

SPURGEONS SERMONS VOLUME 24 1878

by C.H. Spurgeon

Volume 24 of Spurgeon's collected sermons, containing messages preached during 1878 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. These sermons showcase Spurgeon's powerful biblical exposition, vivid illustrations, and passionate gospel proclamation that drew thousands to hear the 'Prince of Preachers' during his Metropolitan Tabernacle ministry.

5 Chapters

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Spurgeons Sermons Volume 24 1878

The Shortest of the Seven Cries

A Sermon (No.1409) Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 14th, 1878, by C. H. SPURGEON, At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." -- John 19:28. IT was most fitting that every word of our Lord upon the cross should be gathered up and preserved. As not a bone of him shall be broken, so not a word shall be lost. The Holy Spirit took special care that each of the sacred utterances should be fittingly recorded. There were, as you know, seven of those last words, and seven is the number of perfection and fulness; the number which blends the three of the infinite God with the four of complete creation. Our Lord in his death-cries, as in all else, was perfection itself. There is a fulness of meaning in each utterance which no man shall be able fully to bring forth, and when combined they make up a vast deep of thought, which no human line can fathom. Here, as everywhere else, we are constrained to say of our Lord, "Never man spake like this man." Amid all the anguish of his spirit his last words prove him to have remained fully self-possessed, true to his forgiving nature, true to his kingly office, true to his filial relationship, true to his God, true to his love of the written word, true to his glorious work, and true to his faith in his Father. As these seven sayings were so faithfully recorded, we do not wonder that they have frequently been the subject of devout meditation. Fathers and confessors, preachers and divines have delighted to dwell upon every syllable of these matchless cries. These solemn sentences have shone like the seven golden candlesticks or the seven stars of the Apocalypse, and have lighted multitudes of men to him who spake them. Thoughtful men have drawn a wealth of meaning from them, and in so doing have arranged them into different groups, and placed them under several heads. I cannot give you more than a mere taste of this rich subject, but I have been most struck with two ways of regarding our Lord's last words. First, they teach and confirm many of the doctrines of our holy faith. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" is the first. Here is the forgiveness of sin -- free forgiveness in answer to the Saviour's plea. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Here is the safety of the believer in the hour of his departure, and his instant admission into the presence of his Lord. It is a blow at the fable of purgatory which strikes it to the heart. "Women, behold thy son!" This very plainly sets forth the true and proper humanity of Christ, who to the end recognised his human relationship to Mary, of whom he was born. Yet his language teaches us not to worship her, for he calls her "woman," but to honor him in whom his direst agony thought of her needs and griefs, as he also thinks of all his people, for these are his mother and sister and brother. "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" is the fourth cry, and it illustrates the penalty endured by our Substitute when he bore our sins, and so was forsaken of his God. The sharpness of that sentence no exposition can fully disclose to us: it is keen as the very edge and point of the sword which pierced his heart. "I thirst" is the fifth cry, and its utterance teaches us the truth of Scripture, for all things were accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and therefore our Lord said, "I thirst." Holy Scripture remains the basis of our faith, established by every word and act of our Redeemer. The last word but one, "It is finished." There is the complete justification of the believer, since the work by which he is accepted is fully accomplished. The last of his last words is also taken from the Scriptures, and shows where his mind was feeding. He

cried, ere he bowed the head which he had held erect amid all his conflict, as one who never yielded, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." In that cry there is reconciliation to God. He who stood in our stead has finished all his work, and now his spirit comes back to the Father, and he brings us with him. Every word, therefore, you see teaches us some grand fundamental doctrine of our blessed faith. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." A second mode of treating these seven cries is to view them as setting forth the person and offices of our Lord who uttered them. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" -- here we see the Mediator interceding: Jesus standing before the Father pleading for the guilty. "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise" -- this is the Lord Jesus in kingly power, opening with the key of David a door which none can shut, admitting into the gates of heaven the poor soul who had confessed him on the tree. Hail, everlasting King in heaven, thou dost admit to thy paradise whomsoever thou wilt! Nor dost thou set a time for waiting, but instantly thou dost set wide the gate of pearl; thou hast all power in heaven as well as upon earth. Then came, "Women, behold thy son!" wherein we see the Son of man in the gentleness of a son caring for his bereaved mother. In the former cry, as he opened Paradise, you saw the Son of God; now you see him who was verily and truly born of a woman, made under the law; and under the law you see him still, for he honours his mother and cares for her in the last article of death. Then comes the "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here we behold his human soul in anguish, his inmost heart overwhelmed by the withdrawing of Jehovah's face, and made to cry out as if in perplexity and amazement. "I thirst," is his human body tormented by grievous pain. Here you see how the mortal flesh had to share in the agony of the inward spirit. "It is finished" is the last word but one, and there you see the perfected Saviour, the Captain of our salvation, who has completed the undertaking upon which he had entered, finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in ever lasting righteousness. The last expiring word in which he commended his spirit to his Father, is the note of acceptance for himself and for us all. As he commends his spirit into the Father's hand, so does he bring all believers nigh to God, and henceforth we are in the hand of the Father, who is greater than all, and none shall pluck us thence. Is not this a fertile field of thought? May the Holy Spirit often lead us to glean therein. There are many other ways in which these words might be read, and they would be found to be all full of instruction. Like the steps of a ladder or the links of a golden chain, there is a mutual dependence and interlinking of each of the cries, so that one leads to another and that to a third. Separately or in connection our Master's words overflow with instruction to thoughtful minds: but of all save one I must say, "Of which we cannot now speak particularly." Our text is the shortest of all the words of Calvary; it stands as two words in our language -- "I thirst," but in the Greek it is only one. I cannot say that it is short and sweet, for, alas, it was bitterness itself to our Lord Jesus; and yet out of its bitterness I trust there will come great sweetness to us. Though bitter to him in the speaking it will be sweet to us in the hearing, -- so sweet that all the bitterness of our trials shall be forgotten as we remember the vinegar and gall of which he drank. We shall by the assistance of the Holy Spirit try to regard these words of our Saviour in a five-fold light. First, we shall look upon them as THE ENSIGN OF HIS TRUE HUMANITY. Jesus said, "I thirst," and this is the complaint of a man. Our Lord is the Maker of the ocean and the waters that are above the firmament: it is his hand that stays or opens the bottles of heaven, and sendeth rain upon the evil and upon the good. "The sea is his, and he made it," and all fountains and springs are of his digging. He poureth out the streams that run among the hills, the torrents which rush adown the mountains, and the flowing rivers which enrich the plains.

One would have said, If he were thirsty he would not tell us, for all the clouds and rains would be glad to refresh his brow, and the brooks and streams would joyously flow at his feet. And yet, though he was Lord of all he had so fully taken upon himself the form of a servant and was so perfectly made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that he cried with fainting voice, "I thirst." How truly man he is; he is, indeed, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," for he bears our infirmities. I invite you to meditate upon the true humanity of our Lord very reverently, and very lovingly. Jesus was proved to be really man, because he suffered the pains which belong to manhood. Angels cannot suffer thirst. A phantom, as some have called him, could not suffer in his fashion: but Jesus really suffered, not only the more refined pains of delicate and sensitive minds, but the rougher and commoner pangs of flesh and blood. Thirst is a common-place misery, such as may happen to peasants or beggars; it is a real pain, and not a thing of a fancy or a nightmare of dreamland. Thirst is no royal grief, but an evil of universal manhood; Jesus is brother to the poorest and most humble of our race. Our Lord, however, endured thirst to an extreme degree, for it was the thirst of death which was upon him, and more, it was the thirst of one whose death was not a common one, for "he tasted death for every man." That thirst was caused, perhaps, in part by the loss of blood, and by the fever created by the irritation caused by his four grievous wounds. The nails were fastened in the most sensitive parts of the body, and the wounds were widened as the weight of his body dragged the nails through his blessed flesh, and tore his tender nerves. The extreme tension produced a burning feverishness. It was pain that dried his mouth and made it like an oven, till he declared, in the language of the twenty-second psalm, "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws." It was a thirst such as none of us have ever known, for not yet has the death dew condensed upon our brows. We shall perhaps know it in our measure in our dying hour, but not yet, nor ever so terribly as he did. Our Lord felt that grievous drought of dissolution by which all moisture seems dried up, and the flesh returns to the dust of death: this those know who have commenced to tread the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus, being a man, escaped none of the ills which are allotted to man in death. He is indeed "Immanuel, God with us" everywhere. Believing this, let us tenderly feel how very near akin to us our Lord Jesus has become. You have been ill, and you have been parched with fever as he was, and then you too have gasped out "I thirst." Your path runs hard by that of your Master. He said, "I thirst," in order that one might bring him drink, even as you have wished to have a cooling draught handed to you when you could not help yourself. Can you help feeling how very near Jesus is to us when his lips must be moistened with a sponge, and he must be so dependent upon others as to ask drink from their hand? Next time your fevered lips murmur "I am very thirsty," you may say to yourself, "Those are sacred words, for my Lord spake in that fashion." The words, "I thirst," are a common voice in death chambers. We can never forget the painful scenes of which we have been witness, when we have watched the dissolving of the human frame. Some of those whom we loved very dearly we have seen quite unable to help themselves; the death sweat has been upon them, and this has been one of the marks of their approaching dissolution, that they have been parched with thirst, and could only mutter between their half-closed lips, "Give me to drink." Ah, beloved, our Lord was so truly man that all our griefs remind us of him: the next time we are thirsty we may gaze upon him; and whenever we see a friend faint and thirsting while dying we may behold our Lord dimly, but truly, mirrored in his members. How near akin the thirsty Saviour is to us; let us love him more and more. How great the love which led him to such a condescension as this! Do not let us forget the infinite distance between the Lord of glory on his throne and the Crucified dried up with thirst. A

river of the water of life, pure as crystal, proceedeth to-day out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and yet once he condescended to say, "I thirst," before his angelic guards, they would surely have emulated the courage of the men of David when they cut their way to the well of Bethlehem that was within the gate, and drew water in jeopardy of their lives. Who among us would not willingly pour out his soul unto death if he might but give refreshment to the Lord? And yet he placed himself for our sakes into a position of shame and suffering where none would wait upon him, but when he cried, "I thirst," they gave him vinegar to drink. Glorious stoop of our exalted Head! O Lord Jesus, we love thee and we worship thee! We would fain lift thy name on high in grateful remembrance of the depths to which thou didst descend! While thus we admire his condescension let our thoughts also turn with delight to his sure sympathy: for if Jesus said, "I thirst," then he knows all our frailties and woes. The next time we are in pain or are suffering depression of spirit we will remember that our Lord understands it all, for he has had practical, personal experience of it. Neither in torture of body nor in sadness of heart are we deserted by our Lord; his line is parallel with ours. The arrow which has lately pierced thee, my brother, was first stained with his blood. The cup of which thou art made to drink, though it be very bitter, bears the mark of his lips about its brim. He hath traversed the mournful way before thee, and every footprint thou leavest in the sodden soil is stamped side by side with his footmarks. Let the sympathy of Christ, then, be fully believed in and deeply appreciated, since he said, "I thirst." Henceforth, also, let us cultivate the spirit of resignation, for we may well rejoice to carry a cross which his shoulders have borne before us. Beloved, if our Master said, "I thirst," do we expect every day to drink of streams from Lebanon? He was innocent, and yet he thirsted; shall we marvel if guilty ones are now and then chastened? If he was so poor that his garments were stripped from him, and he was hung up upon the tree, penniless and friendless, hungering and thirsting, will you henceforth groan and murmur because you bear the yoke of poverty and want? There is bread upon your table to-day, and there will be at least a cup of cold water to refresh you. You are not, therefore, so poor as he. Complain not, then. Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? Let patience have her perfect work. You do suffer. Perhaps, dear sister, you carry about with you a gnawing disease which eats at your heart, but Jesus took our sicknesses, and his cup was more bitter than yours. In your chamber let the gasp of your Lord as he said, "I thirst," go through your ears, and as you hear it let it touch your heart and cause you to gird up yourself and say, "Doth he say, I thirst? Then I will thirst with him and not complain, I will suffer with him and not murmur." The Redeemer's cry of "I thirst" is a solemn lesson of patience to his afflicted. Once again, as we think of this "I thirst," which proves our Lord's humanity, let us resolve to shun no denials, but rather court them that we may be conformed to his image. May we not be half ashamed of our pleasures when he says, "I thirst"? May we not despise our loaded table while he is neglected? Shall it ever be a hardship to be denied the satisfying draught when he said, "I thirst." Shall carnal appetites be indulged and bodies pampered when Jesus cried "I thirst"? What if the bread be dry, what if the medicine be nauseous; yet for his thirst there was no relief but gall and vinegar, and dare we complain? For his sake we may rejoice in self-denials, and accept Christ and a crust as all we desire between here and heaven. A Christian living to indulge the base appetites of a brute beast, to eat and to drink almost to gluttony and drunkenness, is utterly unworthy of the name. The conquest of the appetites, the entire subjugation of the flesh, must be achieved, for before our great Exemplar said, "It is finished," wherein methinks he reached the greatest height of all, he stood as only upon the next lower step to that elevation, and said, "I thirst." The power to suffer for

another, the capacity to be self-denying even to an extreme to accomplish some great work for God -- this is a thing to be sought after, and must be gained before our work is done, and in this Jesus is before us our example and our strength. Thus have I tried to spy out a measure of teaching, by using that one glass for the soul's eye, through which we look upon "I thirst" as the ensign of his true humanity. II. Secondly, we shall regard these words, "I thirst," as THE TOKEN OF HIS SUFFERING SUBSTITUTION. The great Surety says, "I thirst," because he is placed in the sinner's stead, and he must therefore undergo the penalty of sin for the ungodly. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" points to the anguish of his soul; "I thirst" expresses in part the torture of his body; and they were both needful, because it is written of the God of justice that he is "able to destroy both soul and body in hell," and the pangs that are due to law are of both kinds, touching both heart and flesh. See, brethren, where sin begins, and mark that there it ends. It began with the mouth of appetite, when it was sinfully gratified, and it ends when a kindred appetite is graciously denied. Our first parents plucked forbidden fruit, and by eating slew the race. Appetite was the door of sin, and therefore in that point our Lord was put to pain. With "I thirst" the evil is destroyed and receives its expiation. I saw the other day the emblem of a serpent with its tail in its mouth, and if I carry it a little beyond the artist's intention the symbol may set forth appetite swallowing up itself. A carnal appetite of the body, the satisfaction of the desire for food, first brought us down under the first Adam, and now the pang of thirst, the denial of what the body craved for, restores us to our place. Nor is this all. We know from experience that the present effect of sin in every man who indulges in it is thirst of soul. The mind of man is like the daughters of the horseleech, which cry for ever, "Give, give." Metaphorically understood, thirst is dissatisfaction, the craving of the mind for something which it has not, but which it pines for. Our Lord says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," that thirst being the result of sin in every ungodly man at this moment. Now Christ standing in the stead of the ungodly suffers thirst as a type of his enduring the result of sin. More solemn still is the reflection that according to our Lord's own teaching, thirst will also be the eternal result of sin, for he says concerning the rich glutton, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment," and his prayer, which was denied him, was, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." Now recollect, if Jesus had not thirsted, every one of us would have thirsted for ever afar off from God, with an impassable gulf between us and heaven. Our sinful tongues, blistered by the fever of passion, must have burned for ever had not his tongue been tormented with thirst in our stead. I suppose that the "I thirst" was uttered softly, so that perhaps only one and another who stood near the cross heard it at all; in contrast with the louder cry of "Lama sabachthani" and the triumphant shout of "It is finished": but that soft, expiring sigh, "I thirst," has ended for us the thirst which else, insatiably fierce, had preyed upon us throughout eternity. Oh, wondrous substitution of the just for the unjust, of God for man, of the perfect Christ for us guilty, hell-deserving rebels. Let us magnify and bless our Redeemer's name. It seems to me very wonderful that this "I thirst" should be, as it were, the clearance of it all. He had no sooner said "I thirst," and sipped the vinegar, than he shouted, "It is finished"; and all was over: the battle was fought and the victory won for ever, and our great Deliverer's thirst was the sign of his having smitten the last foe. The flood of his grief has passed the high-water mark, and began to be assuaged. The "I thirst" was the bearing of the last pang; what if I say it was the expression of the fact that his pangs had at last begun to cease, and their fury had spent itself, and left him able to note his lessor pains? The excitement of a great struggle makes men forget thirst and faintness; it

is only when all is over that they come back to themselves and note the spending of their strength. The great agony of being forsaken by God was over, and he felt faint when the strain was withdrawn. I like to think of our Lord's saying, "It is finished," directly after he had exclaimed, "I thirst"; for these two voices come so naturally together. Our glorious Samson had been fighting our foes; heaps upon heaps he had slain his thousands, and now like Samson he was sore athirst. He sipped of the vinegar, and he was refreshed, and no sooner has he thrown off the thirst than he shouted like a conqueror, "It is finished," and quitted the field, covered with renown. Let us exult as we see our Substitute going through with his work even to the bitter end, and then with a "Consummatum est" returning to his Father, God. O souls, burdened with sin, rest ye here, and resting live.^{III}. We will now take the text in a third way, and may the Spirit of God instruct us once again. The utterance of "I thirst" brought out A TYPE OF MAN'S TREATMENT OF HIS LORD. It was a confirmation of the Scripture testimony with regard to man's natural enmity to God. According to modern thought man is a very fine and noble creature, struggling to become better. He is greatly to be commended and admired, for his sin is said to be seeking after God, and his superstition is a struggling after light. Great and worshipful being that he is, truth is to be altered for him, the gospel is to be modulated to suit the tone of his various generations, and all the arrangements of the universe are to be rendered subservient to his interests. Justice must fly the field lest it be severe to so deserving a being; as for punishment, it must not be whispered to his ears polite. In fact, the tendency is to exalt man above God and give him the highest place. But such is not the truthful estimate of man according to the Scriptures: there man is a fallen creature, with a carnal mind which cannot be reconciled to God; a worse than brutish creature, rendering evil for good, and treating his God with vile ingratitude. Alas, man is the slave and the dupe of Satan, and a black-hearted traitor to his God. Did not the prophecies say that man would give to his incarnate God gall to eat and vinegar to drink? It is done. He came to save, and man denied him hospitality: at the first there was no room for him at the inn, and at the last there was not one cool cup of water for him to drink; but when he thirsted they gave him vinegar to drink. This is man's treatment of his Saviour. Universal manhood, left to itself, rejects, crucifies, and mocks the Christ of God. This was the act too of man at his best, when he is moved to pity; for it seems clear that he who lifted up the wet sponge to the Redeemer's lips, did it in compassion. I think that Roman soldier meant well, at least well for a rough warrior with his little light and knowledge. He ran and filled a sponge with vinegar: it was the best way he knew of putting a few drops of moisture to the lips of one who was suffering so much; but though he felt a degree of pity, it was such as one might show to a dog; he felt no reverence, but mocked as he relieved. We read, "The soldiers also mocked him, offering him vinegar." When our Lord cried, "Eloi, Eloi," and afterwards said, "I thirst," the persons around the cross said, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him," mocking him; and, according to Mark, he who gave the vinegar uttered much the same words. He pitied the sufferer, but he thought so little of him that he joined in the voice of scorn. Even when man compassionates the sufferings of Christ, and man would have ceased to be human if he did not, still he scorns him; the very cup which man gives to Jesus is at once scorn and pity, for "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." See how man at his best mingles admiration of the Saviour's person with scorn of his claims; writing books to hold him up as an example and at the same moment rejecting his deity; admitting that he was a wonderful man, but denying his most sacred mission; extolling his ethical teaching and then trampling on his blood: thus giving him drink, but that drink vinegar. O my hearers, beware of praising Jesus and denying

his atoning sacrifice. Beware of rendering him homage and dishonouring his name at the same time. Alas, my brethren, I cannot say much on the score of man's cruelty to our Lord without touching myself and you. Have we not often given him vinegar to drink? Did we not do so years ago before we knew him? We used to melt when we heard about his sufferings, but we did not turn from our sins. We gave him our tears and then grieved him with our sins. We thought sometimes that we loved him as we heard the story of his death, but we did not change our lives for his sake, nor put our trust in him, and so we gave him vinegar to drink. Nor does the grief end here, for have not the best works we have ever done, and the best feelings we ever felt, and the best prayers we have ever offered, been tart and sour with sin? Can they be compared to generous wine? are they not more like sharp vinegar? I wonder he has ever received them, as one marvels why he received this vinegar; and yet he has received them, and smiled upon us for presenting them. He knew once how to turn water into wine, and in matchless love he has often turned our sour drink-offerings into something sweet to himself, though in themselves, methinks, they have been the juice of sour grapes, sharp enough to set his teeth on edge. We may therefore come before him, with all the rest of our race, when God subdues them to repentance by his love, and look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. We may well remember our faults this day, "We, whose proneness to forget Thy dear love, on Olivet Bathed thy brow with bloody sweat;" "We whose sins, with awful power, Like a cloud did o'er thee lower, In that God-excluding hour;" "We, who still, in thought and dead, Often hold the bitter reed To thee, in thy time of need." I have touched that point very lightly because I want a little more time to dwell upon a fourth view of this scene. May the Holy Ghost help us to hear a fourth tuning of the dolorous music, "I thirst." IV. I think, beloved friends, that the cry of "I thirst" was THE MYSTICAL EXPRESSION OF THE DESIRE OF HIS HEART -- "I thirst." I cannot think that natural thirst was all he felt. He thirsted for water doubtless, but his soul was thirsty in a higher sense; indeed, he seems only to have spoken that the Scriptures might be fulfilled as to the offering him vinegar. Always was he in harmony with himself, and his own body was always expressive of his soul's cravings as well as of its own longings. "I thirst" meant that his heart was thirsting to save men. This thirst had been on him from the earliest of his earthly days. "Wist ye not," said he, while yet a boy, "that I must be about my Father's business?" Did he not tell his disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" He thirsted to pluck us from between the jaws of hell, to pay our redemption price, and set us free from the eternal condemnation which hung over us; and when on the cross the work was almost done his thirst was not assuaged, and could not be till he could say, "It is finished." It is almost done, thou Christ of God; thou hast almost saved thy people; there remaineth but one thing more, that thou shouldst actually die, and hence thy strong desire to come to the end and complete thy labour. Thou wast still straightened till the last pang was felt and the last word spoken to complete to full redemption, and hence thy cry, "I thirst." Beloved, there is now upon our Master, and there always has been, a thirst after the love of his people. Do you not remember how that thirst of his was strong in the old days of the prophet? Call to mind his complaint in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, "Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein." What was he looking for from his vineyard and its winepress? What but for the juice of the vine that he might be refreshed? "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes," --

vinegar, and not wine; sourness, and not sweetness. So he was thirsting then. According to the sacred canticle of love, in the fifth chapter of the Song of Songs, we learn that when he drank in those olden times it was in the garden of his church that he was refreshed. What doth he say? "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." In the same song he speaks of his church, and says, "The roof of thy mouth is as the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak." And yet again in the eighth chapter the bride saith, "I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." Yes, he loves to be with his people; they are the garden where he walks for refreshment, and their love, their graces, are the milk and wine which he delights to drink. Christ was always thirsty to save men, and to be loved of men; and we see a type of his life-long desire when, being weary, he sat thus on the well and said to the woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink." There was a deeper meaning in his words than she dreamed of, as a verse further down fully proves, when he said to his disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He derived spiritual refreshment from the winning of that woman's heart to himself. And now, brethren, our blessed Lord has at this time a thirst for communion with each one of you who are his people, not because you can do him good, but because he can do you good. He thirsts to bless you and to receive your grateful love in return; he thirsts to see you looking with believing eye to his fulness, and holding out your emptiness that he may supply it. He saith, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What knocks he for? It is that he may eat and drink with you, for he promises that if we open to him he will enter in and sup with us and we with him. He is thirsty still, you see, for our poor love, and surely we cannot deny it to him. Come let us pour out full flagons, until his joy is fulfilled in us. And what makes him love us so? Ah, that I cannot tell, except his own great love. He must love, it is his nature. He must love his chosen whom he has once begun to love, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His great love makes him thirst to have us much nearer than we are; he will never be satisfied till all his redeemed are beyond gunshot of thee enemy. I will give you one of his thirsty prayers -- "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." He wants you brother, he wants you, dear sister, he longs to have you wholly to himself. Come to him in prayer, come to him in fellowship, come to him by perfect consecration, come to him by surrendering your whole being to the sweet mysterious influences of his Spirit. Sit at his feet with Mary, lean on his breast with John; yea, come with the spouse in the song and say, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." He calls for that: will you not give it to him? Are you so frozen at heart that not a cup of cold water can be melted for Jesus? Are you lukewarm? O brother, if he says, "I thirst" and you bring him a lukewarm heart, that is worse than vinegar, for he has said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He can receive vinegar, but not lukewarm love. Come, bring him your warm heart, and let him drink from that purified chalice as much as he wills. Let all your love be his. I know he loves to receive from you, because he delights even in a cup of cold water that you give to one of his disciples; how much more will he delight in the giving of your whole self to him? Therefore while he thirsts give him to drink this day.V. Lastly, the cry of "I thirst" is to us THE PATTERN OF OUR DEATH WITH HIM. Know ye not, beloved, -- for I speak to those who know the Lord, -- that ye are crucified together with Christ? Well, then, what means this cry, "I thirst," but this, that we should thirst too? We do not thirst after the old manner wherein we were bitterly afflicted, for he hath said, "He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst:" but now we covet a new

thirst. A refined and heavenly appetite, a craving for our Lord. O thou blessed Master, if we are indeed nailed up to the tree with thee, give us a thirst after thee with a thirst which only the cup of "the new covenant in thy blood" can ever satisfy. Certain philosophers have said that they love the pursuit of truth even better than the knowledge of truth. I differ from them greatly, but I will say this, that next to the actual enjoyment of my Lord's presence I love to hunger and to thirst after him. Rutherford used words somewhat to this effect, "I thirst for my Lord and this is joy; a joy which no man taketh from me. Even if I may not come at him, yet shall I be full of consolation, for it is heaven to thirst after him, and surely he will never deny a poor soul liberty to admire him, and adore him, and thirst after him." As for myself, I would grow more and more insatiable after my divine Lord, and when I have much of him I would still cry for more; and then for more, and still for more. My heart shall not be content till he is all in all to me, and I am altogether lost in him. O to be enlarged in soul so as to take deeper draughts of his sweet love, for our heart cannot have enough. One would wish to be as a spouse, who, when she had already been feasting in the banqueting-house, and had found his fruit sweet to her taste, so that she was overjoyed, yet cried out, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." She craved full flagons of love though she was already overpowered by it. This is a kind of sweet whereof if a man hath much he must have more, and when he hath more he is under a still greater necessity to receive more, and so on, his appetite for ever growing by that which it feeds upon, till he is filled with all the fulness of God. "I thirst," -- ay, this is my soul's word with her Lord. Borrowed from his lips it well suiteth my mouth. "I thirst, but not as once I did, The vain delights of earth to share; Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid That I should seek my pleasures there. Dear fountain of delight unknown! No longer sink below the brim; But overflow, and pour me down A living and life-giving stream." Jesus thirsted, then let us thirst in this dry and thirsty land where no water is. Even as the hart panteth after the water brooks, our souls would thirst after thee, O God. Beloved, let us thirst for the souls of our fellow-men. I have already told you that such was our Lord's mystical desire; let it be ours also. Brother, thirst to have your children save. Brother, thirst I pray you to have your workpeople saved. Sister, thirst for the salvation of your class, thirst for the redemption of your family, thirst for the conversion of your husband. We ought all to have a longing for conversions. It is so with each one of you? If not, bestir yourselves at once. Fix your hearts upon some unsaved one, and thirst until he is saved. It is the way whereby many shall be brought to Christ, when this blessed soul-thirst of true Christian charity shall be upon those who are themselves saved. Remember how Paul said, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He would have sacrificed himself to save his countrymen, so heartily did he desire their eternal welfare. Let this mind be in you also. As for yourselves, thirst after perfection. Hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled. Hate sin, and heartily loathe it; but thirst to be holy as God is holy, thirst to be like Christ, thirst to bring glory to his sacred name by complete conformity to his will. May the Holy Ghost work in you the complete pattern of Christ crucified, and to him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Mark 15:15-37; Psalm 69:1-21.

Adoption--The Spirit and the Cry

A Sermon (No.1435) Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 14th, 1878, by C. H. SPURGEON, At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." -- Galatians 4:6. WE do not find the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity set forth in Scripture in formal terms, such as those which are employed in the Athanasian creed; but the truth is continually taken for granted, as if it were a fact well known in the church of God. If not laid down very often, in so many words, it is everywhere held in solution, and it is mentioned incidentally, in connection with other truths in a way which renders it quite as distinct as if it were expressed in a set formula. In many passages it is brought before us so prominently that we must be wilfully blind if we do not note it. In the present chapter, for instance, we have distinct mention of each of the three divine Persons. "God," that is the Father, "sent forth the Spirit," that is the Holy Spirit; and he is here called "the Spirit of his Son." Nor have we the names alone, for each sacred person is mentioned as acting in the work of our salvation: see the fourth verse, "God sent forth his Son."; then note the fifth verse, which speaks of the Son as redeeming them that were under the law; and then the text itself reveals the Spirit as coming into the hearts of believers, and crying Abba, Father. Now, inasmuch, as you have not only the mention of the separate names, but also certain special operations ascribed to each, it is plain that you have here the distinct personality of each. Neither the Father, the Son, nor the Spirit can be an influence, or a mere form of existence, for each one acts in a divine manner, but with a special sphere and a distinct mode of operation. The error of regarding a certain divine person as a mere influence, or emanation, mainly assails the Holy Ghost; but its falseness is seen in the words -- "crying, Abba, Father": an influence could not cry; the act requires a person to perform it. Though we may not understand the wonderful truth of the undivided Unity, and the distinct personality of the Triune Godhead, yet, nevertheless, we see the truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures: and, therefore, we accept it as a matter of faith. The divinity of each of these sacred persons is also to be gathered from the text and its connection. We do not doubt the loving union of all in the work of deliverance. We reverence the Father, without whom we had not been chosen or adopted: the Father who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We love and reverence the Son by whose most precious blood we have been redeemed, and with whom we are one in a mystic and everlasting union: and we adore and love the divine Spirit, for it is by him that we have been regenerated, illuminated, quickened, preserved, and sanctified; and it is through him that we receive the seal and witness within our hearts by which we are assured that we are indeed the sons of God. As God said of old, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, even so do the divine Persons take counsel together, and all unite in the new creation of the believer. We must not fail to bless, adore, and love each one of the exalted Persons, but we must diligently bow in lowliest reverence before the one God -- Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." Having noted this most important fact, let us come to the text itself, hoping to enjoy the doctrine of the Trinity while we are discoursing upon our adoption, in which wonder of grace they each have a share. Under the

teaching of the divine Spirit may we be drawn into sweet communion with the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, to his glory and to our benefit. Three things are very clearly set forth in my text: the first is the dignity of believers -- "ye are sons;" the second is the consequent indwelling of the Holy Ghost -- "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts;" and the third is the filial cry -- crying, "Abba, Father." I. First, then, THE DIGNITY OF BELIEVERS. Adoption gives us the rights of children, regeneration gives us the nature of children: we are partakers of both of these, for we are sons. And let us here observe that this sonship is a gift of grace received by faith. We are not the sons of God by nature in the sense here meant. We are in a sense "the offspring God" by nature, but this is very different from the sonship here described, which is the peculiar privilege of those who are born again. The Jews claimed to be of the family of God, but as their privileges came to them by the way of their fleshly birth, they are likened to Ishmael, who was born after the flesh, but who was cast out as the son of the bondwoman, and compelled to give way to the son of the promise. We have a sonship which does not come to us by nature, for we are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Our sonship comes by promise, by the operation of God as a special gift to a peculiar seed, set apart unto the Lord by his own sovereign grace, as Isaac was. This honour and privilege come to us, according to the connection of our text, by faith. Note well the twenty-sixth verse of the preceding chapter (Gal.3:26): "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." As unbelievers we know nothing of adoption. While we are under the law as self-righteous we know something of servitude, but we know nothing of sonship. It is only after that faith has come that we cease to be under the schoolmaster, and rise out of our minority to take the privileges of the sons of God. Faith worketh in us the spirit of adoption, and our consciousness of sonship, in this wise: first, it brings us justification. Verse twenty-four of the previous chapter says, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." An unjustified man stands in the condition of a criminal, not of a child: his sin is laid to his charge, he is reckoned as unjust and unrighteous, as indeed he really is, and he is therefore a rebel against his king, and not a child enjoying his father's love. But when faith realizes the cleansing power of the blood of atonement, and lays hold upon the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, then the justified man becomes a son and a child. Justification and adoption always go together. "Whom he called them he also justified," and the calling is a call to the Father's house, and to a recognition of sonship. Believing brings forgiveness and justification through our Lord Jesus; it also brings adoption, for it is written, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Faith brings us into the realization of our adoption in the next place by setting us free from the bondage of the law. "After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." When we groaned under a sense of sin, and were shut up by it as in a prison, we feared that the law would punish us for our iniquity, and our life was made bitter with fear. Moreover, we strove in our own blind self-sufficient manner to keep that law, and this brought us into yet another bondage, which became harder and harder as failure succeeded to failure: we sinned and stumbled more and more to our soul's confusion. But now that faith has come we see the law fulfilled in Christ, and ourselves justified and accepted in him: this changes the slave into a child, and duty into choice. Now we delight in the law, and by the power of the Spirit we walk in holiness to the glory of God. Thus it is that by believing in Christ Jesus we escape from Moses, the taskmaster, and come to Jesus, the Saviour; we cease to regard God as an angry Judge and view him as our loving Father. The system of merit and command, and punishment and fear, has given

way to the rule of grace, gratitude, and love, and this new principle of government is one of the grand privileges of the children of God. Now, faith is the mark of sonship in all who have it, whoever they may be, for "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus Gal.3:26). If you are believing in Jesus, whether you are Jew or Gentile, bond or free, you are a son of God. If you have only believed in Christ of late, and have but for the past few weeks been able to rest in his great salvation, yet, beloved, now are you a child of God. It is not an after privilege, granted to assurance or growth in grace; it is an early blessing, and belongs to him who has the smallest degree of faith, and is no more than a babe in grace. If a man be a believer in Jesus Christ his name is in the register-book of the great family above, "for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." But if you have no faith, no matter what zeal, no matter what works, no matter what knowledge, no matter what pretensions to holiness you may possess, you are nothing, and your religion is vain. Without faith in Christ you are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, for without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith then, wherever it is found, is the infallible token of a child of God, and its absence is fatal to the claim. This according to the apostle is further illustrated by our baptism, for in baptism, if there be faith in the soul, there is an open putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ. Read the twenty-seventh verse: "For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ." In baptism you professed to be dead to the world and you were therefore buried into the name of Jesus: and the meaning of that burial, if it had any right meaning to you, was that you professed yourself henceforth to be dead to everything but Christ, and henceforth your life was to be in him, and you were to be as one raised from the dead to newness of life. Of course the outward form avails nothing to the unbeliever, but to the man who is in Christ it is a most instructive ordinance. The spirit and essence of the ordinance lie in the soul's entering into the symbol, in the man's knowing not alone the baptism into water, but the baptism into the Holy Ghost and into fire: and as many of you as know that inward mystic baptism into Christ know also that henceforth you have put on Christ and are covered by him as a man is by his garment. Henceforth you are one in Christ, you wear his name, you live in him, you are saved by him, you are altogether his. Now, if you are one with Christ, since he is a son, you are sons also. If you have put on Christ God seeth you not in yourself but in Christ, and that which belongeth unto Christ belongeth also unto you, for if you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. As the Roman youth when he came of age put on the toga, and was admitted to the rights of citizenship, so the putting on of Christ is the token of our admission into the position of sons of God. Thus are we actually admitted to the enjoyment of our glorious heritage. Every blessing of the covenant of grace belongs to those who are Christ's, and every believer is in that list. Thus, then, according to the teaching of the passage, we receive adoption by faith as the gift of grace. Again, adoption comes to us by redemption. Read the passage which precedes the text: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Beloved, prize redemption, and never listen to teaching which would destroy its meaning or lower its importance. Remember that ye were not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish. You were under the law, and subject to its curse, for you had broken it most grievously, and you were subject to its penalty, for it is written, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die"; and yet again, "cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." You were also under the terror of the law, for you feared its wrath; and you were under its irritating power, for often when the commandment

came, sin within you revived and you died. But now you are redeemed from all; as the Holy Ghost saith, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now ye are not under the law, but under grace, and this because Christ came under the law and kept it both by his active and his passive obedience, fulfilling all its commands and bearing all its penalty on your behalf and in your room and stead. Henceforth you are the redeemed of the Lord, and enjoy a liberty which comes by no other way but that of the eternal ransom. Remember this; and whenever you feel most assured that you are a child of God, praise the redeeming blood; whenever your heart beats highest with love to your great Father, bless the "firstborn among many brethren," who for your sakes came under the law, was circumcised, kept the law in his life, and bowed his head to it in his death, honouring, and magnifying the law, and making the justice and righteousness of God to be more conspicuous by his life than it would have been by the holiness of all mankind, and his justice to be more fully vindicated by his death than it would have been if all the world of sinners had been cast into hell. Glory be to our redeeming Lord, by whom we have received the adoption! Again, we further learn from the passage that we now enjoy the privilege of sonship. According to the run of the passage the apostle means not only that we are children, but that we are full-grown sons. "Because ye are sons," means, -- because the time appointed of the Father is come, and you are of age, and no longer under tutors and governors. In our minority we are under the schoolmaster, under the regimen of ceremonies, under types, figures, shadows, learning our A B C by being convinced of sin; but when faith is come we are no longer under the schoolmaster, but come to a more free condition. Till faith comes we are under tutors and governors, like mere boys, but after faith we take our rights as sons of God. The Jewish church of old was under the yoke of the law; its sacrifices were continual and its ceremonies endless; new moons and feasts must be kept; jubilees must be observed and pilgrimages made: in fact, the yoke was too heavy for feeble flesh to bear. The law followed the Israelite into every corner, and dealt with him upon every point: it had to do with his garments, his meat, his drink, his bed, his board, and everything about him: it treated him like a boy at school who has a rule for everything. Now that faith has come we are full grown sons, and therefore we are free from the rules which govern the school of the child. We are under law to Christ, even as the full-grown son is still under the discipline of his father's house; but this is a law of love and not of fear, of grace and not of bondage. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Return not to the beggarly elements of a merely outward religion, but keep close to the worship of God in spirit and in truth, for this is the liberty of the children of God. Now, by faith we are no more like to bond-servants. The apostle says that "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutor and governors till the time appointed of the father." But beloved, now are ye the sons of God, and ye have come to your majority: now are ye free to enjoy the honours and blessings of the Father's house. Rejoice that the free spirit dwells within you, and prompts you to holiness; this is a far superior power to the merely external command and the whip of threatening. Now no more are you in bondage to outward forms, and rites, and ceremonies; but the Spirit of God teacheth you all things, and leads you into the inner meaning and substance of the truth. Now, also, saith the apostle, we are heirs -- "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." No man living has ever realised to the full what this means. Believers are at this moment heirs, but what is the estate? It is God himself! We are heirs of God! Not only of the promises, of the covenant

engagements, and of all the blessings which belong to the chosen seed, but heirs of God himself. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." "This God is our God for ever and ever." We are not only, heirs to God, to all that he gives to his firstborn, but heirs of God himself. David said, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." As he said to Abraham, "Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward," so saith he to every man that is born of the Spirit. These are his own words -- "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Why, then, believer, are you poor? All riches are yours. Why then are you sorrowful? The ever-blessed God is yours. Why do you tremble? Omnipotence waits to help you. Why do you distrust? His immutability will abide with you even to the end, and make his promise steadfast. All things are yours, for Christ is yours, and Christ is God's; and though there be some things which at present you cannot actually grasp in your hand, nor even see with your eye, to wit, the things which are laid up for you in heaven, yet still by faith you can enjoy even these, for "he hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ," "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance," so that "our citizenship is in heaven." We enjoy even now the pledge and earnest of heaven in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Oh what privileges belong to those who are the sons of God! Once more upon this point of the believer's dignity, we are already tasting one of the inevitable consequences of being the sons of God. What are they? One of them is the opposition of the children of the bondwoman. No sooner had the apostle Paul preached the liberty of the saints, than straightway there arose certain teachers who said, "This will never do; you must be circumcised, you must come under the law." Their opposition was to Paul a token that he was of the free woman, for behold the children of the bondwoman singled him out for their virulent opposition. You shall find, dear brother, that if you enjoy fellowship with God, if you live in the spirit of adoption, if you are brought near to the Most High, so as to be a member of the divine family, straightway all those who are under bondage to the law will quarrel with you. Thus saith the apostle, "As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." The child of Hagar was found by Sarah mocking Isaac, the child of promise. Ishmael would have been glad to have shown his enmity to the hated heir by blows and personal assault, but there was a superior power to check him, so that he could get no further than "mocking." So it is just now. There have been periods in which the enemies of the gospel have gone a great deal further than mocking, for they have been able to imprison and burn alive the lovers of the gospel; but now, thank God, we are under his special protection as to life and limb and liberty, and are as safe as Isaac was in Abraham's house. They can mock us, but they cannot go any further, or else some of us would be publicly gibbeted. But trials of cruel mockings are still to be endured, our words are twisted, our sentiments are misrepresented, and all sorts of horrible things are imputed to us, things which we know not, to all which we would reply with Paul, "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" This is the old way of the Hagarenes, the child after the flesh is still doing his best to mock him that is born after the Spirit. Do not be astonished, neither be grieved in the least degree when this happens to any of you, but let this also turn to the establishment of your confidence and to the confirmation of your faith in Christ Jesus, for he told you of old, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." II. Our second head is THE CONSEQUENT INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST IN BELIEVERS; -- "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Here is a divine act of the Father. The Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son: and God hath sent him forth into your hearts.

If he had only come knocking at your hearts and asked your leave to enter, he had never entered, but when Jehovah sent him he made his way, without violating your will, but yet with irresistible power. Where Jehovah sent him there he will abide, and go no more out for ever. Beloved, I have no time to dwell upon the words, but I want you to turn them over in your thoughts, for they contain a great depth. As surely as God sent his Son into the world to dwell among men, so that his saints beheld his glory, the "glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," so surely hath God sent forth the Spirit to enter into men's hearts, there to take up his residence that in him also the glory of God may be revealed. Bless and adore the Lord who hath sent you such a visitor as this. Now, note the style and title under which the Holy Spirit comes to us: he comes as the Spirit of Jesus. The words are "the Spirit of his Son," by which is not meant the character and disposition of Christ, though that were quite true, for God sends this unto his people, but it means the Holy Ghost. Why, then, is he called the Spirit of his Son, or the Spirit of Jesus? May we not give these reasons? It was by the Holy Ghost that the human nature of Christ was born of the Virgin. By the Spirit our Lord was attested at his baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and abode upon him. In him the Holy Spirit dwelt without measure, anointing him for his great work, and by the Spirit he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. The Spirit was also with him, attesting his ministry by signs and wonders. The Holy Ghost is our Lord's great gift to the church; it was after his ascension that he bestowed the gifts of Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the church to abide with the people of God for ever. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Christ, because, also, he is Christ's witness here below; for "there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." For these and many other reasons he is called "the Spirit of his Son," and it is he who comes to dwell in believers. I would urge you very solemnly and gratefully to consider the wondrous condescension which is here displayed. God himself the Holy Ghost, takes up his residence in believers. I never know which is the more wonderful, the incarnation of Christ or the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Jesus dwelt here for awhile in human flesh untainted by sin, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; but the Holy Ghost dwells continually in the hearts of all believers, though as yet they are imperfect and prone to evil. Year after year, century after century, he still abideth in the saints, and will do so till the elect are all in glory. While we adore the incarnate Son, let us adore also the indwelling Spirit whom the Father hath sent. Now notice the place wherein he takes up his residence. -- "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Note, that it does not say into your heads or your brains. The Spirit of God doubtless illuminates the intellect and guides the judgement, but this is not the commencement nor the main part of his work. He comes chiefly to the affections, he dwells with the heart, for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Now, the heart is the centre of our being, and therefore doth the Holy Ghost occupy this place of vantage. He comes into the central fortress and universal citadel of our nature, and thus takes possession of the whole. The heart is the vital part; we speak of it as the chief residence of life, and therefore the Holy Ghost enters it, and as the living God dwells in the living heart, taking possession of the very core and marrow of our being. It is from the heart and through the heart that life is diffused. The blood is sent even to the extremities of the body by the pulsings of the heart, and when the Spirit of God takes possession of the affections, he operates upon every power, and faculty, and member of our entire manhood. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and from the affections sanctified by the Holy Ghost all other faculties and powers receive renewal, illumination, sanctification, strengthening, and ultimate perfection. This

wonderful blessing is ours "because we are sons;" and it is fraught with marvellous results. Sonship sealed by the indwelling Spirit brings us peace and joy; it leads to nearness to God and fellowship with him; it excites trust, love, and vehement desire, and creates in us reverence, obedience, and actual likeness to God. All this, and much more, because the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in us. Oh, matchless mystery! Had it not been revealed it had never been imagined, and now that it is revealed it would never have been believed if it had not become matter of actual experience to those who are in Christ Jesus. There are many professors who know nothing of this; they listen to us with bewilderment as if we told them an idle tale, for the carnal mind knoweth not the things that be of God; they are spiritual, and can only be spiritually discerned. Those who are not sons, or who only come in as sons under the law of nature, like Ishmael, know nothing of this indwelling Spirit, and are up in arms at us for daring to claim so great a blessing: yet it is ours, and none can deprive us of it. III. Now I come to the third portion of our text -- THE FILIAL CRY. This is deeply interesting. I think it will be profitable if your minds enter into it. Where the Holy Ghost enters there is a cry. "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father." Now, notice, it is the Spirit of God that cries -- a most remarkable fact. Some are inclined to view the expression as a Hebraism, and read it, he "makes us to cry;" but, beloved, the text saith not so, and we are not at liberty to alter it upon such a pretence. We are always right in keeping to what God says, and here we plainly read of the Spirit in our hearts that he is crying "Abba, Father." The apostle in Romans 8:15 says, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," but here he describes the Spirit himself as crying "Abba, Father." We are certain that when he ascribed the cry of "Abba, Father" to us, he did not wish to exclude the Spirit's cry, because in the twenty-sixth verse of the famous eighth of Romans he says, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Thus he represents the Spirit himself as groaning with unutterable groanings within the child of God, so that when he wrote to the Romans he had on his mind the same thought which he here expressed to the Galatians, -- that it is the Spirit itself which cries and groans in us "Abba, Father." How is this? Is it not ourselves that cry? Yes, assuredly; and yet the Spirit cries also. The expressions are both correct. The Holy Spirit prompts and inspires the cry. He puts the cry into the heart and mouth of the believer. It is his cry because he suggests it, approves of it, and educates us to it. We should never have cried thus if he had not first taught us the way. As a mother teaches her child to speak, so he puts this cry of "Abba, Father" into our mouths; yea, it is he who forms in our hearts the desire after our Father, God, and keeps it there. He is the Spirit of adoption, and the author of adoption's special and significant cry. Not only does he prompt us to cry but he works in us a sense of need which compels us to cry, and also that spirit of confidence which emboldens us to claim such relationship to the great God. Nor is this all, for he assists us in some mysterious manner so that we are able to pray aright; he puts his divine energy into us so that we cry "Abba, Father" in an acceptable manner. There are times when we cannot cry at all, and then he cries in us. There are seasons when doubts and fears abound, and so suffocate us with their fumes that we cannot even raise a cry, and then the indwelling Spirit represents us, and speaks for us, and makes intercession for us, crying in our name, and making intercession for us according to the will of God. Thus does the cry "Abba, Father" rise up in our hearts even when we feel as if we could not pray and dare not think ourselves children. Then we may each say, "I live, yet not I, but the Spirit that dwelleth in me." On the other hand, at times our soul gives such a sweet assent to the Spirit's cry that it becometh ours

also, but then we more than ever own the work of the Spirit, and still ascribe to him the blessed cry, "Abba, Father." I want you now to notice a very sweet fact about this cry; namely, that it is literally the cry of the Son. God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, and that Spirit cries in us exactly according to the cry of the Son. If you turn to the gospel of Mark, at the fourteenth chapter, thirty-sixth verse, you will find there what you will not discover in any other evangelist (for Mark is always the man for the striking points, and the memorable words), he records that our Lord prayed in the garden, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." So that this cry in us copies the cry of our Lord to the letter -- "Abba, Father." Now, I dare say you have heard these words "Abba, Father" explained at considerable lengths at other times, and if so, you know that the first word is Syrian or Aramaic; or, roughly speaking, Abba is the Hebrew word for "father." The second word is in Greek, and is the Gentile word, "pates," or pater, which also signifies father. It is said that these two words are used to remind us that Jews and Gentiles are one before God. They do remind us of this, but this cannot have been the principal reason for their use. Do you think that when our Lord was in his agony in the garden that he said, "Abba, Father" because Jews and Gentiles are one? Why should he have thought of that doctrine, and why need he mention it in prayer to his Father? Some other reason must have suggested it to him. It seems to me that our Lord said "Abba" because it was his native tongue. When a Frenchman prays, if he has learned English he may ordinarily pray in English, but if ever he falls into an agony he will pray in French, as surely as he prays at all. Our Welsh brethren tell us that there is no language like Welsh -- I suppose it is so to them: now they will talk English when about their ordinary business, and they can pray in English when everything goes comfortably with them, but I am sure that if a Welshman is in a great fervency of prayer, he flies to his Welsh tongue to find full expression. Our Lord in his agony used his native language, and as born of the seed of Abraham he cries in his own tongue, Abba. Even thus, my brethren, we are prompted by the spirit of adoption to use our own language, the language of the heart, and to speak to the Lord freely in our own tongue. Besides, to my mind, the word "Abba" is of all words in all languages the most natural word for father. I must try and pronounce it so that you see the natural childishness of it, "Ab -- ba," "Ab -- ba." Is it not just what your children say, ab, ab, ba, ba, as soon as they try to talk? It is the sort of word which any child would say, whether Hebrew, or Greek, or French, or English. Therefore, Abba is a word worthy of introduction into all languages. It is truly a child's word, and our Master felt, I have no doubt, in his agony, a love for child's words. Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, said, "Sing a hymn," but he added, "Sing me one of the bairns' hymns." When a man comes to die he wants to be a child again, and longs for bairns' hymns and bairns' words. Our blessed Master in his agony used the bairns' word, "Abba," and it is equally becoming in the mouth of each one of us. I think this sweet word "Abba" was chosen to show us that we are to be very natural with God, and not stilted and formal. We are to be very affectionate, and come close to him, and not merely say "Pater," which is a cold Greek word, but say "Abba," which is a warm, natural, loving word, fit for one who is a little child with God, and makes bold to lie in his bosom, and look up into his face and talk with holy boldness. "Abba" is not a word, somehow, but a babe's lisping. Oh, how near we are to God when we can use such a speech! How dear he is to us and dear we are to him when we may thus address him, saying, like the great Son himself, "Abba, Father." This leads me to observe that this cry in our hearts is exceedingly near and familiar. In the sound of it I have shown you that it is childlike, but the tone and manner of the utterance are equally so. Note that it is a cry. If we obtain audience with a king we do not cry,

we speak then in measured tones and set phrases; but the Spirit of God breaks down our measured tones, and takes away the formality which some hold in great admiration, and he leads us to cry, which is the very reverse of formality and stiffness. When we cry, we cry, "Abba": even our very cries are full of the spirit of adoption. A cry is a sound which we are not anxious that every passer-by should hear; yet what child minds his father hearing him cry? So when our heart is broken and subdued we do not feel as if we could talk fine language at all, but the Spirit in us sends forth cries and groans, and of these we are not ashamed, nor are we afraid to cry before God. I know some of you think that God will not hear your prayers, because you cannot pray grandly like such-and-such a minister. Oh, but the Spirit of his Son cries, and you cannot do better than cry too. Be satisfied to offer to God broken language, words salted with your griefs, wetted with your tears. Go to him with holy familiarity, and be not afraid to cry in his presence, "Abba, Father." But then how earnest it is: for a cry is an intense thing. The word implies fervency. A cry is not a flippant utterance, nor a mere thing of the lips, it comes up from the soul. Hath not the Lord taught us to cry to him in prayer with fervent importunity that will not take a denial? Hath he not brought us so near to him that sometimes we say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me"? Hath he not taught us so to pray that his disciples might almost say of us as they did of one of old, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." We do cry after him, our heart and our flesh crieth out for God, for the living God, and this is the cry, "Abba, Father, I must know thee, I must taste thy love, I must dwell under thy wing, I must behold thy face, I must feel thy great fatherly heart overflowing and filling my heart with peace." We cry, "Abba, Father." I shall close when I notice this, that the most of this crying is kept within the heart, and does not come out at the lips. Like Moses, we cry when we say not a word. God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." You know what I mean: it is not alone in your little room, by the old arm-chair, that you cry to God, but you call him "Abba, Father," as you go about the streets or work in the shop. The Spirit of his Son is crying "Abba, Father," when you are in the crowd or at your table among the family. I see it is alleged as a very grave charge against me that I speak as if I were familiar with God. If it be so, I make bold to say that I speak only as I feel. Blessed be my heavenly Father's name, I know I am his child, and with whom should a child be familiar but with his father? ye strangers to the living God, be it known unto you that if this be vile, I purpose to be viler still, as he shall help me to walk more closely with him. We feel a deep reverence for our Father in heaven, which bows us to the very dust, but for all that we can say, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." No stranger can understand the nearness of the believer's soul to God in Christ Jesus, and because the world cannot understand it, it finds it convenient to sneer, but what of that? Abraham's tenderness to Isaac made Ishmael jealous, and caused him to laugh, but Isaac had no cause to be ashamed of being ridiculed, since the mocker could not rob him of the covenant blessing. Yes, beloved, the Spirit of God makes you cry "Abba, Father," but the cry is mainly within your heart, and there it is so commonly uttered that it becomes the habit of your soul to be crying to your Heavenly Father. The text does not say that he had cried, but the expression is "crying" -- it is a present participle, indicating that he cries every day "Abba, Father." Go home, my brethren, and live in the spirit of sonship. Wake up in the morning, and let your first thought be "My Father, my Father, be with me this day. Go out into business, and when things perplex you let that be your resort -- "My Father, help me in this hour of need." When you go to your home, and there meet with domestic anxieties, let your cry still be, "Help me, my Father." When alone you are not alone, because the Father is with you: and in the midst of the crowd you

are not in danger, because the Father himself loveth you. What a blessed word is that, -- "The Father himself loveth you"! Go, and live as his children. Take heed that ye reverence him, for if he be a father where is his fear? Go and obey him, for this is right. Be ye imitators of God as dear children. Honour him wherever you are, by adorning his doctrine in all things. Go and live upon him, for you shall soon live with him. Go and rejoice in him. Go and cast all your cares upon him. Go henceforth, and whatever men may see in you may they be compelled to own that you are the children of the Highest. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." May you be such henceforth and evermore. Amen and amen. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Galatians 3:22-29; 4; 5:1-6. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 728, 468, 221.

The Best Beloved

A Sermon (No.1446) Delivered by C. H. SPURGEON, At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "Yea, he is altogether lovely." -- Solomons Song of Solomon 5:16. NO WORDS can ever express the gratitude we owe to Him who loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins: the love of Jesus is unutterably precious and worthy of daily praise. No songs can ever fitly celebrate the triumphs of that salvation which he wrought singlehanded on our behalf: the work of Jesus is glorious beyond compare, and all the harps of angels fall short of its worthy honour. Yet I do believe, and my heart prompts me to say so, that the highest praise of every ransomed soul and of the entire Christian church should be offered to the blessed person of Jesus Christ, our adorable Lord. The love of his heart is excelled by the heart which gave forth that love, and the wonders of his hand are outdone by the hand itself, which wrought those godlike miracles of grace. We ought to bless him for what he has done for us as Mediator in the place of humble service under the law, and for what he suffered for us as Substitute on the altar of sacrifice from before the foundation of the world; and for what he is doing for us as Advocate in the place of highest honour at the right hand of the Majesty on high: but still the best thing about Christ is Christ himself. We prize him, but we worship him. His gifts are valued, but he himself is adored. While we contemplate, with mingled feelings of awe, admiration, and thankfulness, his atonement, his resurrection, his glory in heaven, and his second coming, still it is Christ himself, stupendous in his dignity as the Son of God, and superbly beautiful as the Son of man, who sheds an incomparable charm on all those wonderful achievements, wherein his might and his merit, his goodness and his grace appear so conspicuous. For him let our choicest spices be reserved, and to him let our sweetest anthems be raised. Our choicest ointment must be poured upon his head, and for his own self alone our most costly alabaster boxes must be broken. "He is altogether lovely." Not only is his teaching attractive, his doctrine persuasive, his life irreproachable, his character enchanting, and his work a self-denying labour for the common good of all his people, but he himself is altogether lovely. I suppose at first we shall always begin to love him because he first loved us, and even to the last his love to us will always be the strongest motive of our affection towards him; still there ought to be added to this another reason less connected with ourselves, and more entirely arising out of his own superlative excellence; we ought to love him because he is lovely and deserves to be loved. The time should come, and with some of us it has come, when we can heartily say "we love him because we cannot help it, for his all-conquering loveliness has quite ravished our hearts." Surely it is but an unripe fruit to love him merely for the benefits which we have received at his hand. It is a fruit of grace, but it is not of the ripest flavour; at least, there are other fruits, both new and old, which we have laid up for thee, O our beloved, and some of them have a daintier taste. There is a sweet and mellow fruit which can only be brought forth by the summer sun of fellowship -- love because of the Redeemer's intrinsic goodness and personal sweetness. Oh that we might love our Lord for his own sake, love him because he is so supremely beautiful that a glimpse of him has won our hearts, and made him dearer to our eyes than light. Oh that all true and faithful disciples of our beloved Lord would press forward towards that state of affection, and never rest till they reach it! If any of you have not reached it, you need not therefore doubt your own safety, for

whatever the reason why you love Jesus, if you love him at all, it is a sure pledge and token that he loves you, and that you are saved in him with an everlasting salvation. Still covet earnestly the best gifts, and rise to the highest degree of devotion,. Love as the purest of the saints have loved; love as John the apostle loved, for still your Lord exceeds all the loving homage you can pay to him. Love his person, love himself; for he is better than all that he has done or given; and as from himself all blessings flow, so back to himself should all love return. Our text tells us that Christ is altogether lovely. What a wealth of thought and feeling is contained in that exclamation! I am embarrassed to know how to preach on such a subject, and half inclined to wish it had not been laid so much upon my heart. What, I pray you, what is loveliness? To discern it is one thing, but it is quite another thing to describe it. There is not one amongst us but knows how to appreciate beauty, and to be enamoured of its attractions, but how many here could tell us what it is? Stand up, my brother, and define it. Perhaps while you were sitting down you thought you could easily tell the tale, but now you are on your feet you find that it is not quite so easy to clothe in words the thoughts which floated through your brain. What is beauty? Cold-blooded word-mongers answer, fitness. And certainly there is fitness in all loveliness. But do not tell me that beauty is mere fitness, for I have seen a world of fitness in this world which, nevertheless, seemed to me to be inexpressibly ugly and unlovable. A wise man tells me that beauty is proportion; but neither is this a full description by many a league. No doubt it is desirable that the features should be well balanced; the eyes should be fitly set, no one feature should be exaggerated, and none should be dwarfed. "In nature what affects our hearts, Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts; 'Tis not a lip or eye we beauty call, But the joint force and full result of all." Harmony is beauty. Yet I have seen the chiselled marble, fashioned with skilful art into a well-nigh perfect form, which did not, could not, impress me with a sense of loveliness. There stands in one of the halls of the Vatican a statue of Antinous. Every feature in that statue is perfect in itself, and in complete harmony with all the rest. You could not find the slightest fault with eye or nose or mouth. It is indeed as much the ideal of male beauty as the Venus is of female charms, yet no one could ever have been enchanted with the statue, or have felt affection to the form which it represents. There is no expression whatever in the features. Everything is so adjusted and proportioned that you want a divergence to relieve you. The materialism is so carefully measured out that there needs a stir, a break in the harmony to give at least some semblance of a soul. Beauty, then, consists not in mere harmony, nor in balancing the features. Loveliness surely is attractiveness. Yes, but that is another way of saying you do not know what it is. It is a something that attracts you, and constrains you to exclaim, "Nought under heaven so strongly doth allure." We feel its power, we become its slaves; but we cannot write with pen of cold steel, nor could we write even with a pen of lightning, a description of what it is. How, then, can I -- enamoured, entranced, enraptured as I am with him whom my soul loveth -- how can I speak of him? He is altogether lovely? Where shall I find words, terms, expressions that shall fitly set him forth? Unless the Eternal Spirit shall upraise me out of myself I must for ever be incapable of setting forth the Well-beloved. Besides, were I baffled by nothing else, there is this, that the beauty of Christ is mysterious. It surpasses all the comeliness of human form. He may have had great beauty according to the flesh. That I cannot tell, but I should imagine that such a perfect soul as his must have inhabited a perfectly molded body. Never yet did you or I gaze with satisfaction upon the work of any painter who has tried to picture our Lord Jesus Christ. We have not blamed the great masters, but we have felt that the effort surpassed their powers. How could they photograph the sun? The loftiest conceptions of great artists in this case fall far

short of the mark. When the brightness of the Father's glory is the subject the canvas glows in vain. Art sits at her easel and produces diligently many a draught of the sacred features; but they are all failures, and they must be. Who shall ever depict Immanuel, God-with-us? I suppose that, by-and-by, when our Lord had entered upon his active life, and encountered its struggles, his youthful beauty was marred with lines of sadness and sorrow. Still his courage so overshadowed his cares, the mercy he showed so surpassed the misery he shared, and the grace he dispensed so exceeded the griefs that he carried, that a halo of real glory must ever have shone around his brow. His countenance must still have been lovely even when surrounded with the clouds of care and grief. How can we describe even the marred visage? It is a great mystery, but a sure fact, that in our Lord's marred countenance his beauty is best seen. Anguish gave him a loveliness which else he had not reached. His passion put the finishing touch upon his unrivalled loveliness. But, brethren, I am not about to speak of Christ's loveliness after the flesh, for now after the flesh know we him no more. It is his moral and spiritual beauty, of which the spouse in the song most sweetly says, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." The loveliness which the eye dotes on is mere varnish when compared with that which dwells in virtue and holiness; the worm will devour the loveliness of skin and flesh, but a lovely character will endure for ever. I. THIS IS RARE PRAISE. Let that be our first head. This is rare praise. What if I say it is unique? For of no other being could it be said, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." It means, first, that all that is in him is lovely, perfectly lovely. There is no point in our Lord Jesus that you could improve. To paint the rose were to spoil its ruddy hue. To tint the lily, for he is lily as well as rose, were to mar its whiteness. Each virtue in our Lord is there in a state of absolute perfection: it could not be more fully developed. If you were able to conceive of each virtue at its ripest stage it would be found in him. In the matter of transparent ingenuousness and sterling honesty, did ever man speak or act so truthfully as he? Ask, on the other hand, for sympathizing tenderness and love, was ever any so gentle as Jesus? Do you want reverence to God? how he bows before the Father. Do you want boldness before men? how he beards the Pharisees. You could not better anything which you find in Jesus. Wherever you shall cast your eye it may rest with satisfaction, for the best of the best of the best is to be seen in him. He is altogether lovely at every separate point, so that the spouse, when she began with his head, descended to his feet, and then lifting her eyes upward again upon a return voyage of delight, she looked into his countenance and summed up all that she had seen in this one sentence, "He is altogether lovely." This is rare praise. And he is all that is lovely. In each one of his people you will find something that is lovely, -- in one there is faith, in another abounding love; in one tenderness, in another courage, but you do not find all good things in any one saint -- at least not all of them in full perfection; but you find all virtues in Jesus, and each one of them at its best. If you would take the best quality of one saint, and the best quality of another -- yea, the best out of each and all the myriads of his people, you would find no grace or goodness among them all which Jesus does not possess in the fullest degree and in the highest perfection. He combines all the virtues, and gives them all a sweetness over and beyond themselves. In flowers you have a separate beauty belonging to each; no one flower is just like another, but each one blushes with its own loveliness: but in our Lord these separate and distinct beauties are found united in one. Christ is the posy in which all the beauties of the garden of perfection are bound up. Each gem has its own radiance: the diamond is not like the ruby, nor the ruby like the emerald; but Christ is that ring in which you have sapphire, ruby, diamond, emerald, set in choice order, so that each one heightens the other's brilliance. Look not for anything lovely out of Jesus, for he has all the loveliness. All perfections are

in him making up one consummate perfection; and all the loveliness which is to be seen elsewhere is but a reflection of his own unrivalled charms. In Jesus Christ -- this, moreover, is rare praise again -- there is nothing that is unlovely. You have a friend whom you greatly admire and fondly esteem, of whom, nevertheless, I doubt not you have often said to yourself in undertone, "I wish I could take away a little of the rough edge of his manners here and there." You never thought that of Christ. You have observed of one man that he is so bold as to be sometimes rude; and of another that he is so bland and amiable that he is apt to be effeminate. You have said, "That sweetness of his is exceedingly good, but I wish that it were qualified with sterner virtues." But there is nothing to tone down or alter in our divine Lord. He is altogether lovely. Have you not sometimes in describing a friend been obliged to forget, or omit, some rather prominent characteristic when you wished to make a favourable impression? You have had to paint him as the artist once painted Oliver Cromwell; the great wart over the eyebrow was purposely left out of the portrait. Cromwell, you know, said, "Paint me as I am, or not at all." We have, however, often felt that it was kind to leave out the warts when we were talking of those we esteemed, and to whom we would pay a graceful tribute. But there is nothing to leave out in Christ, nothing to hold back, or to guard, or to extenuate. In him is nothing redundant, nothing overgrown. He is altogether lovely. You never need put the finger over the scar in his case, as Apelles did when he painted his hero. No; tell it all out: reveal the details of his private life and secret thoughts, they need no concealment. Lay bare the very heart of Christ, for that is the essence of love and loveliness. Speak of his death-wounds, for in his scars there is more beauty than in the uninjured comeliness of another: and even when he lies dead in the tomb he is more comely than the immortal angels of God at their best estate. Nothing about our Lord needs to be concealed; even his cross at which his enemies stumble, is to be daily proclaimed, and it will be seen to be one of his choicest beauties. Frequently, too, in commending a friend whom you highly appreciated, you have been prone to ask for consideration of his position, and to make excuse for blemishes which you would fain persuade us are less actual than apparent. You have remarked how admirable he acts considering his surroundings. Conscious that someone would hint at an imperfection, you have anticipated the current of conversation by alluding to the circumstances which rendered it so hard for your friend to act commendably. You have felt the need of showing that others influenced him, or that infirmity restrained him. Did you ever feel inclined to apologize for Christ? Did he not always stand unbending beneath life's pressure, upright and unmoved amidst the storms and tempests of an evil world? The vilest calumnies have been uttered against him, in the age just past which produced creatures similar to Thomas Paine, but they never required an answer; and as for the more refined attacks of our modern skepticism, they are for the most part unworthy even of contempt. They fall beneath the glance of truth, withered by the glance of the eye of honesty. We never feel concerned to vindicate the character of Jesus; we know it to be safe against all comers. No man has been able to conjure up an accusation against Jesus. They seek false witnesses, but their testimony agrees not together. The sharp arrows of slander fall blunted from the shield of his perfectness. Oh, no; he is altogether lovely in this sense -- that there is nothing whatever in him that is not lovely. You may look, and look, and look again, but there is nothing in him that will not bear scrutiny world without end. Taking the lord Jesus Christ as a whole -- this is what our text intends to tell us -- he is inexpressibly lovely -- altogether lovely. The words are packed as tightly as they can be, but the meaning is greater than the words. Some translate the passage "He is all desires," and it is a good translation too, and contains a grand truth. Christ is so lovely that all you

can desire of loveliness is in him; and even if you were to sit down and task your imagination and burden your understanding to contrive, to invent, to fashion the ideal of something that should be inimitable -- ay (to utter a paradox) if you could labour to conceive something which should be inconceivably lovely, yet still you would not reach to the perfection of Christ Jesus. He is above, not only all we think, but all we dream of. Do you all believe this? Dear hearers, do you think of Jesus in this fashion? We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. But no man among you will receive our witness until he can say, "I also have seen him, and having seen him, I set to my seal that he is altogether lovely." II. And now, secondly, as this is rare praise, so likewise IT IS PERPETUAL PRAISE. You may say of Christ whenever you look at him, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." He always was so. As God over all, he is blessed for ever, Amen. When in addition to his godhead, he assumed our mortal clay, was he not inimitably lovely then? The babe in Bethlehem was the most beautiful sight that ever the world beheld. No fairer flower ever bloomed in the garden of creation than the mind of that youth of Nazareth gradually unfolding, as he "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." All the while he lived on earth, what moral perfections, what noble qualities, what spiritual charms were about his sacred person! His life among men is a succession of charming pictures. And he was lovely in his bitter passion, when as the thick darkness overshadowed his soul he prayed, in an agony of desire, "Not my will, but thine, be done." The bloody sweat did not disfigure, but adorn him. And oh, was he not lovely when he died? Without resentment he interceded for his murderers. His patience, his self-possession, his piety, as "the faithful martyr," have fixed as the meridian of time the hour when he said, "It is finished," and "bowed his head," and "cried with a loud voice, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He is lovely in his resurrection from the dead; beyond description lovely. Not a word of accusation did he utter against his cruel persecutors, though he had risen clothed with all power in heaven and in earth. With such tender sympathy did he make himself known to his sorrowing disciples, that despite the waywardness of their unbelief their hearts' instinct told them it was the same Jesus." He is altogether lovely. He will be lovely when he comes with solemn pomp, and sound of trumpet, and escort of mighty angels, and brings all his saints who have departed with him, and calls up those that are alive and remain on the earth till his advent, to meet him in the air. Oh, how lovely he will appear to the two throngs who will presently join in one company! How admirable will his appearance be! How eyes, ears, hearts and voices will greet him! With what unanimity the host redeemed by blood will account their highest acclamations as a trivial tribute to his honour and glory! "He is altogether lovely." Yea, and he shall be lovely for ever and ever when your eyes and mine shall eternally find their heaven in beholding him. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," is always worthy of this word of praise -- "altogether lovely." Let us retrace our steps for a minute. The more we study the four gospels, the more charmed we are with the gospel; for as a modern author has well said, "The gospels, like the gospel, are most divine because they are most human." As followers of Jesus, rank yourselves with those men who companied with him all the time that he went in and out among them; and you shall find him lovely in all conditions. Lovely when he talks to a leper, and touches and heals him; lovely by the bedside when he takes the fever-stricken patient by the hand and heals her; lovely by the wayside, when he greets the blind beggar, puts his finger on his eyes and bids him see; lovely when he stands on the sinking vessel and rebukes the waves; lovely when he meets the bier and rekindles the life that had expired; lovely when he visits the mourners, goes with the sisters of Bethany to the new-made grave, and weeps, and groans, and --

majestically lovely -- bids the dead come forth. Lovely is he when he rides through the streets of Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass. Oh, had we been there, we would have plucked the palm branches, and we would have taken off our garments to strew the way. Hosannah, lovely Prince of Peace! But he was just as lovely when he came from the garden with his face all besmeared with bloody sweat; just as lovely when they said, "Crucify him, crucify him;" just as lovely, and if possible more so, when down those sacred cheeks there dripped the cursed spittle from the rough soldiers' mouths; ay, and loveliest, to my eyes loveliest of all, when mangled, wounded, fainting, bruised, dying, he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" uttering a plaintive cry of utmost grief from the felon's gibbet whereon he died. Yea, view him where you will, in any place soever, is he not -- I speak to you who know him, and not to those who never saw him with the eye of faith -- is he not, in the night and in the day, on the sea and on the land, on earth and in heaven, altogether lovely? He is lovely in all his offices. What an entrancing sight to see the king in his beauty, with his diadem upon his head, as he now sits in yonder world of brightness! How charming to view him as a priest, with the Urim and Thummin, wearing the names of his people bejewelled on his breastplate! And what a vision of simple beauty, to see him as a prophet teaching his people in touching parables of homely interest, of whom they said, "Never man spake like this man"! The very tones of his voice, and the glance of his eyes, made his eloquence so supreme that it enthralled men's hearts. Yes, he is lovely, altogether lovely in any and every character. We know not which best beseems him, the highest or the lowliest positions. Let him be what he may -- Lamb or Shepherd, Brother or King, Saviour or Master, Foot-washer or Lord -- in every relation he is altogether lovely. Get a view of him, my brethren, from any point and see whether he is not lovely. Do you recollect the first sight you ever had of him? It was on a day when your eyes were red with weeping over sin, and you expected to see the Lord dressed in anger coming forth to destroy you. Oh, it was the happiest sight I ever saw when I beheld my sins rolling into his sepulchre and when looking up I beheld him my substitute bleeding on the tree. Altogether lovely was he that day. Since then providence has given us a varied experience and taken us to different points of view that we might look at Christ, and see him under many aspects. We look at statues from several standpoints if we would criticize them. A great many in London are hideous from all points of view -- others are very well if you look at them this way, but if you go over yonder and look from another point the artist appears to have utterly failed. Now, beloved, look at Jesus from any point you like, and he is at his best from each and every corner. You have been in prosperity: God multiplied your children and blessed your basket and your store, -- was Jesus lovely then? Assuredly he was the light of your delights. Nothing he had given you vied with himself. He rose in your hearts superior to his own best gifts. But you tell me that you have been very sick, and you have lost one after another of your dear ones; your means have been reduced; you have come down in the world: say, then, is Jesus lovely now? I know that you will reply "Yes, more than ever is Christ delightful in mine eyes." Well, you have had very happy times, and you have been on the mount of hallowed friendship. The other Sunday morning many of us were up there, and thought like Peter that we should like to stay there for ever; and is not Jesus lovely when he is transfigured and we are with him? Yes, but at another time you are down in the depths with Jonah, at the bottom of the sea. Is not Christ lovely then? Yes, even there he hears our prayer out of his holy temple, and brings us again from the deep abyss. We shall soon lie dying. Oh, my brethren, what brave talk God's people have often given us about their Lord when they have been on the edge of the grave! That seems to be a time when the Well-beloved takes the veil off his

face altogether and sits by the bedside, and lets his children look into his face, and see him as he is. I warrant you the saints forget the ghastliness of death when their hearts are ravished with the loveliness of Christ. Yes, hitherto, up to this point Jesus has been lovely; and now let us add that he will always be so. You know there are persons whom you account beautiful when you are young, but when you grow older in years, riper in judgment, and more refined in taste, you meet with others who look far more beautiful. Now, what think you of your Lord? Have you met with anyone in fact or in fable more beautiful than he? You thought him charming when you were but a babe in grace. What think you of him now? Taste, you know, grows, and develops with education: an article of virtue which fascinated you years ago has no longer any charms for you because your taste is raised. Has your spiritual taste outgrown your Lord's beauties? Come, brothers, does Christ go down as you learn truth more exactly and acquaint yourself more fully with him? Oh no. You prize him a thousand times more to-day than you did when the first impression of his goodness was formed in your mind. Some things which look very lovely at a distance lose their loveliness when you get near to them: but is it not true (I am sure it is) that the nearer you get to Christ the lovelier he is? Some things are only beautiful in your eyes for their novelty: you admire them when you have seen them once; if you were to see them a dozen times you would not care much about them. What say you about my Master? Is it not true that the oftener you see him, the more you know him, and the more familiar your intercourse with him, the more he rises in your esteem? I know it is so; and well, therefore, did the spouse say, "He is altogether lovely." Christ is altogether lovely in this respect -- that, when men reproach him and rail at him, he is often all the lovelier in his people's eyes. I warrant you Christ has been better known by the burn-side in Scotland by his covenanting people than ever he has been seen under the fretted roof of cathedral architecture. Away there in lonely glens, amid the mosses and the hills, where Covenanters met for fear of Claverhouse and his dragoons, the Lord Jesus has shone forth like the sun in his strength. We have nowadays to be satisfied with his moonlight face, but in persecuting days his children have seen his sun face, and oh! how glad they have been. Hear how the saints sing in prison! Listen to their charming notes, even on the rack, when the glory of his presence fills their souls with heaven on earth, and makes them defy the torments of the flesh. The Lord Jesus is more lovely to the soul that can bear reproach for him than he is to any other. Put the cross on his back if you will, but we love him all the better for that. Nail up his hands, but we love him all the better for that. Now fasten his feet; ay, but our soul melteth with love to him, and she feels new reasons for loving him when she beholds the nails. Now stand ye around the cross, ye worldlings, and mock him if ye will. Taunt and jest, and jeer and jibe -- these do but make us love the better the great and glorious one, who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Beloved, you shall keep on looking at Christ from all these points of view till you get to heaven, and each time you shall be more enamoured of him. When you reach the celestial city and see him face to face, then shall you say, "The half has not been told us," but even here below Christ is altogether lovely to his people. III. I leave that head just to notice, in the third place, that though this praise is rare praise and perpetual praise, yet also IT IS TOTALLY INSUFFICIENT PRAISE. Say ye that he is altogether lovely? It is not enough. It is not a thousandth part enough. No tongue of man, no tongue of angel, can ever set forth his unutterable beauties. "Oh," say you, "but it is a great word, though short; very full of meaning though soon spoken -- altogether lovely." I tell you it is a poor word. It is a word of despair. It is a word which the spouse

uttered, because she had been trying to describe her Lord and she could not do it, and so she put this down in very desperation: as much as to say, "There, the task is too great for me. I will end it. This is all I can say. Yea, he is altogether lovely." I am sure John Berridge was right when he said -- Living tongues are dumb at best, We must die to speak of Christ. Brethren, the praise of the text is insufficient praise, I know, because it is praise given by one who had never seen him in his glory. It is Old Testament praise this, that he is altogether lovely: praise uttered upon report rather than upon actual view of him. Truly I know not how to bring better, but I shall know one day. Till then I will speak his praise as best I can, though it fall far short of his infinite excellence. Our text is cloth of gold, but it is not fit for our Beloved to put the sole of his foot upon. He deserves better than this, for this is only the praise of a church that had not seen him die, and had not seen him rise, and had not seen him in the splendour at the divine right hand. "Well," say you, "try if you can do better." No, I will not, because if I did praise him better, the style would not last long, for he is coming quickly, and the best thing the best speaker could ever say of him will be put out of date by the majesty of his appearing. His chariot is waiting at his door now, and he may soon come forth from his secret chambers and be among us, and oh! the glory -- oh! the glory! Paul, you know, stole a glance through the lattices one day when he was caught up into the third heaven. Somebody said to me, "I wonder Paul did not tell us what he saw." Ay, but what he saw he might not tell, and the words he heard were words which it were not lawful for a man to utter, and yet to live among this evil generation. We shall hear those words ourselves soon, and see those sights not many days hence, so let it stand as it does, "He is altogether lovely." But when you have thus summed up all that our poor tongues can express, you must not say, "Now we have described him." Oh no, sirs, ye have but held a candle to this glorious sun, for he is such an one as thoughts cannot compass, much less language describe. I leave this point with the reflection, that God intends to describe him and set him forth one day. He is waiting patiently, for longsuffering is part of Christ's character; and God is setting forth the longsuffering of Christ in the patient waiting of these eighteen hundred years. But the day shall presently dawn and usher in the everlasting age when Christ shall be better seen, for every eye shall see him, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. The whole earth will one day be sweet with the praise of Jesus. Earth, did I say? This alabaster box of Christ's sweetness has too much fragrance in it for the world to keep it all to itself; the sweetness of our Lord's person will rise above the stars, and perfume worlds unknown. It will fill heaven itself. Eternity shall be occupied with declaring the praises of Jesus. Seraphs shall sing of it; angels shall harp it; the redeemed shall declare it. He is altogether lovely. The cycles of eternity as they revolve shall only confirm the statement of the blood-redeemed that he is altogether lovely. O that the day were come when we shall bow with them and sing with them! Wait a little while and be not weary, and you shall be at home, and then you shall know that I spoke the truth when I said that this was insufficient praise. Earth is too narrow to contain him, heaven is too little to hold him, eternity itself too short for the utterance of all his praises. IV. So I close with this last thought, which may God bless, for practical uses. This praise is VERY SUGGESTIVE. If Christ be altogether lovely it suggests a question. Suppose I never saw his loveliness. Suppose that in this house there should be souls that never saw anything in Christ to make them love him. If you were to go to some remote island where beauty consisted in having one eye and a twisted mouth, and a sea-green complexion, you would say, "Those people are strange beings." Such are the people of this world. spiritual beauty is not appreciated by them. This world appreciates the man who makes money, however reckless he may be of the welfare of

others while scheming to heap up riches for himself. As for the man who slays his fellow-creatures by thousands, they mount him on a bronze horse, put him on an arch, or they pile up a column, and set him as near heaven as they can. He slew his thousands: he died blood-red: he was an emperor, a tyrant, a conqueror: the world feels his power and pays its homage. As for this Jesus, he only gave his life for men, he was only pure and perfect, the mirror of disinterested love. The vain world cannot see in him a virtue to admire. It is a blind world, a fool world, a world that lieth in the wicked one. Not to discern the beauties of Jesus is an evidence of terrible depravity. Have you, my dear friend, frankly to confess that you were never enamoured of him who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and went about doing good? Then let this come home to you -- that the question is not as to whether Christ is lovely or not, the mistake is here -- that you have not a spiritually enlightened eye, a fine moral perception, nor even a well-regulated conscience, or you would see his loveliness at once. You are dark and blind. God help you to feel this. Do you not love Christ? Then let me ask you why you do not? There was never a man yet that knew Christ that could give a reason for not loving him, neither is there such a reason to be discovered. He is altogether lovely. In nothing is he unlovable. Oh I wish that the good Spirit of God would whisper in your heart, and incline you to say, "I will see about this Christ. I will read of him. I will look at the four portraits of him painted by the evangelists, and if he be indeed thus lovely, no doubt he will win my heart as he appears to have won the hearts of others." I pray he may. But do not, I pray you, continue to deny Christ your love. It is all you can give him. It is a poor thing, but he values it. He would sooner have your heart than all the gold in Europe. He would sooner have the heart of a poor servant girl or of a poor humble labourer upon the soil than the queen's diadem. He loveth love. Love is his gem -- his jewel. He delights to win it, and if he be indeed altogether lovely, let him have it. You have known people, I dare say, whom you could not help loving. they never had to say to you, "Love me," for you were captivated at once by the very sight of them. In like manner many and many have only received one beam of light from the Holy Spirit, and have thereby seen who Jesus was, and they have at once said of him, "Thou hast ravished my heart with one look of thine eyes," and so it has been that all their life long they have loved their Lord. Now, the praise is suggestive still further. "Is Christ altogether lovely? Then do I love him? As a child of God, do I love him as much as I ought? I do love him. Yes, blessed be his name, I do love him. But what a poor, cold, chill love it is. How few are the sacrifices I make for him. How few are the offerings that I present to him. How little is the fellowship that I maintain with him." Brother, is there a rival in your heart? Do you allow anyone to come in between you and the "altogether lovely." If so, chase out the intruder. Christ must have all your heart, and let me tell you the more we love him the more bliss we shall have. A soul that is altogether given up to the love of Christ lives above care and sorrow. It has care and sorrow, but the love of Christ kills all the bitterness by its inexpressible sweetness. I cannot tell you how near a man may live to heaven, but I am persuaded that a very large proportion of the bliss of heaven may be enjoyed before we come there. There is one conduit pipe through which heavenly joy will flow, and if you draw from it you may have as much as you will. "Abide in me" says Christ; and if you do abide in his love you shall have his joy fulfilled in yourselves that your joy may be full. You will have more capacious vessels in heaven, but even now the little vessel that you have can be filled up to the brim by knowing the inexpressible loveliness of Jesus and surrendering your hearts to it. Oh that I could rise to something better than myself. I often feel like a chick in the egg; I am picking my way out, and I cannot get clear of my prison. Fain would I chip the shell, come forth to freedom, develop wings, and soar heavenward,

singing on the road. Would God that were our portion. If anything can help us to get out of the shell, and to begin to rise and sing, it must be a full and clear perception that Jesus is altogether lovely. Come, let us be married to him afresh to-night. Come, believing hearts, yield again to his charms; again surrender yourselves to the supremacy of his affection. Let us have the love of our espousals renewed. As you come to his table bethink you of the lips of Christ, of which the spouse had been speaking before she uttered my text, -- "His mouth is most sweet." There are three things about Christ's mouth that are very sweet. The first is his word: you have heard that. The second is his breath. Come, Holy Spirit, make thy people feel that. And the third is his kiss. May every believing soul have that sweet token of his eternal love. Forgive my ramblings. May God bless to all his people the word that has been spoken. May some that never knew my Master ask to know him to-night. Go home and seek him. Read the word to find him. Cry to him in prayer and he will be found of you. He is so lovely that I should not live without loving him; and I shall deeply regret if any one of you shall spend another four-and-twenty hours without having had a sight of his divine face by faith. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- 1 John 3. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 782, 793, 785.

Forgiveness Made Easy

A Sermon (No.1448) Delivered by C. H. SPURGEON, At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." -- Ephesians 4:82. THE HEATHEN moralists, when they wished to teach virtue, could not point to the example of their gods, for, according to their mythologists, the gods were a compound of every imaginable, and, I had almost said, unimaginable vice. Many of the classic deities surpassed the worst of men in their crimes: they were as much greater in iniquity as they were supposed to be superior in power. It is an ill day for a people when their gods are worse than themselves. The blessed purity of our holy faith is conspicuous, not only in its precepts, but in the character of the God whom it reveals. There is no excellency which we can propose but we can see it brightly shining in the Lord our God: there is no line of conduct in which a believer should excel but we can point to Christ Jesus our Lord and Master as the pattern of it. In the highest places of the Christian faith you have the highest virtue, and unto God our Father and the Lord Jesus be the highest praise. We can urge you to the tenderest spirit of forgiveness by pointing to God who for Christ's sake has forgiven you. What nobler motive can you require for forgiving one another? With such high examples, brethren, what manner of people ought we to be? We have sometimes heard of men who were better than their religion, but that is quite impossible with us: we can never, in spirit or in act, rise to the sublime elevation of our divine religion. We should constantly be rising above ourselves, and above the most gracious of our fellow Christians, and yet above us we shall still behold our God and Saviour. We may go from strength to strength in thoughts of goodness and duties of piety, but Jesus is higher still, and evermore we must be looking up to him as we climb the sacred hill of grace. At this time we wish to speak a little concerning the duties of love and forgiveness; and here we note, at once, that the apostle sets before us the example of God himself. Upon that bright example we shall spend most of our time, but I hope not quite so much as to forget the practical part, which is so much needed in these days by certain Unforgiving spirits who nevertheless assume the Christian name. The theme of God's forgiving love is so fascinating that we may linger awhile, and a long while too, upon that bright example of forgiveness which God has set before us, but from it all I hope we shall be gathering grace by which to forgive others even to seventy times seven. We shall take the text word by word, and so we shall obtain the clearest divisions. I. The first word to think about is "FOR CHRIST'S SAKE." We use these words very often; but probably we have never thought of their Three, and even at this time we cannot bring forth the whole of their meaning. Let us touch thereon with thoughtfulness, praying the good Spirit to instruct us. "For Christ's sake;" all the good things which God has bestowed upon us have come to us "for Christ's sake," but especially the forgiveness of our sins has come "for Christ's sake." This is the plain assertion of the text. What does it mean? It means, surely, first, for the sake of the great atonement which Christ has offered. The great God can, as a just Lawgiver and King, readily pass by out' offences because of the expiation for sin which Christ has offered. If sin were merely a personal affront toward God, we have abundant evidence that he would be ready enough to pass it by without exacting vengeance; but it is a great deal more than that. Those who view it as a mere personal affront against God are but very shallow thinkers. Sin is an attack upon the moral

government of God; it undermines the foundations of society, and were it permitted to have its way it would reduce everything to anarchy, and even destroy the governing power and the Ruler himself. God hath a great realm to govern, not merely of men that dwell on the face of the earth, but beneath his sway there are angels, and principalities, and powers, and we do not know how many worlds of intelligent beings. It would certainly be a monstrous thing to suppose that God has made yonder myriads of worlds that we see sparkling in the sky at night without having placed some living creatures in them; it is far more reasonable to suppose that this earth is an altogether insignificant speck in the divine dominion, a mere province in the boundless empire of the King of kings. Now, this world having rebelled against God high-handedly, as it has done, unless there were a satisfaction demanded for its rebellion it would be a tolerated assault upon the dominion of the great Judge of all, and a lowering of his royal influence over all his domain. If sin in man's case were left unpunished it would soon be known through myriads of worlds, and in fact by ten thousand times ten thousand races of creatures, that they might sin with impunity; if one race had done so, why not all the rest? This would be a proclamation of universal license to rebel. It would probably be the worst calamity that could happen -- that any sin should go unpunished by the supreme Judge. Sometimes in a state, unless the lawgiver executes the law against the murderer, life will be in peril, and everything will become insecure, and therefore it becomes mercy to write the death-warrant: so is it with God in reference to this world of sinners. It is his very love as well as his holiness and his justice which, if I may use such a term, compels him to severity of judgment, so that sin cannot and must not be blotted out till atonement has been presented. There must first of all be a sacrifice for sin, which, mark you, the great Father, to show his love, himself supplies, for it is his own Son who is given to die, and so the Father himself supplies the ransom through his Son, that Son being also one with himself by bonds of essential unity, mysterious but most intense. If God demands the penalty in justice, he himself supplies it in love. 'Tis a wondrous mystery, this mystery of the way of salvation by an atoning sacrifice; but this much is clear, that now God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, because satisfaction has been made to the injured honour of the divine government, and justice is satisfied. I want you to consider for a moment how readily God may now blot out sin since Christ hath died. The blotting out of sin seems hard till we see the cross, and then it appears easy enough. I have looked at sin till it seemed to blind me with its horror, and I said in myself, "This damned spot can never be washed out; no fuller's soap can change its hue; sooner might the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots. sin, thou deep, eternal evil, what can remove thee?" And then I have seen the Son of God dying on the cross, and read the anguish of his soul, and heard the cries which showed the torment of his spirit when God his Father had forsaken him, and it has seemed to me as if the blotting out of sin were the easiest thing under heaven. When I have seen Jesus die I have not been able to understand how any sin could be difficult to remove. Let a man stand on Calvary and look on him whom he hath pierced, and believe and accept the atonement made, and it becomes the simplest thing possible that his debt should be discharged now that it is paid, that his freedom should be given now that the ransom is found, and that he should be no longer under condemnation, since the guilt that condemned him has been carried away by his great Substitute and Lord. It is then because of what Jesus Christ has suffered in our stead that God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, The second rendering of the text would be this, that God has forgiven us because of the representative character of Christ. It should never be forgotten that we originally fell by a representative. Adam stood for us, and he was our federal head. We did not fall personally at the first, but in our

representative. Had he kept the conditions of the covenant we had stood through him, but, inasmuch as he fell, we fell in him. I pray you cavil not at the arrangement, because there lay the hope of our lace. The angels probably fell individually, one by one, and hence they fell irretrievably, -- there was no restoring them: but as we fell in one Adam, there remained the possibility of our rising in another Adam; and therefore in the fulness of time God sent forth his Son Jesus Christ, born of a woman, made under the law to become the second Adam. He undertook to remove our burdens and to fulfil the conditions of our restoration. According to covenant he must appear in our nature, and that nature in the fulness of time he assumed. He must bear the penalty: that he hath done in his personal suffering and death. He must obey the law: that he has done to the utmost. And now Christ Jesus, having borne penalty and fulfilled law, is himself justified before God, and stands forth before God as the representative of all that are in him. God for Christ's sake has accepted us in him, has forgiven us in him, and looks upon us with love infinite and changeless in him. This is how all our blessings come to us -- in and through Christ Jesus; and if we are indeed in him, the Lord doth not only forgive us our sin, but he bestows upon us the boundless riches of his grace in him: in fact, he treats us as he would treat his Son, he deals with us as he would deal with Jesus. Oh, how pleasant to think that when the just God looks upon us it is through the reconciling medium, he views us through the Mediator. We sometimes sing a hymn which says -- "Him and then the sinner see, Look through Jesus' wounds on me," and this is just what the Lord doth. He counts us just for the sake of our Saviour's atonement, and because of his representative character. Now go a little further. When we read "for Christ's sake" it surely means for the deep love which the Father bears him. My brethren, can you guess a little of the love which the Father hath toward the Only-begotten? We cannot pry into the wondrous mystery of the eternal filiation of the Son of God lest we be blinded by excess of light; but this we know, that they are one God, -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and the union which exists between them is intense beyond conception. "The Father loveth the Son," was always true, and is true now; but how deeply, how intensely he loves the Son no mind can conceive. Now, brethren, the Lord will do great things for the sake of a Son whom he loves as he loveth Jesus, for in addition to the fact of his eternally loving him, as being one with him by nature and essence, there is now the superadded cause of love arising out of what the Lord Jesus hath done as the servant of the Father. Remember that our Lord Jesus has been obedient to his Father's will -- obedient to death, even to the death of the cross, wherefore God hath highly exalted him in and given him a name that is above every name. One of the sweetest thoughts, to my mind, which I sometimes suck at when I am alone, is this -- that God the Father will do anything for Christ. Here is also another piece of a honeycomb -- when I can plead Christ's name I am sure to win my suit of him. "For Christ's sake" is a plea that always touches the heart of the great God. Show that for you to receive such and such a blessing will glorify Christ, and the Father cannot withhold it, for it is his delight to honour Jesus. We speak after the manner of men, of course, and on such a theme as this we must be careful, but still we can only speak as men, being only men. It is the joy of the Father to express his love to his Son. Throughout all ages they have had fellowship one with another: they have always been one in all their designs, they have never differed upon any points and cannot differ; and you notice when our Lord says, "Father, glorify thy Son," he is so knit with the Father that he adds, "that thy Son also may glorify thee." Their mutual love is inconceivably great, and, therefore, brethren, God will do anything for Jesus. God will forgive us for Christ's sake; yea, he has done so in the case of thousands around me. And thou, big black sinner, if thou wilt go to God at this moment and say,

"Lord, I cannot ask thee to forgive me for my own sake, but do it out of love for thy dear Son," he will do it, for he will do anything for the sake of Jesus. If thou art at this time conscious of sin so as to despair of thyself, it is well that thou shouldst be so, for self-despair is only common-sense, since there is nothing in thyself upon which thou canst rely. But do catch at this hope -- it is not a straw, it is a good substantial life-buoy -- if thou canst ask forgiveness for the sake of Jesus, God will do anything for Jesus, and he will do anything for thee for his dear sake. So we read our text once more in the light of a truth which grows out of the love of God; namely, that God does forgive sin for the sake of glorifying Christ. Christ took the shame that he might magnify his Father, and now his Father delights to magnify him by blotting out the sin. If thou can prove that any gift to you would reflect glory upon Christ, you may depend upon it you will have it. If there is anything under heaven that would make Christ more illustrious the Father would not spare it for a moment. If thou seest that for thee to have thy sin forgiven would raise the fame of the Saviour, go and plead that argument with God, and thou shalt surely prevail. Will it not make Christ glad if he saves such a sinner as thou art? Then go with this argument in thy mouth, "Father, glorify thy Son by exalting him as a glorious Saviour in saving me." I find this often a great lever at a dead lift, -- to say unto the Lord, "Lord, thou knowest the straits I am in; thou knowest how undeserving I am; thou knowest what a poor, undone creature I am before thee; but if thy dear Son shall help and save me the very angels will stand and wonder -- at his mighty grace, and so it will bring glory to him, therefore I entreat thee be gracious unto me." Be sure thou art certain to prevail if thou canst plead that it will glorify Christ, and surely thou wouldest not wish to have a thing that would not glorify him. Thy prayer shall always be prevalent, if thy heart be in such a state that thou art willing to have or not to have, according as it will honour thy Lord: if it will not glorify Christ, be thou more than content to do without the choicest earthly good; but be thou doubly grateful when the boon that is granted tends to bring honour to the ever dear and worshipful name of Jesus. "For Christ's sake." It is a precious word; dwell upon it, and lay up this sentence in the archives of thy memory -- the Father will do anything for the sake of Jesus Christ his Son. II. Now, secondly, we pass on to observe what it is which we are told in the text has been done for us, and to us, for Christ's sake. "God for Christ's sake HATH FORGIVEN YOU." First notice, that he has done this certainly. The apostle does not say he hopes so, but he says, "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Are you in the number of the forgiven, my dear hearer? Hast thou believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Then, as sure as you have believed, God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Have you put your trust in the atoning sacrifice? Then God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. You have not begun to be a Christian, I hope, with the idea that one day, at some future period, you may obtain forgiveness. No. "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Pardon is not a prize to be run for, but a blessing received at the first step of the race. If you have believed in Jesus your sin has all gone -- all gone; all your sin has been erased from the records of the past, never to be mentioned against you for ever. The moment a sinner looks to Christ, the burden of his sin rolls from off his shoulders never to return. If Christ hath washed thee, (and he has if thou hast believed in him,) then thou art clean every whit, and before the Lord thou standest delivered from every trace of guilt. Pardon is not a matter of hope, but a matter of fact. Expectation looks for many a blessing, but pardon is a realized favour which faith holds in her hand even now. If Christ took thy load, thy load cannot remain on thine own back: if Christ paid thy debts, then they do not stand in God's books against thee. How can they? It stands to reason that if thy Substitute has taken thy sin and put it away, thy sin lies no more on thee. God for Christ's sake hath forgiven thee. Get hold of that grand truth, and hold it,

though all the devils in hell roar at thee. Grasp it as with a hand of steel; grip it as for life: "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven me," -- may each one of us be able to say that. We shall not feel the divine sweetness and force of the text unless we can make a personal matter of it by the Holy Ghost. Then notice that God has forgiven us continuously. He not only forgave us at the first all our sins, but he continues daily to forgive, for the act of forgiveness is a continuous one. I have sometimes heard it said that we were so forgiven when we first believed that there is no need to ask for further forgiveness; to which I reply -- We were so completely forgiven when we first believed that we ought continually to ask for the perpetuity of that one far-reaching act, that the Lord may continue to exert towards us that fulness of forgiving grace which absolved us perfectly at the first, that we may continue to walk before him with a sense of that complete forgiveness, clear and unquestioned. I know I was forgiven when first I believed in Christ; and I am equally sure of it now: the one absolution continues to ring in my ears like joy-bells which never cease. Pardon once given continues to be given. When through doubt and anxiety I was not sure of my pardon, yet it was still true; for he that believeth on him is not condemned, even though he may write bitter things against himself. Beloved friend, catch hold of that, and do not let it go. Divine pardon is a continuous act. And this forgiveness on God's part was most free. We did nothing to obtain it by merit, and we brought nothing wherewith to purchase it. He forgave us for Christ's sake, not for aught that we had done. True, we did repent, and did believe, but repentance and faith he gave us, so that he did not forgive us for the sake of them, but purely of his own dear love, because he delighteth in mercy, and is never more like himself than when he passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin. Remember, also, that he forgave us fully. It was not here and there a sin that he blotted out, but the whole horrible list and catalogue of our offences he destroyed at once. The substitution of our Lord has finished that matter even to perfection: -- "Because the sinless Saviour died, My sinful soul is counted free; For God, the Just, is satisfied To look on him and pardon me." All our transgressions are swept away at once, carried off as by a flood, and so completely removed from us that no guilty trace of them remains. They are all gone! O ye believers, think of this, for the all is no little thing: sins against a holy God, sins against his loving Son, sins against gospel as well as against law, sins against man as well as against God, sins of the body as well as sins of the mind, sins as numerous as the sands on the sea shore, and as great as the sea itself: all, all are removed from us as far as the east is from the west. All this evil was rolled into one great mass, and laid upon Jesus, and having borne it all he has made an end of it for ever. When the Lord forgave us he forgave us the whole debt. He did not take the bill and say, "I strike out this item and that," but the pen went through it all; -- PAID. It was a receipt in full of all demands, Jesus took the handwriting which was against us and nailed it to his cross, to show before the entire universe that its power to condemn us had ceased for ever. We have in him a full forgiveness. And let it be remembered that this forgiveness which God has given us for Christ's sake is an eternal forgiveness. He will never rake up our past offences and a second time impute them, he will not find us on an evil day, and say, "I have had great patience with you, but now will I deal with you after your sins." Far otherwise; he that believeth in Jesus hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation. Irreversible is the pardon of heaven. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never repents what he has given, or forgiven. "Tis done, 'tis done for ever: Jehovah absolves and the sentence stands fast for ever. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Blessed be God for eternal

pardon! And since I could not find a word to finish with but this one, I will use it: he hath divinely pardoned us. There is such a truth, reality, and emphasis in the pardon of God as you can never find in the pardon of man; for though a man should forgive all you have done against him, if you have treated him very badly, yet it is more than you could expect that he should quite forget it, but the Lord says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more for ever." If a man has played you false, although you have forgiven him, you are not likely to trust him again. It is an old proverb, "Never ride a broken-knee'd horse," and it is not a bad proverb either. But see how the Lord deals with his people. When Peter was set on his legs again he was a broken-knee'd horse enough, and yet see how gloriously the Lord rode that charger on the day of Pentecost. Did he not go forth conquering and to conquer? The Lord lets bygones be bygones so completely that he trusts pardoned souls with his secrets, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him"; and he entrusts some of us with his choicest treasures, for Paul said, "He hath put me in trust with the gospel, though I was a blasphemer." He commits to our keeping that priceless casket which encloses the best hope of men, namely, the gospel of Jesus. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." This shows how perfect is our forgiveness, -- nay, I must put it, how divine is the forgiveness which we have received. Let us rejoice in that grand promise which comes to us by the mouth of Jeremiah of old, "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Here is annihilation -- the only annihilation I know of -- the absolute annihilation of sin through the pardon which the Lord gives to his people. Let us sing it as though it were a choice hymn -- "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." III. Now, if you have drank into the spirit of our subject you will be strengthened to bear what I have to say to you upon a point of practice. "FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Let me say, at the commencement, that I do not know of anyone here present who has fallen out with anybody else, and therefore I shall make no personal allusions. If I did know of quarrels and bickerings it is very likely that I should say about the same, but I do not happen to know of any, and if therefore, my remarks should come home, I would earnestly beg each one so affected to believe that what I say is intended for him, and to receive it as a pointed, personal message from God. "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Now observe how the apostle puts it. Does he say "forgiving another"? No, that is not the text, if you look at it. It is "forgiving, one another." One another! Ah, then that means that if you have to forgive to-day, it is very likely that you will yourself need to be forgiven to-morrow for it is "forgiving one another." It is turn and turn about, a mutual operation, a co-operative service. In fact, it is a joint-stock business of mutual forgiveness, and members of Christian churches should take large shares in this concern. "Forgiving one another." You forgive me, and I forgive you, and we forgive them, and they forgive us, and so a circle of unlimited forbearance and love goes round the world. There is something wrong about me that needs to be forgiven by my brother, but there is also something wrong about my brother which needs to be forgiven by me, and this is what the apostle means -- that we are all of us mutually to be exercising the sacred art and mystery of forgiving one another. If we always did this we should not endure those who have a special faculty for spying out faults. There are some who, whatever church they are in, always bring an ill report of it. I have heard this sort of thing from many -- "There is no love among Christians at all." I will tell you the character of the gentleman who makes that observation; he is both unloving and unlovely, and so he is out of the track of the pilgrims of love. Another cries, "There is no sincerity in the world

now." That man is a hypocrite: be you quite sure of that. Judge a bird by its song, and a man by his utterance. The censorious measure our corn, but they use their own bushels. You may know very well what a man is by what he says of others. It is a gauge of character which very seldom will deceive you, to judge other men by their own judgment of their fellows. Their speech betrays their heart. Show me your tongue, sir! Now I know whether you are sick or well. He that speaketh with an ill tongue of his neighbour hath an ill heart; rest assured of that. Let us begin our Christian career with the full assurance that we shall have a great deal to forgive in other people, but that there will be a great deal more to be forgiven in ourselves, and let us set our account upon having to exercise gentleness, and needing its exercise from others, "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Note again. When we forgive, it is a poor and humble business compared with God's forgiving us, because we are only forgiving one another, that is, forgiving fellow-servants; whereas when God forgives us it is the Judge of all the earth forgiving, not his fellows, but his rebel subjects, guilty of treason against his majesty. For God to forgive is something great; for us to forgive, though some think it great, should be regarded as a very small matter. Then reflect upon the matter to be forgiven. Our Lord in his parable tells us that the fellow-servant owed a few pence, but the servant himself was debtor to his master many talents. What we owe to God is infinite, but what our fellow creature owes to us is a very small sum. What did he do which has so much offended you? "He said a very shameful thing about me." It was very bad of him, no doubt. "Then he played me a very nasty trick, and acted very ungraciously; in fact, he behaved scandalously, and if you hear the story you will be quite indignant." Well, I am indignant. He is a bad fellow, there is no doubt about it; and so are you. So were you certainly when you first came to God; bad as he is to you, you have been much worse to the Lord. I will warrant that his blacks towards you are whites compared with your blacks in the presence of God. "Oh, but you would not believe how basely he acted." No, and I dare say I should hardly believe it if I heard how base you have been to the Lord; at any rate, it should make our eyes fill with tears to think how we have grieved our God, and vexed his Spirit. Some of us have had so much manifest forgiveness, so much outward sin forgiven, that for us to forgive ought to be as natural as to open our hands. After such forgiveness as the Lord has bestowed on some of us, we should be wicked servants indeed if we were to take our brother by the throat and say, "Pay me what thou owest." We should deserve to be given over to the tormentors by our angry Master if we did not count it joy to pass by a brother's fault. If anyone here who is a Christian finds a difficulty in forgiveness, I am going to give him three words which will help him wonderfully. I would put them into the good man's mouth. I gave them to you just now, and prayed you to get the sweetness of them; here they are again! "For Christ's sake." Cannot you forgive an offender on that ground? Ah, the girl has acted very shamefully, and you, her father, have said some strong things, but I beg you to forgive her for Christ's sake. Cannot you do it with that motive? It is true your son has behaved very wrongly, and nothing hurts a father's heart more than the wicked conduct of a son. You did in a fit of anger say a very stern thing, and deny him your house for ever. I entreat you to eat your words up for Christ's sake. Sometimes when I have been pleading a case like that, the person I have been persuading has kindly said, "I will do it for you, sir." I have said, "I will thank you if you will do it at all, but I would rather you would have said you would do it for my Master, for what a blessed Master he has been to you! Do it for his sake." I may be speaking very plainly home to some of you. I hope I am. If there be any of you who have got into a bad state of heart and have said you never will forgive a rebellious son, do not say so again till you have looked at the matter, for

Christ's sake. Not for the boy's sake, not for your neighbour's sake who has offended you, not for any other reason do I urge you to mercy, but for Christ's sake. Come, you two brothers, who have fallen out, love each other for Christ's sake; come, you two sisters, come you two friends who have been alienated, get together directly, and end all your ill feeling for Christ's sake. You must not keep a drop of malice in your soul, for Christ's sake. Oh charming word, how it melts us, and as it melts it seems to leave no trace of anger behind it: for Christ's sake our love suffers long and never fails. I do not know how to put this next word I am going to say. It is a paradox. You must forgive or you cannot be saved; at the same time you must not do it from compulsion; you must do it freely. There is a way of carrying this into practice, though I cannot explain it in words. You must forgive, not because you are forced to, but because you heartily do it. Remember, it is of no use for you to put your money into that offering box as you go out unless you remember first to forgive your brother. God will not accept the gifts, prayers, or praises of an unrelenting heart. Though you leave all your substance to his cause, he will not accept a penny of it if you die in an unforgiving temper. There is no grace where there is no willingness to overlook faults. John saith, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" The very prayer that teaches you to ask for mercy bids you say "forgive us, as we forgive our debtors." Unless you have forgiven others you read your own death-warrant when you repeat the Lord's prayer. Finally, I want to say to you all, brethren, that, as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, if we are to forgive one another, there must be some other things which we ought to do. And the first is, do not let us provoke each other to offend. If I know that a man does not like a certain thing, I will not thrust it in his way. Do not say, "Well, but if he is short tempered, I cannot help it; he should not be so ready to take offence. I cannot be always paying deference to his absurd sensitiveness." No; but, brother, your friend is very ready to take offence, and you know that he is; have respect, then, to his infirmity of temper, such as you would have if he were afflicted in body. If you have rheumatism or gout, your friends do not go stamping across the room and saying, "He ought not to mind that; he ought not to feel it." Kind-hearted people step across the floor with a light step, for fear they should hurt the poor suffering limb. If a man has a diseased mind and is very irritable, treat him gently, pity his infirmity, and do not irritate him. A friend wrote me a short while ago a letter of serious complaint against a brother who had been very angry with him, and had spoken very sharply while excited to passion. I felt bound to hear the other side of the story, and I was obliged to say, "Now, you two brothers are both wrong. You, my brother, lost your temper; but you, my other brother, irritated him, so that I do not wonder he did lose his temper. And when you saw he had lost his temper why did you not go away, or do something to quiet him? No, but you remained to increase the wrath, and then wrote to expose him." I blame the wood for burning, but what shall I say of the bellows? It was wrong to blaze, but was it right to fan the flame? Very often when a man is angry he may not be the only one to blame. Therefore, brothers and sisters, if we are to forgive each other, do not let us provoke each other to offend. In the next place, do not make offences. Oftentimes a man has been offended at another for no reason at all. One person has said of another as he passed him in the street, "He will not even nod to me. He is too proud to own me, because I am a poor man." Now, that beloved friend who was thus blamed could not see much further than his hand, for he was shortsighted. Another has been censured for not hearing, though he was deaf, and another for not shaking hands when his arm was crippled. Do not imagine offences where they are not intended. Next, do not take offences where they are intended. It is a splendid thing if you will not be offended. Nothing makes a man feel so small as when you

accept what he intended for an insult as if it were a compliment, and thank him for it. Can you master yourself to that point? Remember, when you have conquered yourself you have conquered the world. You have overcome everybody when you have so fully overcome your own spirit that you remain content with that which naturally would excite your wrath. Then, if you must be offended, dear brother, do not exaggerate an offence. Some good women, I was about to say, and men also, when they come as tale-bearers with a charge, make a great many flourishes and additions. They go a long way round, and they bring innumerable beliefs, and suggestions, and hints, and hearsays into the business, until a midge's egg becomes as huge as ever was laid by an ostrich. I begin coolly to strip off the feathers and the paint, and I say, "Now, I do not see what that point had to do with it, or what that remark has in it all I can see when I come to look at the bare fact is so-and-so, and that was not much, was it?" "Oh, but there was more intended." Do not believe that, dear brother, dear sister. If there must be something wrong, let it be as little as you can. If you have a telescope, look through the large hole and minify instead of magnifying, or, better still, do not look at it at all. A blind eye is often the best eye a man can have, and a deaf ear is better by far than one which hears too much. "Also take no heed," says Solomon, "unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee." Something you have done may irritate a servant, and he may make remarks which are unbecoming and impertinent. Don't hear what he is muttering. Keep out of hearing, he will be sorry to-morrow, and if he thinks you did not hear him he will continue in your service and be faithful to you. What would you do if your master picked you up for every word, and if he caught up every sentence that you uttered? How would you live at all if he reckoned sharply with you? No, dear friends, as you have to forgive one another, do not take offence, and when offence is given do not exaggerate it, and, if you can, do not even observe it. Then, again, do not publish offences. There has been something very offensive said. What then? Do not repeat it. Do not go first to one, and then to another, and say, "Now this is quite private, and mind you keep it a secret; So-and-so has spoken shamefully." Better that you should let your heart break than go up and down with a fire-brand in this fashion. If a brother has done wrong why should you do wrong? You will be doing wrong if you publish his fault. Remember how the curse came upon Noah's son for exposing his father; and how much better it is for us all when there is anything wrong to go backward and cover it, without even looking at it ourselves, if we can help it. Cover it up: cover it up. Charity covereth a multitude of sins. Not only one, two, three sins will charity cover, but she carries a cloak which covereth a whole host of faults. Above all, my brethren, and with this I close, never in any way, directly or indirectly, avenge yourselves. For any fault that is ever done to you, the Master says unto you, -- resist not evil. In all things bend, bow, yield, submit. "If you tread on a worm it will turn," says somebody. And is a worm your example? Christ shall be mine. It is a shocking thing when a Christian man forgets his Lord to find an excuse for himself among the poor creatures under his feet. But if it must be so, what does a worm do when it turns? When you have trodden on a worm, does it bite? Does the worm hurt any one? Ah, no. It has turned, but it has turned in its agony and writhed before you, that is all. You may do that, if you must. Brother, the most splendid vengeance you can ever have is to do good to them that do you evil, and to speak well of them that speak ill of you. They will be ashamed to look at you; they will never hurt you again if they see that you cannot be provoked except it be to greater love and larger kindness. This ought to be the mark of Christians; not "I will have the law of you," or "I will avenge myself," but "I will bear and forbear even to the end." "Vengeance is mine. I will repay it, saith the Lord." Do not take that into your

hand which God says belongs to him, but as he for Christ's sake has forgiven you, so also forgive all those who do you wrong. "How long am I to do that?" says one. "I would not mind doing it three or four times." There was one of old who would go the length of six or seven, but Jesus Christ said "unto seventy times seven. That is a very considerable number. You may count whether you have yet reached that amount, and if you have you will now be glad to begin again, still forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. God help us to be patient to the end. Though I have not just now been preaching Christ Jesus as the object of the sinner's trust, yet remember that he must also be the object of our imitation. This is the kind of doctrine which Christ himself preached, and therefore, since he preached continually this love to our neighbour, and forgiveness of our enemies, we ought both to preach and to practise it. Go ye and believe in him, and be imitators of him, remembering that he forgave his murderers upon the cross whereon he wrought out our redemption. May his Spirit rest upon you evermore. Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Ephesians 4. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 621, 566, 559.

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