt of putting Christ to death, he will be sure to write it. So he takes his pen in his hand and he writes, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." "Well," you say, "is that all that can be brought against Him, that He is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews?" Yes, that is His only offense--they cannot sum up His guilt in any other words. His crime is that He is what He is, that He was a Savior, that He dwelt at Nazareth and that He was the King of the Jews. Now, no exoneration of His Character could be better than

that of this official accusation against Him! And if this accusation brings nothing against Him, think how much may be said in His favor by His friends. When a man is brought before the judge, his accuser is quite sure to say all he can against him. And when Christ was about to be put to death, those who were responsible for that colossal crime had to make out as grave a charge against Him as they could. But this was all they could do--they could not bring anything else against Him except that He was Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. See, then, how absolutely without blemish and without spot was the Lamb of our Passover! See how He "knew no sin," though He was made a Sin-Offering for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Exult, Christians, in this public and official testimony to the spotless purity of His whole life and Character!

Next, as far as Christ is concerned, we may view this inscription as the explanation of His death as well as the clearing of His Character. Keep that superscription clearly in your mind's eye, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." That is the reason why He died. Jesus died first because He was Jesus, because He was the Savior. That is the meaning of it--not that He might merely be made an example--not only that He might bear witness to the Truth. But that cruel death means Atonement and salvation by Atonement. Let us all look up to Him upon the Cross. If we have done so before, let us look up to Him, again, and say, "Yes, blessed Lord, we see that You did die and that You did die to save us. And we magnify You because this was the cause of Your death, that You were the Savior." The whole title that Pilate wrote signified that Christ was the Messiah--and He died because He was the Messiah. "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself." This was the wonderful language of the Prophet Daniel, "cut off, but not for Himself." Cut off because He was the Sent One of God, the Anointed of

the Most High! The Prophet Zachariah had also recorded the Words of Jehovah, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts." There, Beloved, you have the whole reason for Christ's death condensed into a sentence! Jesus dies because He is the Savior, the anointed and prophesied Messiah, sent of God to be the King of the Jews and of the Gentles, too!

But, thirdly, as far as Christ was concerned, this inscription over His head was a claim which was there and then announced. He is hanging on the Cross and there is no trumpeter to make a proclamation of His kingship, but He does not need any such herald, for the same soldiers who fasten His hands to the wood, fasten up an inscription which is the best proclamation possible, for it is in three different languages that all mankind may read it, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." He claims to be King, so stand at the foot of the Cross, I pray you, and acknowledge His claim! If you would have Jesus to be your Savior, you must have Him as your King--you must submit to His government, for He claims the right to rule over all who acknowledge Him to be Jesus! More than that, He claims to rule all mankind, for all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth, and we are bidden to proclaim His Kingdom throughout the whole world and to say to all men, "Jesus of Nazareth is your King, bow down before Him. You kings, bow before Him, for He is King of kings! You lords and nobles, bow before Him, for He is Lord of lords! And all you sons and daughters of men, bow at His feet, for He must reign! And even if you are His enemies, He must reign over you! In spite of all your enmity and opposition, you must be brought to lie at His feet. The claims of Christ, therefore, were published even from the tree on which He died, so do not resist them, but willingly yield yourselves up to Jesus, now, and let Him be King to you henceforth and forever!

And then, not only was a claim of His Sovereignty made by the affixing of this title, but His reign was then and there proclaimed. In an earthly monarchy, as soon as one king is gone, it is usual to proclaim His successor. And by that accusation written up over the head of Christ, a proclamation was made throughout all the earth that Jesus had assumed the Throne and He has never ceased to reign! He went back to His Father and returned again to the earth and dwelt here for forty days. And then His feet left Mount Olive and He ascended to His Throne, and there He sits "expecting till His enemies are made His footstool." His Kingdom is established--do you all belong to it? It is a Kingdom that, in a certain sense, was recognized on the Cross by Pilate's proclamation, though it had existed long before, for His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom! Do you belong to it, or are you outside of it, opposed to it, or indifferent to it? Remember that he that is not with Christ is against Him! Those who are not on His side, He reckons to be on the other side! Are you, my Brothers and Sisters, in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, I know that you look with delight upon that inscription and as you trust to the blood of Christ to cleanse you, you cast your eyes up to that dear head that was crowned with thorns and rejoice to think that Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, is also your King and Lord and Savior!

I want to make just this other remark about this inscription. Inasmuch as Pilate would not alter it, it seems to me that God set forth to mankind that He would never have it altered. Pilate could have sent for that inscription and, with a few strokes of his pen, could have inserted the words that the chief priests wanted, "He said, I am King of the Jews."But Pilate would not do it and the High Priest could not do it--and the devil could not do it and all the devils in Hell and all the wicked men upon earth, with all their rage--cannot do it now! God

has said it as well as Pilate "What I have written, I have written."

"Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." He must reign and no power can ever take away His Kingdom from Him! His Church still prays, "Your Kingdom come," and that Kingdom is yet to come in all its fullness when the whole of Israel shall be gathered together and shall accept Him as their Lord and King! Yes, more than that, for "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him."

Dearly beloved Friends, this is the conclusion of the whole matter, let us cheerfully accept Him as our King. Have we done so? Then let us try to push His conquests on yet further and seek to extend the boundaries of His Kingdom. Are you doing this? Then, do it yet mare earnestly and do it with the right instrument, for the great weapon of conquest is the Cross. It was on the Cross that the proclamation was first lifted up and it is by the Cross that it must be carried to the ends of the earth--not by human learning or eloquence, not by bribery, or the help of the State and I know not what besides, but by the setting forth of Christ evidently crucified among the sons of men. The Cross is its own battle-axe and weapon of war. "In this sign shall you conquer." Let the whole Church preach Christ more, live Christ more and then the proclamation of His Kingdom, which was first fastened up on that Cross, shall be emblazoned throughout the whole world and the power of His Kingdom shall be felt to the very ends of the earth!

I looked into the darkness and I thought I saw a Cross before me. And I saw Him who did once hang upon it. But, as I looked at it, that Cross seemed to grow. It seemed to become a tree and I saw it strike its roots down deep until the lowest depths of human misery had been

touched and blessed by them. Then I saw that tree tower on high, piercing the clouds, passing through the very firmament up above the stars, lifting Believers up upon it and bearing them to the very Throne of God by its majestic power! Then I saw that tree stretch forth its mighty branches on every side. Their shadow fell across this highly-favored land of ours and also fell across the land on the other side of the sea. As I watched, the blessed branches stretched out to Europe, to Asia, to Africa, to America and to Australia, also. I watched it grow till it became so vast a tree that its shadow seemed to cover the whole earth! And I blessed and adored the God of Heaven that He had instituted so mighty a power for the blessing of the sons of men! O Jesus, once crucified but now exalted, so let it be! And let us be Your humble instruments in promoting the extension of Your blessed reign! And we will always adore You, as we do now, not only as "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," but as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN19:1-37.

Verse 1. Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. This was one of the most terrible punishments to which a man could be sentenced. The Roman scourge was no trifle. It tore off the quivering flesh of the agonized sufferer for it was constructed on purpose to do so. It was generally made of the sinews of oxen, intertwisted with the knuckle bones of sheep and small slivers of bone. This torture our blessed Savior endured. These are the stripes with which we are healed.

2. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Mockery was blended with cruelty. They might have made Him a crown, yet surely it need not have been one of thorns unless they intended to put Him to the utmost torment that

they could conceive. By this crown of thorns our blessed Lord was crowned King of the curse, for the earth was cursed through Adam's sin--and part of the sentence pronounced by God in the Garden of Eden was, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you." So Christ wore the mark of the curse which man's sin had brought upon the world.

3. And said, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him with their hands. This was the homage which the Son of God received from men! Harmless and gentle, He came here with no purpose but that of doing good--and this is how mankind treated Him.

4. 5. Pilate therefore went forth again, and said unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto them, Behold the Man!Was there ever such a sight of majesty in misery before or since? Yet He needed not to endure all that ignominy--He was no vanquished monarch unable to maintain His own rights. He was still "over all, God blessed forever," and He could have smitten everyone there to death if He had pleased to do so. But He was the Lamb of God's Passover, so He meekly suffered.

6, 7. When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, You take Him and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered Him. We have a Law, and by our Law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. They no doubt understood that He claimed to be Divine and so He did. I have heard some say that He was a good man, but not God. If He was not God, He was certainly not a good man, for no good man, who was only a man, would claim to be God, or lead others to believe that He was Divine! If He was not actually Divine, He was a rank impostor! But He was Divine and, therefore, we worship and adore Him equally with the Father and the Spirit.

8-10. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and said unto Jesus, Where are You from? But Jesus gave him no answer Then said Pilate unto Him, Speak You not unto me? Know You not that Ihave power to crucify You, and have power to release You?Pilate talks like some great one, yet how contemptibly little he was! Vacillating, cowardly, unable to do what he knew was right. His poor Victim who stood before Him was infinitely greater in character than he was.

11. Jesus answered, You could have no power at all against Me, except it were given you from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin.Christ referred to Judas and through him to the Jews who had conspired to put Him to death. But what tenderness it was on the part of Jesus to make an excuse as it were, even for Pilate! He was notable for making excuses for the guilty. That was a remarkable excuse that He pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." There was never another such a tender heart as His. He was so gentle and so kind that all their cruelty only moved Him to pity them and pray for them.

12-14. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend: whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar When Pilate therefore heard that crying, he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he said unto the Jews,

Behold your King! [See Sermon #1353, Volume 23--ECC REX.] What mockery there was in Pilate's use of this title, and yet how true it was! They asked to have Christ put to death, yet He was their King. Their accusation was transparently false and Pilate made them see that

it was so.

15-17. But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him away. And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha.The Inspired writers seem to delight to give us the Hebrew names of these notable places that are linked with Christ's last agonies. And they are still very precious to Christians, Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha-- three names never to be forgotten by those who were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ!

18. Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst As if to show that they thought Him the worst of the three and, therefore, gave Him--shall I call it the place of chief dishonor?

19, 20. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the Cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.So that all who gathered around the Cross might read it.

21, 22. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews, but that He said, I am king of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.He could be stubborn about some things which shows that he had strength of mind if he had chosen to use it. Yet He was beaten to and fro like a shuttlecock by these wicked men and seemed to have no power to resist them.

23. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments. For they had stripped Him. He must be naked because sin makes us naked and His garments must be a covering for us. They "took His

garments"--

23, 24. Andmade four parts, to every soldier a part; andalso His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled.They knew nothing about that ancient prophecy, yet God ordained that they should act thus, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

24. Which says, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. Doubtless, on the dice there fell the blood of Christ, yet they still gambled there. There is, perhaps, no sin which so effectually hardens the heart as that of gambling--it is a sin with which Christians should not have even the remotest connection!

25-30. Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore sa w His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold your son! Then said He to the disciple, Behold your mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished! [See Sermons #421,

Volume 7--IT IS FINISHED! and #2344, Volume 40--CHRIST'S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH.] Consummatum est. "The work is done, Redemption is accomplished. The salvation of My people is forever secured."

30-37. And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not

remain upon the Cross on the Sabbath, (for that Sabbath was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith came out bloodand water. Andhe that saw it bares record and his record is true: andhe knows that what he says is true, that you might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture says, They shall look upon Him whom they pierced.

Chapter 51

Real Contact With Jesus

(No. 3124)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Jesus said, Somebody touched Me: for I perceived power going out from Me." Luke 8:46.

OUR Lord was very frequently in the midst of a crowd. His preaching was so plain and so forcible that He always attracted a vast company of hearers and, moreover, the rumor of the loaves and fishes no doubt had something to do with increasing His audiences, while the expectation of beholding a miracle would be sure to add to the numbers of the hangers-on. Our Lord Jesus Christ often found it difficult to move through the streets because of the masses who pressed upon Him. This was encouraging to Him as a Preacher and yet how small a residue of real good came of all the excitement which gathered around His personal ministry! He might have looked upon the great mass and have said, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" for here it was piled up upon the threshing floor, heap upon heap, and yet, after His decease, His disciples might have been counted by a few scores, for those who had spiritually received Him were but few. Many were called, but few were chosen. Yet, wherever one was blessed, our Savior took note of it--it touched a chord in His soul. He could never be unaware when virtue had gone out of Him to heal a sick one, or when power had gone forth with His ministry to save a sinful one. Of all the crowd that gathered around the Savior upon the day of which our text speaks, I find nothing said about one of them except this solitary "somebody" who had touched Him!

The crowd came, and the crowd went, but little is recorded of it all. Just as the ocean, having advanced to full tide, leaves but little behind it when it retires again to its channel, so the vast multitude around the Savior left only this one precious deposit--one "somebody" who had touched Him and had received power from Him.

Ah, my Master, it may be so again this evening! These Sabbath mornings and these Sabbath evenings the crowds come pouring in like a mighty ocean, filling this House of Prayer, and then they all retire again.

Only here and there is a "somebody" left weeping for sin, a "somebody" left rejoicing in Christ, a "somebody" who can say, "I have touched the hem of His garment and I have been made whole." The whole of my other hearers are not worth the "somebodies." The many of you are not worth the few, for the many are the pebbles and the few are the diamonds! The many are the heaps of husks and the few are the precious grains! May God find them out at this hour and His shall be all the praise!

Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me," from which we observe that in the use of means and ordinances, we should never be satisfied unless we get into personal contact with Christ, s o that we touch Him, as this woman touched His garment. Secondly, if we get into such personal contact, we shall have a blessing. "I perceived power going out from Me." And thirdly, if we do get a blessing, Christ will know it However obscure our case may be, He will know it and He will have us let others know it--He will speak, and ask such questions as will draw us out and manifest us to the world!

I. First, then, IN THE USE OF ALL MEANS AND ORDINANCES, LET IT BE OUR CHIEF AIM AND OBJECTIVE TO COME INTO PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Peter said, "The multitude throng You and press You," and that is true of the multitudes to this very day. But of those who come where Christ

is in the assembly of His saints, a large proportion only come because it is their custom to do so. Perhaps they hardly know why they go to a place of worship. They go because they always did and they think it wrong not to go. They are just like the doors which swing upon their hinges. They take interest only in the exterior parts of the service--into the heart and soul of the business they do not enter--and cannot enter. They are glad if the sermon is rather short, there is so much the less tedium for them. They are glad if they can look around and gaze at the congregation--they find in that something to interest them. But getting near to the Lord Jesus is not the business they come upon. They have not looked at it in that light. They come and they go. They come and they go--and it will be so till, by-and-by, they will come for the last time and they will find out in the next world that the means of Grace were not instituted to be matters of custom--and that to have heard Jesus Christ preached and to have rejected Him is no trifle, but a solemn thing for which they will have to answer in the Presence of the great Judge of all the earth! Others there are who come to the House of Prayer and try to enter into the service and do so in a certain fashion, but it is only self-righteously or professionally. They may come to the Lord's Table--perhaps they attend to the ordinance of Baptism. They may even join the Church. They are baptized, yet not by the Holy Spirit. They take the Lord's Supper, but they take not the Lord, Himself. They eat the bread, but they never eat His flesh. They drink the wine, but they never drink His blood. They have been buried in the pool, but they have never been buried with Christ in Baptism, nor have they risen again with Him into newness of life! To them, to read, to sing, to kneel, to hear and so on are enough. They are content with the shell, but the blessed spiritual kernel--the true marrow and fatness--these they know

nothing of. These are the many, no matter into what Church or meetinghouse you enter. They are in the press around Jesus, but they do not touch Him. They come, but they come not into contact with Jesus. They are outward, external hearers only, but there is no inward touching of the blessed Person of Christ, no mysterious contact with the ever-blessed Savior, no stream of life and love flowing from Him to them. It is all mechanical religion. Of vital godliness, they know nothing.

But Christ said, "Somebody touched Me," and that is the soul of the matter. O my Hearer, when you are in prayer alone, never be satisfied with having prayed! Do not give it up till you have touched Christ in prayer or, if you have not got to Him, at any rate sigh and cry until you do! Do not think you have prayed, but try again. When you come to public worship, I beseech you, rest not satisfied with listening to the sermon and so on--as you all do with sufficient attention and to that I bear you witness--but do not be content unless you get at Christ, the Master, and touch Him! At all times when you come to the Communion Table, count it to have been no ordinance of Grace to you unless you have gone right through the veil into Christ's own arms, or at least have touched His garment, feeling that the first objective, the life and soul of the means of Grace, is to touch Jesus Christ Himself--and unless "somebody" has touched Him, the whole has been a mere dead performance without life or power!

The woman in our text was not only among those who were in the crowd, but she touched Jesus and, therefore, Beloved, let me hold her up to your example in some respects, though I would to God that in other respects you might excel her!

Note, first, she felt that it was of no use to be in the crowd, of no use to be in the same street with Christ, or near to the place where

Christ was, but she must get at Him--she must touch Him. She touched Him, you will notice, under many difficulties. There was a great crowd. She was a woman. She was also a woman enfeebled by a disease which had long drained her constitution and left her more fit to be upon a bed than to be struggling in the seething tumult. Yet, notwithstanding that, so intense was her desire, that she urged on her way, I doubt not with many a bruise and many an uncouth push and at last, poor trembler as she was, she got near to the Lord. Beloved, it is not always easy to get at Jesus. It is very easy to kneel down to pray, but not so easy to reach Christ in prayer. There is a child crying, it is your own, and its noise has often hindered you when you were striving to approach Jesus. Or a knock will come at the door when you most wish to be retired. When you are sitting in the House of God, your neighbor in the seat before you may unconsciously distract your attention. It is not easy to draw near to Christ, especially coming as some of you do right from the counting-house or from the workshop with a thousand thoughts and cares about you. You cannot always unload your burden outside and come in here with your hearts prepared to receive the Gospel. Ah, it is a terrible fight sometimes--a real toe-to-toe fight with evil, with temptation and I know not what! But Beloved, do fight it out, do fight it out! Do not let your seasons for prayer be wasted, nor your times for hearing be thrown away, but like this woman be resolved, with all your feebleness, that you will lay hold upon Christ! And oh, if you are resolved about it, if you cannot get to Him, He will come to you and sometimes, when you are struggling against unbelieving thoughts, He will turn and say, "Make room for that poor feeble one, that she may come to Me, for My desire is to the work of My own hands. Let her come to Me and let her desire be granted to her."

Observe again that this woman touched Jesus very secretly. Perhaps

there is a dear Sister here who is getting near to Christ at this very moment and yet her face does not betray her. It is so little contact that she has gained with Christ that the joyous flush and the sparkle of the eyes which we often see in the child of God, have not yet come to her. She is sitting in yonder obscure corner, or standing in this aisle, but though her touch is secret, it is true. Though she cannot tell another of it, yet it is accomplished. She has touched Jesus! Beloved, that is not always the nearest fellowship with Christ of which we talk the most. Deep waters are still. No, I am not sure but what we sometimes get nearer to Christ when we think we are at a distance than we do when we imagine we are near Him, for we are not always the best judges of our own spiritual state. And we may be very close to the Master and yet, for all that, we may be so anxious to get closer that we may feel dissatisfied with the measure of Grace which we have already received. To be satisfied with self is no sign of Grace! To long for more Grace is often a far better evidence of the healthy state of the soul. Friend, if you are not coming to the Table tonight publicly, come to the Master in secret. If you dare not tell your wife, or your child, or your father, that you are trusting in Jesus, it need not be told as yet. You may do it secretly, as he did to whom Jesus said, "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael retired to the shade that no one might see him--but Jesus saw him and marked his prayer--and He will see you in the crowd, and in the dark--and not withhold His blessing!

This woman also came into contact with Christ under a very deep sense of unworthiness. I daresay she thought, "If I touch the Great Prophet, it will be a wonder if He does not strike me with some sudden judgment," for she was a woman ceremonially unclean. She had no right to be in the throng. Had the Levitical Law been strictly carried out, I

suppose she would have been confined to her house. But there she was, wandering about, and she must go and touch the holy Savior! Ah, poor Heart, you feel that you are not fit to touch the hem of the Master's robe, for you are so unworthy! You never before felt so undeserving as you do at this moment. In the recollection of last week and its infirmities, in the remembrance of the present state of your heart and all its wanderings from God, you feel as if there never was so worthless a sinner in the House of God before. "Is Grace for me?" you ask. "Is Christ for me?" Oh, yes, unworthy one! Do not be put off without it! Jesus Christ does not save the worthy, but the unworthy! Your plea must not be righteousness, but guilt! And you, too, child of God, though you are ashamed of yourself, Jesus is not ashamed of you. And though you feel unfit to come, let your unfitness only impel you with the greater earnestness of desire. Let your sense of need make you the more fervent to approach the Lord who can supply your need. Thus, you see, the woman came under difficulties, she came secretly, she came as an unworthy one, but still she obtained the blessing!

I have known many staggered with that saying of Paul's, "He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself." Now understand that this passage does not refer to that unworthiness of those persons who come to the Lord's Table, for it does not say, "He that eats and drinks, being unworthy." I t is not an adjective--it is an adverb--"He that eats and drinks unworthily" that is to say, he who shall come to the outward and visible sign of Christ's Presence, and shall eat of the bread in order to obtain money by being a member of the Church, knowing himself to be a hypocrite, or who shall do it jestingly, trifling with the ordinance--such a person would be eating and drinking unworthily and he will be condemned! The sense of the passage is, not, "damnation," as our version reads it, but

"condemnation." There can be no doubt that members of the Church coming to the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner, do receive condemnation. They are condemned for so doing and the Lord is grieved. If they have any conscience at all, they ought to feel their sin. And if not, they may expect the chastisements of God to visit them. But, O Sinner, as to coming to Christ--which is a very different thing from coming to the Lord's Table--as to coming to Christ, the more unworthy you feel yourself to be, the better! Come, you filthy one, for Christ can wash you! Come, you loathsome one, for Christ can beautify you! Come utterly ruined and undone, for in Jesus Christ there is the strength and salvation which your case requires!

Notice, once again, that this woman touched the Master very tremblingly and it was only a hurried touch, but still it was a token of faith. Oh, Beloved, to lay hold on Christ! Be thankful if you do but get near Him for a few minutes. "Abide with me," should be your prayer, but oh if He should only give you a glimpse of Himself, be thankful! Remember that a touch healed the woman! She did not embrace Christ by the hour together. She had but a touch and she was healed! And oh, may you have a sight of Jesus now, my Beloved! Though it is but a glimpse, yet it will gladden and cheer your souls. Perhaps you are waiting on Christ, desiring His company, and while you are turning the matter over in your mind you are asking, "Will He ever shine upon me? Will He ever speak loving words to me? Will He ever let me sit at His feet? Will He ever permit me to lean my head upon His bosom?" Come and try Him! Though you should shake like an aspen leaf, yet come! They sometimes come best who come most tremblingly, for, when the creature is lowest, then is the Creator highest--and when, in our own esteem, we are less than nothing and vanity, then is Christ the more fair and lovely in our eyes! One of the best ways of climbing to Heaven is on our hands and knees. At any

rate, there is no fear of falling when we are in that position for--
"He that is down need fear no fall." Let your lowliness of heart, your sense of utter nothingness, instead of disqualifying you, be a sweet medium for leading you to receive more of Christ. The more empty I am, the more room is there for my Master. The more I lack, the more He will give me. The more I feel my sickness, the more shall I adore and bless Him when He makes me whole!

You see, the woman did really touch Christ, and so I come back to that. Whatever infirmity there was in the touch, it was a real touch of faith. She did reach Christ, Himself. She did not touch Peter, that would have been of no use to her any more than it is for the parish priest to tell you that you are regenerate when your life soon proves that you are not. She did not touch John or James--that would have been of no more good to her than it is for you to be touched by a bishop's hands and to be told that you are confirmed in the faith when you are not even a Believer and, therefore, have no faith to be confirmed in! She touched the Master Himself and I pray you, do not be content unless you can do the same! Put out the hand of faith and touch Christ. Rest on Him. Rely on His atoning Sacrifice, His dying love, His rising power, His ascended plea--and as you rest in Him, your vital touch, however feeble, will certainly give you the blessing your soul needs!

This brings me to the second part of my discourse, upon which I will only say a little.

II. THE WOMAN IN THE CROWD DID TOUCH JESUS AND, HAVING DONE SO, SHE RECEIVED POWER FROM HIM.

The healing energy streamed at once though the finger of faith into the woman. In Christ, there is healing for all spiritual diseases. There is a speedy healing, a healing which will not take months nor years, but which is complete in one second! There is in Christ a sufficient

healing, though your diseases should be multiplied beyond all bounds. There is in Christ an all-conquering power to drive out every ill. Though, like this woman, you baffle physicians and your case is reckoned desperate beyond all parallel, yet a touch of Christ will heal you! What a precious, glorious Gospel I have to preach to sinners! If they touch Jesus, no matter though the devil himself were in them, that touch of faith would drive the devil out of them! Though you were like the man into whom there had entered a legion of devils, the word of Jesus would cast then all into the deep and you would sit at His feet, clothed, and in your right mind! There is no excess or extravagance of sin which the power of Jesus Christ cannot overcome. If you can believe, whatever you may have been, you shall be saved! If you can believe, though you have been lying in the scarlet dye till the warp and woof of your being are ingrained therewith, yet shall the precious blood of Jesus make you white as snow! Though you have become black as Hell itself, and only fit to be cast into the Pit, yet if you trust Jesus, that simple faith shall give to your soul the healing which shall make you fit to tread the streets of Heaven and to stand before Jehovah-Rophi's face, magnifying the Lord that heals you!

And now, child of God, I want you to learn the same lesson. Very likely when you came in here, you said, "Alas, I feel very dull. My spiritually is at a very low ebb. The place is hot and I do not feel prepared to hear--the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak--I shall have no holy enjoyment today!" Why not? Why, the touch of Jesus could make you live if you were dead! And surely it will stir the life that is in you, though it may seem to you to be expiring! Now, struggle hard, my Beloved, to get at Jesus! May the Eternal Spirit come and help you and may you yet find that your dull, dead time can soon become your best times! Oh, what a blessing it is that God takes the beggar up from

the dunghill! He does not raise us when He sees us already up, but when He finds us lying on the dunghill--then He delights to lift us up and set us among princes! Before you are aware, your soul may become like the chariots of Amminadib. Up from the depths of heaviness to the very heights of ecstatic worship you may mount in a single moment if you can but touch Christ Crucified! View Him yonder, with streaming wounds, with thorn-crowned head as, in all the majesty of His misery, He expires for you!

"Alas," you say, "I have a thousand doubts tonight," Ah, but your doubts will soon vanish when you draw near to Christ! He never doubts who feels the touch of Christ--at least not when the touch lasts. For, observe this woman--she felt in her body that she was made whole, and so shall you, if you will only come into contact with the Lord. Do not wait for evidences, but come to Christ for evidences! If you cannot even dream of a good thing in yourselves, come to Jesus Christ as you did the first time! Come to Him as if you never had come at all. Come to Jesus as a sinner and your doubts shall flee away.

"Yes," says another, "but my sins come to my remembrance, my sins since conversion." Well, then, return to Jesus when your guilt seems to return. The fountain is still open and that fountain, you will remember, is not only open for sinners, but for saints! What do the Scriptures say? "There shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem"--that is, for you Church members--for you Believers in Jesus! The fountain is still open! Come, Beloved, come to Jesus anew, and whatever your sins are, or doubts, or heaviness, they shall all depart as soon as you can touch your Lord!

III. And now the last point is--and I will not detain you long upon it--IF SOMEBODY SHALL TOUCH JESUS, THE LORD WILL KNOW IT. I do not know your names. A great number of you are perfect strangers

to me. It matters nothing--your name is "somebody," and Christ will know you! You are a total stranger, perhaps, to everybody in this place, but if you get a blessing, there will be two who will know it--you will and Christ will. Oh, if you should look to Jesus this day, it may not be registered in our Church book, and we may not hear of it, but it will still be registered in the courts of Heaven and they will set all the bells of the New Jerusalem ringing and all the harps of angels will take a fresh lease of music as soon as they know that you are born-again!--

"With joy the Father does approve
The fruit of His eternal love!
The Son with joy looks down and sees
The purchase of His agonies!
The Spirit takes delight to view
The holy soul He formed anew
And saints and angels join to sing
The growing empire of their King!" "Somebody!" I do not know the woman's name. I do not know who the man is, but--"Somebody!"--God's electing love rests on you! Christ's redeeming blood was shed for you! The Spirit has worked an effectual work in you, or you would not have touched Jesus--and all this Jesus knows!

It is a consoling thought that Christ not only knows the great children in the family, but He also knows the little ones. This Truth of God stands fast, "The Lord knows them who are His," whether they are only brought to know Him now, or whether they have known Him for 50 years. "The Lord knows them who are His." And if I am a part of Christ's body, I may be but the foot, but the Lord knows the foot--and the head and the heart in Heaven feel acutely when the foot on earth is bruised! If you have touched Jesus, I tell you that amidst the glories of angels

and the everlasting hallelujahs of all the blood-bought souls around His Throne, He has found time to hear your sigh, to receive your faith and to give you an answer of peace! All the way from Heaven to earth there has rushed a mighty stream of healing power which has come from Christ to you! Since you have touched Him, the healing power has touched you!

Now, as Jesus knows of your salvation, He wishes other people to know of it, and that is why He has put it into my heart to say, "Somebody has touched the Lord." Where is that somebody? Somebody, where are you? Somebody, where are you? You have touched Christ, though with a feeble finger, and you are saved! Let us know it. It is due to us to let us know. You cannot guess what joy it gives us when we hear of sick ones being healed by our Master! Some of you, perhaps, have known the Lord for months and you have not yet come forward to make an announcement of it--we beg you to do so. You may come forward tremblingly, as this woman did. You may perhaps say, "I do not know what I should tell you." Well, you must tell us what she told the Lord--she told Him all the truth. We do not want to hear anything else. We do not desire any sham experience. We do not want you to manufacture feelings like somebody else's that you have read of in a book. Come and tell us what you have felt! We shall not ask you to tell us what you have not felt, or what you

do not know. But, if you have touched Christ and you have been healed, I ask it, and I think I may ask it as your duty, as well as a favor to us, to come and tell us what the Lord has done for your soul!

And you, Believers, when you come to the Lord's Table, if you draw near to Christ and have a sweet season, tell it to your Brothers and Sisters. Just as when Benjamin's brothers went down to Egypt to buy corn, they left Benjamin at home, but they took a sack for Benjamin, so

you ought always to take a word home for the sick wife at home, or the child who cannot come out. Take home food for those of the family who cannot come for it. God grant that you may always have something sweet to tell of what you have experimentally known of the precious Truth of God, for while the sermon may have been sweet in itself, it comes with a double power when you can add, "and there was a savor about it which I enjoyed, and which made my heart leap for joy!"

Whoever you may be, my dear Friend, though you may be nothing but a poor "somebody," yet if you have touched Christ, tell others about it in order that they may come and touch Him, too! And the Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN3.1-21.

[This Exposition belongs to Sermon #3121, Volume 54--THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION, but there was no space available for it there.]

Let us once more read together part of this blessed soul-saving chapter. I suppose that more souls have been saved through the reading of this chapter than through almost any other portion of Holy Writ.

Verses 1, 2. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night.He could not have come at a better time--the business of the day was over and all was quiet.

2. And said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do except God is with him. It is always well to go as far as you can in your avowal of belief in Christ. Nicodemus confessed what he knew to be true and he drew from it the thoroughly accurate conclusion that Christ must be a Teacher come from God because of the miracles which He worked. Dear Hearer, if you do not yet fully know Christ, take heed that you do not trifle with the Truth of God which you do know. If God has taught you a little about Him, prize that little and you shall have more! As we have often

said, "He that values moonlight shall yet have sunlight." Thank God if you know as much as Nicodemus knew--and ask Him to teach you more.

3, 4. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?'Staggering at the symbol, he stumbled at the letter of Christ's saying and did not perceive its inward sense.

5, 6. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, Isay unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Flesh, and nothing more. And it never can be anything more than flesh. The first birth brings no one any further than that. The children of the most godly parents, so far as their sinful nature is concerned, are in precisely the same condition as the offspring of the most ungodly. If they are ever to be numbered among the children of God, they must be born-again, because "that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

6. And that which is born of the Spirit. And that alone--

6. Is spirit. Now, the flesh cannot enter into the spiritual Kingdom, only the spirit can enter that realm and, hence the need of a new birth, that this spirit may be created in us.

7, 8. Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. He is a mystery. The effect of the work of the Spirit upon him is seen in him, but no man understands what the Spirit of God is, or how He

works, any more than he knows from where the wind [See Sermons #630, Volume 11--THE HOLY SPIRIT COMPARED TO THE WIND and #1356, Volume

comes, or where it goes.

9, 10. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things? A very similar query to that might be put to some who are living now--

"Are you profound philosophers, students deeply learned in classic lore, or wise concerning many of the mysteries of nature--yet know you not these things? What will be the good of all your knowledge if you do not know how to gain admission into the Kingdom of Heaven? It would be better for a man to be ignorant of all other things, and to know this one thing, than to have all possible human learning, and yet to miss this knowledge which is the most essential of all!

11. Verily, verily, I say unto you. [See Sermon #3053, Volume 53--JESUS CHRIST'S IDIOM.] Christ speaks with an authority that no mere human teacher can ever possess.

11. We speak what We know, and testify what We have seen; and you receive not Our witness. In a certain sense, every true minister of Christ and every true child of God can say this, for we know that there is a spiritual Kingdom. We have seen it, we have entered into it and we can testify that there is another life which is as much superior to the ordinary life of men as the life of men is superior to that of the brutes that perish! And we know that we have that superior life. We have other eyes than these eyes that are visible, and other ears than the ears of our flesh. There is a higher and better life to be enjoyed even now, and he that believes in Christ has that life. "We speak what we know and testify what we have seen," and yet, though our testimony would be believed if we gave it concerning anything else, we are not believed when we witness concerning this higher and better life!

12. If I have told you earthly things. Things that take place here below, such as the new birth.

12. And you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?'Christ will not go on to teach us the deepest Doctrines of the Christian faith if we will not learn that which is simplest. Shall the boy be taught the classics if he will not study the spelling book? If men will not believe that there is such a thing as the new birth, shall they be taught the Doctrine of Union to Christ, and all those higher Truths of God that rise out of it? They would not believe these things if they were taught them!

13. And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven. There was a nut that Nicodemus could not crack--a riddle that he could not solve--and the Savior left him thus puzzled, for the time being, that he might learn that unless he was taught of the Spirit, he could not understand the teaching of Christ. You and I, who have been taught of the Spirit, understand the meaning of these words, but Nicodemus did not, though he was "a master of Israel." Now follows another passage of Scripture which I always rejoice to read in this Chapter. There are two great Truths revealed here--the one is that we must be born-again and the other is that whoever believes in Christ is saved. Sometimes those two Truths seem to come into conflict with one another. A man says, "You say to me, 'Only believe, and you shall be saved.' And then, by-and-by, you tell me that I must be born-again. Are both these statements true?" Yes, they are both true, and they are both in this Chapter. We have been reading about the necessity of regeneration, now comes the glorious freeness of the Gospel of Christ!

14. 15. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should

not perish but have eternal life. You must be born into a new life if you are to be saved! How are you to have that great blessing? There is life for a look at Jesus Christ lifted up upon the Cross and lifted up in the preaching of the Gospel. Look to Him, then, and as surely as those who were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness were healed the moment that they looked at the serpent of brass, [See Sermon #153, Volume 3--the mysteries of the bronze serpent.] so surely shall every son or daughter of Adam who gives a faith-look at the Crucified Savior, be saved at once and forever!

16, 17. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.There was no necessity for Christ to come here to condemn us, for we were already condemned by our sin! Why, then, did Jesus come? He must have come upon an errand of mercy, to bring salvation to the lost. It is even so--God sent Him for that very purpose, that He might give eternal life to as many as believe on Him. Oh, the glorious freeness of this precious Gospel! Surely they deserve the deepest Hell who will not have Heaven upon such terms! They must forever perish if they reject life when it is set before them in this truly gracious manner!

18, 19. He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation. The very first form of it, the proof of it, and the reason for it--"This is the condemnation."

19-21. That light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil For everyone that does evil

hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are worked in God. Those who love their sins cannot, at the same time, love the Savior! They must love the one and hate the other--and it is a terrible choice when they deliberately reject the only Savior, "the Light of the world," and choose the darkness of sin, the darkness of woe, the outer darkness where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!

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

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