

# SPURGEONS SERMONS VOLUME 35 1889

by C.H. Spurgeon

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*Volume 35 of Spurgeon's collected sermons, containing messages preached during 1889 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.*

11 Chapters

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## Spurgeons Sermons Volume 35 1889

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## Shoes of Iron, and Strength Sufficient: A New Year's Promise

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A Sermon (No.2062) Intended for Reading on Lord's-day, January 6th, 1889, Delivered by C. H. SPURGEON, At the [1]Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington On Thursday Evening, March 29th, 1888. "And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." -- Deuteronomy 33:24-25. I once heard an old minister say that he thought the blessing of Asher was peculiarly the blessing of ministers; and his eyes twinkled as he added, "At any rate, they are usually blessed with children, and it is a great blessing for them if they are acceptable to their brethren, and if they are so truly anointed that they even dip their foot in oil." Well, well, I pray that all of us who preach the gospel may enjoy this triplet of blessings in the highest sense. If our quiver is not full of children according to the flesh, yet may we have many born unto God through our ministry. May we be blessed by being made spiritual fathers to very many, who shall be brought by us to receive life, pardon, peace, and holiness, through our Lord Jesus. What is the use of our life if it be not so? To what end have we preached unless we see souls born into the family of grace? My inmost soul longs to see all my hearers born anew: this would be my greatest joy, my highest blessedness. Ask for me the blessing of Asher -- "Let Asher be blessed with children"; and may the Lord make my spiritual offspring to be as the sands upon the sea-shore. It is a great blessing from the Lord when our speech is sweet to the ears of saints -- when we have something to bring forth which our brethren in Christ can accept, and which comes to them with a peculiar preciousness and power, so that they can receive it, and feel that it is thoroughly acceptable to them. We do not wish to be acceptable to the worldly wise, nor to the error-hunters of the day; but we are very anxious to be pleasant to the Lord's own children -- our brethren in Christ. They have a holy taste whereby they discern spiritual meats, and we would bring forth for food that which they will account to be nourishing and savoury. Every minister prays to be "acceptable to his brethren." And what could we do without the third blessing, namely that of unction? "Let him dip his foot in oil." Oh, for an anointing of the Holy Spirit, not only upon the head with which we think, but upon the foot with which we move! We would have our daily walk and conversation gracious and useful. We wish that, wherever we go, we may leave behind us the print of divine grace. I was asking concerning a preacher what kind of man he was, and the simple, humble cottager, answered me, "Well, sir, he is this kind of man: if he comes to see you, you know that he has been." We must not only have oil in the lamps of our public ministry, but oil in the vessels of our private study. We need the holy oil everywhere, upon every garment, even down to our skirts. I know that there are mockers who scoff at the very mention of unction; but I pray that to myself and my brethren the promise may be fulfilled, "He shall dip his foot in oil." Such a man, anointed with fresh oil, holds an unquestioned office, enjoys an un failing freshness, and exercises an effectual influence. Wherever he goes you see his footprints, for his foot has been dipped in oil. Well, now, if these three blessings be good for ministers, they are equally good for all sorts of workers. You in the school, you who visit tract districts, you who manage mothers' meetings, and you who in any shape or way endeavour to make Christ known, may you have the threefold blessing! The Lord give you many spiritual children: may you be blessed with them, and never be

without additions to their number! The Lord make you acceptable to those among whom you labour; and the Lord grant you always to go forth in his strength, anointed with his Spirit! That is the first part of our text, and I am not going to say any more about it, as the second part is that to which I shall call your especial attention. May the Holy Spirit make the promise exceeding sweet to you, and grant you a full understanding of it. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." There are two things in the text -- shoes and strength. We will talk about these two, hoping to possess them both. I. "THY SHOES SHALL BE IRON AND BRASS." That is a very great promise, and I fear that I shall not be able to bring out all its meaning in one discourse. I find that the passage has several translations; and, though I think that which we have now before us is by far the best, yet I cannot help mentioning the others, for I think they are instructive. These interpretations may serve me as divisions in opening up the meaning. I take it as a rule that the Lord's promises are true in every sense which they will fairly bear. A generous man will allow the widest interpretation of his words, and so will the infinitely gracious God. This promise meant that Asher should have treasures under his feet -- that there should, in fact, be mines of iron and copper within the boundaries of the tribe. Metals enrich nations, and help their advancement in many ways. Tribes that possess minerals are thereby made rich, whatever metals those may be; but such useful metals as iron and copper would prove of the utmost service to the people of that time, if they knew how to use them. Is there any spiritual promise at all in this! Asher is made rich and iron and copper lying beneath his feet. Are saints ever made rich with treasures under their feet? Undoubtedly they are. The Word of God has mines in it. Even the surface of it is rich, and it brings forth food for us; but it is with Scripture as Job saith it is with the earth: "As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold." There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily: even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the gospel of God; but the Word of God yields most to the digger. He that can study hard, and press into the inner meaning -- he is the man that shall be enriched with riches current in heavenly places. Every Bible student here will know that God has put under his feet great treasures of precious teaching, and he will by meditation sink shafts into the deep places of revelation. I wish we gave more time to our Bibles. We waste too much time upon the pretentious, poverty-stricken literature of the age; and some, even Christian people, are more taken up with works of fiction than they are with this great Book of everlasting fact. We should prosper much more in heavenly husbandry if we would "dig deep while sluggards sleep." Remember that God has given to us to have treasures under our feet; but do not so despise his gifts as to leave the mines of revelation unexplored. You will find these treasures, not only in the Word of God, but everywhere in the providence of God, if you will consider the ways of the Lord, and believe that God is everywhere at work, He that looks for a providence will not be long without seeing one. All events are full of teaching to the man that has but grace and wit to interpret them. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." There shall be treasures under your feet if your feet keep to the ways of truth. A rich land is the country along which believers travel to their rest: its stones are iron, and out of its bowels thou mayest dig brass. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right." The Revised Version has it, "Thy bars shall be iron and brass;" and certainly the original text bears that meaning. "Thy bars shall be iron and brass:" there shall be protection around him. The city gates shall be kept fast against the enemy,

so as to preserve the citizens. The slaughtering foe shall not be able to intrude, because, instead of the common wooden bar, which might be sufficient in more peaceful times, there shall be given bars of metal, not easily cut in sunder or removed. Herein I see a spiritual blessing for us also. What a mercy it is, when God strengthens our gates and secures the bars thereof, so that, when the enemy comes, he is not able to enter or to molest us! Peace from all assaults, safety under all alarms, shutting in from all attacks -- this is a priceless boon. Happy people who have God for their protector! Blessed are they who rest in the sure promises and faithfulness of God, for they may laugh their enemies to scorn. O brethren, how safe are they whose trust is in the living God and in his covenant and promise! Personally I know what this means. I have rested as calmly in the centre of the battle as ever I have reposed in the deepest calm: with all against me I am as quiet in soul as when everyone called himself my friend. It is true -- "Thy bars shall be iron and brass." Still, I like the Old Version best, and the original certainly bears it, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." The Revised Version puts this in the margin He shall have protection for his feet. The chief objection that has been raised to this is that it would be a very unusual thing for shoes to be made of iron and brass. Such a thing is not heard of anywhere else in Scripture, neither is it according to Oriental custom. For that reason I judge that the interpretation is the more likely to be correct, since the protection which God gives to his people is unusual. No other feet shall wear so singular a covering; but those who are made strong in the Lord shall be able to wear shoes of iron, and the Lord shall give them sandals of brass. As Og, the King of Bashan, was of the race of the giants, and "his bedstead was a bedstead of iron," so shall the Lord's champions wear shoes of iron. Theirs are no common equipments, for they are no common people. God's people are a peculiar people, and everything about them is peculiar. Even if the poetry of the passage would not bear to run upon all fours, there is no reason why it should, since it only relates to shoes. We may be quite content to take the notion of iron and brazen shoes with all its strangeness, and even let the strangeness be a commendation of it. You have peculiar difficulties, you are a peculiar people, you traverse a peculiar road, you have a peculiar God to trust in, and you may, therefore, find peculiar consolation in a peculiar promise: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." With shoes of iron and of brass, O'er burning marl thy feet shall pass, Tread dragons down, from fear set free; For as thy day thy strength shall be. But what does this mean -- "thy shoes shall be iron and brass"? Are there not several meanings? Does it not mean that our feet, tender and unprotected by nature, shall receive protection -- protection from God? Our feebleness and necessity shall call upon God's grace and skill, and he will provide for us, and give to us exactly what we, by reason of our feebleness, so much need. We want to have shoes of iron and brass, first, to travel with. We are pilgrims. We journey along a road which has not been smoothed by a steam-roller, but remains rough and rugged as the path to an Alpine summit. We push on through a wilderness where there is no way. Sometimes we traverse a dreary road, comparable too a burning sand. At other times sharp trials afflict us as if they cut our feet with flints. Our journey is a maze, a labyrinth: the Lord leads us up and down in the wilderness, and sometimes we seem further from Canaan than ever. Seldom does our march take us through gardens: often it leads us through deserts. We are always travelling, never long in one stay. Sometimes the fiery cloudy pillar rests for a little, but it is only for a little. "Forward!" is our watchword. We have no abiding city here. We pitch our tent by the wells and palms of Elim, but we strike it in the morning, when the silver bugle sounds, "Up, and away!" and so we march to Marah, or to the place of the fiery serpents. Ever onward; ever forward; ever moving! This is our lot. Be it so. Our equipment betokens it: we have appropriate shoes for this

perpetual journey. We are not shod with the skins of beasts, but with metals which will endure all wear and tear. Is it not written, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass"? However long the way, these shoes will last to the end. Perhaps I address some friend whose way is especially rough. You seem to be more tried than anybody else. You reckon yourself to be more familiar with sorrow than anyone you know: affliction has marked you for its own. I pray you take home this promise to yourself by faith: the Lord saith to thee, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." This special route of yours, which is beset with so many difficulties -- your God has prepared you for it. You are shod as none but the Lord's chosen are shod. If your way is singular, so are your shoes. You shall be able to traverse this thorny road -- to journey along it with profit to yourself, and with glory to God. For your travelling days you are well fitted, for your shoes are iron and brass. "If the sorrows of thy case seem peculiar still to thee, God has promised needful grace, 'As thy days, thy strength shall be.'" Shoes of iron remind us of military array -- they are meant to fight with. Brethren, we are soldiers as well as pilgrims. These shoes are meant for trampling upon enemies. All sorts of deadly things lie in our way, and it is by the help of these shoes that the promise is made good. "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Are we not often too much like the young man Jether, who was bidden by his father to slay Zebah and Zalmunna, but he was afraid. We tremble to put our foot upon the neck of the enemy; we fancy that if we should attempt it, we should be guilty of presumption. Let us have done with this false humility, for thus we dishonour the Lord's promise: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." Better far to say, "Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us." Thus we may say without fear, for assuredly "The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly." "O my soul, thou has trodden down strength," said the holy woman of old, when the adversaries of Israel had been routed. Thus can our exultant spirits also take up the chant. I also can say, "O my soul, thou has trodden down strength." Yes, believer, with thy foot thou has crushed thy foe, even as thy Lord, who came on purpose that he might break with his foot, even with his bruised heel, the head of our serpent adversary. Be not afraid, therefore, in the day of conflict, to push onward against the foe. Do not be afraid to seize the victory which Christ has already secured for thee. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass" thou shalt trample down thy foe, and march unharmed to victory. What a blessing it is when we get self under our feet! We shall have good use for iron shoes if we keep him there. What a mercy it is when you get a sinful habit under your feet! You will need have shoes of brass to keep it there. What a mercy it is when some temptation that you have long struggled with at last falls to the ground, and you can set your foot upon it! You need to have both of your shoes strengthened with iron, and hardened with brass, that you may bruise this spiritual enemy, and crush out its life. Feet shod with sound metal of integrity and firmness will be none too strong in this evil world, where so many, like serpents, are ready to bite at our heels. Only so shod shall we win the victory. See, the Lord promises that we shall have shoes suitable alike for travelling and for trampling upon enemies! Next, we have fit shoes for climbing. One interpreter thinks that the sole of the shoe was to be studded with iron or copper nails. Certainly, those who climb would not like to go with the smooth soles which suit us in our parlours and drawing-rooms. There are many instances where a rough tip of iron, or a strong nail in the heel of the shoe, has checked the slipping mountaineer when gliding over a shelving rock, and there he has stayed on the very brink of death. Our spiritual life is an upward climb, with constant danger of a fall. It is a great mercy to have shoes of iron and brass in our spiritual climbings, that should our feet be almost gone, we may find foothold before

we are utterly cast down. We ought to climb: the higher our spiritual life the better. It is written of the believer, "He shall dwell on high." We ought not to be satisfied till we reach the highest places of knowledge, experience, and practice. High doctrine is glorious doctrine, high experience is blessed experience, high holiness is heavenly living. Many souls always keep in the plains: the simple elements are enough for them; and, thank God, they are enough for salvation and for comfort. But if you want the richest delight and the highest degree of grace, climb the hills and roam among the mysteries of God, the sublimer revelations of his divine will. Especially climb into the doctrines of grace: be not afraid of electing love, of special redemption, of the covenant, and all that is contained in it. Be not afraid to climb high, for if thy feet be dipped in the oil of grace, they shall also be so shod that they shall not slip. Trust in God, and you shall be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed. Your shoes shall be iron and brass, for lofty thought and clear knowledge, if you commit your mind to the instruction of the Lord. Receiving nothing except as you find it in the Word, but in a childlike spirit receiving everything that you find there, you shall stand upon your high places. Your feet shall be like hinds' feet, and your place of abode shall be above the mists and clouds of earth's wretched atmosphere of doubt. Rise, also, to the highest graces and the noblest virtues. As is the food we feed on, such should our actions be. Let us love, for God is love, and as dear children we must be imitators of him in all gentleness, tenderness, and forgiveness. Climb to the heights of self-denial, the summits of consecration. Be as near heaven as is possible for those who dwell on earth. Have you not the shoes to climb with? Wherefore tarry down below? I will not press this longer upon you, for I hope that your hearts aspire to climb up where your Lord reveals himself in clearer light; but, lest you should be at all afraid of the climbing as the aged man is afraid of that which is high, I would arouse you to a holy bravery, since God has not given you shoes of iron and brass merely to trip over the plains. He means you to climb; your equipments prove it. Will you be as the children of Ephraim, who, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle? Will you be shod with iron, and melt like wax under a little heat of opposition? Once more. These shoes are for travelling, for trampling, for climbing; they are also made of iron and brass for perseverance. You would not need such shoes for a little bit of a run -- for a trip up the street and back again. Since the Lord has shod you in this fashion, it is a warning to you that the way is long and weary, and the end is not by-and-by. The Lord has furnished you with shoes that will not wear out. "Old shoes and clouted" were good enough for Gibeonites, but they are not fit for Israelites. The Lord does not mean that you should be arrayed as beggars, or become lame through worn-out shoes. The sacred canticle, in one of its verses, saith, "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" The princes of the heavenly household shall be shod according to their rank and this shall be the case at the end of their journey as surely as at the beginning. Whether Israel traversed sand or rock, the camp never halted because the people had become lame; for the Lord had said "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." It is a good pair of shoes that lasts a man for forty years; yet there are some of us who can testify that God's grace has furnished us with spiritual shoes of that kind. I can speak of nearly that length of time since I knew the Lord, and I bear my unhesitating witness that I have found the grace of God all-sufficient, and his promises most sure and steadfast. If we are allowed to live till we touch the borders of a century, or if we even fulfill our hundred years, these shoes would never be too old. These are the sort of shoes that Enoch wore; and was it not for more than three hundred years that he walked with God? He was always walking, but his shoes of iron and brass were never worn out. It matters not, dear friend, how severe may be your trials and troubles, or how long may be

your pilgrimage through this wilderness, God, who gives these extraordinary shoes, such as no other has ever fashioned, and such as men are not accustomed to wear, has in this provided you against the utmost of endurance, the extremity of suffering. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass" -- does not this symbol signify the best, the strongest, the most lasting, and the most fitting provision for a pilgrimage of trial? Thy shoes shall last as long as thou shalt last. Thou shalt find them as good as new when thou art about to lie down on thy last bed, to be gathered to thy fathers. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." I may be addressing some here that are very low in spirit: they fear that they shall not hold on their way, they are ready to halt, yea, ready to lie down in despair. I trust the way will hold you on when you can hardly hold on your way. May you hear the ring of your iron sandals, and be ashamed of cowardice. They should be iron men to whom God has given iron shoes. I would encourage you to go forward in the way, for you are, by God's grace, made fit for travelling. You are not bare-footed, nor badly shod. You ought to go forward bravely, after your heavenly Father has put such shoes as these upon your feet. You are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and you may trip lightly on your way; and again I say, though that way should be a very long one, you need not think that your provision for the way will fail you. Even to hoar hairs the Lord will be with you. He has made, and he will bear; even he will carry you. Your last days shall be better than your first days. Yea, you shall go from strength to strength through his abounding and faithful love. I find great difficulty in speaking tonight, because of some failure of my voice; but the divine promise is so sweet that even when poorly uttered it has a music all its own. For fear my voice should quite fail me, I will hasten on to say a few words upon the second point. We have examined the shoes, now let us consider the strength. II. "AS THY DAYS, SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE." This provision is meant to meet weakness. The words carry a tacit hint to us that we have no strength of our own, but have need of strength from above. Our proud hearts need such a hint; for often we poor creatures begin to rely upon ourselves. Although we are weak as water, we get the notion that our own wit, or our own experience, may now suffice us, though once they might not have done so. But our best powers will not suffice us now, any more than in our youth. If we begin to rest in ourselves it will not be long before we find out our folly. The Lord will not let his people depend upon themselves: they may make the attempt, but, as sure as they are his people, he will empty them from vessel to vessel, and make them know that their fullness dwells in Christ, and not in themselves. Remember that, if you have a sense of weakness, you have only a sense of the truth. You are as weak as you think you are; you certainly do not exaggerate your own helplessness. The Saviour has said "Without me, ye can do nothing"; and that is the full extent of what you can do. The Lord promises you strength, which he would have no need to promise you if you had it naturally apart from him. But he promises to give it, and therein he assures you that you need it. Come down from your self-esteem: stoop from the notion of your own natural ability: divest yourself of the foolish idea that you can do anything in and of yourself, and come down to the strong for strength, and ask your Lord to fulfill this promise in your experience, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The strength which is here promised is to abide through days. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Not for today only, but for tomorrow, and for every day as every day shall come. The longest and the shortest day, the brightest and the darkest day, the wedding and the funeral day, shall each have its strength measured out, till there shall be no more days. The Lord will portion out to his saints their support even as their days follow each other. "Days of trial, days of grief, In succession thou may'st see; This is still thy sweet relief, 'As thy day, thy strength shall be.'" This strength is to be given daily We shall never have two

days' grace at a time."Day by day the manna fell:Oh, to learn this lesson well,'Day by day' the promise reads:Daily strength for daily needs!"If I get strength enough to get through this sermon, I shall be satisfied for the present. I do not want strength to get through next Sabbath morning's sermon till that Sabbath morning comes. If I can weather the present storm, I shall not just now require the strength to outlive the storms of all the year 1889. What should I do with this reserve force if I had it? Where would you store away your extra grace? You would put it in the lumber-room of your pride, where it would breed worms, and become an offence. A storage of what you call "grace" would turn into self-sufficiency. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be": this secures you a day's burden and a day's help, a day's sorrow and a day's comfort. After all, what more do we want? If a man has a meal, let him give thanks for it: he does not want two meals at once. If a man has enough for the day, he certainly is not yet in want for tomorrow. He cannot eat tomorrow's food today; or, if he did, it would injure his health, and be no comfort to him. Let us narrow our vision as to the necessities of daily life, not looking so far ahead as to compress into today more evil than naturally belongs to it; for "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Our strength is to be given to us daily. And then the text seems to say clearly that it will be given to us proportionately, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." A day of little service, little strength; a day of little suffering, little strength; but in a tremendous day -- a day that needs thee to play the Samson -- thou shalt have Samson's strength. A day of deep waters in which thou shalt need to swim, shall be a day in which thou shalt ride the billows like a sea-bird. Do you not think that this might almost tempt us to wish for days of great trial, in order that we might receive great grace? If we are always to go smoothly, and to receive but little grace in consequence, we shall never rise to the great things of the divine life. We shall be dwarfs, and none shall say, "There were giants in those days." We may not wish to be always children, with boyish tasks and childish duties; it is right we should grow, and that in consequence we should shoulder burdens from which youthful backs are exempt. Who would wish to be always a little child? Great grace will be sent to us to meet our great necessities. And is not that a most desirable thing? I remember that for a long season the Lord was very gracious to me in the matter of funds for the extensive works which I have been called upon to originate and superintend,and I felt very grateful for the ease which I enjoyed; yet it crossed my mind that I was learning less of God than in more trying seasons, and I trembled. Years gone by there were considerable necessities which did not appear to be met at once, and I went with them to God in prayer, and I trusted him, and he supplied my needs in such a wonderful way that I seemed to have the closest intercourse with him. I could most plainly see his hand stretched out to help me. I could see him working for me as gloriously as if he wrought miracles. These were glorious days with me! I cannot tell you what holy wonder often filled my soul when the Lord interposed on behalf of the Orphanage or the College. The record reads so charmingly that unbelievers would never accept it as true. Then God made me by grace like one who steps from the summit of one mountain to another: I stepped across the valleys, leaving the deep places far below. So in my easy seasons I thought to myself, "Everything comes in regularly and abundantly. I am like a little child walking along a smooth lawn. This is but a common, ordinary state of affairs, in which even a man of no faith could pursue his way. I do not see so much of God, though assuredly I ought to see him as clearly now as ever." I did not wish for necessities, but I remembered how the Lord glorified himself in them, and therefore I half desired them. The regular blessing day by day, almost without need of special prayer, does not constrain you to look to God so vividly as when you gaze down into the deep, dark abyss of want, and feel, "If he does not help

me now, I shall soon be in dire distress." This forces forth the living prayer."Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." Our great necessities bring God so very near to us,so manifest to our consciousness, that they are an unspeakable blessing. So I did not ask to have a time of need; I hope that I shall never be so foolish as that; but when I found a time of need hurrying up, as I soon did, I felt a special delight in it -- I took pleasure in my necessities. My heart cried,"Now I shall see my Lord; now I shall see him again. Now I shall get a hold of that great arm, and hang upon it, and I shall see how the Lord will deliver me in time of need." I did thus lay hold upon my Lord again, and I found him still God All- sufficient, for which I bless his name. In proportion as he sends the trial he sends the help. Be not, therefore, afraid of great trial: on the contrary, look for it, and when it comes, say to yourselves, "Now for great grace. Now for a special manifestation of the faithfulness of God."Mark, again, that strength will be given to us in all forms. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Our days vary, our trials change; our service varies, too. Our lives are far from being monotonous: they are musical with many notes and tones. Our present state is like chequered work: or, say, as a mosaic of many colours. But the strength that God gives varies with the occasion. He can bestow physical strength, and mental strength, and moral strength, and spiritual strength. He gives strength just where the strength is needed, and of that peculiar kind which the trial demands. We have no need to fear because we feel weak in a certain direction: if we need strength in that special quarter, the strength will come there. "But if I am tried," says one, "in a certain way, I shall fail." No, you will not. "As your days, so shall your strength be." "I am horrified," says one, "at the thought of having to pass through the ordeal of a surgical operation." Do not be horrified at it; for though at the present moment you may be quite unfit for the trial, you will be quite ready for it when it comes. Have you never been in great danger and found yourself cool and calm beyond anything you could have expected? It has been so with me, and I have learned from my experience, not to measure what I shall be, in a trying hour, by what I happen to be just now. The Lord will take care to fit us for our future, and, as our days, so shall our strength be. I find that some persons read this passage thus -- when our days grow many, and we come to the end, yet our strength shall be equal to what it was in the days of our youth. We shall, according to this, find our strength continuing as our days continue. It is a cheering meaning, certainly. The children of God do find that, spiritually, their strength is renewed day by day. The outer man decayeth, that is nature: but the inward man is renewed day by day, that is grace. As thy days are, so shall thy strength continue to be. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Though days come one after another, so shall strength come with them; there shall be such a continuity of perpetual renewal that the heart shall be strong even to the end of life, and the old man shall know no inward decay.An hour or so ago, I stood by what will certainly be the death-bed of one of our best friends, and I was cheered and comforted when I heard him so blessedly speaking both of the present with its pain, and of the future with its near descent into the vale of death. He said, "I have no doubt as to my eternal bliss. I have had no doubt -- no, not a shadow of doubt -- of my interest in Christ through my long illness. In fact, I have felt a perfect rest of mind about it all. And," he added, "this is nothing more than ought to be, with us who listen to the glorious gospel, for we live on good spiritual meat. Sound doctrine should make us strong in the Lord. I have not been a hearer of yours for thirty years, and heard of covenant love and faithfulness, to die with a trembling hope. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Thus, dear friends, shall

we also be supported, for the brother of whom I speak is a simple-minded man, who makes no pretensions to learning, but is one of our own selves. It will be a great privilege to find that when death's days come -- the days of sickness, and decline, and weakness, yet still our strength remains the same. It will be glorious to go from strength to strength, and even in the day of utter physical prostration to find the spirit leaping for joy, in anticipation of the time when it shall be free from the cumbering clay, and shall stretch its wings and fly aloft to yonder world of joy. Yes, as our days our strength shall be. Come, child of God, be peaceful, be happy in the prospect of the future. Do more, be joyous, and show your joy. You are out of harm's reach, for Christ has you in his hand. You shall never be staggered nor overcome, for the Lord is your strength and your song, and he has become your salvation. This text is a royal banquet for you. Here are fat things full of marrow. Eat abundantly, O beloved. Feel your spirit renewed by the Holy Spirit. Be prepared for whatever is yet to come; for such a word as this, not from me, but from the Lord himself, may gird up your loins for another march towards Canaan; "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." I am sorry, very sorry, for those among you who have no portion and lot in such a promise as this. Whatever you may have in this world, you are very poor in losing such a promise as this. You are shoeless, or if you have some wooden sabot, it will soon be worn out. You will never be able to travel to heaven in any shoes that mortal men can make for you. You need to go to the great Father, who alone can say, "Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." I am sorry for you in your present condition, for you have no strength but your own, and that is a poor piece of weakness. You are troubled even now: what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? The common footmen of daily life have wearied you: what will you do when you have to contend with horses? O souls, what will you do when you are ushered into the presence of the dread mysteries of another world? O sirs, you are without strength; but is not that a grand verse, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? Ungodly as you are, clutch at such a word as that. "Without strength" as you are, yet lay hold upon the Lord's strength. It is for those who have no strength that Christ came into the world. It is for the ungodly that he laid down his life. Come, and trust him. Let him become your strength and your righteousness from this time forth; and may he manifest himself to you in a special and gracious way; and unto his name shall be praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Psalm 37. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 686, 89 (Part II), 46 (vers. 1.)

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON BELOVED READERS, -- To you, one and all, may the New Year be fruitful of blessings. I wish you the text of this sermon as a benediction, so far as it is applicable to you. Specially may your feet be shod with the iron and brass which are promised you, and this will be better than the glass slippers of fortune, or the silver sandals of wealth. For myself, I beg your kind remembrance when you have the ear of "the King." I need restored strength, for I am well, but weak; and for another year of service I need that the right hand of the Lord may be laid upon me, and that he should say to me, "Be strong: fear not." He that has supplied might to our feebleness for so many years will not fail us now. Week by week the loaf will be set before you in this sermon, and we shall together bless the Lord of the feast. With all the good wishes of the season, in sincerity and truth, I am, your weekly visitor, C. H. SPURGEON. Mentone, Jan 1st, 1889.

## Two Essential Things

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A Sermon (No.2073) Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, March 3rd, 1889, C. H. SPURGEON, At the [2]Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." -- Acts 20:21 This was the practical drift of Paul's teaching at Ephesus, and everywhere else. He kept back nothing which was profitable to them; and the main profit he expected them to derive from his teaching the whole counsel of God was this, that they should have "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." This was the great aim of the apostle. I pray that it may be so with all of us who are teachers of the Word: may we never be satisfied if we interest, please, or dazzle; but may we long for the immediate production, by the Spirit of God, of true repentance and faith. Old Mr. Dodd, one of the quaintest of the Puritans, was called by some people, "Old Mr. Faith and Repentance," because he was always insisting upon these two things. Philip Henry, remarking upon his name, writes somewhat to this effect -- "As for Mr. Dodd's abundant preaching repentance and faith, I admire him for it; for if I die in the pulpit, I desire to die preaching repentance and faith; and if I die out of the pulpit, I desire to die practising repentance and faith." Some one remarked to Mr. Richard Cecil, that he had preached very largely upon faith; but that good clergyman assured him that if he could rise from his dying bed, and preach again, he would dwell still more upon that subject. No themes can exceed in importance repentance and faith, and these need to be brought very frequently before the minds of our congregations. Paul testified concerning "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"; by which I understand that, as an ambassador for Christ, he assured the people that through repentance and faith they would receive salvation. He taught in God's name mercy through the atoning sacrifice to all who would quit their sin and follow the Lord Jesus. With many tears he added his own personal testimony to his official statement. He could truly say, "I have repented, and I do repent"; and he could add, "but I believe in Jesus Christ as my Saviour; I am resting upon the one foundation, trusting alone in the Crucified." His official testimony, with its solemnity, and his personal testimony, with its pathetic earnestness, made up a very weighty witness-bearing on the behalf of these two points -- repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved friends, we cannot at this time do without either of these any more than could the Greeks and Jews. They are essential to salvation. Some things may be, but these must be. Certain things are needful to the well-being of a Christian, but these things are essential to the very being of a Christian. If you have not repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, you have no part nor lot in this matter. Repentance and faith must go together to complete each other. I compare them to a door and its post. Repentance is the door which shuts out sin, but faith is the post upon which its hinges are fixed. A door without a door-post to hang upon is not a door at all; while a door-post without the door hanging to it is of no value whatever. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder; and these two he has made inseparable -- repentance and faith. I desire to preach in such a way that you shall see and feel that repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ are the two things which you must have; but even then I fail, unless you obtain them. May the Holy Spirit plant both these precious things in our hearts; and if they are already planted there, may he

nourish them and bring them to much greater perfection. I. Let me observe, in the first place, that THERE IS A REPENTANCE WHICH IS NOT TOWARD GOD. Discriminate this morning. Paul did not merely preach repentance, but repentance toward God; and there is a repentance which is fatally faulty, because it is not toward God. In some there is a repentance of sin which is produced by a sense of shame. The evil-doers are found out, and indignant words are spoken about them: they are ashamed, and so far they are repentant, because they have dishonoured themselves. If they had not been found out, in all probability they would have continued comfortably in the sin, and even have gone further on in it. They are grieved at having been discovered; and they are sorry, very sorry, because they are judged and condemned by their fellows. It is not the evil which troubles them, but the dragging of it to light. It is said that among Orientals it is not considered wrong to lie, but it is considered a very great fault to lie so blunderingly as to be caught at it. Many who profess regret for having done wrong are not sorry for the sin itself, but they are affected by the opinion of their fellow-men, and by the remarks that are made concerning their offence, and so they hang their heads. Truly, it is something in their favour that they can blush; it is a mercy that they have so much sense left as to be afraid of the observation of their fellows; for some have lost even this sense of shame. But shame is not evangelical repentance; and a man may go to hell with a blush on his face as surely as if he had the brazen forehead of a shameless woman. Do not mistake a little natural fluttering of the heart and blushing of the face, on account of being found out in sin, for true repentance. Some, again, have a repentance which consists in grief because of the painful consequences of sin. The man has been a spendthrift, a gambler, a profligate, and his money is gone; and now he repents that he has played the fool. Another has been indulging the passions of his corrupt nature, and he finds himself suffering for it, and therefore he repents of his wickedness. There are many cases that I need not instance here, in which sin comes home very quickly to men. Certain sins bear fruit speedily: their harvest is reaped soon after the seed is sown. Then a man says he is sorry, and he gives up the sin for a time; not because he dislikes it, but because he sees that it is ruining him: as sailors in a storm cast overboard the cargo of the ship, not because they are weary of it, but because the vessel will go to the bottom if they retain it. This is regret for consequences, not sorrow for sin. Ah, look at the drunkard, how penitent he is in the morning! "Who hath woe? who hath redness of the eyes?" But he will get a hair of the dog's tail that bit him, he will be at his cups again before long. He repents of the headache, and not of the drink. The dog will return to his vomit. There is no repentance which only consists of being sorry because one is smarting under the consequences of sin. Every murderer regrets his crime when he hears the hammers going that knock the scaffold together for his hanging. This is not the repentance which the Spirit of God works in a soul; it is only such a repentance as a dog may have when he has stolen meat, and is whipped for his pains. It is repentance of so low a sort that it can never be acceptable in the sight of God. Some, again, exhibit a repentance which consists entirely of horror at the future punishment of sin. This fear is healthful in many ways, and we can by no means dispense with it. I do not wonder that a man who has lived a liar, a forger, and a perjurer, should, in the hour of his discovery, put an end to his life. If he accepts modern theology, he has escaped, by this means, from the hand of justice: the little pretence of punishment which deceivers predict for the next world no man need be afraid to risk rather than subject himself to a felon's fate. According to current teaching, it will be all the same with all men in the long run, for there is to be a universal restitution; and therefore the suicide does but rationally leap from pursuit and punishment into a state where all will be made happy for him by-and-by, even if he does not find it

altogether heaven at first. He escapes from punishment in this life, and whatever inconvenience there may be for him in the next life he will soon get over it, for it is said to be so trivial that those who keep to Scripture lines, and speak the dread truth therein revealed, are barbarians or fools. Many men do, no doubt, repent truly through being aroused by fear of death, and judgment, and the wrath to come. But if this fear goes no further than a selfish desire to escape punishment, no reliance can be placed upon its moral effect. If they could be assured that no punishment would follow, such persons would continue in sin, and not only be content to live in it, but be delighted to have it so. Beloved, true repentance is sorrow for the sin itself: it has not only a dread of the death which is the wages of sin, but of the sin which earns the wages. If you have no repentance for the sin itself, it is in vain that you should stand and tremble because of judgment to come. If judgment to come drives you, by its terrors, to escape from sin, you will have to bless God that you ever heard of those terrors, and that there were men found honest enough to speak plainly of them; but, I pray you, do not be satisfied with the mere fear of punishment, for it is of little worth. The evil itself you must lament, and your daily cry must be, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Another kind of repentance may be rather better than any we have spoken of, but still it is not repentance toward God. It is a very good counterfeit; but it is not the genuine article. I refer to a sense of the unworthiness of an ill life. I have known persons, upon a review of their past, rise above the grovelling level of absolute carelessness, and they have begun to enjoy some apprehension of the beauty of virtue, the nobleness of usefulness, and the meanness of a life of selfish pleasure. A few of those who have no spiritual life, have, nevertheless, keen moral perceptions, and they are repentant when they see that they have lost the opportunity of distinguishing themselves by noble lives. They regret that their story will never be quoted among the examples of good men, who have left "footprints on the sands of time." Musing upon their position in reference to society and history, they wish that they could blot out the past, and write more worthy lines upon the page of life. Now, this is hopeful; but it is not sufficient. We are glad when men are under influences which promise amendment; but if a man stops at a mere apprehension of the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, what is there in it? This is not repentance toward God; it may not be repentance at all in any practical sense. Men have been known to practise the vices they denounced, and avoid the virtues they admired; human sentiment has not force enough to break the fetters of evil. Repentance toward God is the only thing which can effectually cut the cable which holds a man to the fatal shores of evil. Once more, there is a repentance which is partial. Men sometimes wake up to the notice of certain great blots in their lives. They cannot forget that black night: they dare not tell what was then done. They cannot forget the villainous act which ruined another, nor that base lie which blasted a reputation. They recall the hour when the inward fires of passion, like those of a volcano, poured the lava of sin adown their lives. At the remembrance of one gross iniquity, they feel a measure of regret when their better selves are to the front. But repentance toward God is repentance of sin as sin, and of rebellion against law as rebellion against God. The man who only repents of this and that glaring offence, has not repented of sin at all. I remember the story of Thomas Olivers, the famous cobbler convert, who was a loose-living man till he was renewed by grace through the preaching of Mr. Wesley, and became a mighty preacher, and the author of that glorious hymn, "The God of Abraham Praise." This man, before conversion, was much in the habit of contracting debts, but could not be brought to pay them. When he received grace, he was convinced that he had no right to remain in debt. He says, "I felt as great sorrow and confusion as if I had stolen every sum I

owed." Now, he was not repentant for this one debt, or that other debt, but for being in debt at all, and, therefore, having a little coming to him from the estate of a relative, he bought a horse, and rode from town to town, paying everybody to whom he was indebted. Before he had finished his pilgrimage, he had paid seventy debts, principal and interest, and had been compelled to sell his horse, saddle, and bridle, to do it. During this eventful journey he rode many miles to pay a single sixpence: it was only a sixpence, but the principle was the same, whether the debt was sixpence or a hundred pounds. Now, as he that hates debt will try to clear himself of every sixpence, so he that repents of sin, repents of it in every shape. No sin is spared by the true penitent. He abhors all sin. Brethren, we must not imitate Saul, who spared Agag and the best of the sheep. He had been told to destroy all, but he must needs spare some. Agag must be hewn in pieces, and the least objectionable of sin, if such there be, must be at once destroyed. Grace spares no sin. "Oh," saith one man, "I can give up every sin except one pleasure. This I reserve: is it not a little one?" Nay, nay; in the name of truth and sincerity, make no reserve. Repentance is a besom which sweeps the house from garret to cellar. Though no man is free from the commission of sin, yet every converted man is free from the love of sin. Every renewed heart is anxious to be free from even a speck of evil. When sin's power is felt within, we do not welcome it, but we cry out against it, as Paul did when he said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We cannot bear sin: when it is near us, we feel like a wretch chained to a rotting carcass; we groan to be free from the hateful thing. Yes, repentance vows that the enemy shall be turned out, bag and baggage; and neither Sanballat, nor any of his trumpery, shall have a chamber or a closet within the heart which has become the temple of God. II. I have said enough to show that there is a repentance which is not toward God; and now, secondly, let us observe that **EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD**. Lay stress on the words, "toward God." True repentance looks toward God. When the prodigal son went back to his home, he did not say, "I will arise, and go to my brother; for I have grieved my brother by leaving him to serve alone." Neither did he say, "I will arise and go to the servants, for they were very kind to me. The dear old nurse that brought me up is broken-hearted at my conduct." "No," he said, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Our Lord's picture of a returning sinner is thus drawn in very clear colours, as a return to the Father, a repentance toward God. You are bound to make humble apology and ample compensation to everybody you have wronged; you are bound to make every acknowledgment and confession to all whom you have slandered or misrepresented: this is right and just, and must not be forgotten. Still, the essence of your repentance must be "toward God"; for the essence of your wrong is toward God. I will endeavour to show you this. A boy is rebellious against his father. The father has told him such a thing is to be done, and he determines that he will not do it. His father has forbidden him certain things, and he therefore defiantly does them. His father is much grieved, talks with him, and endeavours to bring him to repentance. Suppose the boy were to reply, "Father, I feel sorry for what I have done, because it has vexed my brother." Such a speech would be impertinence, and not penitence. Suppose he said, "Father, I will also confess that I am sorry for what I have done, because it has deprived me of a good deal of pleasure." That also would be a selfish and impudent speech, and show great contempt for his father's authority. Before he can be forgiven and restored to favour, he must confess the wrong done in disobeying his father's law. He must lament that he has broken the rule of the household; and he must promise to do so no more. There can be no restoration of that child

to his proper place in the family till he has said, "Father, I have sinned." He is stubborn, unhumiliated, and rebellious till he comes to that point. All the repentance that he feels about the matter which does not go toward his father, misses the mark: in fact, it may even be an impudent aggravation of his rebellion against his father's rule that he is willing to own his wrong toward others, but will not confess the wrong he has done to the one chiefly concerned. O sinner, you must repent before God, or you do not repent at all; for here is the essence of repentance. The man repenting sees that he has neglected God. What though I have never been a thief nor an adulterer; yet God made me, and I am his creature, and if throughout twenty, thirty, or forty years I have never served him, I have all that while robbed him of what he had a right to expect from me. Did God make you, and has he kept the breath in your nostrils, and has he kindly supplied your wants till now, and all these years has he had nothing from you? Would you have kept a horse or a cow all this time, and have had nothing from it? Would you keep a dog if it had never fawned upon you? never noticed your call? Yet all these years God has thus preserved you in being, and blessed you with great mercies, and you have made no response. Hear how the Lord cries, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" This is where the sin lies. Further than that, the true penitent sees that he has misrepresented God. When he has suffered a little affliction, he has thought God was cruel and unjust. The heathen misrepresent God by worshipping idols: we misrepresent God by our murmurings, our complainings, and our thought that there is pleasure in sin, and weariness in the divine service. Have you not spoken of God as if he were the cause of your misery, when you have brought it all upon yourself? You talk about him as if he were unjust, when it is you that are unjust and evil. The penitent man sees that the greatest offence of all his offences is that he has offended God. Many of you think nothing of merely offending God: you think much more of offending man. If I call you "sinners" you do not rebel the charge; but if I called you "criminals" you would rise in indignation, and deny the accusation. A criminal, in the usual sense of the term, is one who has offended his fellow-man: a sinner is one who has wronged his God. You do not mind being called sinners, because you think little of grieving God; but to be called criminals, or offenders against the laws of man, annoys you; for you think far more of man than of God. Yet, in honest judgment, it were better, infinitely better, to break every human law, if this could be done without breaking the divine law, than to disobey the least of the commands of God. Knowest thou not, O man, that thou hast lived in rebellion against God? Thou hast done the things he bids thee not to do, and thou hast left undone the things which he commands thee to do. This is what thou hast to feel and to confess with sorrow; and without this there can be no repentance. Near the vital heart of repentance, right in its core, is a sense of the meanness of our conduct toward God. Especially our ingratitude to him, after all his favour and mercy. This it is that troubles the truly penitent heart most: that God should love so much, and should have such a wretched return. Ingratitude, the worst of ills, makes sin exceeding sinful. Sorrow for having so ill requited the Lord is a spiritual grace. A tear of such repentance is a diamond of the first water, precious in the sight of the Lord. True repentance is also toward God in this respect, that it judges itself by God. We do not repent because we are not so good as a friend whom we admire, but because we are not holy as the Lord. God's perfect law is the transcript of his own perfect character, and sin is any want of conformity to the law and to the character of God. Judge yourselves by your fellow-men, and you may be self-content; but measure yourselves by the perfect holiness of the Lord God, and oh, how you must despise yourself! There is no deep repentance until our standard is the standard of perfect rectitude, till our judgment of self is formed

by a comparison with the divine character. When we behold the perfection of the thrice holy Jehovah, and then look at ourselves, we cry with Job, "Mine eyes seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." To sum up: evangelical repentance is repentance of sin as sin: not of this sin nor of that, but of the whole mass. We repent of the sin of our nature as well as of the sin of our practice. We bemoan sin within us and without us. We repent of sin itself as being an insult to God. Anything short of this is a mere surface repentance, and not a repentance which reaches to the bottom of the mischief. Repentance of the evil act, and not of the evil heart, is like men pumping water out of a leaky vessel, but forgetting to stop the leak. Some would dam up the stream, but leave the fountain still flowing; they would remove the eruption from the skin, but leave the disease in the flesh. All that is done by way of amendment without a bemoaning of sin because of its being rebellion against God will fall short of the mark. When you repent of sin as against God, you have laid the axe at the root of the tree. He that repents of sin as sin against God, is no longer sporting with the evil, but has come to stern business with it; now he will be led to change his life, and to be a new man: now, also, will he be driven to cry to God for mercy, and in consequence he will be drawn to trust in Jesus. He will now feel that he cannot help himself, and he will look to the strong for strength. I can help myself toward my fellow-man, and I can improve myself up to his standard; but I cannot help myself toward God, and cannot wash myself clean before his eye; therefore I fly to him to purge me with hyssop, and make me whiter than snow. O gracious Spirit, turn our eyes Godward, and then fill them with penitential tears. III. Thirdly, I am going to throw in a bit of my own. I confess that it does not rise to the glorious fulness of the text, but I use it as a stepping-stone for feeble footsteps. I thus apologize as I say -- **THOSE WHO HAVE EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE ARE PERMITTED TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST.** Paul says that he testified of "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"; and, therefore, where there is repentance, faith is allowable. O penitent sinner, you may believe in the Saviour! While you are labouring under your present sense of guilt, while you are loathing and abhorring yourself, while you are burdened and heavy laden with fears, while you are crushed with sorrow as you lie before the Lord, you may now trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Before you have any quiet of conscience, before any relief comes to your heart, before hope shines in your spirit; now in your direct distress, when you are ready to perish, you may at once exercise faith in him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. There is no law against faith. No decree of heaven forbids a sinner to believe and live. You may pluck up courage to believe when you remember this -- first, that though you have offended God (and this is the great point that troubles you) that God, whom you have offended, has himself provided an atonement. The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is practically a substitution presented by God himself. The Offended dies to set the offender free. God himself suffers the penalty of his law, that he may justly forgive; and that, though Judge of all, he may yet righteously exercise his fatherly love in the putting away of sin. When you are looking to God with tears in your eyes, remember it is the same God who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this offended God, "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Recollect, also, that this atonement was presented for the guilty: in fact, there could be no atonement where there was no guilt. It would be superfluous to make expiation where there had been no fault. For man, as a sinner, Christ died. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I pray you, then, the more deeply you feel your sinnership, the more clearly perceive that the sacrifice of Calvary was for you. For sinners the cross was lifted

high, and for sinners the eternal Son of God poured out his soul unto death. Oh that my hearers, who mourn over sin, could see this, and rejoice in the divine method of putting sin out of the way! But, remember, you must, with your repentance, come to God with faith in his dear Son. I have said that you may do so; but I apologize for so saying, for it is only half the truth. God commands you to believe. The same God that says, "Thou shalt not steal," is that God who says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is his commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Faith is not left to your option, you are commanded to accept the witness of God. "Believe and live," has all the force of a divine statute. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Therefore, if thou art already a rebel, do not go on rebelling by refusing to believe in the Lord's own testimony. Remember that there can be no reconciliation made between you and God unless you believe in Jesus Christ, whom he has given as a Saviour, and commissioned to that end. Not believing in Jesus is caviling at God's way of salvation, quarrelling with his message of love. Will you do this? You have done wrong enough by fighting against Jehovah's law, are you going to fight against his gospel? Without faith it is impossible to please him; will you continue to displease him? Disbelief in Christ is on your part casting a new dishonour upon God, and thus it is a perseverance in rebellion of the most aggravated form. By refusing his unspeakable gift, you do, as it were, put your finger into the very eye of God. To refuse the Son is to blaspheme the Father. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Come, poor soul, be encouraged. Clearly, if you have repentance toward God, you are allowed to believe in Jesus. Upon the drops of your repentance the sun of mercy is shining; what a rainbow of hope is thus made! Do not hesitate. You would fain be washed, for you mourn your defilement; yonder is the cleansing fount! You are pained with the malady of sin; there stands the healing Saviour, cast yourself at his feet! No embargo is laid upon your believing. God has not even in secret said to you, "Seek ye my face in vain." Come, I pray you, and fear not. We testify to you "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." But that faith must be toward the Lord Jesus Christ. You must look to Jesus, to the substitute, to the sacrifice, to the mediator, to the Son of God. "No man cometh unto the Father," saith Jesus, "but by me." No faith in God will save the sinner except it is faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. To attempt to come to God without the appointed Mediator, is again to insult him by refusing his method of reconciliation. Do not so, but let your repentance toward God be accompanied with faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; you are warranted in thus believing. IV. And now I come to my last point. Oh that I might be helped by the Holy Ghost! Here I come back to the text, and get on sure ground. EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS LINKED TO FAITH, AND FAITH IS LINKED TO REPENTANCE. We testify not only of repentance toward God, but of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are born of the same Spirit of God. I do not know which comes first; but I fall back on my well-worn image of a wheel -- when the cart starts, which spoke of the wheel moves first? I do not know. Repentance and faith come together. Perhaps I may say that repentance is like Leah, for it is "tender eyed"; and faith is like Rachel, fairer to look upon. But you cannot take Rachel to yourself unless you will have Leah also; for it is according to the rule of the gospel that so it should be. The Old Testament, with its law of repentance, must be bound up in one volume with the New Testament of the gospel of faith. These two, like Naomi and Ruth, say to each other, "Where thou dwellest I will dwell." There are two stars called the Gemini, which are always together: faith and repentance are the Twins of the spiritual heavens. What if I liken them to the two valves of the

heart? They must be both in action, or the soul cannot live. They are born together, and they must live together. Repentance is the result of an unperceived faith. When a man repents of sin, he does inwardly believe, in a measure, although he may not think so. There is such a thing as latent faith: although it yields the man no conscious comfort, it may be doing something even better for him; for it may be working in him truthfulness of heart, purity of spirit, and abhorrence of evil. No true repentance is quite apart from faith. The solid of faith is held in solution in the liquid of repentance. It is clear that no man can repent toward God unless he believes in God. He could never feel grief at having offended God, if he did not believe that God is good. To the dark cloud of repentance there is a silver lining of faith; yet, at the first, the awakened soul does not know this, and therefore laments that he cannot believe; whereas, his very repentance is grounded upon a measure of faith. Repentance is also greatly increased as faith grows. I fear that some people fancy that they repented when they were first converted, and that, therefore, they have done with repentance. But it is not so: the higher the faith, the deeper the repentance. The saint most ripe for heaven is the most aware of his own shortcomings. As long as we are here, and grace is an active exercise, our consciousness of our unworthiness will grow upon us. When you have grown too big for repentance, depend upon it you have grown too proud for faith. They that say they have ceased to repent confess that they have departed from Christ. Repentance and faith will grow each one as the other grows: the more you know the weight of sin, the more will you lean upon Jesus, and the more will you know his power to uphold. When repentance measures a cubit, faith will measure a cubit also. Repentance also increases faith. Beloved, we never believe in Christ to the full till we get a clear view of our need of him; and that is the fruit of repentance. When we hate sin more we shall love Christ more, and trust him more. The more self sinks, the more Christ rises: like the two scales of balance, one must go down that the other may go up: self must sink in repentance that Christ may rise by faith. Moreover, repentance salts faith and sweetens it, and faith does the same to repentance. Faith, if there could be true faith without repentance, would be like the flowers without the dew, like the sunshine without shade, and like hills without valleys. If faith be the cluster, repentance is the juice of the grape. Faith is dry, like the fleece on the threshing-floor, receptive and retentive; but when heaven visits it with fulness, it drips with repentance. If a man professes faith, and has no sense of personal unworthiness, and no grief for sin, he becomes a man of the letter, sound in the head, and very apt to prove his doctrine orthodox by apostolic blows and knocks. But when you add to this the mollifying effects of true repentance, he becomes lowly, and humble, and easily to be entreated. When a man repents as much as he believes, he is as patient in his own quarrel as he is valiant in "the quarrel of the covenant." He holds his own sinnership as firmly as he holds the Lord's Saviourship, and he frequents the Valley of Humiliation as much as the hills of Assurance. If there could be such a thing as a man who was a believer without repentance, he would be much too big for his boots, and there would be no bearing him. If he were always saying, "Yes, I know I am saved; I have a full assurance that I am saved"; and yet had no sense of personal sin, how loudly he would crow! But, O dear friends, while we mourn our sins, we are not puffed up by the privileges which faith receives. An old Puritan says, that when a saint is made beautiful with rich graces, as the peacock with many-coloured feathers, let him not be vain, but let him recollect the black feet of his inbred sin, and the harsh voice of his many shortcomings. Repentance will never allow faith to strut, even if it had a mind to do so. Faith cheers repentance, and repentance sobers faith. The two go well together. Faith looks to the throne, and repentance loves the cross. When faith looks most rightly to the Second Advent,

repentance forbids its forgetting the First Advent. When faith is tempted to climb into presumption, repentance calls it back to sit at Jesus' feet. Never try to separate these dear companions, which minister more sweetly to one another than I have time to tell. That conversion which is all joy and lacks sorrow for sin, is very questionable. I will not believe in that faith which has no repentance with it, any more than I would believe in that repentance which left a man without faith in Jesus. Like the two cherubs which stood gazing down upon the mercy-seat, so stand these two inseparable graces, and none must dare to remove the one or the other. I have almost done; but the thought strikes me, Will these good people go home, and remember about repentance and faith? Have I so talked that they will think of me rather than of the points in hand? I hope it is not so. I do pray you, throw away all that I may have said apart from the subject; cast it off as so much chaff, and keep only the wheat. Remember, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Let each one ask himself, Have I a repentance which leads to faith? Have I a faith which joins hands with repentance? This is the way to weave an ark of bulrushes for your infant assurance: twist these two together, repentance and faith. Yet trust neither repentance nor faith; but repent toward God, and have faith toward the Lord Jesus. Mind you do this; for there is a sad aptitude in many hearers to forget the essential point, and think of our stories and illustrations rather than of the practical duty which we would enforce. A celebrated minister, who has long ago gone home, was once taken ill, and his wife requested him to go and consult an eminent physician. He went to this physician, who welcomed him very heartily. "I am right glad to see you, sir," said he; "I have heard you preach, and have been greatly profited by you, and therefore I have often wished to have half an hour's chat with you. If I can do anything for you, I am sure I will." The minister stated his case. The doctor said, "Oh, it is a very simple matter; you have only to take such and such a drug, and you will soon be right." The patient was about to go, thinking that he must not occupy the physician's time; but he pressed him to stay, and they entered into pleasant conversation. The minister went home to his wife, and told her with joy what a delightful man the doctor had proved to be. He said, "I do not know that I ever had a more delightful talk. The good man is eloquent, and witty, and gracious." The wife replied, "But what remedy did he prescribe?" "Dear!" said the minister, "I quite forget what he told me on that point." "What!" she said, "did you go to a physician for advice, and have you come away without a remedy?" "It quite slipped my mind," he said: "the doctor talked so pleasantly that his prescription has quite gone out of my head." Now, if I have talked to you so that this will happen, I shall be very sorry. Come, let my last word be a repetition of the gospel remedy for sin. Here it is. Trust in the precious blood of Christ, and make full confession of your sin, heartily forsaking it. You must receive Christ by faith, and you must loathe every evil way. Repentance and faith must look to the water and the blood from the side of Jesus for cleansing from the power and guilt of sin. Pray God that you may, by both these priceless graces, receive at once the merit of your Saviour unto eternal salvation. Amen. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Acts 20:17-27; Ps.51. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 34 (Ver.1), 579, 51 (Ver.2).

## The Believing Thief

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A Sermon (No.2078) Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, April 7th, 1889, C. H. SPURGEON, At [3]the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." -- Luke 23:42-43. SOME TIME AGO I preached upon the whole story of the dying thief. I do not propose to do the same to-day, but only to look at it from one particular point of view. The story of the salvation of the dying thief is a standing instance of the power of Christ to save, and of his abundant willingness to receive all that come to him, in whatever plight they may be. I cannot regard this act of grace as a solitary instance, any more than the salvation of Zacchaeus, the restoration of Peter, or the call of Saul, the persecutor. Every conversion is, in a sense, singular: no two are exactly alike, and yet any one conversion is a type of others. The case of the dying thief is much more similar to our conversion than it is dissimilar; in point of fact, his case may be regarded as typical, rather than as an extraordinary incident. So I shall use it at this time. May the Holy Spirit speak through it to the encouragement of those who are ready to despair! Remember, beloved friends, that our Lord Jesus, at the time he saved this malefactor, was at his lowest. His glory had been ebbing out in Gethsemane, and before Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate; but it had now reached the utmost low-water mark. Stripped of his garments, and nailed to the cross, our Lord was mocked by a ribald crowd, and was dying in agony: then was he "numbered with the transgressors," and made as the offscouring of all things. Yet, while in that condition, he achieved this marvellous deed of grace. Behold the wonder wrought by the Saviour when emptied of all his glory, and hanged up a spectacle of shame upon the brink of death! How certain is it that he can do great wonders of mercy now, seeing that he has returned unto his glory, and sitteth upon the throne of light! "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." If a dying Saviour saved the thief, my argument is, that he can do even more now that he liveth and reigneth. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; can anything at this present time surpass the power of his grace? It is not only the weakness of our Lord which makes the salvation of the penitent thief memorable; it is the fact that the dying malefactor saw it before his very eyes. Can you put yourself into his place, and suppose yourself to be looking upon one who hangs in agony upon a cross? Could you readily believe him to be the Lord of glory, who would soon come to his kingdom? That was no mean faith which, at such a moment, could believe in Jesus as Lord and King. If the apostle Paul were here, and wanted to add a New Testament chapter to the eleventh of Hebrews, he might certainly commence his instances of remarkable faith with this thief, who believed in a crucified, derided, and dying Christ, and cried to him as to one whose kingdom would surely come. The thief's faith was the more remarkable because he was himself in great pain, and bound to die. It is not easy to exercise confidence when you are tortured with deadly anguish. Our own rest of mind has at times been greatly hindered by pain of body. When we are the subjects of acute suffering it is not easy to exhibit that faith which we fancy we possess at other times. This man, suffering as he did, and seeing the Saviour in so sad a state, nevertheless believed unto life eternal. Herein was such faith as is seldom seen. Recollect, also, that he was surrounded by scoffers. It is easy to

swim with the current, and hard to go against the stream. This man heard the priests, in their pride, ridicule the Lord, and the great multitude of the common people, with one consent, joined in the scorning; his comrade caught the spirit of the hour, and mocked also, and perhaps he did the same for a while; but through the grace of God he was changed, and believed in the Lord Jesus in the teeth of all the scorn. His faith was not affected by his surroundings; but he, dying thief as he was, made sure his confidence. Like a jutting rock, standing out in the midst of a torrent, he declared the innocence of the Christ whom others blasphemed. His faith is worthy of our imitation in its fruits. He had no member that was free except his tongue, and he used that member wisely to rebuke his brother malefactor, and defend his Lord. His faith brought forth a brave testimony and a bold confession. I am not going to praise the thief, or his faith, but to extol the glory of that grace divine which gave the thief such faith, and then freely saved him by its means. I am anxious to show how glorious is the Saviour -- that Saviour to the uttermost, who, at such a time, could save such a man, and give him so great a faith, and so perfectly and speedily prepare him for eternal bliss. Behold the power of that divine Spirit who could produce such faith on soil so unlikely, and in a climate so unpropitious. Let us enter at once into the centre of our sermon. First, note the man who was our Lord's last companion on earth; secondly, note that this same man was our Lord's first companion at the gate of paradise; and then, thirdly, let us note the sermon which our Lord preaches to us from this act of grace. Oh, for a blessing from the Holy Spirit all the sermon through! I. Carefully NOTE THAT THE CRUCIFIED THIEF WAS OUR LORD'S LAST COMPANION ON EARTH. What sorry company our Lord selected when he was here! He did not consort with the religious Pharisees or the philosophic Sadducees, but he was known as "the friend of publicans and sinners." How I rejoice at this! It gives me assurance that he will not refuse to associate with me. When the Lord Jesus made a friend of me, he certainly did not make a choice which brought him credit. Do you think he gained any honour when he made a friend of you? Has he ever gained anything by us? No, my brethren; if Jesus had not stooped very low, he would not have come to me; and if he did not seek the most unworthy, he might not have come to you. You feel it so, and you are thankful that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." As the great physician, our Lord was much with the sick: he went where there was room for him to exercise his healing art. The whole have no need of a physician: they cannot appreciate him, nor afford scope for his skill; and therefore he did not frequent their abodes. Yes, after all, our Lord did make a good choice when he saved you and me; for in us he has found abundant room for his mercy and grace. There has been elbow room for his love to work within the awful emptiness of our necessities and sins; and therein he has done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Lest any here should be despairing, and say, "He will never deign to look on me," I want you to notice that the last companion of Christ on earth was a sinner, and no ordinary sinner. He had broken even the laws of man, for he was a robber. One calls him "a brigand"; and I suppose it is likely to have been the case. The brigands of those days mixed murder with their robberies: he was probably a freebooter in arms against the Roman government, making this a pretext for plundering as he had opportunity. At last he was arrested, and was condemned by a Roman tribunal, which, on the whole, was usually just, and in this case was certainly just; for he himself confesses the justice of his condemnation. The malefactor who believed upon the cross was a convict, who had lain in the condemned cell, and was then undergoing execution for his crimes. A convicted felon was the person with whom our Lord last consorted upon earth. What a lover of the souls of guilty men is he! What a stoop he makes to the very lowest of mankind! To

this most unworthy of men the Lord of glory, ere he quitted life, spoke with matchless grace. He spoke to him such wondrous words as never can be excelled if you search the Scriptures through: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." I do not suppose that anywhere in this Tabernacle there will be found a man who has been convicted before the law, or who is even chargeable with a crime against common honesty; but if there should be such a person among my hearers, I would invite him to find pardon and change of heart through our Lord Jesus Christ. You may come to him, whoever you may be; for this man did. Here is a specimen of one who had gone to the extreme of guilt, and who acknowledged that he had done so; he made no excuse, and sought no cloak for his sin; he was in the hands of justice, confronted with the death-doom, and yet he believed in Jesus, and breathed a humble prayer to him, and he was saved upon the spot. As is the sample, such is the bulk. Jesus saves others of like kind. Let me, therefore, put it very plainly here, that none may mistake me. None of you are excluded from the infinite mercy of Christ, however great your iniquity: if you believe in Jesus, he will save you. This man was not only a sinner; he was a sinner newly awakened. I do not suppose that he had seriously thought of the Lord Jesus before. According to the other Evangelists, he appears to have joined with his fellow thief in scoffing at Jesus: if he did not actually himself use opprobrious words, he was so far consenting thereunto, that the Evangelist did him no injustice when he said, "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." Yet, now, on a sudden, he wakes up to the conviction that the man who is dying at his side is something more than a man. He reads the title over his head, and believes it to be true -- "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Thus believing, he makes his appeal to the Messiah, whom he had so newly found, and commits himself to his hands. My hearer, do you see this truth, that the moment a man knows Jesus to be the Christ of God he may at once put his trust in him and be saved? A certain preacher, whose gospel was very doubtful, said, "Do you, who have been living in sin for fifty years, believe that you can in a moment be made clean through the blood of Jesus?" I answer, "Yes, we do believe that in one moment, through the precious blood of Jesus, the blackest soul can be made white. We do believe that in a single instant the sins of sixty or seventy years can be absolutely forgiven, and that the old nature, which has gone on growing worse and worse, can receive its death-wound in a moment of time, while the life eternal may be implanted in the soul at once." It was so with this man. He had reached the end of his tether, but all of a sudden he woke up to the assured conviction that the Messiah was at his side, and, believing, he looked to him and lived. So now, my brothers, if you have never in your life before been the subject of any religious conviction, if you have lived up till now an utterly ungodly life, yet if now you will believe that God's dear Son has come into the world to save men from sin, and will unfeignedly confess your sin and trust in him, you shall be immediately saved. Ay, while I speak the word, the deed of grace may be accomplished by that glorious One who has gone up into the heaven with omnipotent power to save. I desire to put this case very plainly: this man, who was the last companion of Christ upon earth, was a sinner in misery. His sins had found him out: he was now enduring the reward of his deeds. I constantly meet with persons in this condition: they have lived a life of wantonness, excess, and carelessness, and they begin to feel the fire-flakes of the tempest of wrath falling upon their flesh; they dwell in an earthly hell, a prelude of eternal woe. Remorse, like an asp, has stung them, and set their blood on fire: they cannot rest, they are troubled day and night. "Be sure your sin will find you out." It has found them out, and arrested them, and they feel the strong grip of conviction. This man was in that horrible condition: what is more, he was in extremis. He could not

live long: the crucifixion was sure to be fatal; in a short time his legs would be broken, to end his wretched existence. He, poor soul, had but a short time to live -- only the space between noon and sundown; but it was long enough for the Saviour, who is mighty to save. Some are very much afraid that people will put off coming to Christ, if we state this. I cannot help what wicked men do with truth, but I shall state it all the same. If you are now within an hour of death, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. If you never reach your homes again, but drop dead on the road, if you will now believe in the Lord Jesus, you shall be saved: saved now, on the spot. Looking and trusting to Jesus, he will give you a new heart and a right spirit, and blot out your sins. This is the glory of Christ's grace. How I wish I could extol it in proper language! He was last seen on earth before his death in company with a convicted felon, to whom he spoke most lovingly. Come, O ye guilty, and he will receive you graciously! Once more, this man whom Christ saved at last was a man who could do no good works. If salvation had been by good works, he could not have been saved; for he was fastened hand and foot to the tree of doom. It was all over with him as to any act or deed of righteousness. He could say a good word or two, but that was all; he could perform no acts; and if his salvation had depended on an active life of usefulness, certainly he never could have been saved. He was a sinner also, who could not exhibit a long-enduring repentance for sin, for he had so short a time to live. He could not have experienced bitter convictions, lasting over months and years, for his time was measured by moments, and he was on the borders of the grave. His end was very near, and yet the Saviour could save him, and did save him so perfectly, that the sun went not down till he was in paradise with Christ. This sinner, whom I have painted to you in colours none too black, was one who believed in Jesus, and confessed his faith. He did trust the Lord. Jesus was a man, and he called him so; but he knew that he was also Lord, and he called him so, and said, "Lord, remember me." He had such confidence in Jesus, that, if he would but only think of him, if he would only remember him when he came into his kingdom, that would be all that he would ask of him. Alas, my dear hearers! the trouble about some of you is that you know all about my Lord, and yet you do not trust him. Trust is the saving act. Years ago you were on the verge of really trusting Jesus, but you are just as far off from it now as you were then. This man did not hesitate: he grasped the one hope for himself. He did not keep his persuasion of our Lord's Messiahship in his mind as a dry, dead belief, but he turned it into trust and prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Oh, that in his infinite mercy many of you would trust my Lord this morning! You shall be saved, I am sure you shall: if you are not saved when you trust, I must myself also renounce all hope. This is all that we have done: we looked, and we lived, and we continue to live because we look to the living Saviour. Oh, that this morning, feeling your sin, you would look to Jesus, trusting him, and confessing that trust! Owning that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father, you must and shall be saved. In consequence of having this faith which saved him, this poor man breathed the humble but fitting prayer, "Lord, remember me." This does not seem to ask much; but as he understood it, it meant all that an anxious heart could desire. As he thought of the kingdom, he had such clear ideas of the glory of the Saviour, that he felt that if the Lord would think of him his eternal state would be safe. Joseph, in prison, asked the chief butler to remember him when he was restored to power; but he forgot him. Our Joseph never forgets a sinner who cried to him in the low dungeon; in his kingdom he remembers the moanings and groanings of poor sinners who are burdened with a sense of sin. Can you not pray this morning, and thus secure a place in the memory of the Lord Jesus? Thus I have tried to describe the man; and, after having done my best, I shall fail of my

object unless I make you see that whatever this thief was, he is a picture of what you are. Especially if you have been a great offender, and if you have been living long without caring for eternal things, you are like that malefactor; and yet you, even you, may do as that thief did; you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and commit your souls into his hands, and he will save you as surely as he saved the condemned brigand. Jesus graciously says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This means that if you come and trust him, whoever you may be, he will for no reason, and on no ground, and under no circumstances, ever cast you out. Do you catch that thought? Do you feel that it belongs to you, and that if you come to him, you shall find eternal life? I rejoice if you so far perceive the truth. Few persons have so much intercourse with desponding and despairing souls as I have. Poor cast down ones write to me continually. I scarce know why. I have no special gift of consolation, but I gladly lay myself out to comfort the distressed, and they seem to know it. What joy I have when I see a despairing one find peace! I have had this joy several times during the week just ended. How much I desire that any of you who are breaking your hearts because you cannot find forgiveness would come to my Lord, and trust him, and enter into rest! Has he not said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Come and try him, and that rest shall be yours. II. In the second place, NOTE, THAT THIS MAN WAS OUR LORD'S COMPANION AT THE GATE OF PARADISE. I am not going into any speculations as to where our Lord went when he quitted the body which hung on the cross. It would seem, from some Scriptures, that he descended into the lower parts of the earth, that he might fill all things. But he very rapidly traversed the regions of the dead. Remember that he died, perhaps an hour or two before the thief, and during that time the eternal glory flamed through the underworld, and was flashing through the gates of paradise just when the pardoned thief was entering the eternal world. Who is this that entereth the pearl-gate at the same moment as the King of glory? Who is this favoured companion of the Redeemer? Is it some honoured martyr? Is it a faithful apostle? Is it a patriarch, like Abraham; or a prince, like David? It is none of these. Behold, and be amazed at sovereign grace. He that goeth in at the gate of paradise, with the King of glory, is a thief, who was saved in the article of death. He is saved in no inferior way, and received into bliss in no secondary style. Verily, there are last which shall be first! Here I would have you notice the condescension of our Lord's choice. The comrade of the Lord of glory, for whom the cherub turns aside his sword of fire, is no great one, but a newly-converted malefactor. And why? I think the Saviour took him with him as a specimen of what he meant to do. He seemed to say to all the heavenly powers, "I bring a sinner with me; he is a sample of the rest." Have you never heard of him who dreamed that he stood without the gate of heaven, and while there he heard sweet music from a band of venerable persons who were on their way to glory? They entered the celestial portals, and there were great rejoicing and shouts. Enquiring "What are these?" he was told that they were the goodly fellowship of the prophets. He sighed, and said, "Alas! I am not one of those." He waited a while, and another band of shining ones drew nigh, who also entered heaven with hallelujahs, and when he enquired, "Who are these, and whence came they?" the answer was, "These are the glorious company of the apostles." Again he sighed, and said, "I cannot enter with them." Then came another body of men white-robed, and bearing palms in their hands, who marched amid great acclamation into the golden city. These he learned were the noble army of martyrs; and again he wept, and said, "I cannot enter with these." In the end he heard the voices of much people, and saw a greater multitude advancing, among whom he perceived Rahab and Mary Magdalene, David and Peter, Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus, and he

espied especially the thief, who died at the right hand of Jesus. These all entered in -- a strange company. Then he eagerly enquired, "Who are these?" and they answered, "This is the host of sinners saved by grace." Then was he exceeding glad, and said, "I can go with these." Yet, he thought there would be no shouting at the approach of this company, and that they would enter heaven without song; instead of which, there seemed to rise a seven-fold hallelujah of praise unto the Lord of love; for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners that repent. I invite any poor soul here that can neither aspire to serve Christ, nor to suffer for him as yet, nevertheless to come in with other believing sinners, in the company of Jesus, who now sets before us an open door. While we are handling this text, note well the blessedness of the place to which the Lord called this penitent. Jesus said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise means a garden, a garden filled with delights. The garden of Eden is the type of heaven. We know that paradise means heaven, for the apostle speaks of such a man caught up into paradise, and anon he calls it the third heaven. Our Saviour took this dying thief into the paradise of infinite delight, and this is where he will take all of us sinners who believe in him. If we are trusting him, we shall ultimately be with him in paradise. The next word is better still. Note the glory of the society to which this sinner is introduced: "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." If the Lord said, "To day shalt thou be with me," we should not need him to add another word; for where he is, is heaven to us. He added the word "paradise," because else none could have guessed where he was going. Think of it, you uncomely soul; you are to dwell with the Altogether-lovely One for ever. You poor and needy ones, you are to be with him in his glory, in his bliss, in his perfection. Where he is, and as he is, you shall be. The Lord looks into those weeping eyes of yours this morning, and he says, "Poor sinner, thou shalt one day be with me." I think I hear you say, "Lord, that is bliss too great for such a sinner as I am"; but he replies -- I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness will I draw thee, till thou shalt be with me where I am. The stress of the text lies in the speediness of all this. "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." "To day." Thou shalt not lie in purgatory for ages, nor sleep in limbo for so many years; but thou shalt be ready for bliss at once, and at once thou shalt enjoy it. The sinner was hard by the gates of hell, but almighty mercy lifted him up, and the Lord said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." What a change from the cross to the crown, from the anguish of Calvary to the glory of the New Jerusalem! In those few hours the beggar was lifted from the dunghill and set among princes. "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Can you measure the change from that sinner, loathsome in his iniquity, when the sun was high at noon, to that same sinner, clothed in pure white, and accepted in the Beloved, in the paradise of God, when the sun went down? O glorious Saviour, what marvels thou canst work! How rapidly canst thou work them! Please notice, also, the majesty of the Lord's grace in this text. The Saviour said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Our Lord gives his own will as the reason for saving this man. "I say." He says it who claims the right thus to speak. It is he who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. He speaks royally, "Verily I say unto thee." Are they not imperial words? The Lord is a King in whose word there is power. What he says none can gainsay. He that hath the keys of hell and of death saith, "I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Who shall prevent the fulfilment of his word? Notice the certainty of it. He says, "Verily." Our blessed Lord on the cross returned to his old majestic manner, as he painfully turned his head, and looked on his convert. He was wont to begin his preaching with, "Verily, verily, I say unto you"; and now that he

is dying he uses his favourite manner, and says, "Verily." Our Lord took no oath; his strongest asseveration was, "Verily, verily." To give the penitent the plainest assurance, he says, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." In this he had an absolutely indisputable assurance that though he must die, yet he would live and find himself in paradise with his Lord. I have thus shown you that our Lord passed within the pearly gate in company with one to whom he had pledged himself. Why should not you and I pass through that pearl-gate in due time, clothed in his merit, washed in his blood, resting on his power? One of these days angels will say of you, and of me, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" The shining ones will be amazed to see some of us coming. If you have lived a life of sin until now, and yet shall repent and enter heaven, what an amazement there will be in every golden street to think that you have come there! In the early Christian church Marcus Caius Victorinus was converted; but he had reached so great an age, and had been so gross a sinner, that the pastor and church doubted him. He gave, however, clear proof of having undergone the divine change, and then there were great acclamations, and many shouts of "Victorinus has become a Christian!" Oh, that some of you big sinners might be saved! How gladly would we rejoice over you! Why not? Would it not glorify God? The salvation of this convicted highwayman has made our Lord illustrious for mercy even unto this day; would not your case do the same? Would not saints cry, "Hallelujah! hallelujah!" if they heard that some of you had been turned from darkness to marvellous light? Why should it not be? Believe in Jesus, and it is so. III. Now I come to my third and most practical point: NOTE THE LORD'S SERMON TO US FROM ALL THIS. The devil wants to preach this morning a bit. Yes, Satan asks to come to the front and preach to you; but he cannot be allowed. Avaunt, thou deceiver! Yet I should not wonder if he gets at certain of you when the sermon is over, and whispers, "You see you can be saved at the very last. Put off repentance and faith; you may be forgiven on your death-bed." Sirs, you know who it is that would ruin you by this suggestion. Abhor his deceitful teaching. Do not be ungrateful because God is kind. Do not provoke the Lord because he is patient. Such conduct would be unworthy and ungrateful. Do not run an awful risk because one escaped the tremendous peril. The Lord will accept all who repent; but how do you know that you will repent? It is true that one thief was saved -- but the other thief was lost. One is saved, and we may not despair; the other is lost, and we may not presume. Dear friends, I trust you are not made of such diabolical stuff as to fetch from the mercy of God an argument for continuing in sin. If you do, I can only say of you, your damnation will be just; you will have brought it upon yourselves. Consider now the teaching of our Lord; see the glory of Christ in salvation. He is ready to save at the last moment. He was just passing away; his foot was on the doorstep of the Father's house. Up comes this poor sinner the last thing at night, at the eleventh hour, and the Saviour smiles and declares that he will not enter except with this belated wanderer. At the very gate he declares that this seeking soul shall enter with him. There was plenty of time for him to have come before: you know how apt we are to say, "You have waited to the last moment. I am just going off, and I cannot attend to you now." Our Lord had his dying pangs upon him, and yet he attends to the perishing criminal, and permits him to pass through the heavenly portal in his company. Jesus easily saves the sinners for whom he painfully died. Jesus loves to rescue sinners from going down into the pit. You will be very happy if you are saved, but you will not be one half so happy as he will be when he saves you. See how gentle he is!" His hand no thunder bears, No terror clothes his brow; No bolts to drive our guilty souls To fiercer flames below." He comes to us full of tenderness, with tears in his eyes, mercy in his hands, and love in

his heart. Believe him to be a great Saviour of great sinners. I have heard of one who had received great mercy who went about saying, "He is a great forgiver;" and I would have you say the same. You shall find your transgressions put away, and your sins pardoned once for all, if you now trust him. The next doctrine Christ preaches from this wonderful story is faith in its permitted attachment. This man believed that Jesus was the Christ. The next thing he did was to appropriate that Christ. He said, "Lord, remember me." Jesus might have said, "What have I to do with you, and what have you to do with me? What has a thief to do with the perfect One?" Many of you, good people, try to get as far away as you can from the erring and fallen. They might infect your innocence! Society claims that we should not be familiar with people who have offended against its laws. We must not be seen associating with them, for it might discredit us. Infamous bosh! Can anything discredit sinners such as we are by nature and by practice? If we know ourselves before God we are degraded enough in and of ourselves? Is there anybody, after all, in the world, who is worse than we are when we see ourselves in the faithful glass of the Word? As soon as ever a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, let him hook himself on to him. The moment you believe Jesus to be the Saviour, seize upon him as your Saviour. If I remember rightly, Augustine called this man, "Latro laudabilis et mirabilis," a thief to be praised and wondered at, who dared, as it were, to seize the Saviour for his own. In this he is to be imitated. Take the Lord to be yours, and you have him. Jesus is the common property of all sinners who make bold to take him. Every sinner who has the will to do so may take the Lord home with him. He came into the world to save the sinful. Take him by force, as robbers take their prey; for the kingdom of heaven suffereth the violence of daring faith. Get him, and he will never get himself away from you. If you trust him, he must save you. Next, notice the doctrine of faith in its immediate power. "The moment a sinner believes, and trusts in his crucified God, his pardon at once he receives, redemption in full through his blood." "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He has no sooner believed than Christ gives him the seal of his believing in the full assurance that he shall be with him for ever in his glory. O dear hearts, if you believe this morning, you shall be saved this morning! God grant that you, by his rich grace, may be brought into salvation here, on the spot, and at once! The next thing is, the nearness of eternal things. Think of that a minute. Heaven and hell are not places far away. You may be in heaven before the clock ticks again, it is so near. Could we but rend that veil which parts us from the unseen! It is all there, and all near. "To day," said the Lord; within three or four hours at the longest, "shalt thou be with me in paradise;" so near is it. A statesman has given us the expression of being "within measurable distance." We are all within measurable distance of heaven or hell; if there be any difficulty in measuring the distance, it lies in its brevity rather than in its length. "One gentle sigh the fetter breaks, We scarce can say, 'He's gone,' Before the ransomed spirit takes its mansion near the throne." Oh, that we, instead of trifling about such things, because they seem so far away, would solemnly realize them, since they are so very near! This very day, before the sun goes down, some hearer, now sitting in this place, may see, in his own spirit, the realities of heaven or hell. It has frequently happened, in this large congregation, that some one of our audience has died ere the next Sabbath has come round: it may happen this week. Think of that, and let eternal things impress you all the more because they lie so near. Furthermore, know that if you have believed in Jesus you are prepared for heaven. It may be that you will have to live on earth twenty, or thirty, or forty years to glorify Christ; and, if so, be thankful for the privilege; but if you do not live another hour, your instantaneous death would not alter the fact that he that believeth in the Son of God is meet for heaven. Surely, if anything beyond faith is needed to make

us fit to enter paradise, the thief would have been kept a little longer here; but no, he is, in the morning, in the state of nature, at noon he enters the state of grace, and by sunset he is in the state of glory. The question never is whether a death-bed repentance is accepted if it be sincere: the question is -- Is it sincere? If it be so, if the man dies five minutes after his first act of faith, he is as safe as if he had served the Lord for fifty years. If your faith is true, if you die one moment after you have believed in Christ, you will be admitted into paradise, even if you shall have enjoyed no time in which to produce good works and other evidences of grace. He that reads the heart will read your faith written on its fleshy tablets, and he will accept you through Jesus Christ, even though no act of grace has been visible to the eye of man. I conclude by again saying that this is not an exceptional case. I began with that, and I want to finish with it, because so many demi-semi-gospellers are so terribly afraid of preaching free grace too fully. I read somewhere, and I think it is true, that some ministers preach the gospel in the same way as donkeys eat thistles, namely, very, very cautiously. On the contrary, I will preach it boldly. I have not the slightest alarm about the matter. If any of you misuse free-grace teaching, I cannot help it. He that will be damned can as well ruin himself by perverting the gospel as by anything else. I cannot help what base hearts may invent; but mine it is to set forth the gospel in all its fulness of grace, and I will do it. If the thief was an exceptional case -- and our Lord does not usually act in such a way -- there would have been a hint given of so important a fact. A hedge would have been set about this exception to all rules. Would not the Saviour have whispered quietly to the dying man, "You are the only one I am going to treat in this way"? Whenever I have to do an exceptional favour to a person, I have to say, "Do not mention this, or I shall have so many besieging me." If the Saviour had meant this to be a solitary case, he would have faintly said to him, "Do not let anybody know; but you shall to day be in the kingdom with me." No, our Lord spoke openly, and those about him heard what he said. Moreover, the inspired penman has recorded it. If it had been an exceptional case, it would not have been written in the Word of God. Men will not publish their actions in the newspapers if they feel that the record might lead others to expect from them what they cannot give. The Saviour had this wonder of grace reported in the daily news of the gospel, because he means to repeat the marvel every day. The bulk shall be equal to sample, and therefore he sets the sample before you all. He is able to save to the uttermost, for he saved the dying thief. The case would not have been put there to encourage hopes which he cannot fulfil. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, and not for our disappointing. I pray you, therefore, if any of you have not yet trusted in my Lord Jesus, come and trust in him now. Trust him wholly; trust him only; trust him at once. Then will you sing with me -- "The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in his day, And there have I, though vile as he, Washed all my sins away." PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Luke 23:27-49. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 241, 288, 506. \* No. 1881. "The Dying Thief in a New Light."

## A Free Grace Promise

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A Sermon (No.2082) Intended for Reading on Lord's-day, May 5th, 1888. Delivered by C. H. SPURGEON, At the [4]Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, On Thursday Evening, October 11th, 1888. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." -- Joel 2:32. VENGEANCE was in full career. The armies of divine justice had been called forth for war: "They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war." They had invaded and devastated the land, and turned the land from being like the garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness. All faces gathered blackness: the people were "much pained" The sun itself was dim, the moon was dark, and the stars withdrew themselves: the earth quaked, and the heavens trembled. At such a dreadful time, when we might least have expected it, between the peals of thunder and the flashes of lightning, was heard this gentle word, "It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Let us carefully read the passage: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." In the worst times that can ever happen, there is still salvation for men. When day turns to night, and life becomes death, and the staff of life is broken, and the hope of man has fled, there still remains in God, in the person of his dear Son, deliverance to all those who will call upon the name of the Lord. We do not know what is to happen: reading the roll of the future, we prophesy dark things; but still this light shall always shine between the rifts of the cloud-wrack: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." This passage was selected by the apostle at Pentecost to be set in its place as a sort of morning star of gospel times. When the Spirit was poured out upon the servants and the handmaids, and sons and daughters began to prophesy, it was clear that the wondrous time had come, which had been foretold so long before. Then Peter, as he preached his memorable sermon, told the people, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved"; thus giving a fuller and yet more evangelical meaning to the word "delivered." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered" from sin, death and hell -- shall, in fact, be so delivered as to be, in divine language, "saved" -- saved from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin, saved from the wrath to come. These gospel times are still the happy days in which "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." In the Year of Grace we have reached a day and an hour in which "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." To you at this moment is this salvation sent. The dispensation of immediate acceptance proclaimed at Pentecost has never ceased: its fulness of blessing has grown rather than diminished. The sacred promise stands in all its certainty, fulness, and freeness: it has lost none of all its breadth and length: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I have nothing to do to-night but to tell you over again the old, old story of infinite mercy come to meet infinite sin -- of free grace come to lead free will into a better line of things -- of God himself appearing to undo man's ruin wrought by man, and to lift him up by a great deliverance. May the Holy Spirit graciously aid me while I shall talk to you very simply, thus: -- I. First, THERE IS SOMETHING ALWAYS WANTED. That something is deliverance, or "salvation." It is always

wanted. It is the requisite of man, wherever man is found. As long as there are men on the face of the earth, there will always be a need of salvation. I could wish that some of you had the instructive schooling which I received last Tuesday, when I was sitting to see enquirers. I had a very happy time in seeing a very large number of persons who had joyfully put their trust in Christ; but among them were some who could not trust -- poor hearts, conscious of sin, though they did not think they were. These seemed bound hand and foot, shut up in the prison of despair, and darkened in heart. I tell you, I felt dismayed as they baffled me: I felt a fool as they refused to be comforted. I could do nothing for them so far as argument and persuasion were concerned. I could pray with them: I could also set them praying, and they did pray: but they were cases in which, unless the arm of God were revealed, I was as powerless with them as when a man stands weeping over the body of his dead wife, and would restore her to life even at the cost of his own life, and yet he could produce neither hearing nor motion. Dear friends, while we mingle only with those who are saved, we forget how much need there is still of a divine salvation. If we could go through London, into its dens and slums, we should think very differently of human need from what we do when we simply come from our own quiet domestic circle, and step into our pew and hear a sermon. The world is still sick and dying. The world is still corrupting and rotting. The world is a ship in which the water is rising fast, and the vessel is going down into the deep of destruction. God's salvation is wanted as much to-day as when the spirit preached it in Noah's day to the spirits in prison. God must step in, and bring deliverance, or there remains no hope. Some want deliverance from present trouble. If you are in this need to-night through very sore distress, I invite you to take my text as your guide, and believe that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Depend upon it, in any form of distress, physical, mental, or whatever it may be, prayer is wonderfully available. "Call upon me," says God, "in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." If you are so down at the heel that your foot is on the bare pavement; if you have come to this place in bodily sickness, and feel as if you should die on the seat in which you sit; if there be no physician to help you, and no friend to stretch out a generous hand, call upon God, I beseech you. You have come to the end of men; you are now at the beginning of God. See whether your Maker will forget you. See whether the great, generous heart of God does not still beat tenderly towards the sorrowful and the afflicted. If I saw you lying wounded on a battle-field, bleeding to death, I would say, "Call upon God." If I knew that you had not a house to go to, but must walk these streets all night, I would say, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." I will take the text in the broadest sense, and bid you, nay, command you, to test your good and gracious God in the day of your calamity. This is true whenever you come into a position of deep personal distress, even though it should not be of a physical kind. When you do not know how to act, but are bewildered and at your wits' end, when wave of trouble has followed wave of trouble till you are like the sailor in the storm who reels to and fro, and staggers like a drunken man; if now you cannot help yourself, because your spirit sinks and your mind fails, call upon God, call upon God, call upon God! Lost child in the wood, with the night fog thickening about you, ready to lie down and die, call upon your Father! Call upon God, thou distracted one; for "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." In the last great day when all secrets are known, it will seem ridiculous that ever persons took to writing tales and romances; for the real stories of what God has done for those who cry to him are infinitely more surprising. If men and women could but tell in simple, natural language how God has come to their rescue in the hour of imminent distress, they would set the harps of heaven a-ringing with new melodies, and the hearts of saints on earth

a-glowing with new love to God for his wonderful kindness to the children of men. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness! Oh that we could abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness to ourselves in the night of our weeping! The text holds good concerning deliverance from future troubles. What is to happen in the amazing future we do not know. Some try to startle and alarm you with prophecies of what will soon happen; concerning whom I would warn you to be well upon your guard. Take small heed of what they say. Whatever is to happen according to the Word of God -- if the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood -- if God shall show great wonders in the heavens, and the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, yet remember that though you will then assuredly want deliverance, deliverance will still be near at hand. The text seems put in a startling connection in order to advise us that when the worst and most terrible convulsions shall occur, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The star Wormwood may fall, but we shall be saved if we call upon the name of the Lord. Plagues may be poured out, trumpets may sound, and judgments may follow one another as quickly as the plagues of Egypt, but "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." When the need of deliverance shall apparently increase, the abundance of salvation shall increase with it. Fear not the direst of all wars, the bitterest of all famines, the deadliest of all plagues; for still, if we call upon the Lord, he is pledged to deliver us. This word of promise meets the most terrible of possibilities with a sure salvation. Yes, and when you come to die, when to you the sun has turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, this text ensures deliverance in the last dread hour. Call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be saved. Amid the pains of death, and the gloom of departure, you shall enjoy a glorious visitation, which shall turn darkness into light, and sorrow into joy. When you wake up amid the realities of the eternal future there will be nothing for you to dread in resurrection, or in judgment, or in the yawning mouth of hell. If you have called upon the name of the Lord, you shall still be delivered. Though the unpardoned are thrust down to the depth of woe, and the righteous scarcely are saved, yet you who have called upon the name of the Lord must be delivered. Stands the promise firm, whatever may be hidden in the great roll of the future; God cannot deny himself, he will deliver those who call upon his name. What is wanted, then, is salvation; and I do think, beloved brethren, that you and I who preach the Word, and long to save souls, must very often go over this grand old truth about salvation to the guilty, deliverance to all who call upon the name of the Lord. Sometimes we talk to friends about the higher life, about attaining to very high degrees of sanctity; and all this is very proper and very good; but still the great fundamental truth is, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." We urge our friends to be sound in doctrine, and to know what they do know, and to understand the revealed will of God; and very proper is this also; but still, first and foremost, this is the elementary, all-important truth -- "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." To this old foundation truth we come back for comfort. I sometimes rejoice in God, and joy in the God of my salvation, and spread my wings and mount up into communion with the heavenlies; but still there are other seasons when I hide my head in darkness, and then I am very glad of such a broad, gracious promise as this, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I find that my sweetest, happiest, safest state, is just as a poor, guilty, helpless sinner, to call upon the name of the Lord, and take mercy at his hands as one who deserves nothing but his wrath, while I dare hang the weight of my soul on such a sure promise as this, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Get where you may, however high your experience; be what you may, however great your usefulness, you will always want to come back to the same ground upon which

the poorest and weakest of hearts must stand, and claim to be saved by almighty grace, through simply calling upon the name of the Lord. Thus have I said enough upon what is always wanted -- this deliverance, this salvation. II. Now, secondly, let us attentively observe THE WAY IN WHICH THIS DELIVERANCE IS TO BE HAD. Help us, blessed Spirit, in this our meditation. It is to be had, according to the text, by calling upon the name of the Lord. Is not the most obvious sense of this language, prayer? Are we not brought to the Lord by a prayer which trusts in God -- by a prayer which asks God to give the deliverance that is needed, and expects to have it from the Lord, as a gift of grace? It amounts to much the same thing as that other word, "Believe and live"; for how shall they call on him of whom they have not heard? And if they have heard, yet vain is their calling if they have not believed as well as heard. But to "call on the name of the Lord," is briefly to pray a believing prayer; to cry to God for his help, and to leave yourself in his hands. This is very simple, is it not? There is no cumbersome machinery here, nothing complex and mysterious. No priestly help is wanted, except the help of that great High Priest, who intercedes for us within the veil. A poor, broken heart pours its distress into the ear of God, and calls upon him to fulfill his promise of help in the time of need -- that is all. Thank God, nothing more is mentioned in our text. The promise is -- "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What a suitable way of salvation it is to those who feel that they can do nothing! Ah, dear hearts! if we had to preach to them a very difficult and elaborate salvation, they would perish! They have not the mind, some of them, to follow our directions if they were at all intricate; and they have not enough hope to venture upon anything that looks at all difficult. But if it be true that "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," this method is simple and available, and they catch at it. He can pray to God who can do nothing else. Thank God, he need not want to do anything else; for if he can call for help, he gets deliverance, and, in that deliverance, he gets all that he will ever want between this place and heaven. He has called upon the name of the Lord, and all that is deficient in him will be supplied for time and for eternity. He will be delivered, not only now, but throughout all the future of his life, until he sees the face of God in glory everlasting. The text, however, contains within it a measure of specific instruction: the prayer must be to the true God. "Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved." There is something distinctive here; for one would call on Baal, another would call on Ashtaroth, and a fourth on Moloch; but these would not be saved. The promise is special: "Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved." You know that triune name, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" -- call upon it. You know how the name of Jehovah is set forth most conspicuously in the person of the Lord Jesus -- call upon him. Call upon the true God. Call upon no idol, call on no Virgin Mary, no saint, dead or living. Call on no image. Call on no impression of your mind! Call upon the living God -- call upon him who reveals himself in the Bible -- call upon him who manifests himself in the person of his dear Son; for whosoever shall call upon this God shall be saved. You may call upon the idols, but these will not hear you: "Ears have they, but they hear not. Eyes have they, but they see not." You may not call upon men, for they are all sinners like yourselves. Priests cannot help their most zealous admirers; but, "Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved." Mind, then, it is not the mere repetition of a prayer as a sort of charm, or a piece of religious witchcraft, but you must make a direct address to God, an appeal to the Most High to help you in your time of need. In presenting true prayer to the true God you shall be delivered. Moreover, the prayer should be intelligently presented. We read, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord." Now, by the word "name" we understand the person, the character of the Lord. The more, then, you know about the Lord, and

the better you know his name, the more intelligently will you call upon that name. If you know his power, you will call upon that power to help you. If you know his mercy, you will call upon him in his grace to save you. If you know his wisdom, you feel that he knows your difficulties, and can help you through them. If you understand his immutability, you will call upon him, as the same God who has saved other sinners, to come and save you. It will be well, therefore, for you to study the Scriptures much, and to pray the Lord to manifest himself to you that you may know him; since, in proportion to your acquaintance with him, will you with greater confidence be able to call upon his name. But, little as you may know, call on him according to the little you do know. Cast yourself upon him, whether your trouble to-night be external or internal; but especially if it be internal, if it be the trouble of sin, if it be the burden of guilt, if it be a load of horror and fear because of wrath to come, call upon the name of the Lord, for you shall be delivered. There stands his promise. It is not, "He may be delivered," but he "shall be." Note well the everlasting "shall" of God -- irrevocable, unalterable, unquestionable, irresistible. His promise stands eternally the same. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." This way of salvation, by calling upon the name of the Lord, glorifies God. He asks nothing of you but that you ask everything of him. You are the beggar, and he is the benefactor. You are in the trouble, and he is the Deliverer. All you have to do is to trust him, and beg of him. This is easy enough. This puts the matter into the hands of the Lord, and takes it out of your hands. Do you not like the plan? Put it in practice immediately! It will prove itself gloriously effectual. Dear friends, I speak to some whom I know to be now present, who are under severe trial. You dare not look up. You seem to be given up; at any rate you have given yourself up; and yet, I pray you, call upon the name of the Lord. You cannot perish praying; no one has ever done so. If you could perish praying, you would be a new wonder in the universe. A praying soul in hell is an utter impossibility. A man calling on God and rejected of God! -- the supposition is not to be endured. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." God himself must lie, he must quit his nature, forfeit his claim to mercy, destroy his character of love, if he were to let a poor sinner call upon his name, and yet refuse to hear him. There will come a day, but that is not now -- there will come a day in the next state when he will say, "I called, but ye refused" ; but it is not so now. While there is life there is hope. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart," but call upon God at once; for this warrant of grace runneth through all the regions of mortality, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I recollect a time when, if I had heard a sermon on this subject, putting it plainly to me, I should have leaped into comfort and light in a single moment. Is it not such a time with you? I thought, I must do something, I must be something, I must in some way prepare myself for the mercy of God. I did not know that a calling upon God, a trusting myself in his hand, an invocation of his sacred name, would bring me to Christ, the Saviour. But so it stands, and happy, indeed, was I when I found it out. Heaven is given away. Salvation may be had for the asking. I hope that many a captive heart here will at once leap to loose his chains, and cry, "It is even so. If God has said it, it must be true. There it is in his own Word. I have called upon him, and I must be delivered." III. Now I come to notice, in the third place, THE PEOPLE TO WHOM THIS PROMISE AND THIS DELIVERANCE WILL BE GIVEN. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered." According to the connection, the people had been greatly afflicted -- afflicted beyond all precedent, afflicted to the very brink of despair; but the Lord said, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Go down to the hospital. You may select, if you please, the hospital which deals with the effects of vice. In that house of misery you may stand at

each bed and say, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." You may then hasten every door of every cell, yes, even at the grating of the condemned cell, if there lie men and women there given up to death, and you may with safety say to each one, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered." I know what the Pharisees will say -- "If you preach this, men will go on in sin." It has always been so, that the great mercy of God has been turned by some into a reason for continuing in sin; but God (and this is the wonder of it) has never restricted his mercy because of that. It must have been a terrible provocation of Almighty grace when men have perverted his mercy into an excuse for sin, but the Lord has never even taken the edges off from his mercy because men have misused it: he has still made it stand out bright and clear: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Still he cries, "Turn and live." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Undimmed is that brave sun that shineth on the foulest dunghills of vice. Trust Christ, and live. Call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be pardoned; yea, you shall be rescued from the bondage of your sin, and be made a new creature, a child of God, a member of the family of his grace. The most afflicted, and the most afflicted by sin, are met with by this gracious promise, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Yes, but there were some, according to Joel, who had the Spirit of God poured out upon them. What about them? Were they saved by that? Oh no! Those who had the Spirit of God so that they dreamed dreams and saw visions, yet had to come to the palace of mercy by this same gate of believing prayer -- "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Ah, poor souls! you say, to yourselves, "if we were deacons of churches, if we were pastors, oh, then we should be saved!" You do not know anything about it: church officers are no more saved by their office than you are by being without office. We owe nothing to our official position in this matter of salvation: in fact, we may owe our damnation to our official standing unless we look well to our ways. We have no preference over you plain folks. I do assure you, I am quite happy to take your hand, whoever you may be, and come to Christ on the same footing as yourself. "Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to thy cross I cling." Often, when I have been cheering up a poor sinner, and urging him to believe in Christ, I have thought, "Well, if he will not drink this cup of comfort, I will even drink it up myself." I assure you, I need it as much as those to whom I carry it. I have been as big a sinner as any of you, and therefore I take the promise to myself. The divine cordial shall not be lost: I will accept it. I came to Jesus as I was, weary, and worn, and faint, and sick, and full of sin, and I trusted him on my own account, and found peace -- peace on the same ground as my text sets before all of you. If I drink of this consolation, you may drink it too. The miracle of this cup is that fifty may drink, and yet it is just as full as ever. There is no restriction in the word "Whosoever." You maidens that have the Spirit of God upon you, and you old men that dream, it is neither the Spirit of God nor the dreaming that will save you; but your calling on the sacred name. It is, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Also, there were some upon whom the Spirit of God did not fall. They did not speak with tongues, nor prophesy the future, nor work miracles; but though they did none of these marvels, yet it stood true to them -- "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What though no supernatural gift was bestowed, though they saw no vision and could not speak with tongues, they called upon the name of the Lord, and they were saved. There is the same way of salvation for the little as well as for the great, for the poorest and most obscure as well as for those that are strong in faith, and lead the hosts of God to the battle. But some were terribly afraid. I

should think that a good many must have been sadly alarmed when there were in the earth blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood: but, afraid as they were, if they called upon the name of the Lord, they were delivered. Now, Mrs. Much-afraid, what do you say to that? Mr. Ready-to-halt, did I hear your crutches sounding in the aisle just now, or was it an umbrella? Never mind, if you call upon the name of the Lord, you shall be saved. You that are so feeble in mind, so weak, so wounded that you hardly dare to trust, still it is written for your sakes also, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Ah!" says another, "but I am worse than that. I have no good feelings. I would give all that I have to own a broken heart. I wish I could even feel despair, but I am hard as a stone." I have been told that sorrowful story many times, and it almost always happens that those who most mourn their want of feeling are those who feel most acutely. Their hearts are like hell-hardened steel, so they say; but it is not true. But if it were true, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Do you think that the Lord wants you to give yourself a new heart first, and that then he will save you? My dear soul, you are saved when you have a new heart, and you do not want him to save you then, since you are saved. "Oh, but I must get good feelings!" Must you? Where are you going for them? Are you to rake the dunghill of your depraved nature to find good feelings there? Come without any good feeling. Come just as you are. Come, you that are like a frozen iceberg, that have nothing about you whatever, but that which chills and repels; come and call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be saved. "Wonders of grace to God belong." It is not a small gospel that he has sent us to preach to small sinners, but ours is a great gospel for great sinners. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Ah, well!" says one, "I cannot think it is meant for me, for I am nobody." Nobody, are you there? I have a great love for nobodies. I am worried with somebodies, and the worst somebody in the world is my own somebody. How I wish I could always turn my own somebody out, and keep company with none but nobodies! Then I should make Jesus everybody. Nobody, where are you? You are the very person that I am sent to look after. If there is nothing of you, there shall be all the more of Christ. If you are not only empty, but cracked and broken; if you are done for, destroyed, ruined, utterly crushed and broken, to you is this word of salvation sent: -- "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I have set the gate wide open. If it were the wrong track, all the sheep would go through; but as it is the right road, I may set the gate open as long as I will, but yet the sheep will shun it, unless thou, Great Shepherd, shall go around the field to-night, and lead them in. Take up in thine own arms some sheep that thou hast purchased long ago with thy dear heart's blood -- take him upon thy gracious shoulders, rejoicing as thou doest it, and place him within the field where the good pasture grows.IV. I want you to dwell for a minute upon THE BLESSING ITSELF. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." I need not say much about it because I have already expounded it. It is a very good rule, when a man makes you a promise, to understand it in the narrowest sense. It is fair to him that you should do so. Let him interpret it liberally, if he pleases; but he is actually bound to give you no more than the bare terms of his promise will imply. Now, it is a rule which all God's people may well practise, always to understand God's promises in the largest possible sense. If the words will bear a bigger construction than at the first sight they naturally suggest to you, you may put the larger construction upon them. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think." God never draws a line in his promise, that he may go barely up to it; but it is with the great God as it was with his dear Son, who, though he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet spent the greater part of his

time in Galilee, which was called, "Galilee of the Gentiles"; and went to the very verge of Canaan to find out a Canaanitish woman, that he might give her a blessing. Thou mayest put the biggest and most liberal sense, then, on such a text as this, for Peter did so. The New Testament is wont to give a broader sense to Old Testament words; and it does so most rightly, for God loves us to treat his words with the breadth of faith. Come, then, if you are the subject of the judgments of God; if you believe that God's hand has visited you on account of sin, call upon him, and he will deliver you both from the judgment, and from the guilt that brought the judgment -- from the sin, and from that which follows the sin. He will help you to escape. Try him now, I pray you. And if your case should be different: if you are a child of God and you are in trouble, and that trouble eats into your spirit, and causes you daily wear of spirit and tear of heart -- call upon the Lord. He can take away from you the fret and the trouble too. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." You may have to bear the trouble, but it shall be so transformed as to be rather a blessing than an evil, and you shall fall in love with your cross, since the nature of it has been changed. If sin be the great cause of your present trouble, and that sin has brought you into bondage to evil habits, if you have been a drunkard and do not know how to learn sobriety, if you have been unchaste and have become entangled in vicious connections; call upon God, and he can break you away from the sin, and set you free from all its entanglements. He can cut you loose to-night with the great sword of his grace, and make you a free man. I tell you that, though you should be like a poor sheep between the jaws of a lion, ready to be devoured immediately by the monster, God can come and pluck you out from between the lion's jaws. The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered. Only call upon the name of the Lord! Call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be delivered. Yes, and I repeat what I said just now. If you have come under the power of disease, if you are near to die, if already death has written his name legibly upon your body, and you are afraid of death and hell; yet call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be delivered at this last moment. Even now, when the pit gapes wide for you, and like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, you are ready to go down alive into it, call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be delivered. If I were telling you what I had made up, or hammered out of my own brain, I could not expect you to believe me; but, as this Book is inspired, and as Joel spoke in the name of God, and as the apostles spoke in the name of Jehovah, this is the very truth of the God that made the heavens and the earth. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." V. In conclusion, I must remind you of one mournful thought. Let me warn you OF THE SADLY COMMON NEGLECT OF THIS BLESSING. You would think that everybody would call upon the name of the Lord; but read the text, "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said." It shall be there as the Lord hath said. Will they not have it then? Notice! "And in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." It seems to shrivel me up altogether, that word "remnant." What! Will they not come? Are they madmen? Will they not come? No, only a remnant; and even that remnant will not call upon the name of the Lord until first God calls them by his grace. This is almost as great a wonder as the love which so graciously invites them. Could even devils behave worse? If they were invited to call upon God, and be saved, would they refuse? Unhappy business! The way is plain, but "few there be that find it." After all the preaching, and all the invitation, and the illimitable breadth of the promise, yet all that are saved are contained "in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." Is not our text a generous invitation; the setting open of the door, yea, the lifting of the door from off its hinges, that it never might be shut? And yet "broad is the gate, and wide is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat."

There they come, streams of them, hurrying impatiently, rushing down to death and hell -- yes, eagerly panting, hurrying, dashing against one another to descend to that awful gulf from which there is no return! No missionaries are wanted, no ministers are needed to plead with men to go to hell. No books of persuasion are wanted to urge them to rush onward to eternal ruin. They hurry to be lost: they are eager to be destroyed. As when the wild bisons of the prairie hasten onward in their madness, until they come to a great gulf, and then rush down headlong, a cataract of life leaping to death, so is it with the sons of men! They choose their own delusions, and covet their own damnations, and that without end. This is all that sovereign mercy rescues after all -- a remnant, and that remnant only because the arm of the Lord is revealed, and a miraculous power exerted upon their wills. This is the misery of it, that the guilty are not willing to be parted from their sins. They will not seek that which alone is their life, their joy, their salvation. They prefer hell to heaven, sin to holiness. Never spake the Master a word which observation more clearly proves than when he said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." You will attend your chapels, but you will not call on the Lord. Jesus cries, "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me; but ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." You will do anything rather than come to Jesus. You stop short of calling upon him. O my dear hearers, do not let it be so with you! Many of you are saved; I beseech you intercede for those who are not saved. Oh, that the unconverted among you may be moved to pray. Before you leave this place, breathe an earnest prayer to God, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner. Lord, I need to be saved. Save me. I call upon thy name." Join with me in prayer at this moment, I entreat you. Join with me while I put words into your mouths, and speak them on your behalf -- "Lord, I am guilty. I deserve thy wrath. Lord I cannot save myself. Lord, I would have a new heart and a right spirit, but what can I do? Lord, I can do nothing, come and work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure." "Thou alone hast power, I know, To save a wretch like me; To whom, or whither should I go? I should turn from thee?" "But I now do from my very soul call upon thy name. Trembling, yet believing, I cast myself wholly upon thee, O Lord. I trust the blood and righteousness of thy dear Son; I trust thy mercy, and thy love, and thy power, as they are revealed in him. I dare to lay hold upon this word of thine, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Lord, save me to-night, for Jesus' sake. Amen." PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- JOEL 2:11-32. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK" -- 282, 544, 275.

## The Mediator--The Interpreter

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A Sermon (No.2097) Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, July 28th, 1889, by C. H. SPURGEON, At [5]the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." -- Exodus 20:18-20. THE GIVING of the law was glorious with pomp of power. The blaze of splendor was intended to impress the people with its sense of the authority of the law, by letting them see the greatness of the Lawgiver. It was meet that with great solemnity the law of the Most High should be proclaimed, that Israel might have a holy reverence for its commands. This terrible grandeur may also have been intended to suggest to the people the condemning force of the law. Not with sweet sound of harp, nor with the song of angels, was the law given; but with an awful voice from amid a terrible burning. Not in itself is the law condemnatory; for if there could have been life by any law, it would have been by this law: but by reason of man's sinfulness, the law worketh wrath; and to indicate this, it was made public with accompaniments of fear and death: the battalions of Omnipotence marshaled upon the scene; the dread artillery of God, with awful salvos, adding emphasis to every syllable. The tremendous scene at Sinai was also in some respects a prophecy, if not a rehearsal, of the Day of Judgment. If the giving of the law, while it was yet unbroken, was attended with such a display of awe-inspiring power, what will that day be when the Lord shall, with flaming fire, take vengeance on those who have willfully broken His law? To us, that day at Horeb is a type of the action of the law in our nature: thus doth the law deal with our consciences and hearts. If you have ever felt the law spoken home to you by the Spirit of God, you have heard great thunderings within. You have been forced to cry with Habakkuk, "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones." And God intended it to be so, that you might look to the flames which Moses saw, and abandon forever all hope of acceptance by the works of the law. The glorious majesty which surrounded the institution of the law is not, however, our subject at this time. I shall handle the text in another manner. The Lord God, in this instance, came as near to man as was possible; yea, He came nearer than man could bear. Until a Mediator was found, the approach of God brought to man nothing but terror. Although under no great apprehension of guilt at the time -- for they had only then heard the law for the first time -- yet the people removed, and stood afar off, and cried out, "If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die." God was near them in special condescension; for Moses said, "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?" Yet this memorable manifestation caused them alarm. Does it ever happen now that the Lord comes to His people in a way which dismays them? I think so. It is not really so, that God will fight against His people; but, to our apprehension, so it seems at certain times. Of these tempestuous manifestations of the Lord to our hearts I am going to speak at this time; and may the heavenly Comforter use it to the spiritual profit of his tried family! Our first head is this: the Lord has ways of communing with His people which fill them with fear; but, secondly, this endears the

Mediator to them; and thirdly, this Mediator teaches them to interpret wisely the Lord's darker dealings with them. When we have thought upon these things, we shall close by saying to you that this sacred art of interpretation should be practiced by us now. 1. First, let me remind you that THE LORD HAS WAYS OF COMMUNING WITH HIS PEOPLE WHICH FILL THEM WITH FEAR. You must not think that the Lord always appears to His people in robes of light: sometimes He enrobes Himself in clouds and darkness. His paths drop fatness, and yet He often hath His way in the whirlwind. True, He manifests Himself to us as He doth not unto the world; but in the brightest of those manifestations He may make us fear as we enter into the cloud. It is not every revelation of God which inspires the saints with joy; for in many cases it is far otherwise, even as with Daniel, who said, "I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." This experience may not have occurred to some of you; it is, however, known to many of the people of God, who have had long dealings with Him. If any of you do not understand this matter, lay the sermon by till you do. Sometimes the near approach of the Lord fills His people with apprehension and alarm; and this sure to be the case when His coming includes a close application of the law to their hearts. We used to talk of "law-work" in days which are not past, and are by moderns looked upon with contempt; and, my brethren, our talk was not without good reason, for there is such a work, and it ministers greatly to our good. Certain servants of God, who had experienced this law-work to a very deep degree, fell into the error of regarding a marked measure of it as absolutely necessary to every child of God. We will avoid that evil, for it was a grievous cause of uncharitableness; but we will not conceal the fact that many souls, in coming to God, and in God's coming to them, have been made to feel a hewing and burning work from the law of God. The law has rent them in pieces, because they themselves have rent in pieces. The law has wrought in them a sense of bondage, burden, and despair. Even after we have fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel, after we have a full assurance that our iniquities are put away, the Lord sometimes works in us a further work of the law, in which He makes us to see its exactness, its spirituality, strictness, and infinite compass. It is no little thing to see how the law judges the thoughts, desires, and imaginations of the heart. As the plummet of the holy law is held up, we see how out of the perpendicular we are, and we are therefore distressed. Brethren, when I have carefully considered, and inwardly perceived, the holiness of God's law, I have felt as though the sharp edge of a saber had been drawn across my heart, and I have shivered and trembled. Though the law did not actually cut or wound, yet its very presence, in all the keenness of its two edges, has made me shudder. So pure, so just, so uncompromising is the law of God, that when it is really understood, it makes us quail, and brings us to our knees. The law searches to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow, and it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Its excessive light strikes us, like Saul of Tarsus, to the earth, and makes us cry for mercy, When you begin to judge yourself, and estimate your actions by its infallible rule, you cease from boasting, and are filled with self-abhorrence. I believe it to be one of the best means to growth in humility, to be well instructed in the law, in the force and power of it. No man knows the brightness of the gospel till he understands the blackness of those clouds which surround the law of the Lord. Much of the shallowness of current religion is the result of a failure to apprehend the demands of divine justice, and a want of clear perception of the heinousness of disobedience. Let but God set up the throne of His law in your heart, and make you feel the power of that law in any one item of your daily conduct, much more in the whole circle of your life, and you will feel as the Israelites did when they could not abide the presence of the

Most High. The Lord also may most truly and profitably come to a man, and in His coming may unveil to him the depravity of his nature. If any man could see his own heart as it is by nature, he would be driven mad: the sight of our disease is not to be borne unless we also see the remedy. When the Lord permits the fountains of the great deep of our depravity to be broken up, then are the tops of the hills of our self-sufficiency drowned in fear. When we see what we are capable of being, apart from divine grace, our spirit sinks. When believers are allowed to see how much there is still about them that is akin to hell, when sin becomes exceeding sinful, and we feel that the taint of it has defiled our whole nature, then it is that we are horrified and appalled. What an abyss of evil is within our bosoms! Probably some of you know very little about it. I pray that you may never discover it by its painful results; but I desire that you may believe it, so as to take a firmer grip upon the doctrines of grace, and exercise greater watchfulness over your hearts. Sin which dwelleth in us is no enemy that we can safely despise. Even in one single member of our fallen nature, namely, the tongue, there dwells a world iniquity: "It defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." What poor creatures we are! The best of men are men at the best; and, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, and the power of divine grace, hell itself does not contain greater monsters of iniquity than you and I might become. Within the magazine of our hearts there is powder enough to destroy us in an instant, if omnipotent grace did not prevent. When this is distinctly perceived, we are troubled before the presence of the thrice holy God. Standing before the Lord, we cry with the prophet, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." This is a true manifestation of God; but it is by no means a cause of comfort to us. The Lord may also come to us, and lead us, by His light, to a discovery of actual sin in our life. We may sit here, and think ourselves very good; but if so, we are in the dark. If a beam of divine light is now entering our mind, our apprehension of our own character will be changed. The sins of a single day, if fully known in all their bearings, would drive us to despair, apart from the infinite grace of God. Apart from the divine plan of justifying the ungodly in Christ Jesus, any one hour would shut us up in hell. Beloved, think a minute of your omissions during the past week, how much you might have done, and ought to have done, which you have not done. It is on the side of omission that some of us are most vulnerable. Honestly looking down upon our lives, we may be able to say that we do not know of any overt offense against God, and for this we bless the divine grace; but when we come to think of what we have left undone, we feel like a traveler who, when crossing a glacier, suddenly sees an unfathomable crevasse opening just before him, and widening fast as he looks down into its blue depths of frozen death. Oh the sadness of that confession, "We have left undone the things which we ought to have done!" There is as much of lamentation in it as in the cry which precedes it -- "We have done those things which we ought not to have done." When we think of all our omissions, how can we stand before the Lord? Think again of your failure in what you have done. Brethren, you have prayed this week. I only refer to this week; for seven days are more than enough for my purpose. You have prayed: you have kept your regular times for devotion. But how have you prayed? With fervency? With careful consideration? With concentrated mind? Brethren, have you prayed with faith? With importunity? Surely, each of these questions must cut into you like a whip of wire. If you are as I am, you cannot answer to this examination without wincing. Why, even in the one matter of prayer, the sins of our holy things may shrivel us up before the burning eye of the Lord, who searcheth the heart. Your Bible also: you have read your Bible, of course you have; but with what attention? with what intention? with what devout belief? with what resolve to feel its force, and obey its

commands? Have we not sinned against this Book enough to cast us into the lowest hell in the space of four-and-twenty hours? When the Lord begins to take a man to pieces by coming near to him, another matter will often trouble him, and that is his falseness, even were, in a measure, he is sincere. You prayed in public, and expressed most proper emotions and desires; but were they really your own emotions and desires, or did you steal the expressions of another man? You preached about the things of God; did your testimony come from your heart? Do you act in accordance therewith? You, my Christian friend, expressed yourself strongly, but, in your heart of hearts, can you justify the expression? Do we not often go further with our lips than we go with our hearts? Is not this, to some degree, hypocrisy? Must it not be very displeasing to God that we should use words towards Him which we have not weighed, and which are not fully true, as we use them? O brethren, if the Lord sets out secret sins in the light of His countenance, we too, like Israel, shall start and shrink from the presence of the Lord. If we add to these apprehensions of our own unworthiness a sense of the divine glory, then we cower down and hide ourselves in the dust. When a peal of thunder rends the heavens, and is followed up by a crash, as if the house would fall about your ears, while flames of fire blind you with their excessive brilliance, you feel that the Lord is terrible out of His holy places. God's nearness has inspired you with an awe which has been shaded with dread. The one attribute of power suffices to make the strongest believer feel that Jehovah is to be feared above all gods. But, my brethren, if properly apprehended, God's omniscience inspires an equal awe, while His goodness, His love, and His holiness are even more overwhelming when fully realized. One might possibly stand with unblanched cheek in the presence of divine power; but when the Lord reveals His holiness, a man might far sooner gaze into the sun than look into the face of God. Even His love is as the fire of a furnace to our unloveliness. At the sight of our God we say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The nearness of God to sinful man is a killing thing, and those who have known it will confess that it is so. What, my brethren, if, in addition to this, there should come to you a succession of alarming providences? These Israelites not only knew that God was near, but they heard the thunder, they saw the lightning, they looked into the thick darkness, they marked the mountain altogether on a smoke, and by all this they were horror stricken. Has it come to pass that the Lord has laid many blows upon His servant? Has He taken away the desire of thine eye with a stroke? What if there be one, two, three little graves in yonder cemetery? What if love and friend have forsaken thee? What if thy business fail thee, and if thy health fail thee also? What if thy spirits sink? Oh, then, indeed I marvel not that thou art scared with forebodings of still worse calamities, and art ready to give up the ghost! Now art thou afraid because of the nearness of the great God, who is trying thee. If to this be added an apprehension of speedy death, as in the case of the Israelites, who cried, "This great Fire will consume us"; then, indeed, it is difficult to remain calm and hopeful. It will be no trifle to stand before the face of the Eternal. Since heaven and earth shall flee from thy face, and rocks shall melt, and stars shall fall, and the moon shall be turned black as sackcloth of hair, who shall stand before Thee, thou great and glorious One! Thus have I spoken to you upon the fact that our God does sometimes commune with His people in a way that fills them with overwhelming dread; let us advance to our next theme. II. Secondly, ALL THIS ENDEARS TO US THE MEDIATOR. The Israelites turned at once to Moses. They had already murmured against him: they afterwards said, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him"; once they took up stones to stone him; but now they are of

another mind. Terrified by the presence of God, they cry to Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the Lord Our God shall speak unto thee." The Mediator is everything to them now. They had found out by experience the necessity for an interposer; and they had not made a mistake either, for God Himself said they had well spoken what they had said. There is in God's esteem an urgent need for a Mediator. When we sang just now -- "Till God in human flesh I see, My thoughts no comfort find; The holy, just, and sacred Three Are terrors to my mind," we did not give utterance to morbid or ungrounded fear. It is so in truth; and the next verse is accurate also: "But if Immanuel's face appear, My hope, my joy begins; His name forbids my slavish fear, His grace removes my sins." It is a matter of fact that we need a Mediator; and these people were driven to see it. Brethren, be sensible of your sin, and you will no more attempt to approach an absolute Deity than you would walk into a volcano's mouth. You will feel that you need a sacrifice, a propitiation, a Saviour, a Mediator. Perceive the infinite difference between your nothingness and the divine infinity, and you will feel that there is no drawing nigh to the Eternal but by Jesus Christ. How can we, of ourselves, draw nigh unto God? It is wisdom to say unto the Well-beloved, "We pray thee, stand between the Lord and us." When your trembling is upon you, when your heart faints with awe, then you perceive how much you need an Advocate. Bless God that He has appointed one to be High Priest for you, who can safely go into the thick darkness, and stand in the presence of the Thrice Holy Majesty, and represent you without fail. Moses was well fitted to be the type of the true Mediator of the gospel covenant. He was himself in great favor with God, so that the Lord hearkened to his voice. Behold his dauntless courage in the presence of God, and, at the same time, his intense tenderness towards the people. Mark his faithfulness Godward as a servant over all his Master's house, and then note his self-sacrifice for Israel, so that he once said, "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." He offered himself to be a sacrifice for them. But, O beloved, consider Jesus Christ our Mediator. Where is the like of Him? He is man, like ourselves; in all respects a sufferer, poor, needy, knowing even the pangs of death; and therefore He can lay His hand upon us with a warm, brotherly love. But then He is "God over all, blessed forever," equal with the Most High, the Well-beloved of the Father; and thus He can give His hand to the eternal God, and so link our humanity with God. I feel most safe in trusting all my concerns with that dear Advocate, that Interpreter, one of a thousand. O Jesus, who can rival thee? "God, and yet man, thou art, True God, true man, art thou; Of man, and of man's earth a part, One with us thou art now." Into the thick darkness our Mediator went. Forth from it He came. He interprets to us the language of the Eternal, and He takes our petitions up to heaven, and translates them into the tongue of the Holy One, so that God hears us and accepts us in the Well-beloved. I know that some of you imagine that you would believe the gospel if God were to speak to you out of the skies. Do not wish for it. The terror of His voice would overwhelm you, but it would not convert you. The Israelites were happy with a Mediator, and so will you be. If you hear not Jesus, neither would you hear though God should thunder. A Mediator is provided. Could you, with all your wit, suggest a better Mediator than Christ? I entreat you, accept the gospel in Christ, and come to God through Him. As there is no other way, so assuredly there could be no better way. If you had all wisdom and all power in your hands with which to make a way of acceptance with God, could you devise one more pleasant, more simple, more perfect, more adequate, more exactly what you need? Come, then, dear heart, come at once to God in Christ; and remember, Jesus says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"; "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." III. Now I come to my third

point, upon which I would lay stress: THE MEDIATOR TEACHES US TO INTERPRET WISELY THE LORD'S DEALINGS. Moses became an interpreter of the Lord's terrible appearance to the trembling people, and he put a cheering construction upon it. You, to whom God has been speaking in a way of terror, and I know there are such here, for I have had to comfort them; you have a Mediator to explain to you the ways of the Lord. Be ready to learn the lesson which He teaches you: it is this -- "Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." These rough dealings of God with your conscience, with your body, with your family, and with your estate, are not for your destruction, but for your instruction: not for your killing, but for your healing. As He came in tempest and thunder to teach the children of Israel, so has He come to you. If God is teaching you, He cannot mean to destroy you: the law does not provide a schoolmaster for a convict who is to be hanged tomorrow. The discipline in God's house, however severe it may be, is a sure proof of love. We educate sons, and not enemies. The Lord is teaching you what you are, and what He is. If He had meant to destroy you, He would not have showed you such things as these, If a criminal must needs die, we do not put him through a rehearsal of the pains of death. No, no, there would be no use in such a course-it would be sheer cruelty, and depend upon it, the Lord will not show you His own greatness merely to make you miserable, nor reveal to you your own ruin merely to drive you to despair. He does not afflict willingly. Infinite love dictates the apparent severity with which He afflicts your conscience. You are being judged here, that you may not be judged hereafter with the ungodly; you are now made to abhor yourself, that the Lord may not abhor you in the day of the judgment of the wicked. The Mediator here explains to trembling Israel that God had come to test them. We all need testing, do we not? Would you like to cross a railway bridge if it was reported to you that it had never been tested by a train? When the first Exhibition was built, I remember how they marched troops along the galleries to test them. Do you not desire to have your hope for eternity tested? The Lord draws near to us in ways which inspire our fears because He would test us. What is the result of the test? Do you not feel your own weakness? Does not this drive you to the strong for strength? You feel your own sinfulness; and you fly to the Lord Jesus for righteousness. Testing has a practically good effect in slaying self-confidence, and driving you to put your confidence where God would have it rest. When God came to these people in cloud and storm, it was to impress them, to put depth into their thought and feeling. We are filled with fear at times on purpose that our religion may not be a flimsy, superficial thing. Our tendency is to slur spiritual work. We easily get to be trifling and careless. Levity in religion is an easily-besetting sin with many; but when we are made to see the plague of our heart, and the awful majesty of God, that fear of the Lord which endureth forever soon drives out the triflers from the temple. Fear plows deep, and then faith sows, and love reaps; but godly fear must lead the way. Godly fear makes prayer to be fervent prayer; it makes the hearing of the word to be quite another thing from listening to the chatter of the world's vanity. Holy awe of God makes preaching to me to be the burden of the Lord. It may be light work to your men of genius and learning; but to me it is life and death work. Often have I thought that I would rather take a whipping with a cat-o'-nine-tails than preach again. How can I answer for it at the last great day unless I am faithful? "Who is sufficient for these things?" When I have felt the dread responsibility of souls which may be lost or saved by the word they hear, the fact that God is so near has made my flesh creep, and made me wish that I had never ventured on so bold a life-work. How shall I give in an honorable account of my commission at last? Beloved, God, by such apprehensions as these, is deepening in us the work

of His grace, making us more alive to our position, and better fitting us for it. It is all in love that He allows our awe of Him to darken into dread, our sense of weakness to deepen into faintness of heart. Above all, it is explained to us that the dealings of the Lord are meant to keep us from sin. What does David say? "Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." Does not Hezekiah tell us that by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of our spirit? We are so worldly, that we need our nest to be stirred to keep us on the wing. Six days we are taken up with business, mixing with those who despise heavenly things; and we should come to think lightly of them too, were it not that God comes to us in His dread majesty and makes us think, consider, and fear. This holy trembling drives off the shams which else would grow over us like mold on decaying matter. Our inward tempests clear the air, and keep us from stagnation and the pestilence which breeds in it. God's love will not suffer us to settle down in mere pretenses, and so glide into gross sins: He empties us from vessel to vessel, and thus discovers our evil sediment, and cleanses us from it. Many people, when they hear a sermon, say, "How did you enjoy it?" If you always enjoy sermons, the minister is not a good steward. He is not acting wisely who deals out nothing but sweets. God's people need that the word should at times be medicine to them, and we do not enjoy medicine. The word is as fire, and the iron does not like the fire; yet it is needful to its melting. It is as a hammer, and the rock does not love the hammer; yet it is needful to its breaking. Experiences which are painful may be therefore all the more profitable. That which makes us hate sin is a thing to be valued. I pray you, after this manner read the dispensations of God with you. When He chides He loves; when He chastens He shows fatherly affection; and when He scourges He receives into peculiar familiarity. Do not therefore run away from a chastening God. If fear drives thee away, let faith draw thee near. He means thy highest good. Never doubt it. Steadfastly believe that His heart loves even if His face frowns. IV. I close by asking you to PRACTICE THIS ART OF SACRED INTERPRETATION. Whensoever thy Lord speaketh with thee in thunder and writeth bitter things against thee, by faith read between the lines, and after the example of Moses, the mediator, put a comfortable construction upon rough words. Faith sees many reasons for refusing to read as fear would suggest: here is one of them. When the Lord spoke to these people with the voice of trumpet and thunder, He did not speak in anger after all, but in love; for His first words set the key-note. Here they are: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of Bondage." What gracious words! What happy memories they arouse! What loving-kindnesses they record! It is true that your Lord has taken your wife or your child away, or has made you sick, or has tried your soul by the hidings of His face; but it is not an enemy who has done this. It is your God who has done it, even the same God that delivered you from the power of sin, and made you free in Christ Jesus. The Lord of love has chastened you, and chastened you in love. Learn Job's philosophy, and say from your heart, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Think of His former loving-kindness. Consider what He has done for you through the Lord Jesus and His death on your behalf. He brought you out of the bondage of your natural depravity, and He set you free from the Pharaoh of your evil passions. He has washed you from your sins, and brought you through the Red Sea of your fears by His own right hand. Can you not believe that He means well to you? What if He does speak roughly; may He not do so without being distrusted? He is the same God: He changeth not, and therefore you are not consumed: can you not rely on His faithful love? Will you take good from His hand, and will you not also take evil? He who humbles us is our covenant God, bound to us by His promise and His oath. He gave His Son to redeem us, He

cannot now do us a displeasure: let Him do as seemeth Him good. We give Him carte blanche to do what He wills, for His love is beyond dispute. He died that I might live, and now it is impossible for Him to mean anything other than good towards me. I sometimes think that if I never had a gleam of love from His face again, I would live on that one text: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Salvation from sin and death and hell should make us interpret every trying revelation, and every afflicting providence, and every painful experience, by the key of His ancient love; and so interpreted, every sorrowful line is sweetened. Notice next, dear friends, in your process of interpretation, that God cannot mean to destroy us, since this would be contrary to His word. He hath said, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." Can "everlasting life" be destroyed or die? How, then, could it be "everlasting life?" Can God declare it everlasting, and yet end it? Yes, He has given us everlasting life in His dear Son; and, what is more, He has laid up that life in Christ; for "your life is hid with Christ in God." Can He destroy the life which He has hid in His own immortal Son? Does not Jesus say, "Because I live ye shall live also?" What are you afraid of, then? God cannot destroy you. He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." What if He speaks severely to thee, it is that He may deliver thee from sinning. Wilt thou not bless Him? He will not curse thee, for He hath blessed thee in His Son, and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Bow thyself, and take from thy Father's hand whatever He appoints. Remember, that you are not, after all, in the same condition as Israel at the foot of Horeb. Though I have drawn a sort of parallel this morning, yet there remains a wonderful difference. "Ye are not come unto the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest." Ye are not come to a terrible voice which mortal ears could not endure. "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." You are come to the land of pardon, peace, and promise: you are in the home of life, love and liberty. You have come to the Lord of adoption, acceptance and glory. Wherefore, do not, I pray you, construe the acts and dealings of God with your soul after the mean and slavish manner which unbelief suggests to you, but believe your God in the teeth of all you hear, or see, or feel. The Lord hath come to prove thee, to put His fear before thy face, and to keep thee from sin; wherefore look for sweet fruit from the bitter tree of thy present grief, and flee not from thy God. Again, dear friend, here is our great comfort: we have a Mediator. When God dealeth with thee by the law, or by His rod, or by His searching Spirit, thou art apt to say, "How can I endure His hand?" Hide behind the Mediator. Let Jesus be thy shield, even as He is the Lord's Anointed. Beseech the Lord God not to look on thee as thou art in thyself, but to see thee in Christ Jesus. Say Him, and then the sinner see, Look through Jesus's wounds on me. Take care that thou lookest through Jesus' wounds on God; and if thou dost, thou wilt see in Him infinite love and boundless kindness. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is unutterable love. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him", and when they fear Him most, His pity goes out to them in streams of tenderness. If thy God use the knife on thee, it is to cut out a deadly cancer. If thy God break thee, and grind thee, it is to get away thy bran, and make thee as the fine flour of the meat-offering. He may seem to slay thee, but by this He makes thee live. Though He slay thee, still trust thou in Him. Never believe anything which would militate against the truth of His love, or the wisdom or the tenderness of it. Cling to Him when He frowns. The closer thou canst cling the less thou wilt feel the blows of His

hand when He chastens. A faith which believes when it smarts will soon have done with the rod. If thou wilt have nothing but good to say of God, He will take thee out of the fire, for it is evident that thou dost not need more of it. A full and firm belief in God when He seems to be against us, is a grand mark of sanctification. To be able to spell out "love" when it is written in cruciform characters, shows a high state of spiritual education. And now, beloved, if you can take the Lord in this way, henceforth and forever believing in His love, and never staggering through unbelief, thou wilt glorify thy God and get good to thyself in every way. If thou believest, then thou wilt be strong; for faith is the backbone of the spiritual man. If thou believest, thou wilt love, and love is the very heart of the spiritual man. Believing and loving, thou wilt endure with patience, and thy patience shall be a crown to thee. Believing, loving, and enduring, thou shalt become equipped for every holy service, and in that service thou shalt acquire more and more of likeness to thy Lord, till when thou hast endured to the full, thou shalt be in all points a brother of Him who is the Firstborn. Like Him, thou shalt be able to go into the thick darkness, and have that communion with God which only they can know who have felt the consuming fire passing through them again and again, and burning up that corruption of the flesh which makes God to be a terror to men. Like our Mediator, may we be made to plead with God for men, and with men for God. May we go up into the mount and see God and eat and drink; and then come down with faces shining with the heavenly light. God give us thus to have a Mediator, to interpret our God through a Mediator, and then to grow like our Mediator by the work of his own Spirit. I have said a great deal that must be very terrible to ungodly men, since it even tries the holiest. O my hearers, if you are unconverted, I do not suppose that the terrors of the Lord, even though they make you fear, will work any lasting good in you; for I remember that those very people who trembled at Sinai were found, in a very few weeks, madly dancing before a golden calf, and saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of Egypt." Fear alone will work no saving or sanctifying effect on the heart. It plows, but it does not sow. In the child of God, mixed with faith, fear becomes a holy tonic, a salutary medicine; but, as for you who have cause for fear, there is something else for you. Flee to the Mediator, trust in Christ Jesus, who stands between man and God, look unto Him at once, and looking you shall live. To our adorable Mediator be glory forever and ever. Amen, and Amen. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Exodus 20:18-21; Deuteronomy 5. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 92 (Part 1), 433, 281.

## Whither Goest Thou?

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A Sermon (No.2098) Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, August 4th, 1889, by C. H. SPURGEON, At [6]the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." -- Job 23:10. On several Sabbath mornings of late I have earnestly handled spiritual subjects which I trust may have been for the edification of the people of God; but it will not do to continue in that line. I am a fisher of men as well as a shepherd of the flock. I must attend to both offices. Here are souls perishing, sinners that need to be saved by Christ, and therefore I must leave the flock, and go after the wanderers. I must lay down the crook and take up the net. By a simple sermon, full of earnest expostulation, I would reason with the careless. At this moment I have not so much to expound doctrine as to arouse hearts. Oh, for the power of the Holy Ghost, without which I must utterly fail in my design! We have this morning been praying for the conversion of many: we expect our prayers to be heard. The question is not, Will there be any converted under this sermon? but, Who will it be? I trust many who have come here with no higher motive than to see the great congregation and to hear the preacher, may, nevertheless, be met with in God's infinite mercy, and placed in the way of eternal life. May this be the spiritual birthday of many -- a day to be remembered by them throughout eternity! Job could not understand the way of God with him; he was greatly perplexed. He could not find the Lord, with whom aforetime he constantly abode. He cries, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." But if Job knew not the way of the Lord, the Lord knew Job's way. It is a great comfort that when we cannot see the Lord, He sees us, and perceives the way that we take. It is not so important that we should understand what the Lord is doing as that the Lord should understand what we are doing, and that we should be impressed by the great fact that He does understand it. Our case may be quite beyond our own comprehension, but it is all plain to Him who seeth the end from the beginning, and understands the secrets of all hearts. Because God knew his way, Job turned from the unjust judgments of his unfeeling friends and appealed to the Lord God Himself. He pleaded in the supreme court, where his case was known, and he refused the verdicts of erring men. He that doeth right seeketh the light; and as Job saw that the light was with God, he hastened to that light, that his deeds might be made manifest. Like a bird of the day, which begins to signal the return of the morning, he could sing when he stood in the light of God. He was glad that the Lord knew his way, his motive, and his desires; for from that truth he inferred that he would be helped in his trials, and brought safely through them: "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." These words afford rich consolation to the saints; and if I were to use them for that purpose, I should expect the Lord's people greatly to rejoice in the Lord, whose observant eye and gracious thoughts are always upon them. Our whole condition lies open to Him with whom we have to do. Though never understood by men, we are understood by our God. "'Tis no surprising thing That we should be unknown: The Jewish world knew not their King, God's everlasting Son." As the Son of God was known to the Father, though unknown to all the world, so are we hidden from the knowledge of men, but well known of the Most High. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." "Thou hast known my soul in

adversities." I quit the design of comforting the people of God for the more presently pressing work of arousing the unconverted. Their way is evil, and the end thereof is destruction. Oh, that I could arouse them to a sense of their condition! To that end I shall ask four questions of every man within reach of my voice. God knoweth the way that you take. I will ask you first: Do you know your own way? Secondly: Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way? Thirdly: Are you tried in the way? and, if so, fourthly: Have you confidence in God as to the result of that trial? Can you say with Job, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"? I. My hearer, I ask you, first: Do You have a way. There is a way which you have taken, chosen, selected for yourself: there is a way which you follow in desire, word, and act. So far as your life is left to your own management, there is a way which you voluntarily take, and willingly follow. Do you know what that way is? It is not everyone who does know as much as that. It is a very simple question to put to you; but yet it is a very needful one to a great many; for many walk on as in a dream. Do you know where you are going? "Of course," says one, "everybody knows where he is going." Do you know where you are going, and do you carefully consider your end? You are steaming across the deep sea of time into the main ocean of eternity: to what port are you steering? Whither goest thou, O man? The birds in the heaven know their time and place when they fly away in due season; but do you know whither you are speeding? Do you keep watch, looking ahead for the shore? What shore are you expecting to see? For what purpose are you living? What is the end and drift of your daily action? I fear that many in this vast congregation are not prepared to give a deliberate answer which will be pleasant to utter and to think upon. Is not this suspicious? If I were to go out tomorrow by sea, I should not walk on board a steamboat and then enquire, "Where are you going?" The captain would think me a crazy fellow if I embarked before I knew where the vessel was going. I first make up my mind where I will go, and then select a vessel which is likely to carry me there in comfort. You must know where you are going. The main thing with the captain of a Cunarder will be the getting his vessel safely into the port for which it is bound. This design overrules everything else. To get into port is the thought of every watch, every glance at the chart, every observation of the stars. The captain's heart is set upon the other side. His hope is safely to arrive at the desired haven, and he knows which is the haven of his choice. He would not expect to get there if he did not set his mind on it. How is it with you, dear friend? You are speeding towards heaven or hell: which of these is your port? I know of no ultimate abode of souls except the brightness of the Father's glory, or the darkness of Jehovah's wrath: which of these will be your end? Which way are you intentionally going? What is it you are aiming at? Are you living for God? or are you so living that the result must be eternal banishment from His presence? Surely, to press this inquiry upon you needs no eloquence of speech. The question is vital to your happiness, and self-interest should induce you to weigh it. I shall not use a single metaphor or illustration; for I am not here to please, but to arouse. I charge every man and woman in this house now to consider this question: Whither are you going? What will be the end of the life you are now leading? Do not cast away the inquiry. It is not impertinent; it is not unnecessary. In the name of the Lord, I beseech you answer me. If you answer that question, allow me to put another: Do you know how you are going? In what strength are you pursuing your journey? If you feel able to say, "I am seeking that which is right and good", I then press the inquiry, In what strength are you pursuing it? Are you depending upon your own power, or have you received strength from on high? Do you rely on your own resolves and determinations, or have you received help from the Spirit of God? Remember, there are days in every life-voyage in which the storm-fiend puts all human power to a nonplus. Even in the fairest

weather we are all too apt to run on rocks or quicksands; but the voyage of life is seldom altogether a pleasant one, and we must be prepared for tempests. Our own unaided strength will not endure the waves and the winds of the ocean of life; and if you are trusting to yourself disaster will befall you. The Lord brings men to the desired haven; but left to themselves, they are no match for the thousand dangers of their mysterious voyage. Is God with you? Has the Lord Jesus become your strength and your song? Do you sail beneath the blood-red flag of the Cross? If you are trusting in the Lord alone, disappointment, failure, and shipwreck are impossible; but if you are hastening on with out God for your Guide and Protector, then will your weakness and folly be made clear before long to your inevitable ruin. You may put on all steam and forge ahead in the teeth of the wind; but all in vain: you will never reach the Fair Havens. Are there any here who decline to answer my question? Will you not tell us whither you are going? When a great vessel is crossing the sea and another comes within sight, they propose the question, "Where are you bound?" If the other vessel took no notice, gave no answer whatever, it would look suspicious. A craft that will not say where it is going! We don't like the look of it. If one of Her Majesty's vessels were about, and it challenged a sail, and received no reply to the question, "To what port are you bound?" I think they would fire a shot across her bows and make her heave to, till she did answer. Might not the silent craft prove to be a pirate? When a man confesses that he does not know where he is going, or what his business may be, the policeman concludes that he is probably going where he ought not to go, and has business on hand which is not what it should be. If you are afraid to consider your future, your fear is a bad omen. The tradesman who is afraid to look into his accounts will before long have them looked into for him by an officer from the Bankruptcy Court. He that dares not see his own face in the glass must be an ugly fellow; and you that dare not behold your own characters, have bad characters. Not know where you are going! Ah me! do you wish to find yourselves in hell on a sudden? Would you, like the rich man, lift up your eyes in hopeless misery? I am suspicious of you who cannot tell where you are going; and I wish you would be suspicious of yourselves. You who do not like self-examination are the persons who need it most. You who shun awkward questions are the very people who need to face them. I usually speak out -- pretty plainly, and those of you who are used to me are not displeased; but sometimes strange hearers are offended, and say that they will not come to be spoken to in such a fashion. Ah, my friend! your ill humour shows that you are in an ill condition and do not care to be corrected. If you were honestly desirous to be set right, you would like straight talks and honest rebukes. Do you prefer to go to a doctor who is known to say, "There is not much the matter: a little change, and a dose of physic, will soon put you all right"? Do you pay your guineas to be flattered? No; the man who is wise wants to know the truth, however alarming that truth may be. The man who is honest and hopeful desires a thorough examination, and invites the preacher to deal truthfully with him, even if the result should cause distress of mind. If you decline to see whither you are going, it is because you are going down into the pit. If you decline to answer the question, What is your way? I fear your way is one that you cannot defend, whose end will cause you endless lament. Is anyone here compelled to say, "I have chosen the evil road"? Remember, the Lord knows the way that you take. I am anxious that you should yourself know the truth about your condition and prospects. I dread much your going on in ignorance. I wish every man here who is serving Satan to be aware that he is doing it. "If Jehovah be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him": be hearty one way or the other. If you have chosen the service of sin, own it like a man, to yourself, at least. Choose your way of life in broad daylight. If you propose to die without

hope in Christ, say as much. If you resolve to let the future happen as it may, and to run all risks, then put down in black and white your daring resolution. If you believe that you shall die like a dog and see no hereafter, do not at all conceal from yourself your doggish degradation, but be true to your own choice. If you choose the way of evil pleasures, do it deliberately and after weighing all that can be said on the other side. But there is this comfort to me, if it does not comfort you -- that if you have chosen the wrong way, that choice need not stand. The grace of God can come in, and lead you at once to reverse your course. Oh, that you may now say, "I had not thought of it, but I certainly am going in the wrong direction, and, God helping me, I will not go an inch further!" Through our Lord Jesus Christ the past can be forgiven; and by the power of the Holy Spirit the present and the future can be changed. The grace of God can lead you to turn away from that which you have eagerly followed, and cause you to seek after that which you have disregarded. Oh, that today your cry might be, "Ho for holiness and heaven!" You have not been hitherto on the Lord's side, but now enlist in the army of the Lord Jesus. I would fain stay your vessel in her evil voyage. I am firing a shot across your bows. I solemnly warn you to consider your ways. Bethink you, what will the end of these things be? Break off your sins by righteousness; for it is time to seek the Lord. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?" This is the voice of God's own Word to you: hear it, and be admonished, and, God helping you, turn at once. But, my friend, are you drifting? Do you say, "I am not distinctly sailing for heaven, neither am I resolutely steering in the other direction. I do not quite know what to say of myself"? Are you drifting, then? Are you like a vessel which is left to the mercy of the winds and the waves? Ignoble condition! Perilous case! What! Are you no more than a log on the water? I should not like to be a passenger in a vessel which had no course marked out on the chart, no pilot at the wheel, no man at watch. Surely, you must be derelict, if not water-logged; and you will come to a total wreck before long. Yours is a dark prospect. Some time ago, I read in a paper of a gentleman being brought up before the magistrate. What was the charge against him? "Nothing very serious," you will say. He was found wandering in the fields. He was asked where he was going, and he said he was not going anywhere. He was asked where he came from, and he said he did not know. They asked him where his home was, and he said he had none. They brought him up for wandering as -- what? -- a dangerous lunatic. The man who has no aim or object in life, but just wanders about anywhere or nowhere, acts like a dangerous lunatic, and assuredly he is not morally sane. What! Am I aiming at nothing? Have I all this machinery of life, making up a vessel more wonderful than the finest steam-boat, and am I going nowhere? My heart-throbs are the pulsing of a divinely-arranged machinery: do they beat for nothing? Do I get up every morning, and go about this world, and work hard, and all for nothing which will last? As a being created of God for noblest purposes, am I spending my existence in a purposeless manner? How foolish! Why, surely, I have need, like the prodigal, to come to myself; and if I do come to myself, I shall ask myself, Can it be right that I should thus be wasting the precious gifts of time, and life, and power? If I were nothing, it were congruous that I should aim at nothing; but, being a man, I ought to have a high purpose, and to pursue it heartily. Do not say that you are drifting; it is a terrible answer, implying grievous danger, and casting a suspicion upon your sanity. If you have reason, use it in a reasonable way, and do not play the fool. But can you say, "Yes, I am bound for the right port"? It may be that your accents are trembling with a holy fear; but none the less I am glad to hear you say as much. I rejoice if you say, "Christ commands me; I am trusting to his guidance; he is my way, my life, my end." Dear friend, I congratulate you. We will sail together, as God shall help us, under the convoy of our Lord

Jesus, who is the Lord High Admiral of the sea of life. We will keep with His squadron till we cast anchor in the glassy sea. But now that you know your way and are assured that you are on the right tack, put on all steam. Exert your strength in the work to which your life is consecrated. Waste not a single moment; let no energy lie dormant; arouse every faculty. If you are serving the Lord, serve Him with all your might. Is it not written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"? Those words sound to me like great strokes of the soul's paddle wheels! They urge us to press forward in the holy voyage. Brothers, we must run, for our life is to be a race. It must be hard running, too. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." If we really are on the right way, let us press forward with all our powers; and may God help us that we may win the prize! Answer this first question, and know of a surety whose you are, and where you are, and whither you are going. II. Secondly, IS IT A COMFORT TO YOU THAT GOD KNOWS YOUR WAY? Solemnly, I believe that one of the best tests of human character is our relation to the great truth of God's omniscience. If it startles you that God sees you, then you ought to be startled. If it delights you that God sees you, you may reasonably conclude that there is within your heart that which is right and true, which God will approve of. You are among those who do the truth, for you come to the light, and cry, "Search me, O God." Allow me to apply the test to you now, by asking what you think of the truth that the Lord knows you altogether. Remember, if your heart condemn you, God is greater than your heart and knoweth all things; but if your heart condemn you not, then have you confidence towards God. Dear friend, it is quite certain that God does know the way that you take. The Hebrew may be read, "He knoweth the way that is in me"; from which I gather that the Lord not only knows our outward actions, but our inward feelings. He knows our likes and dislikes, our desires and our designs, our imaginations and tendencies. He knows not only what we do, but what we would do if we could. He knows which way we should go if the restraints of society and the fear of consequences were removed; and that, perhaps, is a more important proof of character than the actions of which we are guilty. God knows what you think of, what you wish for, what you are pleased with: he knows, not only the surface-tint of your character, but the secret heart and core of it. The Lord knows you altogether. Think of that. Does it give you any joy, this morning, to think that the Lord thus reads all the secrets of your bosom? Whether you rejoice therein or not, so it is and ever will be. The Lord knows you approvingly if you follow that which is right. He knoweth them that put their trust in Him; that is to say, He approves of them. If there be in you even a faint desire towards God, He knows it and looks with pleasure upon it. If you practise private prayer, if you do good by stealth, if you conquer evil passions, if you honour Him by patience, if you present gifts to Him which nobody ever hears of, He knows it all, and He smiles upon it. Does this give you pleasure, greater pleasure than if men praised you for it? Then it is well with you; but if you put the praise of men before the approval of God, you are in an evil case. If you can say this morning, "I am glad that He knows what I do, for his approval is heaven to me," then conclude that there is a work of grace in your heart, and that you are a follower of Jesus. God knows your way, however falsely you may be represented by others. Those three men who had looked so askance upon Job, accused him of hypocrisy, and of having practised some secret evil; but Job could answer, "The Lord knoweth the way that I take." Are you the victim of slander? The Lord knows the truth. Though you have been sadly misunderstood, if not wilfully misrepresented by ungenerous persons, yet God knows all about you; and His knowledge is of more importance than the opinions of dying men. If you are not afraid

to put your character and profession before the eye of the Lord, you have small reason for disquietude, though all men should cast out your name as evil. The Lord knows the way that you take, though you could not yourself describe that way. Some gracious people are slow of speech and they have great difficulty in saying anything about their soul affairs. Coming to see the elders of the church is quite an ordeal. I am half afraid that they even feel it a trial to see me, poor creature that I am. They are timid in speech, though they would be bold in act. They could die for Jesus, but they find it hard to speak for him. Their heart is all right; but when they begin to talk, their tongue fails them. They are unable to describe their conversion, though they feel it. They love repentance, but can barely describe their own repenting. They have believed in the Lord Jesus, but it would puzzle them to tell what faith is. Trembling one, fall back on this -- "He knoweth the way that I take." If I cannot express my faith, yet He accepts it: if I cannot describe His work in my soul, yet He discerns the work of His own hands. Another great mercy is, that God knows the way we take when we hardly know it ourselves. There are times with the true children of God when they cannot see their way, nor even take their bearings. It is not every saint that knows his longitude and latitude; nay, it is not every saint that is sure that he is a saint. We have to ask, "Is my repentance real? Is my faith true? Have I really passed from death to life? Am I the Lord's own?" I do not wish you to be in such a state: it is a pity that such a question should be possible; but I know full well that many sincere saints are often put to the question, and not altogether without reason. Herein is comfort: the Lord knows His children, and He knows the truth of their graces, the preciousness of their faith, the heavenliness of their life; for He is the former, the author of them all. He knows His own work, and cannot be deceived. Wherefore, dear friends, let us feel confident in God's knowledge of us, since He is greater than our hearts, and His verdict is more sure than that of conscience itself. Once more, remember that at this very moment God knows your way. He knows not only the way you have taken and the way you will take, but the way you are now choosing for yourself. He knows how you are acting towards the sermon you are hearing. It may be, you conclude that the preacher is very tiresome. Be it so: but still the subject is one which ought to be pressed upon your consideration; therefore, bear with me. But if you reply, "No, it is not that; but I do not want to be probed and pressed in this way." Well, the Lord knows that you are taking the way of resisting His Spirit, and hardening your neck against rebuke. Do you like that fact? I think I hear one say, "I really wish to be right, and I am afraid I am not right. Oh, that I could be made so! "God knows that feeling; breathe it into His ear in prayer. If you can say, "I am willing to be tested; I know to what port I am going; I am no pirate; I am bound for the New Jerusalem," then I rejoice. Well, well, the Lord knows. He dearly sees your present thought, your present wish, your present resolve. He knows your heart. Is that a comfort to you? If it is, well. But if it saddens you that God should know your present condition, then be afraid, for there is something about you to be afraid of. He that sews fig leaves together, as Adam did, that he may hide himself from God, must know that he is naked. If he were clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, he would seek no concealment, but would be willing both to examine himself, and to be examined of the Lord. Thus have I handled these two questions: Do you know your way? Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way? III. Thirdly, DO YOU MEET WITH TRIALS IN THE WAY? I anticipate your answer. Out of the many here present, not one has been quite free from sorrow. I think I hear one saying, "Sir, I have had more trouble since I have been a Christian than I ever had before." I met with such a case the other day: a man said to me, "I never went to a place of worship for many years, and I always seemed to prosper. At last I began to think of divine things,

and I attended the house of God; but since then I have had nothing but trouble." He did not murmur against God, but he did think it very strange. Friend, listen to me. These troubles are no token that you are in the wrong way. Job was in the right way, and the Lord knew it; and yet he suffered Job to be very fiercely tried. Consider that there are trials in all ways. Even the road to destruction, broad as it is, has not a path in it which avoids trial. Some sinners go over hedge and ditch to hell. If a man resolves to be a worldling, he will not find that the paths of sin are paths of peace. The wicked may well be ill at ease; for God walks contrary to them because they walk contrary to him. No man, be he on the throne, or on the wool-sack, or up in a mill, or down in a coal-pit can live without affliction. In a cottage near a wood there are troubles as well as in the palace by the sea. We are born to trouble: if you look for a world without thorns and thistles, you will not find it here. Then, remember, the very brightest of the saints have been afflicted. We have in the Bible, records of the lives of believers. Can you remember the life of a single believer who lived and died without sorrow? I cannot. Begin with father Abraham: the Lord did try Abraham. Go on to Moses, a king in Israel. Were not his trials many and heavy? Remember David and all his afflictions. Come down to New Testament times. The apostles were so tried that one of them said, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." Through much tribulation they reached their rest. If the saints of God confessed that theirs was a troublous way, you need not suppose that you are out of the road because your way is full of difficulty. Is there any ocean upon which a ship can sail in which it shall be quite sure that no storms will arise? Where there is sea there may be storms, so where there is life there will be changes, temptations, difficulties and sorrows. Trials are no evidence of being without God, since trials come from God. Job says, "When he hath tried me." He sees God in his afflictions. The devil actually wrought the trouble; but the Lord not only permitted it, but he had a design in it. Without the divine concurrence, none of his afflictions could have happened. It was God that tried Job, and it is God that tries us. No trouble comes to us without divine permission. All the dogs of affliction are muzzled until God sets them free. Nay, against none of the seed of Israel can a dog move its tongue unless God permits. Troubles do not spring out of the ground like weeds that grow anyhow, but they grow as plants set in the garden. God appoints the weight and number of all our adversities. If He declares the number ten they cannot be eleven. If He wills that we bear a certain weight, no one can add half an ounce more. Since every trial comes from God, afflictions are no evidence that you are out of God's way. Besides, according to the text, these trials are tests: "When he hath tried me." The trials that came to Job were made to be proofs that the patriarch was real and sincere. Did not the enemy say: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." The devil will have it that as dogs follow men for bones, so do we follow God for what we can get out of him. The Lord lets the devil see that our love is not bought by temporal goods; that we are not mercenary followers, but loving children of the Lord, so that under dire suffering we exclaim, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." By the endurance of grief our sincerity is made manifest, and it is proven that we are not mere pretenders, but true heirs of God. Once more upon this point: if you have met with troubles, remember they will come to an end. The holy man in our text says, "When he hath tried me." As much as to say, He will not always be doing it; there will come a time when He will have done trying me. Beloved, put a stout heart to a steep hill and you will climb it before long. Put the ship in good trim for a storm; and though the winds may howl for a

while, they will at length sob themselves asleep. There is a sea of glass for us after the sea of storms. Only have patience and the end will come. Many a man of God has lived through a hundred troubles when he thought one would kill him; and so will it be with you. You young beginners, you that are bound for the kingdom, but have only lately started for it, be not amazed if you meet with conflicts. If you very soon meet with difficulties, be not surprised. Let your trials be evidence to you rather that you are in the right, than that you are in the wrong way; "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" He that will go to hell will find many to help him thither; but he that will go to heaven may have to cut his way through a host of adversaries. Pluck up courage. The rod is one of the tokens of the child of God. If thou wert not God's child thou mightest be left unchastened; but inasmuch as thou art dear to Him, He will whip thee when thou dost disobey. If thou wert only a bit of common clay God would not put thee into the furnace; but as thou art gold and He knows it, thou must be refined; and to be refined it is needful that the fire should exercise its power upon thee. Because thou art bound for heaven thou wilt meet with storms on thy voyage to glory. IV. Fourthly, HAVE YOU CONFIDENCE IN GOD AS TO THESE STORMS? Can you say, in the language of the text, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"? If you are really trusting in Jesus, if he is everything to you, you may say this confidently; for you will find it true to the letter. If you have really given yourself up to be saved by grace, do not hesitate to believe that you will be found safe at the last. I do not like people to come and trust Christ with a temporary faith as though he could keep them for a day or two, but could not preserve them all their lives. Trust Christ for everlasting salvation: mark the word "everlasting." I thank God, that when I believed in His Son Jesus Christ, I laid hold upon final perseverance: I believed that where He had begun a good work He would carry it on and perfect it in the day of Christ. I believed in the Lord Jesus, not for a year or two, but for all the days of my life, and to eternity. I want your faith to have a hand of that kind, so that you grasp the Lord as your Saviour to the uttermost. I cannot tell what troubles may come, nor what temptations may arise; but I know in whose hands I am, and I am persuaded that He is able to preserve me, so that when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. I go into the fire, but I shall not be burned up in it; "I shall come forth." Like the three holy children, though the furnace be heated seven times hotter, yet the Son of man will be with me in the furnace, and "I shall come forth" with not even the smell of fire upon me. Yes, "I shall come forth," and none can hinder me. It is good to begin with this holy confidence, and to let that confidence increase as you get nearer to the recompense of the reward. Hath He not promised that we shall never perish? shall we not, therefore, come forth as gold? This confidence is grounded on the Lord's knowledge of us. "He knoweth the way that I take": therefore, "when he hath tried me, shall come forth as gold." If something happened to us which the Lord had not foreseen and provided for, we might be in great peril; But He knows our way even to the end, and is prepared for its rough places. If some amazing calamity could come upon us which the Lord had not reckoned upon, we might well be afraid of being wrecked; but our Lord's foreseeing eye hath swept the horizon and prepared us for all weathers. He knows where storms do lurk and cyclones hide away; and He is at home in managing tempests and tornadoes. If His far-seeing eye has spied out for us a long sickness and a gradual and painful death, then He has prepared the means to bear us through. If He has looked into the mysterious unknown of the apocalyptic revelation, and seen unimaginable horrors and heartmelting terrors, yet He has forestalled the necessity which He knows is coming on. It is enough for us that our Father knows what things we have need of and "when he hath tried us, we shall come forth as gold." This confidence must be sustained by

sincerity. If a man is not sure that he is sincere, he cannot have confidence in God. If you are a bit of gold and know it, the fire and you are friends. You will come forth out of it; for no fire will burn up gold. But if you suspect that you are some imitation metal, some mixture which glitters but is not gold, you will then hate fire, and have no good word for it. You will proudly murmur at the divine dispensations. Why should you be put into the fire? Why should you be tried? You will kick against God's providence if you are a hypocrite; but if you are really sincere, you will submit to the divine hand, and will not lie down in despair. The motto of pure gold is, "I shall come forth." Make it your hopeful confidence in the day of trouble. I want you to have this sense of sincerity which makes you know that you are what you profess to be, that you may also have the conviction that you will come forth out of every possible trial. I shall be tempted, but "I shall come forth"; I shall be denounced by slander, but "I shall come forth." Be of good cheer: O gold, if thou goest into the fire gold, thou wilt come forth gold! Once more, he says, "I shall come forth as gold." But how does that come forth? It comes forth proved. It has been assayed, and is now warranted pure. So shall you be. After the trial you will be able to say, "Now I know that I fear God; now I know that God is with me, sustaining me; now I see that He has helped me, and I am sure that I am his." How does gold come forth? It comes forth purified. A lump of ore may not be so big as when it went into the fire, but it is quite as precious. There is quite as much gold in it now as there was at first. What has gone? Nothing but that which is best gone. The dross has gone; but all the gold is there. O child of God, you may decrease in bulk, but not in bullion! You may lose importance, but not innocence. You may not talk so big; but there shall be really more to talk of. And what a gain it is to lose dross! What gain to lose pride! What gain to lose self-sufficiency! What gain to lose all those propensities to boastings that are so abundantly there! You may thank God for your trials, for you will come forth as gold purified. Once more, how does gold come forth from the furnace? It comes forth ready for use. Now the goldsmith may take it and make what he pleases of it. It has been through the fire and the dross has been got away from it, and it is fit for his use. So, beloved, if you are on the way to heaven and you meet with difficulties, they will bring you preparation for higher service; you will be a better and more useful man; you will be a woman whom God can more fully use to comfort others of a sorrowful spirit. Spiritual afflictions are heavenly promotions. You are going a rank higher: God is putting another stripe upon your arm. You were only a corporal, but now He is making a sergeant of you. Be not discouraged. You that have set out for heaven this morning, do not go back because you get a rainy day when you start. Do not be like Pliable. When he got to the Slough of Despond, and tumbled in, all he did was to struggle to get out on the side nearest home. He said, "If I may only once get out of this bog, you may have that grand city for yourself for me." Come, be like Christian, who, though he did sink, always kept his face in the right way and always turned his back to the City of Destruction. "No," he said, "if I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, I will go down with my eyes towards the hills whence cometh my help." "I am bound for Canaan, and if all the Canaanites stand in the way in one block, I will die with my face towards Jerusalem: I still will hold on, God helping me, even unto the end." May the Lord so bless you, for He knows the way you take; and when He hath tried you, He will bring you forth as gold. Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Psalm 139. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 914, 139, 701.

## Pricked in Their Heart

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A Sermon (No.2102) Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, September 1st, 1889, by C. H. SPURGEON, At [7]the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" -- Acts 2:36-37. THIS WAS THE FIRST public preaching of the gospel after our Lord was taken up into glory. It was thus a very memorable sermon, a kind of first-fruits of the great harvest of gospel testimony. It is very encouraging to those who are engaged in preaching that the first sermon should have been so successful. Three thousand made up a grand take of fish at that first cast of the net. We are serving a great and growing cause in the way chosen of God, and we hope in the future to see still larger results produced by that same undying and unchanging power which helped Peter to preach such a heart-piercing sermon. Peter's discourse was not distinguished by any special rhetorical display: he used not the words of man's wisdom or eloquence. It was not an oration, but it was a heart-moving argument, entreaty, and exhortation. He gave his hearers a simple, well-reasoned, Scriptural discourse, sustained by the facts of experience; and every passage of it pointed to the Lord Jesus. It was in these respects a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its contents. His plea was personally addressed to the people who stood before him, and it had a practical and pressing relation to them and to their conduct. It was aimed, not at the head, but at the heart. Every word of it was directed to the conscience and the affections, It was plain, practical, personal, and persuasive; and in this it was a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its aim and style. Yet Peter could not have spoken otherwise under the impression of the divine Spirit: his speech was as the oracles of God, a true product of a divine inspiration. Under the circumstances, any other kind of address would have been sadly out of place. A flashy, dazzling oration would have been a piece of horrible irreverence to the Holy Ghost; and Peter would have been guilty of the blood of souls if he had attempted it. In sober earnestness he kept to the plain facts of the case, setting them in the light of God's Word; and then with all his might he pressed home the truth upon those for whose salvation he was labouring. May it ever be the preacher's one desire to win men to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! May no minister wish to be admired, but may he long that his Lord and Master may be sought after! May none bewilder their people with the clouds of theoretic philosophy, but refresh them with the rain of revealed truth? Oh, that we could so preach that our hearers should be at once pricked in their hearts, and so be led at once to believe in our Lord Jesus, and immediately to come forward and confess their faith in his name! We must not forget, however, to trace the special success of the sermon on the day of Pentecost to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, in which Peter had shared. This it is which is the making of the preacher. Immersed into the Holy Spirit, the preacher will think rightly, and speak wisely; his word will be with power to those who hear. We must not forget, also, that there had been a long season of earnest, united, believing prayer on the part of the whole church. Peter was not alone: he was the voice of a praying company, and the believers had been with one accord in one place crying for a blessing; and thus not only was the Spirit resting upon the preacher, but on

all who were with him. What a difference this makes to a preacher of the gospel, when all his comrades are as much anointed of the Spirit as himself! His power is enhanced a hundredfold. We shall seldom see the very greatest wonders wrought when the preacher stands by himself; but when Peter is described as standing up "with the eleven," then is there a twelve-man ministry concentrated in one; and when the inner circle is further sustained by a company of men and women who have entered into the same truth, and are of one heart and one soul, then is the power increased beyond measure. A lonely ministry may sometimes effect great things, as Jonah did in Nineveh; but if we look for the greatest and most desirable result of all, it must come from one who is not alone, but is the mouthpiece of many. Peter had the one hundred and twenty registered brethren for a loving body-guard, and this tended to make him strong for his Lord. How greatly I value the loving co-operation of the friends around me! I have no word, to express my gratitude to God for the army of true men and women who surround me with their love, and support me with their faith. I pray you, never cease to sustain me by your prayers, your sympathy, and your co-operation, until some other preacher shall take my place when increasing years shall warn me to stand aside. Yet much responsibility must rest with the preacher himself; and there was much about Peter's own self that is well worthy of imitation. The sermon was born of the occasion, and it used the event of the hour as God intended it to be used. It was earnest without a trace of passion, and prudent without a suspicion of fear. The preacher himself was self-collected, calm, courteous, and gentle. He aired no theories, but went on firm ground, stepping from fact to fact, from Scripture to Scripture, from plain truth to plain truth. He was patient at the beginning, argumentative all along, and conclusive at the end. He fought his way through the doubts and prejudices of his hearers; and when he came to the end, he stated the inevitable conclusion with clearness and certainty. All along he spake very boldly, without mincing the truth -- Ye with wicked hands have crucified and slain him whom God has highly exalted. He boldly accused them of the murder of the Lord of glory, doing his duty in the sight of God, and for the good of their souls, with great firmness and fearlessness. Yet there is great tenderness in his discourse. Impulsive and hot-headed Peter, who, a little while before, had drawn his sword to fight for his Lord, does not, in this instance, use a harsh word; but speaks with great gentleness and meekness of spirit, using words and terms all through the address which indicate a desire to conciliate, and then to convince. Though he was as faithful as an Elijah, yet he used terms so courteous and kindly that, if men took offence, it would not be because of any offensiveness of tone on the speaker's part. Peter was gentle in his manner, but forceful in his matter. This art he had learned from his Lord; and we shall never have master-preachers among us till we see men who have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. Oh, that we could become partakers of our Lord's Spirit, and echoes of his tone! Then may we hope to attain to Pentecostal results, when we have preachers like Peter, surrounded by a band of earnest witnesses, and all baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. When we follow the run of Peter's argument, we do not wonder that his hearers were pricked in their hearts. We ascribe that deep compunction to the Spirit of God; and yet it was a very reasonable thing that it should be so. When it was clearly shown to them that they had really crucified the Messiah, the great hope of their nation, it was not wonderful that they should be smitten with horror. Looking as they were for Israel's King, and finding that he had been among them, and they had despitefully used him, and crucified him, they might well be smitten at the heart. Though for the result of our ministry we depend wholly upon the Spirit of God, yet we must adapt our discourse to the end we aim at; or, say rather, we must leave ourselves in the Spirit's

hand as to the sermon itself as well as in reference to the result of the sermon. The Holy Ghost uses means which are adapted to the end designed. Because, beloved, I do desire beyond all things that many in this congregation may be pricked in the heart, I have taken this concluding part of Peter's discourse to be the text of my sermon this morning. Yet my trust is not in the Word itself, but in the quickening Spirit who works by it. May the Spirit of God use the rapier of his Word to pierce the hearts of my hearers! First, note that Peter speaks to his hearers upon their evil conduct to the Lord Jesus; and, secondly, he declares to them the exaltation that God has bestowed upon him. When we have dwelt on these two things, we will notice, in the third place, the result of knowing this grand fact -- "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." I. First, then, Peter dwelt tenderly, but very plainly, upon THEIR EVIL CONDUCT TOWARDS THE LORD JESUS. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." As a nation, Israel had rejected him whom God had sent. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had gone further, and had consented unto his death; nay, had even clamoured for it, crying, "Crucify him, crucify him." Solemnly had the Jews exclaimed, "His blood be on us, and on our children." None of them had protested against the murder of the innocent One; but many of them had been eager to make an end of him. This Peter, in plain words, charged upon them, and they could not deny it; nor did they pretend to do so. It is well when a sense of guilt compels a man to stand silent under the rebuke of God. We then have hope of him that he will seek for pardon. Men and brethren, we are not in Jerusalem, and the death of our Lord happened more than eighteen hundred years ago; therefore we need not dwell upon the sin of those long since dead. It will be more profitable for us practically to consider how far we have been guilty of similar sins against the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at home. Let each one consider his own case. I may be addressing some to-day who have blasphemed the name of the Lord Jesus. I do not suppose that you have been guilty of the vulgar language of blasphemy, which is coarse and revolting, as well as profane; but there are politer methods of committing the self-same crime. Some, with their elaborate criticisms of Christianity, wound it far more seriously than atheists with their profanities. In these days, wiseacres, with their philosophy, derogate from the glory of our Lord's nature, and, with their novel doctrines, undermine his gospel. Denying the atonement, or teaching it as something other than a substitutionary sacrifice, they try to make away with that which is the very heart and soul of the Redeemer's work. Men nowadays drink in opinions which lessen the guilt of sin, and, of course, lower the value of the atoning blood. The cross is still a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. Men do not now accept the words of the Bible as authoritative, nor the teaching of the apostles as final; they set themselves up to be teachers of the great Teacher, reformers of the divine gospel. They do not accept the teaching of the Lord Jesus one half so much as they criticize it. If any here present have been thus guilty, may the Holy Spirit convince them of their sin! Since the Lord God hath made this atoning Jesus both Lord and Christ, and set him on his right hand, any teaching which does despite to him, however learned, however advanced, however cultured it may seem to be, is a grievous sin against the Lord God himself. By such conduct we are, as far as in us lies, again putting the Lord Jesus to death; we are attempting to make away with that which is the very life and glory of Christ. O my hearer, if you have denied his Deity, rejected his atoning blood, ridiculed his imputed righteousness, or scoffed at salvation by faith in him, may you be pricked in the heart as you see that God hath made that same Jesus to be Lord of all! Much more common, however, is another sin against our Lord Jesus -- namely, neglecting him, ignoring his claims, and postponing the day of faith in him. I trust that none here

are willing to die unconverted, or would even dare to think of passing away without being washed in the precious blood; yet, my hearers, you have lived to manhood; to ripe years; perhaps even to old age, without yielding your hearts to the Lord Jesus, and accepting him as your Saviour. To say the least of it, this is a very sad piece of neglect. To ignore a man altogether is, in a certain sense, as far as you are concerned, to kill that man. If you put him out of your reckoning, if you treat him as if he were nothing, if your estimate of life is made as if he were a cipher, you have put your Lord out of existence in reference to yourself. You treat him with empty compliment by observing his day, and hearing his Word; but you have no real regard for him. Is not this a cruel fault? From morning till night your Lord is not in all your thoughts; he never affects your dealings with your fellow-men; you never endeavour to catch his spirit of love, and considerateness, and meekness; and thus, as a Leader and Exemplar, he is dead to you. You have never confessed your sin before him, nor sought for pardon at his hands, nor have you looked to see whether he hath borne your sins in his own body on the tree. O soul, this is base neglect -- ungrateful contempt! God thinks so much of his Son that he cannot set him too high; he has placed him at his own right hand, and yet you will not spare him a thought! The great God thinks heaven and earth too little for him, and magnifies him exceedingly above all, as King of kings, and Lord of lords; and yet you treat him as if he were of no account, and might be safely made to wait your time and leisure. Is this right? Will you treat your Saviour thus? May this prick you in the heart, and may you cease from this base ingratitude! There are others who have done more than this, for they have rejected Christ. I now allude to those of you who have not been able to resist the appeals made to you by the Lord's ministers. You have felt a good deal -- felt more than you would like to confess. You have been so inclined to seek the Saviour that you have almost done so; sin has flashed in your face like the flames of Tophet, and in alarm you have resolved to seek salvation; you have gone home to bend the knee in prayer, you have read the Scriptures to learn the way of eternal life; but, alas! an evil companion crossed your path, and the question came, "Shall it be this man or Christ?" You chose the man: I had almost said, you chose Barabbas, and rejected Jesus. A sinful pleasure came before you when you had begun to be serious, and the question arose, "Shall I give up this pleasure, or shall I renounce all hope of Christ?" You snatched at the pleasure, and you let your Saviour go. Do you not remember when you did violence to your conscience? There was an effort about it, as you stifled conviction. You had to put forth a decided act of the will to quench the Spirit of God, and to escape from the strivings of your awakened conscience. I know not to whom this may apply; but I am certain, as certain as Peter was when he spoke to the crucifiers of Christ, that I am speaking to some who have been rejecters of the Lord Jesus Christ, not once nor twice. Some of you have distinctly rejected him almost every Sabbath-day; but especially when the Word of the Lord has been with extraordinary power, and you have felt it shake you, as a lion shakes his prey. Thank God, you are not past feeling yet! I pray you, do not presume upon the continuance of your tenderness. You will not always feel as you have felt: the day may come when even the thunders of God may not be heard by your deafened ear, and the love of Christ will not affect the heart which you have made callous by wilful obstinacy. Woe to the man when his heart is turned to stone! When flesh turns to stone, it is a conversion unto eternal death; just as the turning of stone to flesh is conversion to eternal life. God have mercy upon you, and prick you in the heart this morning, while you yet have tenderness enough to feel that you have rejected him whom you ought to embrace with all your heart!! must come a little closer to certain of you, who have forsaken the Lord Jesus Christ. There are a few unhappy persons here this morning, over whom I

greatly grieve, because of their wanderings; and yet I am glad that they have not quite forsaken the courts of the Lord's house. These once professed to be disciples of Christ; but they have gone back, and walk no more with him. They were once numbered with us, and went in and out of our solemn assemblies for prayer and breaking of bread; but now we know them not. They were not backward to confess themselves Christians, But now they deny their Lord. In former days they were zealous, and apparently devout; they were quick in the service of God, and sound in their creed. But there came a day -- I need not describe the circumstances, for they differ in different cases -- when two roads were before them, and they must go either to the right or to the left; and they took the road by which they turned their back upon Christ, and upon the vitality of godliness. They went off into sin, and apostatized from the faith. We fear "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." They have gone aside unto crooked ways, and we fear that the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. O my backsliding hearer, I hope you are not a Judas; my trust is that you may be a Peter! You have denied your Master, but I hope you will yet weep bitterly, and be restored to your Lord's service. For your good I must bring home your wanderings to you; may the Lord prick you in the heart about them! Why have you left your Lord? Wherein has he wearied you? There may be present persons from the country, or friends from America, who were once glad to be numbered with the children of God, but now they care nothing for God, or his people. Alas! they take part with the adversaries of Christ, and the despisers of his precious blood! Friend, you are here this morning that I may bring your sin to remembrance, and ask you why you have done this thing! Were you a hypocrite? If not, why have you turned aside ? God has exalted to his throne the Saviour, on whom you have turned your back; have you not acted madly in what you have done? The Most High God is on the side of Jesus, and you are avowedly on the other side; is this right, or wise? It is painful to me to speak of these things. I hope it is far more painful for you to hear of them. I want you to feel as David did, when his heart smote him. What have you been doing? Has the Lord Jesus deserved this at your hands? Turn, I pray you, from your evil way, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. II. After Peter had dwelt upon the sin of his hearers in treating the Lord so ill, he declared to them THE EXALTATION BESTOWED ON HIM BY GOD. The great God loved, and honoured, and exalted that same Jesus whom they had crucified. O my hearers, whatever you may think of the Lord Jesus, God thinks everything of him! To you he may be dead and buried, but God hath raised him from the dead. To God he is the ever-living, the ever well-beloved Christ. You cannot destroy the Lord Jesus, or his cause. If you could do all that the most malicious heart could suggest, you could not really defeat him. Men wreaked their vengeance on him: once they put him to a felon's death, they laid him in the grave, and sealed the stone; but he rose again, for God was on his side. My hearer, whatever you do, you cannot shake the truth of the gospel, nor rob the Lord Jesus of a single beam of his glory. He lives and reigns, and he will live and reign, whatever becomes of you. You may refuse his salvation but he is still a Saviour, and a great one. His gospel chariot rolls on, and every stone which is placed to hinder it is crushed into the earth, and compelled to make a road for him. If you resist the Lord, you do it at your peril; but you do it in vain. You might as well hope to reverse the laws of nature, quench the sun, and snatch the moon from her orbit, as hope to overthrow the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus; for God is on his side, and his throne is established for ever. God hath raised his Son from the dead, and taken him up to sit at his right hand, and there he will remain while his enemies shall be made his footstool. By this you may see what evil you have done through rejecting Christ, and

may know who he is whom you have neglected refused, and forsaken. Let me remind you that, when we read of our Lord as being at the right hand of God, we perceive that he enjoys infinite felicity. At the right hand of God there are pleasures for evermore; and David said, as the representative of our Lord, "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." He who was the Man of sorrows now overflows with gladness. All his work and warfare done, he rests in boundless blessedness. His priestly work being finished, he sits down. No more does he feel the cross and nails, no more does he endure the mockery of cruel eyes and ribald lips. He is full of joy, that joy which he bids his people share when he says, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." His portion is measureless, infinite, inconceivable delight. Can it be that you are opposed to him, and neglect him, while God lavishes upon him more than all the bliss of heaven, and makes him to be the fountain of unspeakable delight to all his redeemed ones? Grieve that you should grieve him whom God thus loads with blessedness. Moreover, remember that at the right hand of God our Lord sits in infinite majesty. Jesus, whom you think little of, Jesus, from whom you turn aside, is to-day adored of angels, obeyed by seraphs, worshipped by just men made perfect. He is the highest in the highest heavens. Do you not hear the blast of heaven's trumpets, which proclaims him head over principalities and powers? Do you not hear the song which ascribes to him honour, and glory, and power, and dominion, and might? My faith anticipates the happy day when I shall stand a courtier in his unrivalled courts, and behold him, the Lamb upon the throne, reigning high over all, with every knee in heaven and in earth gladly bowing before him. Can it be that you have neglected him whom God hath exalted? Can it be that you have refused him, that you have done despite to him, that you have, as far as you could, put him to death whom Jehovah has made Lord of all? Nor is this all: for the place at the right hand of God, to which he is now exalted, is the place of power. There sits the Mediator, the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, while his enemies are being subdued under him. Do not believe it, O proudest of doubters, that thou canst take away from Christ any measure of his power! He overrules all mortal things; he directs the movements of the stars; he rules the armies of heaven. He restrains the rage of his adversaries, and what he suffers to be let loose he turns to his glory. All power is given to him in heaven and earth; he reigns in the three realms of nature, providence, and grace. His kingdom ruleth over all, and of his dominion there shall be no end. O sirs, what do our hearts suggest but that we bow at his feet? that we worship him with loving reverence? that we yield to that supreme power which is used for purposes of love? Yet it is this Christ, this mighty Christ, who is set at nought by some of you, so that you run the risk of perishing because you have no heart for him and his great salvation. Learn, next, that he is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, seated as our Judge. If we refuse him as a Saviour, we shall not be able to escape from him as Judge in the last great day. All the acts of men are being recorded, and in that day, when the great white throne shall be set in the heavens, all things shall be made manifest, and we must stand unveiled in his presence. You have often heard and sung of him whose face was more marred than that of any man, when he was here as a sacrifice for guilty men. If you refuse him, you will have to stand before his bar to answer for it. The most awful sight for the impenitent in the day of judgment will be the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not find that they cry, "Hide us from the tempest," nor "Hide us from the angel-guards," nor "Hide us from their swords of fire," but, "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Love, when once it turns to wrath, is terrible beyond compare. As oil when set on fire blazes with great force, so the meek and loving Jesus, when finally rejected, will exhibit a wrath more terrible than

death."Ye sinners, seek his grace,Whose wrath ye cannot bear;Fly to the shelter of his cross,And find salvation there."Perhaps through ignorance you have rebelled; repent, and take another course. You supposed that when you kicked against a sermon, you had only put down the minister's words; but in reality you resisted the Saviour's love. You thought that when you turned away from Christ and his people, it was only leaving a church, and having your name crossed out of a book. Ah, sirs! take heed, for I fear you have left the Lamb of God, and renounced your part in his Book of Life! At the last it may turn out to have been an awful thing to have been put forth from the Church of Christ on earth; for when we, as a church, do our Lord's bidding, that which we bind on earth is bound in heaven. In refusing the Lord's Word, you refuse him who speaks from heaven: you refuse not only his words, but himself, and he shall be your Judge -- your Judge most just, most holy. Oh, how will you bear it? How will you bear to stand at the bar of the despised Saviour? Peter also showed his hearers that the Lord was greatly exalted in heaven as the Head over all things to his church, for he had that day shed abroad the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes, he comes from Christ, and as the witness of his power. He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and he bears witness with both. Christ's power was marvellously proved when, after he had been but a little while in heaven, he was able to bestow such gifts upon men, and specially to send the tongues of fire, and the rushing mighty wind, which betoken the energy of the Holy Ghost. He is such a Lord that he can save or destroy. The Christ that died upon the cross hath all things committed into his hands. He can this morning send forth salvation to the ends of the earth, so that multitudes shall believe and live; for him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. Or, he can turn the key the other way, and shut the door against this untoward generation; for he openeth, and no man shutteth; and he shutteth, and no man openeth. In any case, be ye sure of this, ye Gentiles, even as Peter would have the house of Israel be sure of it, that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."I notice that, at this time, few writers or preachers use the expression, "Our Lord Jesus Christ." We have lives of Christ, and lives of Jesus; but, brethren, he is THE LORD. Jesus is both Lord and Christ: we need to acknowledge his Deity, his dominion, and his divine anointing. He is "God over all, blessed for ever," and we can never praise him too much. A great and grievous error of the times is a want of reverence for our Lord and his sacrifice. To sit in judgment on his sacred teaching, is to spit in his face; to deny his miracles, is to strip him of his own clothes; to make him out to be a mere teacher of ethics, is to mock him with a purple robe; and to deny his atonement, in philosophical phraseology, is to crown him with thorns, and crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame. Be not guilty of this, my hearers, for God hath made this same Jesus "both Lord and Christ"; let us worship him as Lord, and trust him as Christ.III. Now I come to my closing point, which is, THE RESULT OF KNOWING THIS ASSUREDLY. May I here pause to ask -- do you know this assuredly? I hope all of you believe that God hath made Jesus Christ, the Mediator, in his complex person, as God-and-man, to be " both Lord and Christ." He was Lord, as God, always; but as God-and-man, he is now Lord and Christ. Manhood and Godhead are in him united in one wondrous Person, and this Person is "both Lord and Christ." You believe it. But do you so believe it that it is a fact of the utmost importance to you? Will you assuredly believe it, that the man of Nazareth, who died on Calvary, is to-day both Lord and Christ? If you do now believe this, what are your feelings as you review your past misconduct towards him? Does not your past neglect prick you in the heart? If you do not so believe, it is of little use for me to describe what the result of such belief would be, for that result will not take

place in you; but if you have so believed, and Jesus is to you Lord and Christ, you will look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn for him. As you recollect your negligence of him, your rejection of him, your backsliding from him, and all your ungrateful acts which show contempt of him, your heart will be ready to break, and you will be seized with a great sorrow, and a hearty repentance. The Lord work it in you, for his Son's sake! Observe, that as the result of Peter's sermon, his hearers felt a mortal sting. "They were pricked in their heart." The truth had pierced their souls. When a man finds out that he has done a fearful wrong to one who loved him, he grows sick at heart, and views his own conduct with abhorrence. We all remember the story of Llewellyn and his faithful dog. The prince came back from the hunt, and missed his infant child, but saw marks of blood everywhere. Suspecting his dog Gelert of having killed the child he drove his vengeful sword into the faithful hound, which had been bravely defending his child against a huge wolf, which lay there, all torn and dead, "tremendous still in death." Yes, he had slain the faithful creature which had preserved his child. Poor Gelert's dying yell pierced the prince to the heart; and well it might. If such emotions fitly arise when we discover that we have, in error, been ungenerous and cruel to a dog, how ought we to feel towards the Lord Jesus, who laid down his life that we, who were his enemies, might live? I recall an awfully tragic story of an evil couple, who kept an inn of base repute. A young man called one night to lodge. They noticed that he had gold in his purse, and they murdered him in the night. It was their own son, who had come back to gladden their old age, and wished to see whether his parents would remember him. Oh, the bitterness of their lamentation when they found that through the lust of gold they had murdered their own son! Take out of such amazing grief its better portion, and then add to it a spiritual conviction of the sin of evil -- entreating the Son of God, the perfect One, the Lover of our souls, and you come near the meaning of being "pricked in the heart." Oh, to think that we should despise him who loved us, and gave himself for us, and should rebel against him that bought us with his own blood while we were his enemies! I would to God everyone here, that has not come to Christ, would feel a sting in his conscience now; and would mourn that he has done this exceeding evil thing against the ever-blessed Son of God, who became man, and died for love of guilty men. When we read "they were pricked in their heart," we may see in it the meaning, that they felt a movement of love to him -- a relenting of heart, a stirring of emotion towards him. They said to themselves, "Have we treated him thus? What can we do to show our horror of our own conduct?" They were not merely convinced of their fault so as to be grieved, but their desires and affections went out towards the offended One, and they cried, "What shall we do? In what way can we acknowledge our wrong? Is there any way of undoing this ill towards him whom we now love?" To this point I would have you all come. I would have you know the meaning of Newton's hymn: -- "I saw One hanging on a tree, in agonies and blood, Who fix'd his languid eyes on me, As near his cross I stood. Sure never till my latest breath Can I forget that look; It seem'd to charge me with his death, Though not a word he spoke. My conscience felt and own'd the guilt, And plunged me in despair; I saw my sins his blood had spilt, And help'd to nail him there. Alas! I knew not what I did; But now my tears are vain; Where shall my trembling soul be hid? For I the Lord have slain." Let us tearfully enquire how we can end our opposition, and prove ourselves to be his friends and humble servants. As a consequence of Peter's sermon, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, these people exhibited obedient faith. They were roused to action, and they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They believed that the same Jesus whom they had crucified was now Lord of all, and they hastened to be obedient unto him. When Peter said, "Repent!" they did

indeed repent. If repentance be grief, they grieved at their hearts. If repentance be a change of mind and life, they were indeed altered men. Then Peter said, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Take the open and decisive step: stand forth as believers in Jesus, and confess him by that outward and visible sign which he has ordained. Be buried with him in whom your sin is buried. You slew him in error; be buried with him in truth. They did it gladly, they repented of the sin; they were baptized into the sacred name. And then Peter could tell them -- "You have remission of sins: the wrong you have done to your Lord is cancelled: the Lord hath put away your sin for ever. Remission of sins comes to you through Jesus, whom you slew, whom the Father has raised up. You shall not be summoned before the bar of God to account even for the hideous crime of murdering the Lord, for by his death you are forgiven. In proof of forgiveness you shall now be made partakers of the great gift which marks his ascending power. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, even upon you his murderers, and you shall go forth, and be witnesses for him." "O my hearers, to what a place have I brought you now! If indeed the Holy Spirit has helped you to follow me in my discourse, see where we have climbed! However black your crime, however vile your character, if you have seen the wrong that you have done, if you have repented of having done it because you see that you have sinned against your loving Lord, and if you will now come to him repenting and believing, and will confess him as he bids you confess him in baptism; then you have full remission, and you shall be partakers of the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit, and henceforth you shall be chosen witnesses for the Christ whom God hath raised from the dead. Beloved, you need no choice speech from me: pure gold needs no gilding, and as I have told you the most wonderful of all facts in heaven or in earth, I let it remain in all its simple grandeur. May God write out this old, old story on your hearts! Oh, that he would issue a new edition of his gospel of love, printed on your hearts! Every man's conversion is a freshly-printed copy of the poem of salvation. May the Lord issue you hot from the press this morning, a living epistle to be known and read of all men; and specially to be read by your children at home, and your neighbours in the same street! The Lord grant that hearts may be pricked by this sermon, for his name's sake! Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Acts 2:14-42. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 909, 279, 429.

## The Withered Fig Tree

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A Sermon (No.2107) Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, September 29th, 1889, by C. H. SPURGEON, At the [8]Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!" -- Matthew 21:17-20. THIS is a miracle and a parable. We have books upon the miracles, we have an equal number of volumes upon the parables: into which of these volumes shall we place this story? I would answer, put it in both. It is a singular miracle, and it is a striking parable. It is an acted parable, in which our Lord gives us an object-lesson. He gets truth before men's eyes, in this instance, that the lesson may make a deeper impression upon the mind and heart. I would lay great stress upon the remark that this is a parable; for, if you do not look upon it in that light, you may misunderstand it. We are not of those who come to the Word of God with the cool impertinence of the critic, thinking ourselves wiser than the Book, and therefore able to judge it. We believe that the Holy Spirit is greater than man's spirit, and that our Lord and Master was a better judge of what is right and good than any of us can be. Our place is at his feet: we are not cavillers, but followers. Whatever Jesus does and says, we regard with deepest reverence; our chief desire is to learn as much as we can from it. We see great mysteries in his simplest actions, and profound teaching about his plainest words. When he speaks or acts, we are like Moses at the bush, and feel that we stand on holy ground. Flippant persons have spoken of the story before us in a very foolish manner. They have represented it as though our Lord, being hungered, thought only of his necessity, and, expecting to be refreshed by a few green figs went up to the tree in error. Finding no fruit upon the tree, it being a season when he had no right to expect that there would be any, he was vexed, and uttered a malediction against a tree, as though it had been a responsible agent. This view of the case results from the folly of the observer: it is not the truth. Our Lord desired to teach his disciples concerning the doom of Jerusalem. The reception given him in Jerusalem was full of promise, but it would come to nothing. Their loud hosannas would change to, "Crucify Him!" When Jerusalem was to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar a former time, the prophets had not only spoken, but they had used instructive signs. If you turn to the Book of Ezekiel, you will there see the record of many signs and symbols which set forth the coming woe. These tokens excited curiosity, secured consideration, and brought home the prophetic warnings to the homes and hearts of the common people. Again, the judgments of God were at the gates of the guilty city. Words -- the words of Jesus -- had been wasted; and even tears -- tears of the Saviour -- had been spilt in vain; it was time that the sign should be given -- the sign of condemnation. Ezekiel had said, "All the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, and have dried up the green tree"; and herein was suggested the very image which was employed by our Lord. He saw a fig tree, by a freak of nature, covered with leaves at a time when, in the ordinary course of things, it should not have been so. Our Lord saw that this was a fine object lesson for him, and therefore he took his disciples to see if there were figs as well as

leaves. When he found none, he bade the fig tree remain for ever fruitless, and immediately it began to wither. Our Lord would have used the fig tree to excellent purpose had he ordered it to be used a fuel to warm cold hands, but he did better when he used it to warm cold hearts. No wrong was done to any man; it was a tree on the waste, and utterly worthless. No pain was inflicted; no anger was felt. In the object-lesson, the Lord simply said to the fig tree, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever"; and it withered away. In this our Lord taught a great lesson to all ages at a small expense. The withering of a tree has been the quickening of many a soul; and if it had not been so, it was no loss to any that a tree should wither when it had proved itself barren. A great teacher may do far more than destroy a tree, if he can thereby give demonstrations of truth, and scatter seeds of virtue. It is the veriest idleness of criticism to find fault with our Lord Jesus for a piece of fine poetic instruction, for which, had it been spoken by any other teacher, the most lavish praise would have been awarded by these very critics. The blighted fig tree was a singularly apt simile of the Jewish state. The nation had promised great things to God. When all the other nations were like trees without leaves, making no profession of allegiance to the true God, the Jewish nation was covered with the leafage of abundant religious profession. Scribes, pharisees, priests and elders of the people were all sticklers for the letter of the law, and boaster of being worshippers of the one God, and strict observers of all his laws. Their constant cry was, "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these." "We have Abraham to our Father" was frequently on their lips. They were a fig tree in full leaf. But there was no fruit upon them; for the people were neither holy, nor just, nor true, nor faithful towards God, nor loving to their neighbor. The Jewish church was a mass of glittering profession, unsupported by spiritual life. Our Lord had looked into the temple, and had found the house of prayer to be a den of thieves. He condemned the Jewish church to remain a lifeless, fruitless thing; and it was so. The synagogue remained open; but its teaching became a dead form. Israel had no influence upon the age. The Jewish race became, for centuries, a withered tree: it had nothing but profession when Christ came, and that profession proved powerless to save even the holy city. Christ did not destroy the religious organization of the Jews: he left them as they were; but they withered away from the root, till the Roman came, and with the axes of his legions cleared away the fruitless trunk. What a lesson is this to nations! Nations may make a profession, a loud profession, of religion, and yet may fail to exhibit that righteousness which exalteth a nation. Nations may be adorned with all the leafage of civilization, and art, and progress, and religion; but if there be no inner life of godliness, and no fruit unto righteousness, they will stand for a while, and then wither away. What a lesson this is to churches! There have been churches which have stood prominent in numbers and in influence; but faith, and love, and holiness have not been maintained, and the Holy Ghost has left them to the vain show of a fruitless profession; and there stand those churches, with the trunk of organization, and widely-extended branches, but they are dead, and every year they become more and more decayed. Brethren, such churches we have even among Nonconformists at this hour. May it never be so with this church! We may have numbers of people coming to hear the Word, and a considerable body of men and women professing to be converted; but unless vital godliness is in their midst, what are congregations and churches? We might have a valued ministry, but what would this be without the Spirit of God? We might have large subscriptions, and many outward efforts; but what of these without the spirit of prayer, the spirit of faith, the spirit of grace and consecration? I dread lest we should ever come to be like a tree, precocious with a superlative profession, but yet worthless in the sight of the Lord, because the

secret life of piety, and vital union to Christ, are gone. Better that the axe clear away every vestige of the tree than that it stand out against the sky an open lie, a mockery, a delusion. This is the lesson of the text; but I do not want you to consider it only in the gross, in its relation to nations and churches; but my heart's desire is that we may learn the lesson in detail, and take it home each one to his own heart. May the Lord himself speak to each one of us this morning personally! In preparing the sermon, I have had great searchings of heart, and I pray that the hearing of it may produce the same results. May we tremble, lest, having a profession of godliness, we should wear it conspicuously, and yet should lack the fruitbearing which alone can warrant such a profession. The name of saintship, if it be not justified by sanctity, is an offence to honest men, and much more to a holy God. A pronounced and forward avowal of Christianity without a Christian life at the back of it is a lie, abhorrent to God and man, an offence against truth, a dishonour to religion, and the forerunner of a withering curse. May the Holy Spirit help me to preach very solemnly and powerfully at this time! Our first observation is this -- There are in the world cases of forward, but fruitless, profession; our second observation will be this -- These will be inspected by King Jesus; and our third remark will be -- The result of that inspection will be very terrible. Help us, O Holy Spirit! First, then, THERE ARE IN THE WORLD CASES OF FORWARD, BUT FRUITLESS, PROFESSION. The cases to which we refer are not so very rare. They far excel their fellow-men. Their promise is very loud, and their exterior very impressive. They look like fruitful trees; you expect many baskets of the best figs from them. They impress us by their talk, they overpower us by their manners. We envy them, and lash ourselves. This last might not harm us; but to envy hypocrites can never be otherwise than injurious in the long run; for, when their hypocrisy is discovered, we are apt to despise religion as well as the pretenders to it. Do you not know persons who are in appearance everything and in reality nothing? O dark thought! may we not ourselves be such persons? See the man, he is strong in faith, even to presumption; he is joyous in hope, even to levity; he is loving in spirit, even to utter indifference about truth! How very glib he is in talk! How deep he is in theological speculation! Yet he has never entered the kingdom by the new birth. He has never been taught of God. The gospel has come to him in word only. He is a stranger to the work of the Holy Ghost. Are there not such persons? Are there not persons who are defenders of orthodoxy and yet are heterodox in their own conduct? Do we not know men and women whose lives deny what their lips profess? We are sure it is so. All vineyards have had in them fig trees covered with leaves, which have been conspicuous from the foliage of their profession, and yet have brought forth no fruit unto the Lord. Such persons seem to defy the seasons. It was not the time of figs, yet was this fig tree covered with those leaves which usually betokened ripe figs. I suppose you all know what I have often seen for myself -- the fig tree puts forth its fruit before its leaves. Early in the year you see green knobs put forth at the end and points of the branches, and these, as they swell, turn out to be green figs. The leaves come forward afterwards, and by the time the tree is fully covered with leaves, the figs are ready for eating. When a fig tree is in full leaf, you expect to find figs upon it; and if you do not, it will bear no figs for that season. This tree put forth leaves abundantly before its season, and therein excelled all other fig trees. Yes, but it was a freak of nature, and not a healthy result of true growth. Such freaks of nature occur in forests and in vineyards; and their like may be met with in the moral and spiritual world. Certain men and women seem far in advance of those round about them, and astonish us by their special virtues. They are better than the best; more excellent than the most excellent -- at least in appearance. They are so zealous that they are not chilled by the surrounding world: their great souls create a

summer for themselves. The backwardness of saints, and the wickedness of sinners, do not hinder them; they are too vigorous to be affected by their surroundings. They are very superior persons, covered with virtues, as this fig tree with leaves. Observe, that they overleap the ordinary rule of growth. As I have told you, the rule is, first the fig, and afterwards the fig leaves; but we have seen persons who make a profession before they have produced the slightest fruit to justify it. I like to see our young friends, when they believe in Christ, proving their faith by holiness at home, by godliness abroad, and then coming forward and confessing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That looks to be the sober and normal way of proceeding, for a man first to be, and then to profess to be; first to be lighted, and then to shine; first to repent and believe, and then to confess his repentance and his faith in the Scriptural way, by baptism into Christ. But these people think it unnecessary to attend to the trifle of heart-work -- they dare to omit the most vital part of the matter. They attend a revival meeting, and they declare themselves saved, though they have not been renewed in heart, and possess neither repentance nor faith. They come forward to avow a mere emotion. They have nothing better than a resolve; but they flourish it as if it were the deed itself. Quick as thought, the convert sets up to be a teacher. Without test or trial of his brand-new virtues, he holds himself forth as an example to others. Now, I do not object to the rapidity of the conversion; on the contrary, I admire it, if it be true; but I cannot judge till I see the fruit and evidence in the life. If the change of conduct is distinct and true, I care not how quickly the work is done; but we must see the change. There is a heat which leads to fermentation, and a fermentation which breeds sourness and corruption. O dear friends, never think you may skip the fruit and come at once to the leaf. Be not like a builder who should say, "It is all nonsense to spend labor and material on works underground. Foundations are never seen; I can run up a house in no time; four walls and a roof will not take long." Yes; but how long will such a house last? Is it worthwhile building a house without foundations? If you omit the foundation, why not omit the house altogether? Is there not a tendency, especially in these days, when men are either skeptical or fanatical, to cultivate a mushroom godliness, which comes up in a night and perishes in a night? Will it not be ruinous if conviction of sin is slighted, repentance slurred, faith imitated, the new birth counterfeited, and godliness feigned? Beloved, this will never do. We must have figs before leaves, acts before declarations, faith before baptism, union to Christ before union with the church. You cannot leap over the processes of nature, neither may you omit the processes of grace, lest haply your foliage without fruit become a curse without cure. These people usually catch the eye of others. According to Mark, our Lord saw this tree "afar off." The other trees were not in leaf, and consequently, when he began to go up the hill toward Jerusalem, he saw this one tree quite a long way before he reached it. A fig tree dressed in its vesture of lovely green would be a striking object, and would be observable at a distance. It stood, also, near the track from Bethany to the city gate. It stood where every wayfarer would observe it, and probably speak with wonder of its singular leafage for the season. Persons whose religion is false are frequently prominent, because they have not grace enough to be modest and retiring. They seek the highest room, aspire to office, and push themselves into leadership. They do not walk in secret with God, they have little concern about private godliness, and so they are all the more eager to be seen of men. This is both their weakness and their peril. Though least of all able to bear the wear and tear of publicity, they are covetous for it, and are, therefore, all the more watched. This is the evil of the whole matter; for it makes their spiritual failure to be known by so many, and their sin brings all the greater dishonor upon the name of the Lord, whom they profess to serve. Better far to be fruitless in a corner of a

wood than on the public way which leads to the temple. Such people not only catch the eye, but they often attract the company of good men. Who blames us for drawing near to a tree which is in leaf long before its fellows? Is it not right to cultivate the acquaintance of the eminently good? Our Saviour and his disciples went up to the leafy fig tree: not merely did it win their eye, but it drew them to itself. Have we not been fascinated by the charming conduct of one who seemed to be a brother in the Lord, more devout than usual, fearing God above many? Like Jehu, he has said, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord;" and we have been glad enough to ride in the chariot with him: he seemed so godly, so generous, so humble, so useful, that we looked up to him, and wished that we were more worthy to be associated with him. Young converts and seekers are naturally apt to do this; and hence it is a sad calamity when their confidence turns out to have been misplaced. Whenever we see any standing out prominently, and making a bold profession, what should be our thoughts about them? I answer, do not judge them; do not fall into habitual mistrust. Your Lord did not stand at a distance and say, "That tree is worthless." No, he went up to it, with his disciples, and carefully inspected it. These prominent persons may be wonders of divine grace: let us hope and pray that they may be. Let the Lord and his love be magnified in them! God has his fig trees that bear figs in winter; God has his saints who are filled with good works when the love of others has waxed cold. The Lord raises some up to be as standards for the truth, rallying points in the battle. The Lord can make young men mature, and new converts useful. It has been said, by way of proverbial expression, that "some men are born with beards." The Lord can give great grace, so as to make spiritual growth rapid and yet solid. He does this so often that we have no right to doubt but what the prominent brother before us is one of these growths of grace. Unless we are forced to see with bitter regret that there are no marks of grace, no evidences of faith, let us hope for the best, and be glad at the sight of God's grace. If we are inclined to be suspicious, let us turn the point of that sword towards our own bosoms. Self-suspicion will be healthy; suspicion of others may be cruel. We are not judges; and even if we are, we had better keep to our own court, and sit on our own judgment-seat, dispensing the law within the little kingdom of our own selves. Where those who are prominent turn out to be all they profess to be, they are a great blessing. It would have been well if that morning there had been figs upon that fig tree. It would have been a great refreshment to the Saviour if he had been fed by the green fruit. When the Lord makes the first in position to be first in holiness, it is a blessing to the church, to the family, and to the neighborhood; indeed, it may prove to be a blessing to the whole world. We ought, therefore, to pray the Lord to water with his own hand those trees which he has planted; or, in other words, to uphold by his grace those men of his right hand whom he has made strong for himself. But when we take the text and lay it home to our own hearts, we need not be so gentle with it as in the cases of others. We have, many of us, for long years been like this fig-tree, as to prominence and profession. And in this matter, so far, there is nothing of which to be ashamed. Yet it is evidently to ourselves that the parable speaks; for we have stood in open avowal and distinct service by the wayside, and we have been seen "afar off." Certain of us have made a very bold profession, and we are not ashamed to repeat that profession before men and angels. Hence the enquiry: Are we truthful in it? What if we should turn out to be contending for a faith in which we have no share? What if in us there should be none of the life of love, and consequently our profession should be "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal"? What if there should be talk, and no work; doctrine, and no practice? What if we are without holiness? Then we shall never see the Lord. Whatever terrible aspect this parable-miracle may have, it bears upon many of us. I, the preacher, feel how much it

bears upon me. In that spirit have I thought it over, anxiously trusting that every deacon and every elder of this church, and every member and every worker among you, may have great searchings of heart. May every minister of Christ who may have dropped in here this morning, say to himself, "Yes, I have been like that fig tree in prominence and in profession; God grant that I be not like it in being devoid of fruit!"II. It is time that we remembered the solemn truth of our second head: THESE WILL BE INSPECTED BY KING JESUS. He will draw nigh to them, and when he comes up to them he will look for fruit. The first Adam came to the fig tree for leaves, but the Second Adam looks for figs. He searches our character through and through, to see whether there is any real faith, any true love, any living hope, any joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, any patience, any self-denial, any fervour in prayer, any walking with God, any indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and if he does not see these things, he is not satisfied with chapel-going, church-going, prayer meetings, communions, sermons, Bible readings; for all these may be no more than leafage. If our Lord does not see the fruit of the Spirit upon us, he is not satisfied with us, and his inspection will lead to severe measures. Notice that what Jesus looks for is not your words, not your resolves, not your avowals, but your sincerity, your inward faith, your being indeed wrought upon by the Spirit of God to bring forth fruits meet for his kingdom. Our Lord has a right to expect fruit when he looks for it. When he went up to that fig tree he had a right to expect fruit; because the fruit, according to nature, comes before the leaf. If, then, the leaf has come, there should be fruit. True, it was not the time of figs; but then, if it was not the time of figs, it certainly was not the season for leaves, for the figs are first. This tree, by putting forth leaves, which are the signs and tokens of ripe figs, virtually advertised itself as bearing fruit. So, however bad the times may be, some of us profess that we will not follow the times, but will follow the one immutable truth. As Christians, we confess that we are redeemed from among men, and have been delivered from this perverse generation. Christ may not expect fruit of men who acknowledge the world and its changing ages as their supreme guide; but he may well look for it from the believer in his own Word. He looks for fruit from the preacher, from the Sunday-school teacher, from the church-officer, from the sister who conducts a Bible class, from that brother who has a band of young men around him, to whom he is a guide in the gospel. He does expect it of all who submit to his gospel rule. As Christ had a right to expect fruit of a leaf-bearing fig tree, so he has a right to expect great things from those who avow themselves his trustful followers. Ah me! how this fact should move the preacher with trembling! Should it not affect full many of you in the same manner? Fruit is what the Lord earnestly desires. The Saviour, when he came under the fig tree, did not desire leaves; for we read that he hungered, and human hunger cannot be removed by leaves of a fig tree. He desired to eat a fig or two; and he longs to have fruit from us also. He hungers for our holiness: he longs that his joy may be in us, that our joy may be full. He comes up to each of you who are members of his church, and especially to each of you who are leaders of his people, and he looks to see in you the things in which his soul is well pleased. He would see in us love to himself, love to our fellow-men, strong faith in revelation, earnest contention for the once delivered faith, importunate pleading in prayer, and careful living in every part of our course. He expects from us actions such as are according to the law of God and the mind of the Spirit of God; and if he does not see these, he does not receive his due. What did he die for but to make his people holy? What did he give himself for but that he might sanctify unto himself a people zealous of good works? What is the reward of the bloody sweat and the five wounds and the death agony, but that by all these we should be bought with a price? We rob him of his reward if we do not glorify him, and therefore the Spirit of God is grieved

at our conduct if we do not show forth his praises by our godly and zealous lives. And mark here, that when Christ comes to a soul he surveys it with keen discernment. He is not mocked. It is not possible to deceive him. I have thought that to be a fig which turned out to be only a leaf was a mistake; but our Lord makes no such mistake. Neither will he overlook the little figs, just breaking forth. He knows the fruit of the Spirit in whatever stage it may be. He never mistakes fluent expression for hearty possession, nor real grace for mere emotion. Beloved, you are in good hands as to the trial of your condition when the Lord Jesus comes to deal with you. Your fellow-men are quick in their judgments, and they may be either censorious, or partial; but the King gives forth a righteous sentence. He knows just where we are, and what we are; and he judges not after the appearance, but according to truth. Oh, that our prayer might this morning rise to heaven: "Jesus, Master, come and cast thy searching eyes upon me, and judge whether I am living unto thee or not! Give me to see myself as thou seest me, that I may have my errors corrected, and my graces nourished. Lord, make me to be indeed what I profess to be; and if I am not so already, convince me of my false state, and begin a true work in my soul. If I am thine, and am right in thy sight, grant me a kind, assuring word to sink my fears again, and I will gladly rejoice in thee as the God of my salvation."III. I come, thirdly, by the help of the Spirit of God, to consider the truth, that **THE RESULT OF THE COMING OF CHRIST TO THE FORWARD, BUT FRUITLESS, PROFESSOR WILL BE VERY TERRIBLE.**The searcher finds nothing but leaves where fruit might have been expected. Nothing but leaves means nothing but lies. Is that a harsh expression? If I profess faith, and have no faith, is not that a lie? If I profess repentance, and have not repented, is not that a lie? If I unite with the people of the living God, and yet have no fear of God in my heart, is not that a lie? If I come to the communion-table, and partake of the bread and wine, and yet never discern the Lord's body, is not that a lie? If I profess to defend the doctrines of grace, and yet am not assured of the truth of them, is not that a lie? If I have never felt my depravity; if I have never been effectually called, never known my election of God, never rested in the redeeming blood, and have never been renewed by the Spirit, is not my defense of the doctrines of grace a lie? If there is nothing but leaves, there is nothing but lies, and the Saviour sees that it is so. All the verdure of green leaf to him without fruit is but so much deceit. Profession without grace is the funeral pageantry of a dead soul. Religion without holiness is the light which comes from rotten wood -- the phosphorescence of decay: I speak dread words, but how can I speak less dreadfully than I do? If you and I have but a name to live, and are dead, what a state we are in! Ours is something worse than corruption: it is the corruption of corruption. To profess religion and live in sin, is to sprinkle rose-water upon a dunghill, and leave it a dunghill still. To give a spirit an angel's name when it bears the devil's character, is almost to sin against the Holy Ghost. If we remain unconverted, of what use can it be to have our name written among the godly?Our Lord discovered that there was no fruit, and that was a dreadful thing; but, next, he condemned the tree. Was it not right that he should condemn it? Did he curse it? It was already a curse. It was calculated to tantalize the hungry, and take them out of their way to deceive them. God will not have the poor and needy made a jest of. An empty profession is a practical curse; and should it not receive the censure of the Lord of truth? The tree was of no use where it was: it ministered to no man's refreshment. So, the barren professor occupies a position in which he ought to be a blessing, but, in truth, an evil influence streams forth from him. If he has not the grace of God in him, he is utterly useless, and in all probability he is a curse: he is an Achan in the camp, grieving the Lord, and causing him to refuse success to his people.Our Lord did, however, use the fig tree

for a good purpose when he caused it to wither away; for it became, henceforth, a beacon and a warning to all others who put forth vain pretenses. So, when the ungodly man, who has exhibited a flourishing profession, is allowed to fade away in his ways, some moral effect is produced upon others: they are compelled to see the peril of an unsound profession; and if they are wise, they will no longer be guilty of it. Would God it might be so in every case whenever a notable religionist withers away! After that, when the Saviour had condemned it, he pronounced sentence upon it; and what was the sentence? It was simply, "As you were." It was nothing more than a confirmation of its state. This tree has borne no fruit, it shall never bear fruit. If a man chooses to be without the grace of God, and yet to make a profession of having it, it is only just that the great Judge should say, "Continue without grace." When the great Judge at last shall speak to those who depart from God, he will simply say to them, "Depart!" Throughout life they always were departing, and after death their character is stamped with perpetuity. If you choose to be graceless, to be graceless shall be your doom. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." May the Lord Jesus never have to sentence any of you in this way; but may he turn us, that we may be turned, and work in us eternal life to his praise and glory! Then there came a change over the tree. It began at once to wither. I do not know whether the disciples saw a quiver run through it at once; but on the next morning when they passed that way, according to Mark, it had dried up from the roots. Not only did the leaves hang down, like streamers when there is no wind; not only did the bark seem to have lost every token of vitality; but the whole fabric was blighted fatally. Have you ever seen a fig tree with its strange, weird branches? It is a very extraordinary sight when bare of leaves. In this case I see its skeleton arms! It is twice dead, dead from the very roots. Thus have I seen the fair professor undergo a blight. He has looked like a thing that has felt the breath of a furnace, and has had its moisture dried up. The man is no longer himself: his glory and his beauty are hopelessly gone. No axe was lifted; no fire was kindled; a word did it, and the tree withered from the root. So, without thunderbolt or pestilence, the once brave professor is stricken as with the judgment of Cain. It is an awful fate. Better far to have the vine-dresser come to you with the axe in his hand, and strike you with the head of it, and say to you, "Tree, thou must bear fruit, or be hewn down." Such a warning would be terrible, but it would be infinitely better than to be left in one's place untouched, quietly to wither to destruction. Now I have delivered my heavy burden, laying it far more upon myself than upon any one of you; for I stand more prominent than you; I have made a louder profession than most of you; and if I have not his grace in me, then I shall stand before the multitude that have seen me in my greenness, and shall wither away to the very roots, a terrible example of what God doth with those who bear no fruit to his glory. But now I desire to conclude with tenderer words. Let no man say, "This is very hard." Brother, it is not hard, is it, that if we profess a thing we should be expected to be true to it? Besides, I pray you not to think that anything my Lord can do is hard. He is all gentleness and tenderness. The only thing he ever did destroy was this fig tree. He destroyed no men, as Elias did when he brought fire from heaven upon them; nor as Elisha did when the bears came out of the wood. It is only a barren tree that he causes to wither away. He is all love and tenderness: he does not want to wither you, nor will he, if you be but true. The very least he may expect is that you be true to what you profess. Are you rebellious because he asks you not to play the hypocrite? If you begin to kick against his admonition, it will look as if you were yourself untrue at heart. Instead of that, come and bow humbly at his feet, and say, "Lord, if anything in this solemn truth bears upon me, I beseech thee so to apply it to my conscience that I may feel its power, and flee to thee for salvation." Many men

are converted in this way -- these hard but honest things drive them from false refuges, and bring them to be true to Christ and to their own souls."But," saith one, "I know what I will do; I will never make any profession; I will bear no leaves." My friend, that also is a sullen, rebellious spirit. Instead of talking so, you should say, Lord, I do not ask thee to take away my leaves, but let me have fruit. The fruit is not likely to ripen well without leaves; leaves are essential to the health of the tree, and the health of the tree is essential to the ripening of the fruit. Open confession of faith is good, and must not be refused. Lord, I would not drop a leaf."I'm not ashamed to own my Lord, Or to defend his cause; Maintain the honour of his word, The glory of his cross." Lord, I do not want to be set away in a corner; I am satisfied to stand where men may see my good works, and glorify my Father who is in heaven. I do not ask to be observed; but I am not ashamed to be observed; only, Lord, make me fit for observation. If a commander said to a soldier, "Stand firm, but mind you have your cartridges ready, so that you may not lift an empty gun;" suppose that soldier answered, "I cannot be so particular. I would rather run to the rear." Would that be a fit reply? Coward! because your captain warns you that you must not be a sham, you would therefore, run off altogether! Surely, you are of an evil sort. You are not truly one of the Lord's, if you cannot bear his rebuke. Let not these solemn truths drive us away, but let them draw us on to say, "Lord, I pray thee, help me to make my calling and election sure. I beseech thee, help me to bring forth the expected fruit. Thy grace can do it." I would suggest to everyone here to cry to the Lord to make us conscious of our natural barrenness. Gracious ones, may the Lord make us mourn our comparative barrenness, even if we do bear some fruit. To feel quite satisfied with yourself is perilous: to feel that you are holy, and indeed that you are perfect, is to be on the brink of the pit of pride. If you hold your head so high, I am afraid you will strike it against the top of the doorway. If you walk on stilts, I fear you will fall. It is a safer thing to feel, "Lord, I do serve thee, and I am no deceiver. I do love thee; thou hast wrought the works of the Spirit in me. But alas! I am not what I want to be, I am not what I ought to be. I aspire to holiness: help me to attain it. Lord, I would lie in the very dust before thee to think that after being digged about and dinged, as I have been, I should bear such little fruit. I feel myself less than nothing. My cry is, 'God be merciful to me.' If I had done all, I should still have been an unprofitable servant; but having done so little, Lord, where shall I hide my guilty head?" Lastly, when you have made this confession, and the good Lord has heard you, there is one emblem in Scripture I should like you to copy. Suppose this morning you feel so dry and dead and barren, that you cannot serve God as you would, nor even pray for more grace, as you wish to do. Then you are something like these twelve rods. They are very dead and dry, for they have been held in the hands of twelve chiefs, who have used them as their official staves. These twelve rods are to be laid before the Lord. This one is Aaron's rod; but it is quite as dead and dry as any of the rest. The whole twelve are laid in the place where the Lord dwelleth. We see them next morning. Eleven are dry rods still; but see this rod of Aaron! What has happened? It was dry as death. See, it has budded! This is wonderful! But look, it has blossomed! There are almond flowers upon it. You know they are rosy pink and white. This is marvelous! But look again, it has brought forth almonds! Here, you have them! See these green fruits, which look like peaches. Take off the flesh, and here is an almond whose shell you may break and find the kernel. The heavenly power has come upon the dry stick, and it has budded and blossomed, and even brought forth almonds. Fruit-bearing is the proof of life and favour. Lord, take these poor sticks this morning, and make them bud. Lord, here we are, in a bundle, perform that ancient miracle in a thousand of us. Make us bud and blossom, and bear fruit! Come with divine power, and turn this

congregation from a fagot into a grove. Oh, that our blessed Lord may get a fig from some dry stick this morning! at least, such a fig as this, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" there is sweetness in that fig as this, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." Here is another, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" -- that is a whole basketful of the first ripe figs, and the Lord rejoices in their sweetness. Come Holy Spirit, produce fruit in us this day, through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen, and Amen. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Matthew 21:12-32. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 100 (Ver.1), 652, 645.

## Perseverance in Holiness

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A Sermon (No.2108) Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, October 6th, 1889, by C. H. SPURGEON, At the [9]Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" -- Jeremiah 32:40. LAST Sabbath morning we were called to deep searching of heart. It was a very painful discourse to the preacher, and it was not less so to many of his hearers. Some of us will never forget that fig tree, covered with untimely leaves, which yielded no fruit, and was condemned to stand a beacon to the unfruitful of all ages. I felt that I was in the surgery, using the knife: I felt great tenderness, and the operation was grievous to my soul. When the winnowing fan was used to chase away the chaff, some of the wheat felt that it was none too heavy: the wind stirred it in its place, so as to make it fear that it would be carried into the fire. To-day, I trust we shall see that, despite all sifting, not one true grain shall be lost. May the King himself come near and feast his saints to-day! May the Comforter who convinced of sin now come to cheer us with the promise! We noticed concerning the fig tree, that it was confirmed in its barrenness: it had borne no fruit, though it made large professions of doing so, and it was made to abide as it was. Let us consider another form of confirmation: not the curse of continuance in the rooted habit of evil; but the blessing of perseverance in a settled way of grace. May the Lord show us how he establishes his saints in righteousness, and makes the works which he has begun in them to abide, and remain, and even to go onward towards perfection, so that they shall not be ashamed in the day of his appearing! We will go to our text at once. In the world there are men and women towards whom God stands in covenant relationship. Mixed up with these myriads of God-forgetting, or even God-defying people, there are a number of covenanted ones, who think of God, know God, trust God, and are even in league with God. God has made with them a covenant. It is a wonder of mercy that Jehovah should enter into covenant with men; but he has done so. God has pledged himself to his people, and they have, in return, through his grace, pledged themselves to God. These are heaven's Covenanters, in bonds of amity, alliance, and even union with the Lord their God. This covenant shall stand when the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed: it is not a thing of passing time; but, like its Author, it is everlasting. Happy people who are joined unto the Lord by an eternal bond! These covenanted ones may be known by certain marks and evidences. It is most important that we should know that we ourselves belong to them. They are a people, according to the text, to whom God is doing good. Friend, do you perceive that he is doing good to you? Has the Lord dealt graciously with you? Has he appeared to you, and said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"? Do all things work together for good for you? I mean, for your spiritual good? your lasting good? Have you received the greatest good by the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Has he given Christ to you? Has he made you hate evil and cleave to that which is good? If these good gifts have been bestowed on you, he has done you good; for these gifts are the outcome of the covenant, and are sure guarantees that it stands fast between God and your soul. These people are known by having the fear of God in their hearts. Judge ye, whether it be so in your own case. This is the covenant promise -- "I will put my fear in their hearts." Do you fear the

Lord? Do you reverence Jehovah, our God? Do you desire to please the Lord? Do you please him? Do you desire to be like him? Are you like him in some humble degree? Do you feel ashamed when you see how sadly you come short; and does this make you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is the gracious presence of God your heaven below? Is it all the heaven you desire above? If so, this fear of God in your heart is the seal of the covenant to you. Towards you God has thoughts of love which shall never change. This leads us to a close consideration of our text. We notice in it, first, the everlasting covenant: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them." Secondly, we reverently perceive the unchanging God of the covenant: "I will not turn away from them, to do them good." Thirdly, we see with joy the persevering people in that covenant: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." I am sure I shall not find language suitable to such a theme as this; but I am cheered with the reflection that, however poor and simple my words may be, the matter of which I speak is in itself enough for the delight of all true believers. When you have an abundance of solid food wherewith to make a meal, you need not fret, even though you miss the tasteful adornments of the table. Hungry men are not eager for a display of plate or of damask; nor even for a show of flowers bedecking the table. They are best satisfied with solid food. In my subject there is meat fit for kings: however badly I may carve it, you who have appetites will not fail to feed thereon. May the Holy Spirit make it so!! First, here is THE EVERLASTING COVENANT: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them." In the previous chapter, in the thirty-first verse, this covenant is called "a new covenant"; and it is new in contrast with the former one which the Lord made with Israel when he brought them out of Egypt. It is new as to the principle upon which it is based. The Lord had said unto his people, that if they would keep his laws and walk in his statutes, he would bless them. He set before them a long line of blessings, rich and full: all these would be their portion if they would hearken to the Lord and obey his law. Truly Jehovah was a husband to them, tenderly supplying all their need, and upholding them in all their journeying. He fed them with angels' food; he sheltered them by day from the heat, and at night he lit up their canvas city with a pillar of fire. He himself walked in the midst of them, and revealed himself to them as he had done to no other nation: they were a people near unto him, a nation beloved of the Lord. But under the exceedingly favourable circumstances in which they lived in the wilderness, where they had no temporal cares, and no neighbours to mislead them, they did not keep the statutes of their God; nay, they did not even remain faithful to him as their God; for they worshipped a molten image, and likened the Lord of Glory to an ox that eateth grass. They bowed down before the image of a bullock that hath horns and hoofs; and they cried, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Thus they brake the covenant in the most wanton and wicked manner. Such a covenant was easily violated by a rebellious people; therefore the Lord, in his immeasurable grace, resolves to make with them a covenant of a new kind, which cannot thus be broken. The Lord was faithful to the old covenant: the breaking was on the part of the people, as we read in Jeremiah 31:32: "Which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them." After long patience, he visited them for their iniquities, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness, for they could not enter into his rest. In after-ages he gave them into the hands of their enemies, who were a scourge to them; he made them to be carried away captive; and at last he suffered the Roman to burn their holy city, and scatter the people throughout all lands. They would not keep the covenant of God, and therefore their treachery was visited upon them. But in these days the Lord hath, in Christ Jesus, made with the true seed of Abraham, even with all believers, a new covenant; not after the tenor of the old,

nor liable to be broken as it was. Brethren, take care to distinguish between the old and the new covenants; for they must never be mingled. Many never catch the true idea of the covenant of grace; they do not understand a compact of pure promise. They talk about grace, but they regard it as dependent upon merit. They speak about God's mercy, and then combine with it conditions which make it rather justice than grace. Distinguish between things which differ. If salvation be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work. The new covenant is all of grace, from its first letter to its closing word; and we shall have to show you this as we go on. It is an "everlasting" covenant, however: that is the point upon which the text insists. The other covenant was of very short duration; but this is an "everlasting covenant." Despite modern thought, I hope I shall be allowed to believe that the word "everlasting" means lasting for ever. While there is any meaning in language, we shall be satisfied that "an everlasting covenant" means a covenant that will never come to an end. Why is it so? The first reason why it is an everlasting covenant is, that it was made with us in Christ Jesus. The covenant of works was made with the race in the first Adam; but the first Adam was faulty, and failed full soon; he could not bear the stress of his responsibility, and so that covenant was broken. But the surety of the new covenant is our Lord Jesus Christ; and he is not faulty, but perfect. The Lord Jesus is the federal head of his chosen, and he stands for them: they are regarded as members of his body, and he is their head, their mouthpiece, their representative. The Lord Jesus, as the second Adam, entered into covenant with God on the behalf of his people; and because he cannot fail -- for in him there is no infirmity or sin -- therefore the covenant of which he is the surety must stand. He abideth for ever in his Melchizedek priesthood, and in the power of an endless life. He is, both in his nature and in his work, eternally qualified to stand before the living God. He stands in absolute perfectness under every strain, and, therefore, the covenant stands in him. When it is written, "I have given him for a covenant to the people," we see that the covenant cannot fail, because he cannot fail who is the sum and substance of it. Because the Lord Jesus represents all his believing people in the covenant, therefore the covenant is everlasting. Next, the covenant cannot fail because the human side of it has been fulfilled. The human side might be regarded as the weak side of it; but when Jesus became the representative of man that side was sure. He has at this hour fulfilled to the letter every stipulation upon that side of which he was the surety. He has magnified the law, and made it honourable by his own obedience to it. He has met the demands of moral government, and made amends to holiness for man's offences. The law is more glorified by his atoning death than it was dishonoured by man's sin. This Man hath offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and that is so effectual for the fulfillment of the covenant that he sits down at the right hand of God. Since, then, that side of the covenant has been fulfilled which appertains to man, there remaineth only God's side of it to be fulfilled, which consists of promises -- unconditional promises, full of grace and truth, such as these: -- "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Will not God be true to his engagements? Yes, verily. When he makes a covenant, and on man's part the compact has been fulfilled, depend upon it, on the Lord's side no word will fall to the ground. Even to the jots and tittles, all shall be carried out. Furthermore, the covenant must be everlasting, for it is founded upon the free grace of God. The first covenant was conditioned upon the obedience of

men. If they kept the law, God would bless them; but they failed through disobedience, and inherited the curse. The divine sovereignty determined to deal with men, not according to merit, but according to mercy; not according to the personal character of men, but according to the personal character of God; not according to what men might do, but according to what the Lord Jesus would perform. Sovereign grace declares that he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. This basis of sovereignty cannot be shaken. The covenant which saves men according to God's will and good pleasure, is founded upon a rock; for God's free grace is always the same, and God's sovereignty is linked to immutability, even as it is written, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The slightest touch of merit puts perishable material into the covenant; but if it be of pure grace, then the covenant is everlasting. Again, in the covenant, everything that can be supposed to be a condition is provided. It is necessary that a man, to be forgiven, should repent; but then the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. It is necessary that a man, in order to be saved, should have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but faith is of the operation of God, and the Holy Ghost worketh in us this fruit of the Spirit. It is needful, before we enter heaven, that we should be holy; but the Lord sanctifies us through the Word, and worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. All that is required is also supplied. If there be, anywhere in the Word of God, any act or grace mentioned as though it were a condition of salvation, it is in another Scripture described as a covenant gift which will be bestowed upon the heirs of salvation by Christ Jesus. So that the condition, which might seem to put the covenant in danger, is so surely provided for, that thence ariseth no flaw or fracture. Moreover, the covenant must be everlasting, because it cannot be superseded by anything more glorious. In the order of God's working he always advances from the good to the better. The old law was put away because he found fault with it, and therefore the new covenant must last till a fault can be found with it; which will never be. This is the glory which excelleth: no brightness can exceed the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There can be nothing more gracious, nothing more righteous, nothing more just to God or more safe to man, than the plan of salvation set forth in the covenant of grace. The moon gives way to the sun, and the sun gives way to a lustre which shall exceed the light of seven days; but what is to supersede the light of free grace and dying love, the glory of the love which gave the Only-begotten that we might live through him! The covenant of grace made with us in Christ Jesus is the masterpiece of divine wisdom and love, and it is established on such sure principles that it must last for ever. Beloved, rest in the covenant of grace as affording you eternal security and boundless comfort. It may well be everlasting, since it was divine in its conception. Surely the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Who else could have thought of a covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," to be made with guilty man? It was also divine in its carrying out, and therefore it shall endure. Who could have provided a Saviour like the Only-begotten of the Father? Who could have given him for a covenant but the Father? The covenant is divine in its maintenance. Note well the word of the Lord: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them." He does not say, "They shall make a covenant with me"; but "I will make a covenant with them." That God is the maker of the covenant, is a reason for its certainty and everlastingness. The faithful God has given guarantees which fix it fast, even his promise and his oath; those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie. Through these we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first head; and very little it is, compared with the grandeur of the subject. II. Secondly, we have now devoutly to

think upon THE UNCHANGING GOD OF THE COVENANT: "I will not turn away from them, to do them good." Please notice the terms here: the Lord does not merely say, "I will not turn away from them," but, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good." He will not cease to work good for his chosen. The Lord is always doing his people good; and here he promises that he will never leave off blessing them. Not only will he always love them, but he will always prove his love by active kindness and blessing. He is pledged to continue the gifts and work of his goodness. In effect he says, "I will not cease blessing them; I will continually, everlastingly be doing them good." Now, why is this, that God is thus unchanging in his doings towards his covenanted ones? He will not turn away from doing them good, first, because he has said so. That is enough. Jehovah speaks, and in his voice lies the end of all controversy. He says, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good"; and we are sure that he will not forfeit his word. I do not need to bring forth more reasons: this suffices, the Lord hath said it. Hath he said, and will he not do it? Still, let us remember that there is no valid reason why he should turn away from them to do them good. You remind me of their unworthiness. Yes, but observe that when he began to do them good they were as unworthy as they could possibly be. He began to do them good when they were "dead in trespasses and sins." He began to do them good when they were enemies, rebels, and under condemnation. When first the sinner feels the movement of divine love upon his heart, he is in no commendable state. In some cases the man is a drunkard, a swearer, a liar, or a profane person. In certain cases the man has been a persecutor like Manasseh or Saul. If God left off blessing us because he could see no good in us, why did he begin to do us good when we were without desire towards him? We were a mass of misery, a pit of wants, and a dunghill of sins when he began to do us good. Whatever we may be now, we are not otherwise than we were when first he revealed his love towards us. The same motive which led him to begin leads him to continue; and that motive is nothing but his grace. Moreover, there can be no reason in the faultiness of the believer why the Lord should cease to do him good, seeing that he foresaw all the evil that would be in us. No wandering child of God surprises his heavenly Father. He foreknew every sin we should commit: he proposed to do us good notwithstanding all this foreknown iniquity. If, then, he entered into a covenant with us, and began to bless us with all our sin before his mind, nothing new can spring up which can alter the covenant once made with all these drawbacks known and taken into account. There is no scarlet sin which has been omitted, for the Lord has said, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet." He entered into a covenant that he would not turn away from us, to do us good; and no circumstance has arisen, or can arise, which was unknown to him when he thus pledged his word of grace. Moreover, I would have you remember that we are by God at this day viewed in the same light as ever. He saw us at the first as under sin, fallen and depraved, and yet he promised to do us good. "He saw me ruined in the fall, Yet loved me notwithstanding all." "And if to-day I am sinful, if to-day I have to groan by reason of my evil nature, yet I am but where I was when he chose me, and called me, and redeemed me by the blood of his Son. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We were undeserving objects upon whom he bestowed his mercy, out of no motive but that which he drew from his own nature; and if we are undeserving still, his grace is still the same. If it be so, that he still deals with us in the way of grace, it is evident that he still views us as undeserving; and why should he not do good towards us now as he did at the first? Assuredly, the fountain being the same, the stream will continue to flow. Moreover, remember that he sees us now in Christ. Behold, he has put his people into the hands of his dear Son. He has even put us into Christ's body; "for

we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." He sees us in Christ to have died, in him to have been buried, and in him to have risen again. As the Lord Jesus Christ is well-pleasing to the Father, so in him are we well-pleasing to the Father also; for our being in him identifies us with him. If, then, our acceptance with God stands on the footing of Christ's acceptance with God, it standeth firmly, and is an unchanging argument with the Lord God for doing us good. If we stood before God in our own individual righteousness, our ruin would be sure and speedy; but in Jesus our life is hid beyond peril. Firmly believe that until the Lord rejects Christ he cannot reject his people; until he repudiates the atonement and the resurrection, he cannot cast away any of those with whom he has entered into covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord will not turn away from his people, from doing them good, because he has shown them so much kindness already; and all that he has done would be lost if he did not go through with it. When he gave his Son, he gave us a sure pledge that he meant to finish his work of love. They say of a man that does not finish his work, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish"; but that shall never be said of the Lord Jehovah. The Lord God has laid out his whole Deity to save his people, and given his whole self in the person of the Well-beloved for our redemption; and can you believe that he will fail in it? Surely, the idea is blasphemous. Some of us have known too much love already to believe that it will ever cease to flow towards us. We have been so favoured that we dare not fear that his favour toward us will cease. So heavenly, so divine is the sense of the love of God, when it is revealed to the soul, that we cannot believe that it has been given to mock us. We have been carried away with such torrents of love, that we will never believe that they can be dried up. The Lord has communed with us so closely, that the secret of the Lord is with us, and he will for ever recognize that mystic token by which our union has been sealed. Like Paul, each one of us may say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The cost to which our Lord has gone assures us that he will complete his designs of grace. Beloved, we feel sure that he will not cease to bless us, because we have proved that even when he has hidden his face he has not turned away from doing us good. The Lord has withdrawn the light of his countenance, but never the love of his heart. When the Lord has turned away his face from his people, it has been to do them good, by making them sick of self and eager for his love. How often he has brought us back from wandering by making us feel the evil of the sin which grieves his Spirit! When we have cried, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" we have been greatly blessed by the anguish of our search. Bear me witness, ye tried people of God; the Lord's chastenings have always been for your good. When the Lord has bruised you till the wound has been blue, your heart has been bettered. When the Lord has taken away your comforts, he has done you good by driving you closer to the highest good. The Lord has enriched you by your losses, and made you healthy by your sicknesses. If, then, the Lord our God, when he is seen in darkest colours, has not turned away from doing us good, we are persuaded that he will never cease daily to load us with benefits. Moreover, I close with this argument, that he has involved his honour in the salvation of his people. If the Lord's chosen and redeemed are cast away, where is the glory of his redemption? Will not the enemy say of the Lord, "He had not the power to carry out his covenant, nor the constancy to continue blessing them"? Shall that ever be said of God? Will he thus lose the glory of his omnipotence and immutability? I cannot believe that any purpose of the Lord can fail; neither can I conceive that he can withdraw his declarations of love to those with whom he is in covenant. The God whom we adore and reverence, the God of Abraham, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, fainteth not, neither is weary. "He is in one mind,

and who can turn him?" "He will ever be mindful of his covenant." Of our Lord Jesus we truly sing -- "His honour is engaged to save the meanest of his sheep; All that his heavenly Father gave, His hands securely keep." Whether my arguments seem good to you or not, is of small consequence; for the text is the inspired Word of God, and it cannot be misunderstood or questioned. Thus saith the Lord, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good." III. The third part of our subject leads us to see THE PERSEVERING PEOPLE IN THE COVENANT: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Let me read very distinctly these words: "They shall not depart from me." If there were only that text in the Bible, it would suffice to prove the final perseverance of the saints: "They SHALL NOT depart from me." The salvation of those who are in covenant with God is herein provided for by an absolute promise of the omnipotent God, which must be carried out. It is plain, clear, unconditional, positive: "They shall not depart from me." It is not carried out by altering the effect of apostasy. If they did depart from God, it would be fatal. Suppose a child of God should utterly depart from the Lord, and wholly lose the life of God: what then? Would he nevertheless be saved? I answer, His salvation lies in the fact that he will never utterly lose the life of God. Why are we to ask what would happen in a case which can never occur? But if we must suppose it, we are not slow to say that if the believer were wholly separated from Christ, he must, without doubt, perish everlastingly. If a man abide not in Christ, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. The Scripture is very positive about it: if grace were gone, safety would be gone. "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" "If these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." If the work of grace could wholly and totally fail in any man, the case would be beyond all remedy, since the best means has, on that supposition, been tried and has failed. If the Holy Ghost has indeed regenerated a soul, and yet that regeneration does not save it from total apostasy, what can be done? There is such a thing as being "born again"; but there is no such thing as being born again and again. Regeneration is once for all: it cannot be repeated. Scripture has no word or hint that it could be. If men have been washed in the blood of Jesus, and renewed by the Holy Ghost, and this sacred process has failed, there remains no more. When old things have passed away and all things have become new, can it be imagined that these will grow old again? No man may therefore say, "Though I go back to my old sin, and cease to pray, or repent, or believe, or have any life of God in me, yet I shall be saved because I was once a believer." Nay, nay, profane talker; the text saith not, "They shall be saved though they depart from me"; but "They shall not depart from me" -- which is a very different matter. Woe unto them that depart from the living God! for they must perish, and with them no covenant of peace has been made. Neither does this perseverance of the saints come in by the removal of temptation. It is not said, "I will put them where they shall not be tempted; I will give them such a sufficient livelihood that they shall not be tried by poverty, and at the same time they shall never be so rich as to know the temptations of wealth." No, the Lord does not take his people out of the world; but he allows them to fight the battle of life in the same field as others. He does not remove us from the conflict, but "he giveth us the victory." We are tempted as was our Lord; but we have a way of escape provided. Our heart is prone to wander, and we are not kept from the scene of possible wandering. But what is said is this -- "They shall not depart from me." What a blessed assurance! They may be tempted; but they shall not be overcome. Though they sin in measure, yet shall they not so sin as to depart from God. They shall still hold on to him, and live in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. How, then, are they preserved? Well, not as some falsely talk, as though we preached, "that the man who is converted may live as he likes." We have never

said so; we have never even thought so. The man who is converted cannot live as he likes; or, rather, he is so changed by the Holy Spirit, that if he could live as he likes, he would never sin, but live an absolutely perfect life. Oh, how deeply do we long to be kept clear of every sin! We preach not that men may depart from God and yet live; but that they shall not depart from him. This is effected by putting a divine principle within their hearts. The Lord saith, "I will put my fear in their hearts." It would never be found there if he did not put it there. It will never spring up naturally in any heart. "I will put my fear in their hearts"; that is, regeneration and conversion. He makes us tremble before his law. He makes us feel the smart and bitterness of sin. He causes us to remember the God we once forgot, and to obey the Lord whom once we defied. "I will put my fear in their hearts" is the first great act of conversion, and it is continued throughout life by the perpetual working of the Spirit upon the heart. The work which commences at conversion is duly carried on in the converted ones; for the Lord still puts his fear into their hearts. How the Spirit of God works we cannot tell: he has ways of acting directly upon our minds which are all his own, and cannot be understood by us. But without violating the freedom of our nature, leaving us men as we were before, he knows how to make us continue in the fear of God. This is God's great holdfast upon his people, "I will put my fear in their hearts." What is this fear of God? It is, first, a holy awe and reverence of the great God. Taught of God, we come to see his infinite greatness, and the fact that he is everywhere present with us; and then, filled with a devout sense of his Godhead, we dare not sin. Since God is near, we cannot offend. The words, "my fear," also intend filial fear. God is our Father, and we feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." This child-like love kindles in us a fear to grieve him whom we love, and therefore we have no desire to depart from him. There moves also in our hearts a deep sense of grateful obligation. God is so good to me, how can I sin? He loves me so, how can I vex him? He favours me so greatly from day to day that I cannot do that which is contrary to his will. Did you ever receive a choice and special mercy? It has often fallen to my lot; and when the tears have been in my eyes at the sight of so great a favour, I have felt that if a temptation came to me, it would come at a time when I had neither heart, nor eye, nor ear for it. Gratitude bars the door against sin. Great love received overthrows great temptation to wander. Our cry is, "The Lord bathes me in his love, he indulges me with the nearest and dearest fellowship with himself, and how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Loved of him so specially, and united to him by an everlasting covenant, how can we fly in the face of love so wonderful? Surely, we can find no pleasure in offending so gracious a God; but it is our joy to do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. See, beloved, this perseverance of the saints, is perseverance in holiness: "They shall not depart from me." If the grace of God has really changed you, you are radically and lastingly changed. If you have come to Christ, he has not placed in you a mere cup of the water of life, but he has said it: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The work that is done in regeneration is not a temporary work, by which a man is, for a time, reformed; but it is an everlasting work, by which the man is born for heaven. There is a life implanted at the new birth, which cannot die, for it is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. Grace will go on working in a man until it leads him to glory. If any differ from what I have said, I cannot help it; but I would beg them not to differ from the text; for the Scripture cannot be broken. Read it: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." There it stands, "They shall not depart from me." But if you ask, By what instrumentality does God maintain this fear in the hearts of his people? I answer, it is the work of the Spirit of God: but the

Holy Spirit usually works by means. The fear of God is kept alive in our hearts by the hearing of the Word; for faith cometh by hearing, and holy fear cometh through faith. Be diligent, then, in hearing the Word. That fear is kept alive in our hearts by reading the Scriptures; for as we feed on the Word, it breathes within us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. This fear of God is maintained in us by the belief of revealed truth, and meditation thereon. Study the doctrines of grace, and be instructed in the analogy of the faith. Know the gospel well and thoroughly, and this will bring fuel to the fire of the fear of God in your hearts. Be much in private prayer; for that stirs up the fire, and makes it burn more brilliantly. In fine, seek to live near to God, to abide in him; for as you abide in him, and his words abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit, and so shall you be his disciples. I find this precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to be a very fruitful one. One Thursday night, not long ago, I preached this doctrine with all my might, and many were comforted by it; but, better still, many were set thinking, and were led to turn their faces Christ-ward. Some preach a doctrine which has a very wide door, but it is all door, and when you get in, there is nothing to be had; you are no safer than you were outside. Sheep are not in a hurry to enter where there is no pasture. Some have thought my doctrine narrow, though I am sure it is not; but if a door should seem strait, yet, if there is something worth the having when you get in, many will seek admission. There are such wonderful blessings provided in the covenant of grace that those who are wise are anxious to obtain them. "Oh!" says one, "if salvation is an everlasting thing, if this regeneration means a change of nature such as can never be undone, let me have it. If salvation is a mere plated article which will wear out, I do not want it; but if it is pure silver all through, let me have it." Does the gift of grace make us partakers of the divine nature, and cause us to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust? then let us have it. I pray that some here may desire salvation, because it secures a life of holiness. The sweetmeat which tempted me to Christ was this -- I believed that salvation was an insurance of character. In what better way can a young man cleanse his life than by putting himself into the holy hands of the Lord Jesus, to be kept from falling? I said -- If I give myself to Christ, he will save me from my sins. Therefore, I came to him, and he keeps me. Oh, how musical these words, "They shall not depart from me!" To use an old figure: be sure that you take a ticket all the way through. Many people have only believed in God to save them for a time; so long as they are faithful, or so long as they are earnest. Beloved, believe in God to keep you faithful and earnest all your life: take a ticket all the way through. Get a salvation which covers all risks. There is no other ticket issued from the authorized office but a through-ticket. Other tickets are forgeries. He that cannot keep you for ever cannot keep you a day. If the power of regeneration will not last through life, it may not last an hour. Faith in the everlasting covenant stirs my heart's blood, fills me with grateful joy, inspires me with confidence, fires me with enthusiasm. I can never give up my belief in what the Lord hath said, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Hebrews 8; 10:12-39. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 27, 229, 228.

## The Mustard Seed: A Sermon for the Sabbath-School Teacher

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A Sermon (No.2110) Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, October 20th, 1889, by C. H. SPURGEON, At [10]the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington "Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." -- Luke 13:18-19. I SHALL not attempt fully to explain this great little parable. A full exposition may be left for another occasion. The parable may be understood to relate to our Lord Himself, who is the living seed. You know also how His church is the tree that springs from Him, and how greatly it grows and spreads its branches until it covers the earth. From the one man Christ Jesus, despised and rejected of men, slain and buried, and so hidden away from among men -- from Him, I say, there arises a multitude which no one can number. These spread themselves, like some tree which grows by the rivers of waters, and they yielded both gracious shelter and spiritual food. I called it a great little parable, and so it is: it has a world of teaching within the smallest compass. The parable is itself like a grain of mustard seed, but its meanings are as a great tree. At this time of the year, Sabbath-school teachers come together especially to pray for a blessing on their work, and pastors are invited to say a word to cheer them in their self-denying service. This request I would cheerfully fulfill, and therefore my discourse will not be a full explanation of the parable, but an adaptation of it to the cheering of those who are engaged in the admirable work of teaching the young the fear of the Lord. Never service more important; to overlook it would be a grave fault. We rejoice to encourage our friends in their labor of love. In this parable light is thrown upon the work of those who teach the Gospel. First, notice a very simple work: "a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden." Secondly, observe what came of it: "it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." First, NOTICE A VERY SIMPLE WORK. The work of teaching the gospel is as the casting of a grain of mustard seed into a garden. Note, first, what the nameless man did. "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took." He took it; that is to say, picked it out from the bulk. It was only one grain, and a grain of a very insignificant seed; but he did not let it lie on the shelf; he took it in his hand to put it to its proper use. A grain of mustard seed is too small a thing for public exhibition; the man who takes it in his hand is almost the only one who spies it out. It was only a grain of mustard seed, but the man set it before his own mind as a distinct object to be dealt with. He was not sowing mustard over broad acres, but he was sowing "a grain of mustard seed" in his garden. It is well for the teacher to know what he is going to teach, to have that truth distinctly in his mind's eye, as the man had the grain of mustard seed between his fingers. Depend upon it, unless a truth is clearly seen and distinctly recognized by the teacher, little will come of it to the taught. It may be a very simple truth, but if a someone takes it, understands it, grasps it, and loves it, he will do something with it. Beloved, first and foremost let us ourselves take the Gospel, let us believe it, let us appreciate it, let us prize it beyond all things; for truth lives as it is loved, and no hand is so fit for its sowing as the hand which grasps it well. Further, in this little parable we notice that this man had a garden: "Like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden." Some Christian people have no garden -- no personal sphere of service. They belong to the whole clan

of Christians, and they pine to see the entire band go out to cultivate the whole world, but they do not come to personal particulars. It is delightful to be warmed up by missionary addresses, and to feel a zeal for the salvation of all the nations; but, after all, the net result of a general theoretic earnestness for all the world does not amount to much. As we should have no horticulture if people had no gardens, so we shall have no missionary work done unless each person has a mission. It is the duty of every believer in Christ, like the first man, Adam, to have a garden to dress and to till. Children are in the Sunday-schools by millions: thank God for that! But have you a class of your own? All the church at work for Christ! Glorious theory! Are you up and doing for your Lord? It will be a grand time when every believer has his allotment, and is sowing it with the seed of truth. The wilderness and the solitary place will blossom as the rose when each Christian cultivates his own plot of roses. Where should this unnamed man sow his mustard seed but in his own garden? It was near him, and dear to him, and to it he went. Teach your own children, speak to your neighbors, seek the conversion of those whom God has especially entrusted to you. Having a garden, and having this seed, the man sowed it, and simple as this is, it is the hinge of the instruction. You have a number of seeds in a pill-box. There they are: look at them! Take that box down this day a year from now, and the seeds will be just the same. Lay them by in that dry box for seven years, and nothing will happen. Truth is not to be kept to ourselves; it is to be published and advocated. There is an old proverb, "Truth is mighty, and will prevail." The proverb is true in a sense, but it needs to be taken with a grain of salt. If you put truth away and leave it without a voice, it won't prevail; it will not even contend. When have great truths prevailed? Why, when brave men have persisted in declaring them. Daring spirits have taken up a cause which has been at the first unpopular, and they have spoken about it so earnestly and so often that at length the cause has commanded attention; they have pressed on and on until the cause has triumphed altogether. Truth has been mighty, and has prevailed, but yet not without the people who gave it life and tongue. Not even the Gospel itself, if it is not taught, will prevail. If revealed truth is laid on one side and kept in silence, it will not grow. Mark how through the dark ages the Gospel lay asleep in old books in the libraries of monasteries until Luther and his fellow reformers fetched it out and sowed it in the minds of men. This man simply cast it into his garden. He did not wrap it around with gold leaf, or otherwise adorn it, but he put it into the ground. The naked seed came into contact with the naked soil. O teachers, do not try to make the Gospel look fine; do not overlay it with your fine words or elaborate explanations. The Gospel seed is to be put into the young heart just as it is. Get the truth concerning the Lord Jesus into the children's minds. Make them know, not what you can say about the truth, but what the truth itself says. It is wicked to take the Gospel and make a peg of it to hang our old clothes upon. The Gospel is not a boat to be freighted with human thoughts, fine speculations, scraps of poetry, and pretty tales. No, no. The Gospel is the thought of God; in and of itself it is the message which the soul needs. It is the Gospel itself which will grow. Take a truth, especially that great doctrine, that humanity is lost and that Christ is the only Saviour, and see to it that you place it in the mind. Teach plainly the great truth that whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life, and that the Lord Jesus bare our sins in His own body on the tree and suffered for us, the just for the unjust -- I say take these truths and set them forth to the mind, and see what will come of it. Sow the very truth; not your reflections on the truth, not your embellishments of the truth, but the truth itself. This is to be brought into contact with the mind, for the truth is the seed, and the human mind is the soil for it to grow in. These remarks of mine are very plain and trite; and yet everything depends upon the simple operation described.

Nearly everything has been tried in preaching of late, except the plain and clear statement of the glad tidings and of the atoning sacrifice. People have talked about what the church can do, and what the Gospel can do; we have been informed as to the proofs of the Gospel, or the doubts about it, and so forth; but when will they give us the Gospel itself? Friends, we must come to the point and teach the Gospel, for this is the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. It is an easy thing to deliver an address upon mustard seed, to give the children a taste of the pungency of mustard, to tell them how mustard seed would grow, what kind of a tree it would produce, and how the birds would sing among its branches. But this is not sowing mustard seed. It is all very fine to talk about the influence of the Gospel, the ethics of Christianity, the elevating power of the love of Christ, and so on; but what we want is the Gospel itself, which exercises that influence. Sow the seed: tell the children the doctrine of the Cross, the fact that with the stripes of Jesus we are healed, and that by faith in Him we are justified. What is wanted is not talk about the Gospel, but the Gospel itself. We must continually bring the living Word of the living God into contact with the hearts of men. Oh, for the aid of the Holy Spirit in this! He will help us, for He delights to glorify Jesus. That which is described in the parable was an insignificant business: the man took the tiny seed and put it into his garden. It is a very commonplace affair to sit down with a dozen children around you and open your Bible and tell them the well-worn tale of how Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. No Pharisee is likely to stand and blow a trumpet when he is going to teach children; he is more likely to point to the children in the temple and sneeringly say, "Hearest thou what these say?" It is a lowly business altogether, but yet, to the mustard seed, and to the man with a garden, the sowing is the all-important matter. The mustard seed will never grow unless put into the soil; the owner of the garden will never have a crop of mustard unless he sows the seed. Dear Sunday-school teacher, do not become weary of your humble work, for none can measure its importance. Tell the boys and girls of the Son of God, who lived and loved and died that the ungodly might be saved. Urge them to immediate faith in the mighty Saviour that they may be saved at once. Tell of the new birth, and how the souls of human beings are renewed by the Holy Spirit, without whose divine working none can enter the kingdom of heaven. Cast in mustard seed, and nothing else but mustard seed, if you want to grow mustard. Teach the Gospel of grace, and nothing but the Gospel of grace, if you would see grace growing in the hearts of your young people. Secondly, let us consider what it was that the man sowed. We have seen that he sowed; what did he sow? It was one single seed, and that seed a very small one; so very, very small that the Jews were accustomed to say, "As small as mustard seed." Hence the Saviour speaks of it as the smallest among seeds, which it may not have been absolutely, but which it was according to common parlance; our Lord was not teaching botany, but speaking a popular parable. Yes, the Gospel seems a very simple thing: Believe and live! Look to Jesus lying in the sinner's stead! Look to Jesus crucified, even as Israel looked to the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It is simplicity itself; in fact, the Gospel is so plain a matter that our superior people are weary of it and look out for something more difficult of comprehension. People nowadays are like the person who liked to hear the Scriptures "properly confounded"; or like the other who said, "You should hear our minister dispense with the truth." Sowing seed is work too ordinary for the moderns; they demand new methods. But, beloved, we must not run after vain inventions; our one business is to sow the Word of God in the minds of children. It is yours and mine to teach everybody the simple truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. We know nothing else among adults or among children.

This one seed, apparently so little, so insignificant, we continue to sow. They sneeringly say, "What can be the moral result of preaching such a Gospel? Surely it would be better to discourse upon morals, social economics, and the sciences?" Ah, friends! if you can do any good in those ways, we will not hinder you, but our belief is that a hundred times more can be done with the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes. The Gospel is not the enemy of any good thing; say, rather, it is the force by which good things are to be carried out. Whatsoever things are pure and honest and of good repute are all nurtured by that spirit which is begotten by the simple Gospel of Christ. Yet conversions do not come by essays upon morals but by the teaching of salvation by Christ. The cleansing and raising of our race will not be effected by politics or science, but by the Word of the Lord, which lives and abides forever. To bring the greatest blessings upon our rising youth we must labor to implant in their minds faith in the Lord Jesus. Oh, for divine power in this work! But the seed, though very small, was a living thing. There is a great difference between a mustard seed and a piece of wax of the same size. Life slumbers in that seed. What life is we cannot tell. Even if you take a microscope you cannot spy it out. It is a mystery, but it is essential to a seed. The Gospel has a something in it not readily discoverable by the philosophical inquirer, if, indeed, he can perceive it at all. Take a maxim of Socrates or of Plato, and inquire whether a nation or a tribe has ever been transformed by it from barbarism to culture. A maxim of a philosopher may have measurably influenced a person in some right direction, but who has ever heard of a someone's whole character being transformed by any observation of Confucius or Socrates? I confess I never have. Human teachings are barren. But within the Gospel, with all its triteness and simplicity, there is a divine life and that life makes all the difference. The human can never rival the divine, for it lacks the life-fire. It is better to preach five words of God's Word than five million words of human wisdom. Human words may seem to be the wiser and the more attractive, but there is no heavenly life in them. Within God's Word, however simple it may be, there dwells an omnipotence like that of God from whose lips it came. Truth to tell, a seed is a very comprehensive thing. Within the mustard seed what is to be found? Why, there is all in it that ever comes out of it. It must be so. Every branch and every leaf and every flower and every seed that is to be is, in its essence, all within the seed. It needs to be developed, but it is all there. And so, within the simple Gospel, how much lies concentrated? Look at it! Within that truth lie regeneration, repentance, faith, holiness, zeal, consecration, perfection. Heaven hides itself away within the Gospel. Like a young bird in its nest, glory dwells in grace. We may not at first see all its results, nor, indeed, shall we see them at all until we sow the seed and it grows; yet it is all there. Do you believe it, young teacher? Have you realized what you have in your hold when you grasp the Gospel of the grace of God? It is the most wonderful thing beneath the skies. Do you believe in the Gospel which you have to teach? Do you discern that within its apparently narrow lines the Eternal, the Infinite, the Perfect, and the Divine are all enclosed? As in the babe of Bethlehem there was the Eternal God, so within the simple teaching of "Believe and live" there are all the elements of eternal blessedness for people, and boundless glory for God. It is a very comprehensive thing, that little seed, that Gospel of God. And for this reason it is so wonderful: it is a divine creation. Summon your chemists, bring them together with all their vessels and their fires. Select a jury of the greatest chemists now alive, analytical or otherwise, as you will. Learned sirs, will you kindly make us a mustard seed? You may take a mustard seed, and pound it and analyze it, and you may thus ascertain all its ingredients. So far so good. Is not your work well begun? Now make a single mustard seed. We will give you a week. It is a very small affair. You have all the

elements of mustard in yonder mortar. Make us one living grain; we do not ask for a ton weight. One grain of mustard seed will suffice us. Great chemists, have you not made so small a thing? A month has gone by. Only one grain of mustard seed we asked of you, and where is it? Have you not made one in a month? What are you at? Shall we allow you seven years? Yes, with all the laboratories in the kingdom at your service and all known substances for your material and all the world's coal beds for your fuel, get to your work. The air is black with your smoke and the streams run foul with your waste products; but where is the mustard seed? This baffles the wise; they cannot make a living seed. No; and nobody can make a Gospel, or even a new Gospel text. The thinkers of the age could not even concoct another life of Christ to match with the four Gospels which we have already. I go further: they could not create a new incident which would be congruous with the facts we already know. Plenty of novel writers nowadays can beat out imaginary histories upon their anvils: let them write a fifth Gospel -- say the Gospel according to Peter, or Andrew. Let us have it! They will not even commence the task. Who will write a new psalm, or even a new promise? Clever chemists prove their wisdom by saying at once, "No, we cannot make a mustard seed"; and wise thinkers will equally confess that they cannot make another Gospel. My learned brethren are trying very hard to make a new Gospel for this nineteenth century, but you teachers had better go on with the old one. The advanced men cannot put life into their theory. This living Word is the finger of God. That simple grain of mustard seed must be made by God, or not at all; He must put life into the Gospel, or it will not have power in the heart. The Gospel of Sunday-school teachers, that Gospel of "Believe and live," however people may despise it, has Godgiven life in it. You cannot make another which can supplant it, for you cannot put life into your invention. Go on and use the one living truth with your children, for nothing else has God's life in it. I want you to see what a little affair the sowing seemed, as we answer the question, What was it to him? It was a very natural act; he sowed a seed. It is a most natural thing that we should teach others what we believe ourselves. I cannot make out how some professors can call themselves Christians and yet never communicate the faith to others. That the young people of our churches should gather other young people around them and tell them of Jesus, whom you love, is as natural as for a gardener to put seeds into his prepared ground. To sow a mustard seed is a very inexpensive act. Only one grain of mustard: nobody can find me a coin small enough to express its value. I do not know how much mustard seed the man had; certainly it is not a rare thing, but he only took one grain of it and cast it into his garden. He emptied no exchequer by that expenditure; this is one of the excellencies of Sabbath-school work, that it neither exhausts the church of people nor of money. However much of it is done, it does not lessen the resources of our Zion; it is done freely, quietly, without excitement, without sacrifice of life, and yet what a fountain of blessing it is! Still, it was an act of faith. It is always an act of faith to sow seed, because you have, for the time, to give it up and receive nothing in return. The farmer takes his choice seed corn and throws it into the soil of his field. He might have made many a loaf of bread with it, but he casts it away. Only his faith saves him from being judged a maniac: he expects it to return to him fiftyfold. If you had never seen a harvest, you would think that someone burying good wheat under the clods had gone mad; if you had never seen conversions, it might seem an absurd thing to be constantly teaching to boys and girls the story of the Man who was nailed to the tree. We preach and teach as a work of faith, and remember, it is only as an act of faith that it will answer its purpose. The rule of the harvest is, "According to thy faith, be it unto thee." Believe, dear teacher, believe in the Gospel. Believe in what you are doing when you tell it.

Believe that great results from slender causes spring. Go on sowing your mustard seed of salvation by faith, expecting and believing that fruit will come thereof. It was an act which brought the sower no honor. The Saviour has chronicled the fact that the man took a grain of mustard seed and sowed it, but thousands of people had gone on sowing mustard seed for half a lifetime without a word. Nobody has ever spoken in your honor, my friend, though you have taught the truth. Dear teacher, go on sowing, though nobody should observe your diligence or praise your faithfulness. Sow the seed of precious truth in the garden of the child's mind, for much more will come of it than you have dared to hope. It seems to me that our Lord selected the mustard seed in this parable, not because its results are the greatest possible from a seed -- for an oak or a cedar are much greater growths than a mustard tree -- but He selected it because it is the greatest result as compared with the size of the seed. Follow out the analogy. Come to yonder school, and see! That earnest young man is teaching a boy, one of those wild creatures of the street; they swarm in every quarter. A dozen young Turks are before him, or say young Arabs of the street; he is teaching them the Gospel. Small affair, is it not? Yes, very; but what may come of it? Think of how joyfully much may grow out of this little! What is that young man teaching? Only one elementary truth. Do not sneer; it is truth, but it is the mere alphabet of it. He touches upon nothing deep in theology; he only says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Dear boy, believe in the Lord Jesus and live." That is all he says. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? The teacher himself is teaching the one truth in a very poor way; at least, he thinks so. Ask him, when he has done, what he thinks of his own teaching, and he replies, "I do not feel fit to teach." Yes, that young man's teaching is sighed over, and in his own judgment it is poor and weak, but there is life in the truth he imparts and eternal results will follow -- results of which I have now to speak in the second part of my sermon. May the good Spirit help me so to speak as to encourage my beloved friends, who have given themselves up to the Christlike work of teaching the little ones! Secondly, let us enquire, WHAT CAME OF IT? First, "it grew." That was what the sower hoped would come of it: he placed the seed in the ground hoping that it would grow. It is not reasonable to suppose that he would have sown it if he had not hoped that it would spring up. Dear teacher, do you always sow in hope, do you trust that the Word will live and grow? If you do not, I do not think your success is very probable. Expect the truth to take root and expand and grow up. Teach divine truth with earnestness and expect that the life within it will unveil its wonders. But though the sower expected growth, he could not himself have made it grow. After he had placed the seed in the ground he could water it, he could pray God to make the sun shine on it, but he could not directly produce growth. Only He that made the seed could cause it to grow. Growth is a continuance of that almighty act by which life is at first given. The putting of life into the seed is God's work, and the bringing forth of the life from the seed is God's work too. This is a matter within your hope, but far beyond your power. A very wonderful thing it is that the seed should grow. If we did not see it every day, we should be more astonished at the growth of seed than at all the wonders of magicians. A growing seed is God's abiding miracle. You see a piece of ground near London covered with a market garden, and after a few months you go by the place and you see streets and a public square and a church and a great population. You say to yourself, "It is remarkable that all these houses should have sprung up in a few months." Yet that is not at all so wonderful as for a plowed field to become covered four feet high with corn, and all without the use of wagons to bring the material, or tools to work it up into a harvest. Without noise of hammer, or the ringing of trowels; without handiwork of man, the whole has been done. Wonder at the growth of grace. See

how it increases, deepens, strengthens! Growth in grace is a marvel of divine love. That a person should repent through the Gospel, that he should believe in Jesus, that he should be totally changed, that he should have a hope of heaven, that he should receive power to become a child of God -- these are all marvelous things; yet they are going on under our eyes and we fail to admire them as we should. The growth of holiness in such fallen creatures as we are is the admiration of angels, the delight of all intelligent beings. To the sower this growth was very pleasing. How pleasant it is to see the seed of grace grow in children! Do you not remember when you first sowed mustard-and-cress as a child, how the very next morning you went and turned the ground up to see how much it had grown? How pleased you were when you saw the little yellow shoot, and afterward a green leaf or two! So is it with the true teacher: he or she is anxious to see growth and makes eager inquiry for it. What was expected is taking place and it is most delightful to that teacher, whatever it may be to others. An unsympathetic person cries, "Oh, I do not think anything of that child's emotions. It is merely a passing impression: he will soon forget it." The teacher does not think so. The cold critic says, "I don't think much of a child's weeping. Children's tears lie very near the surface." But the teacher is full of hope that in these tears is a real sorrow for sin, and an earnest seeking after the Lord. The questioner says, "It is nothing for a child to say that he gives his heart to Jesus. Youngsters soon think that they believe. They are so easily led." People talk thus because they do not love children and live with the desire to save them. If you sympathize with children, you are pleased with every hopeful token and are on the watch for every mark of divine life within them. If you are a florist, you will see more of the progress of your plants than if you are no gardener and have no interest in such things. Think, then, of what my text says: "It grew." Oh, for a prayer just now from all of you this morning, "Lord, make the Gospel grow wherever it falls! Whether the preacher scatters it, or the teacher sows it; whether it falls among the aged people, or the young; Lord, make the Gospel grow!" Pray hard for it, friends! You cannot make it grow, but you can prevail with God to bless it to His honor and praise. Next, having started growing, it became a tree. Luke says, "It waxed a great tree." It was great in itself, but the greatness was seen mainly in comparison with the size of the seed. The growth was great. Here is the wonder, not that it became a tree, but that being a mustard seed, it should become "a great tree." Do you see the point of the parable? I have already brought it before you. Listen! It was only a word spoken -- "Dear boy, look to Jesus." Only such a word, and a soul was saved, its sin was forgiven, its whole being was changed, a new heir of heaven was born. Do you see the growth? A word produces salvation! A grain of mustard seed becomes a great tree! A little teaching brings eternal life. That is not all: the teacher, with many prayers and tears, took her girl home, and pleaded with her for Christ, and the girl was led to yield her heart to the dominion of Christ Jesus -- a holy, heavenly life came out of that pleading. See! she becomes a thoughtful girl, a loving wife, a gracious mother, a matron in Israel, such a one as Dorcas among the poor, or Hannah with her Samuel. What a great result from a little cause! The teacher's words were tearfully spoken; they could not have been printed, for they were far too broken and childlike; but they were, in God's hands, the means of fashioning a life most sweet, most chaste, most beautiful. A boy was about as wild as any roamer of our streets; a teacher knelt by his side with his arm about the lad's neck. He pleaded with God for the boy, and with the boy for God. That boy was converted, and as a youth in business he was an example to the workroom; as a father he was a guide to his household; as a man of God he was a light to all around; as a preacher of righteousness he adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. There is much more which I might easily picture, but you can work it

out as well as I can. All that is to be desired may spring out of the simple talk of a humble Christian with a youth. A mustard seed becomes a great tree; a few words of holy admonition may produce a noble life. But is that all? Beloved, our teaching may preserve souls from the deep darkness of the abode of the lost. A soul left to itself might hurry down from folly to vice, from vice to obduracy, from obduracy to fixed resolve to perish; but by the means of loving teaching all this is changed. Rescued from the power of sin, like a lamb snatched from between the jaws of the lion, the youth is now no longer the victim of vice, but seeks holy and heavenly things. Hell has lost its prey, and see up yonder, heaven's wide gate has received a precious soul. "Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem" many have come who were led there from the Sunday-school. They who once were foul are now white-robed, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Hark to their songs of praise! You may keep on listening, for those songs will never come to an end. All this was brought about through a brief address of a trembling brother who stood up one Sunday afternoon to close the school and talk a little about the Cross of Jesus. Or all this came of a gentle sister who could never have spoken in public, yet was enabled to warn a young girl who was growing giddy and seemed likely to go sadly astray. Wonderful that a soul's taking the road to heaven or to hell should be made, in the purpose of God, to hinge upon the humble endeavors of a weak but faithful teacher! You see how the mustard seed grew until it waxed a great tree. This great tree became a shelter: "the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." Mustard in the East does grow very large indeed. The commonest kind of it may be found eight or ten feet high, but there is a kind which will grow almost like a forest tree, and there probably were some of these latter trees in the sheltered region wherein our Lord was speaking. A mustard which grew here and there in Palestine was of surprising dimensions. When the tree grew, the birds came to it. Here we have unexpected influences. Think of it. That man took a mustard seed which you could hardly see if I held it up. When he took the mustard seed, when he put it into his garden, had he any thought of bringing birds to that spot? Not he. You do not know all you are doing when you are teaching a child the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. When you are trying to bring a soul to Christ, your action has ten thousand hooks to it, and these may seize on innumerable things. Holy teaching is the opening of a well, and no one knows all the effect which the waters will produce on that spot. There seems no link between sowing a grain of mustard seed and birds of the air, but the winged wanderers soon made a happy connection. There may seem no connection between teaching that boy and the reclaiming of cannibals in New Guinea, but I can see a very possible connection. Tribes in Central Africa may have their destiny shaped by your instruction of a tiny child. When John Pounds bribed an urchin with a hot potato to come and learn to read the Bible, I am sure John Pounds had no idea of all the Ragged schools in London, but there is a clear line of cause and effect in the whole matter. A hot potato might be the coat of arms of the Ragged school Union. When Nasmyth went about from house to house visiting in the slums of London, I do not suppose that he saw in his act the founding of the London City Mission and all the Country Town Missions. No one can tell the end of his beginnings, the growth of his sowings. Go on doing good in little ways and you shall one day wonder at the great results. Do the next thing that lies before you. Do it well. Do it unto the Lord. Leave results with His unbounded liberality of love, but hope to reap at least a hundredfold. How many fowls came and roosted under that one mustard tree I do not know. How many birds in a day, how many birds in the year, came and found a resting place, and picked the seeds they loved so well, I cannot tell. When one person is converted, how many may receive a blessing out of him none can tell. Now is the day for romances: our literature is drenched with tales

religious or irreligious. What stories might be written concerning benefits bestowed, directly and indirectly, by a single godly man or woman! When you have written a thrilling story upon the subject, I can assure you I can match it with something better still. One single individual can scatter benedictions across a continent, and belt the world with blessing. But what is that I hear? I see this mustard tree -- it is a very wonderful tree; but I not only see, I hear! Music! music! The birds! the birds! It is early morning, the sun is scarcely up -- what torrents of song! Is that the way to produce music? Shall I sow mustard seed, and reap songs? I thought we must buy an organ or purchase a violin, or by some wind or stringed instrument come at music, but here is a new plan altogether. Nebuchadnezzar had his flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, but all that mingled sound could not rival the melody of birds. I shall sow mustard seed now, and get music in God's own way. Friends, when you teach your children the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, you are sowing the music of heaven. Every time you tell the tidings of pardon bought with blood, you are filling the choirs of glory with sweet voices which, to the Eternal Name, shall day and night trill out songs of devout gratitude. Go on, then, if this is to be the result. If even heaven's high harmonies depend upon the simple teaching of a Ragged school, let us never cease from our hallowed service. Having said so much, I now close with these three practical observations. Are we not highly honored to be entrusted with such a marvelous thing as the Gospel? If it is a seed comprehending so much within it which will come to so much if it be properly used, blessed and happy are we to have such good news to proclaim! I thought this morning, when I awoke into the damp and rain, and felt my bones complaining, I shall be glad when four more Sundays shall have gone, and I shall be free to take a little rest in a sunnier clime. Jaded in mind, and weary in spirit, I braced myself with this reflection -- what blessed work I have to do! What a glorious Gospel have I to preach! I ought to be a very happy man to have such glad tidings to bear to my fellows. I said to myself, "So I am." Well now, beloved teacher, next Sunday, when you leave your bed, and say, "I have had a hard week's work, and I could half wish that I had not to go to my class," answer yourself thus: "But I am a happy person to have to talk to children about Christ Jesus. If I had to teach them arithmetic or carpentering, I might get tired of it, but to talk about Jesus, whom I love, why, it is a joy forever. Let us be encouraged to sow the good seed in evil times. If we do not see the Gospel prospering elsewhere, let us not despair; if there were no more mustard seed in the world, and I had only one grain of it, I should be all the more anxious to sow it. You can produce any quantity if only one seed will grow. So now today there is not very much Gospel about, the church has given it up, a great many preachers preach everything but the living truth. This is sad, but it is a strong reason why you and I should teach more Gospel than ever. I have often thought to myself -- Other men may teach socialism, deliver lectures, or collect a band of fiddlers that they may gather a congregation, but I will preach the Gospel. I will preach more Gospel than ever if I can; I will stick more to the one cardinal point. The others can attend to the odds and ends, but I will keep to Christ crucified. To those of vast ability who are looking to the events of the day I would say, "Allow one poor fool to keep to preaching the Gospel." Beloved teachers, be fools for Christ, and keep to the Gospel. Don't you be afraid. It has life in it, and it will grow; only you bring it out, and let it grow. I am sometimes afraid that we may prepare our sermons and addresses too much, so as to make ourselves shine. If so, we are like the man who tried to grow potatoes -- he never grew any, and he wondered much, "for," said he, "I very carefully boiled them for hours." So, it is very possible to extract all the life out of the Gospel, and put so much of yourself into it that Christ will not bless it. And, lastly, we are bound to do it. If so much will come out of so little, we are

bound to go in for it. Nowadays people want ten percent for their money. Hosts of fools are readily caught by any scheme or speculation or limited liability company that promises to give them immense dividends! I would like to make you wise by inviting you to an investment which is sure. Sow a mustard seed, and grow a tree. Talk of Christ, and save a soul; that soul saved will be a blessing for ages, and a joy to God throughout eternity. Was there ever such an investment as this? Let us go on with it. If on our simple word eternity is hung, let us speak with all our heart. Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown, hang on the lips of the earnest teacher of the Gospel of Jesus. Let us never cease speaking while we have breath in our body. The Lord bless you! Amen, and Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -- Matthew 13:1-23. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 916, 643, 30.

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