

SPURGEONS SERMONS VOLUME 48 1902

by C.H. Spurgeon

Volume 48 of Spurgeon's collected sermons, a posthumous publication from 1902 containing messages prepared by the 'Prince of Preachers' and published after his death in 1892. These sermons continue to display his characteristic biblical exposition, vivid illustrations, and passionate gospel proclamation.

3 Chapters

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Spurgeons Sermons Volume 48 1902

Go in Peace

A Sermon (No.2770) Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 23rd, 1902, Delivered by C. H. SPURGEON, At [1]the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington. On Lord's-day Evening, September 23rd, 1883. "And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." -- Luke 7:50. THERE appear to have been four stages in Christ's dealing with this woman. I know not what had preceded the narrative as we have it recorded in this chapter; I need not enter into that question now. There had, doubtless, been a work of the Spirit of God upon that woman's heart, turning her from her sin to her Saviour; but when she stood at our Master's feet, raining tears of penitence upon them, wiping them with the hairs of her head, giving to them kisses of love, and anointing them with the ointment from the alabaster box, there were four stages in his gracious dealings with her. The first was, when he silently accepted her manifestations of love. When the copious tears from her eyes fell upon his feet, he did not withdraw them. When those feet were wiped with the luxuriant tresses of her hair, still he did not withdraw them; and when she ventured upon a yet closer familiarity, and not only kissed his feet, but did not cease to kiss them, he still did not withdraw them, but quietly accepted all that she did. And when the precious ointment was poured in lavish abundance upon those precious feet of his, he did not upbraid her, he did not refuse her gifts, but tacitly accepted them, though without a word of acknowledgment just then. And I think it is a very blessed thing for any one of you to be accepted before God, even though no word has come from his lips assuring you that it is so. When your tears, and cries, and secret love, and earnest seeking, -- when your confession of sin, your struggle after faith, and the dawning of your faith are just accepted by the Lord, though as yet he has not said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," it is a very blessed stage for you to have reached, for the Lord does not begin to accept anyone, even by a silence which means consent, and then draw back. He accepted this woman's love and gifts, though, for a time, he gave her no assurance of that acceptance, and that fact must have greatly cheered her. Manoah's wife said to him, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands;" and I feel sure that, if the Lord had not meant to bestow his mercy upon this woman, he would not have submitted to her washing of his feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, and the subsequent continual kissing of them, and anointing of them with the precious ointment. Our Lord's favourable inclination towards this woman was still more marked in the second stage of his dealings with her, when he began to defend her against her accuser. When Simon's evil thoughts had condemned her, and her Lord also, Jesus spoke that wonderful parable which set forth the greatness of this woman's love, and justified the extraordinary way in which she manifested it. Christ did not speak to her, but he spoke up for her; and such action as that should be quite sufficient to stay the soul of a believer in him. What though my Lord has not revealed himself to me? He has revealed himself to the Father for me. What if he has not spoken to me? Yet, if he has spoken to God on my behalf, -- if he has Spoken in the Scriptures in defence of poor sinners, and advocated their cause in the High Court of Heaven, then how thankful I may be, and how thankful they may be! In the third stage, our Lord did still more for this woman, for he spoke to her these gracious words, "Thy sins are forgiven." Oh, how they must have dropped like dew into her poor soul! How she must have

been refreshed by them! She, who was a sinner, -- a great sinner, a public sinner, -- ay, a professional sinner, hears her Saviour say to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." The absolution pronounced by the man who calls himself a priest is utterly worthless; but it would be worth while to give a thousand worlds, if we had them, for absolution from our great High Priest! Yes, he who knew all about the woman's sin, he who had power on earth to forgive sins, had said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." Was not that enough for her? Would not that short sentence set all the bells of her heart ringing as long as ever she lived? Ay, but there was still more to follow, for the Lord spoke to her a second time, and said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." So she was not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but she was also delivered from the power of sin. Her faith had saved her; she was a saved woman, so she might go in peace. Now she is enjoying the sunlight of full assurance, the bright clear noontide of acknowledged acceptance: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Some of us have this great blessing, and we rejoice in it; but if others of you have not come quite so far on the heavenly road, do not begin murmuring, or doubting. Bless the Lord Jesus Christ for any favour that he has shown to you, a poor unworthy sinner; and if you have even the faintest ray of light, pray him to make your path like that of the just, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." If you have received any token for good from your Lord, be thankful for it, and expect ere long to hear in your soul the sweet music of this gracious word, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." So we have come to our text, in which two things are, very clearly revealed. The first is, an assurance: "Thy faith hath saved thee and the second is, a dismissal: "Go in peace." I. First, then, here is AN ASSURANCE: "Thy faith hath saved thee." That assurance teaches us, first, that salvation is a present thing: "Thy faith hath saved thee." This is something that is already accomplished. You are saved; not, you shall be saved; but you are even now in possession of the priceless boon of salvation: "Thy faith hath saved thee." All through the Scriptures, and especially in the New Testament, it is plainly asserted that believers in Christ are already in possession of salvation. I will not stay to prove that it is so, but will rather explain it. If anyone says to me, "In what respect are believers saved?" I answer, that they are saved in the price, in the promise, in the principles, and in the pledge of salvation. The alliteration will help you to remember these four points. First, they are saved in the price of salvation. All that was necessary to save them from the result of sin has been endured by the Lord Jesus Christ. He has ransomed them by his death upon the cross. He has stood in their stead, and borne their sin in his own body on the tree, and suffered the full penalty for it. He has finished the transgression, and made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in for them everlasting righteousness; so that they are saved. The great work of their salvation was completed by Christ upon the cross when he laid down his life for them, and now they are "bought with a price," even "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Next, they are saved in the promise of salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who cannot lie, hath declared "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God's promise is certain of fulfilment, so that every believer in Jesus may be absolutely sure of salvation. We often take the cheque of a man who is known to be in a good financial position, and we consider his cheque to be as good as if it were hard cash; and, in like manner, we accept God's promise of salvation as being just as sure as the salvation itself. Paul tells us that God's promise has been confirmed by an oath, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Then, thirdly, we have salvation in the principles of it; that is to say, all those graces, which constitute the essentials

of a perfect character, are in every true child of God. There is given to us, when we are regenerated, the very same life which we are to live for ever in heaven. We have now the root, the bulb, the seed, out of which immortality and perfection will most surely grow; we may not yet be perfect, but we have that which will come to perfection. We have within us a new nature, which cannot sin, because it is born of God; and this will gradually overcome the old nature, as the Israelites drove out the Canaanites, and we shall be perfect before the throne of the Most High. A man may have, in a very small room, a whole field of wheat lying in embryo, in the seed which is to be sown in the springtime, and reaped in the autumn; and we have, in the gift of God's grace, all heaven in embryo, in the seeds of faith and love, and the work of the Holy Spirit within our souls. Thus, we have salvation in the principles of it. And, once more, we have salvation in the pledge of it; for, when the Holy Spirit enters our heart, his coming there is the pledge and the earnest of heaven. There is a difference between a pledge and an earnest, and what I really mean is rather an earnest than a pledge. A pledge is taken back again, but an earnest is retained. A man, who has his wages to take at the end of the week, may get some earnest money in the middle of the week; and, if his master is what he should be, that will be a pledge that he will get the rest. So, the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who virtually puts heaven into us, and makes us fit to be in the heaven which Christ has gone to prepare for us. What a mercy it is to have the witness of the Holy Spirit, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Heavenly Father, to have aspirations after holiness which we never had in our unregenerate state! All this is the pledge of heaven; and in having the pledge, we have practically the salvation itself. The Holy Spirit would not have come into our hearts, and given us all these blessings, if he had not meant to "perfect that which concerneth us," and to save us in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Salvation, then, is a present thing, in price, in promise, in principles, and in pledge; but the important question for each of you to answer is, -- Have you obtained that salvation? If you have not, you are in a truly terrible condition, for you are "condemned already" because you have "not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." But if you have obtained this salvation, then you are indeed rich to all eternity. Perhaps you live in one poor room, and have to work very hard for a livelihood, yet you are much richer than those emperors and kings, who have much earthly pomp and state, but who are not the subjects of God's grace, for you are saved; the Lord has given you that salvation which can never be taken away from you. So, rejoice in this salvation; and, if you have little else to cover you, let this salvation be your royal apparel; let this salvation load your table with heavenly dainties; let this salvation smooth your path, however rough it may be, and cheer your heart, however great your trials may be. So, this assurance means that salvation is a present thing. Next, it teaches us that salvation is obtained by faith: "Thy faith hath saved thee." "But," says someone, "was it not the Lord Jesus Christ who saved her?" Yes, certainly it was; but do you see what Christ does? He is so fond of faith that he takes the crown from his own head, and puts it on the head of faith, as he says to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Is that a safe thing for Christ to do? Oh, yes! because faith at once removes the crown from her own head, and puts it back upon Christ's, saying, "Not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name be all the glory." Christ loves to crown faith because faith loves to crown Christ. As for boasting, -- faith cannot tolerate that for a moment; she hurls it out of the window, and will have nothing further to do with it. Our Saviour speaks thus, "Thy faith hath saved thee," because he knows that it will be understood that faith is only the connecting link with himself, -- that he really works the salvation, but that the faith of the believer is the means of obtaining it. There are four things concerning this faith, which I want you to

notice, and I will put them under the same letter that I used before, so that it may be the easier for you to remember them. First, this woman's faith was a personal faith: "Thy faith hath saved thee." O dear friends, I implore you to give up all idea, of being saved by anybody else's faith! Thou must believe in Jesus for thyself, or thou wilt be a lost man for ever. What a dreadful falsehood it is when men stand up, as sponsors for a child, and promise and vow various things, none of which are within their power to perform! As to anything that anybody ever promised with regard to your soul, what can another person do for you in such a matter as that? The most earnest faith in your parents can never bring you to heaven, unless you also have faith in Jesus. There is a great blessing which may come to us through the faith of others, if they exercise it in prayer on our behalf; but, still, salvation can never come to us apart from our own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee;" -- not Peter's faith, nor James's faith, nor John's faith, but her own; and thou also must have faith for thyself, or thou wilt assuredly be lost. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" but if thou dost not personally believe on him, thou canst not be saved. Notice, next, that this woman's faith was a practical faith. She was saved by faith, and not by works; but, she was not saved by a faith which did not produce works. Think of her works, -- she washes the Master's feet with her tears, and wipes them with the hairs of her head; she kisses them repeatedly, and anoints them with her precious ointment. I may truly say of her, "She hath done what she could." All that her affection prompted, her devotion performed; for she had the faith which works by love; and if you, dear friends, have a faith that never works for Christ, I beg you to get rid of it at once, for it will turn out to be a bastard faith. The faith that never kisses his feet is a faith that he will tread under his feet. The faith that never anoints him is a faith that will have no fragrance in his esteem, and he will not accept it. We are not saved by works and faith combined, much less by works alone; but, nevertheless, the faith which saves is not a barren faith; it produces the good fruit of love and service for Christ, So this woman's faith was personal and practical. It was also a penitent faith. While she stood at Christ's feet, behind him, her eyes showered tears upon them as she wept over her sin. I am always doubtful of the genuineness of a dry-eyed faith. The longer I live, the more I am afraid of those people who profess to leap into faith without any repentance; and there seem to be some, in these days, who do not believe in the old-fashioned sorrow for sin. I would rather see some men less confident than they are if they were more humbled on account of their past transgressions. This woman manifested a truly penitent faith. And, once more, it was a pure faith; -- I use that word pure to help your memory, and I mean that her faith was perfectly simple. She wept, but she did not trust in her weeping. She anointed Christ's feet with the ointment, but she did not rely upon her self-sacrifice. She kissed his feet, but she did not depend upon her kisses. Where was her trust all placed? Why, upon Christ, and-upon him alone. I do not know that she had ever read the Old Testament; certainly, she could not have read the New Testament, for it was not written then. She may not have known much about the Bible, but she knew him who is the very sum and substance of the Bible. I have heard people talk about a Body of Divinity; but there never was but one in the highest sense of the term, and Jesus Christ is that Body of Divinity. He is, in the truest sense, "the Word of God." This woman had seen him, she had learned to know him, he had forgiven her sin, and she had come into that house full of love to him, and full of trust in him, and now from his own lips she receives this gracious assurance, "Thy faith hath saved thee." It was faith in him, and in nothing else. There was not, and there could not, have been, in her case, anything to trust to but Christ. She was, in a very emphatic sense, a sinner; she had not set herself up as being a person

of good character; there were, no doubt, scores of people in the city who could have borne lamentable evidence of her sinfulness. But she trusted herself absolutely to Jesus Christ, the sinners' Saviour, and she trusted him alone, and so her faith was proved to be of that pure kind that saves all who exercise it. Let yours be like that, dear friend, -- personal, practical, penitential, and pure. Further, upon this first point, note that salvation may be a matter of assurance. This woman had the assurance from Christ's own lips, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Those of you who were at the prayer-meeting here, last Monday night, will remember that one of our brethren, when he was giving an address, made you smile when he said, "He that believeth On the Son hath everlasting life," and then added, "h-a-t-h, -- that spells 'got it.'" That is a queer mode of spelling, which is not taught at the Board School; yet it is a heavenly way of spelling, and it is perfectly correct. "H-a-t-h; -- that spells 'got it.'" If you have the blessing of salvation, there is a possibility of knowing that you have it. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" he has got it; he has got it now. "I should believe it," says one, "if Jesus Christ spoke to me, and said so." My dear friend, he has said it in his Word. Is that Word a lie, or is it true? If it is true, then what more do you want? Christ has written it in his Word; and I like a thing that is written even better than that which is spoken. You know how a man says, when he wants a guarantee about a bargain, "Give it to me in writing; for some people will swear that they never said what we ourselves heard them say, so give it me in black and white." Well, here it is in black and white: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and again, "There is therefore now" -- "now," mark, -- "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" and yet again, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, cannot you also say, "got it"? Oh, but! says someone, "I want evidence that it is so." Very well, you shall have evidence; you shall have the witness of the Spirit who has renewed you; you shall have the witness of your changed life; you shall have the witness of your new character; but, first of all, is not Christ's Word sufficient for you? Is not Christ's written Word enough? Is not this Book, which you believe to have been inspired by the Holy Ghost, and which reveals the Word of the Lord, enough for you? It is enough for me. If all the men in the world were to come, one after another, after I had read something in the Bible, and were all to say, in their different languages, "That is a lie," I should not believe it an atom the less; and suppose they were all to stand up, and say, "It is true," I should reply, "Of course it is, but I do not need your word to confirm what Christ has said." I am perfectly satisfied if he has said it; and there it stands, and all the powers of hell cannot prevail to overthrow it. Here is the solid rock for a soul to rest upon. Christ says, at this moment, to everyone who believes in him, and trusts in his blood and righteousness, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." II. So we come to the latter part of our text, which is, A DISMISSION: "Go in peace." What did Our Lord mean by saying this? I think he meant, first, "Quit this place of controversy, and go in peace." Do you notice that it was when those, who sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" that he said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace"? See the black looks of those Jews, those Pharisees, round about Simon's table. Why, they are as sour as vinegar, and full of all kinds of scepticism, so the Saviour says to the woman, "Go home good soul, away from all of them." So, dear friends, whenever you meet with a book that is full of scepticism and unbelief, -- especially you who have lately found the Saviour, -- you had better throw it away. "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Unbelief will be no help to thee; thy faith hath already saved thee; then, what more dost thou want? Thou hast the assurance within thine own soul that thou art saved; do not go anywhere, or do anything to damage that assurance. I do not think it is worth

while to go through a horse pond, and get covered with filth, just for the pleasure of being afterwards washed. It may be that some strong man, like another Samson, may have to go in among the Philistines, and pull their temple down about their ears; but poor Hannah could not do that, and those who are like her -- the women of a sorrowful spirit, -- had better go home, and get out of the way of that set of wranglers. They may even be wrangling professors, squabbling about this doctrine and that, and perhaps not understanding any of them properly; so the Saviour says to you, "You have the assurance of salvation; do not let anybody worry you out of that. Go in peace." This is what the apostle means when he says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Then, next, I think our Saviour meant his words to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace;" to be a kind of dismissal of her case from the Court. Here is Simon in thought accusing her, and thinking that she ought not to be permitted to come and touch the Master's feet, and here is the Lord Jesus Christ not only becoming a pleader for her, but deciding the case in her favour as he says to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." This was in effect saying, "Your case is dismissed; there is nothing against you. The Court clears you; go home, good soul." What a mercy it is when the Lord speaks thus to anyone! "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Christ has given us our dismissal from the Court of Justice, so let us "go in peace." May not our Lord also have meant something more than we see upon the surface of these words? May he not have meant, "Go home in peace to thy daily avocations"? Ah! she had done a deal of mischief in that home of hers by her sin; for there never was a fallen woman who brought a blessing to her family while she lived in sin. And now that the Saviour has given to her the assurance of salvation, he says to her, "Go home, and attend to your ordinary household duties. Go and act as a woman should. Fulfil your part as a mother, or a daughter, or a servant, or whatever your calling may be. Go in peace." Do you not also think that this dismissory word would last her as long as ever she lived, -- and that, all her life through, she would seem to hear the Saviour saying to her, "Go in peace"? Perhaps she was to go upstairs, and lie there ill; but she was to "go in peace." Possibly, she was to come down, and to confront opposition and persecution; if so, she was still to hear this message, "Go in peace." I think that word would come to her every morning as soon as ever she woke; and when she was about to close her eyes, and go to sleep, she would still hear it. With such a gracious message as that, she could even go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and "fear no evil." It may be that is just what the Lord meant it for, -- that, when she came to die, -- and she may have died a martyr's death, we cannot tell, -- at any rate, whenever she came to die, this message was ringing in her ears, "Go in peace." The practical point that I want to bring home to you Christian people, to you who are saved, is this. Beloved friends, as you go to your families, as you go through life, as you go into eternity, I pray you to "go in peace." It is heaven begun below to possess "the peace Of God, which passeth all understanding." Peace should be the continual portion of all believers. This is what the angels sang when our Lord Jesus appeared on earth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to-ward men." And as it was at the beginning Of Our Saviour's life, so it was at the end, for this was our Lord's legacy to all his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." That which gives one of his titles even to God himself-for he is called "the God of peace," -- should be very precious to your soul. Peace is the fit result of what the Saviour has done for you. Has he forgiven you? Then you have peace. Has he saved you? Oh, then, feel an inward peace

which none can take from you! Did he die for you? Then you can never die, in the full meaning of the word, so be at rest about that matter. Has he risen for you? Then, because he lives, you shall live also; so, let not your heart be troubled, but be at peace. Will he come again to receive you unto himself? Oh, then, let your peace be like a river flowing from the very throne of God! This peace within your heart is the blessed fruit of the Spirit of peace. Where the Spirit of God is, there must be peace, for he is the Sacred Dove. The fruit of the Spirit within us should be "quietness and assurance for ever." Do not despise this priceless boon of peace; but, as saved souls, covet more and more of it. Do you know what I mean by talking thus to you? Suppose you are thinking to yourself, "Alas! I am going home to an ungodly husband;" never mind, dear wife, "go in peace." "Oh, but! to-morrow, I have to go out among ungodly men." Never mind; "go in peace." Do not go among them disturbed and fluttered, but sing to yourself softly, -- "My heart is resting, O my God!" "Go in peace." Perhaps you are going to the sick-bed of one of your dearest friends. Possibly, there is one at home, who is so depressed in spirit as to depress you too. Never mind; "go in peace." It will strengthen you to have your own heart at peace. I remember once seeing an accident on a hill. I feared that a man had broken his leg, and I know that someone ran to fetch a doctor, and when he came, to my surprise, he walked coolly up to where the man was. If I had been sent for, I should have ran myself out of breath to get to the poor man; and when I reached him, I should have been all of a tremble, and should not have been able to do anything properly. But when the doctor heard that there was a man with his leg broken, he walked quietly to the spot, and the result was that he was able to do his work properly. Our Lord Jesus Christ was never in a hurry. It is marvellous to contemplate the leisure of the greatest Worker who ever lived. He always moved along with a holy calm and quiet dignity, and he therefore did everything well. Do you likewise; "go in peace," for it shall be your strength. Sometimes, your strength is to sit still; and, always, the joy of the Lord shall be your strength. This is the way in which you are to glorify God in your life, -- by going in peace. When this woman went back to her home, -- that same woman who had been such a poor, trembling, broken, bruised reed, because of her sin, -- those who knew her enquired, "What has come to Mary?" -- if that was her name; I do not know; -- "What has come to her? Why, she looks so placid, so calm, she is not like the same woman that she used to be." I have no doubt that she was rather quick-tempered, for most very loving spirits are like that. "But now," say her friends, "she takes things so differently; she is so still, and quiet, and restful." Just so; and then they took knowledge of her, that she had been with Jesus, and had learned of him, for that was his style and his manner also. Ah, dear hearts! if Christ has saved you, you have the best reason in all the world for being the quietest, happiest people who ever lived. One said, one day, to a person who had spoken of his salvation in tones of assurance, "You ought to be the happiest man that lives;" and he answered, "So I am." It was well known that he was very poor, that he did not know where he would get a second coat to his back; but, then, he thought that he did not want a second coat till he had worn out the first one. They said that he did not know where he would get his next breakfast; but he had had his supper, so he was quite content to wait till God should give him his breakfast. He had such simple faith in God that, though he was so very poor, yet he said he was the happiest man in all the world. Go in for that, beloved, for surely you have a right to it if you are a believer in Jesus. Your greatest sorrows are over, your heaviest burdens Christ has carried; the most terrible disaster that could ever happen to you has been averted by him; the most fearful calamity that you once had cause to dread can never come to you. You are an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. You shall have all you really need in this life, and

you shall have the heaven of God in the life to come. The supreme act of God, by which he blesses eternally, has been performed upon you already. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have all united to bless you; and the covenant of peace is signed, and sealed, and ratified, and you must and shall conquer at the last. So, "Let not Your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid;" but say to yourself, -- "All that remains for me is but to love and sing, and wait until the angels come to bear me to the King." God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen. Ephesians 2. Verse 1. And you hath he quickened, -- You, who were by nature dead, are now made alive unto God by the Holy Spirit. If you had nothing else to think of, all day long, but just these five words, they might suffice to lift you up to the very heights of grateful adoration of your quickening Lord: "And you hath he quickened," -- 1. Who were dead in trespasses and sins; These were your grave-clothes, or the charnel-house in which you would have continued to lie if the quickening power of God the Holy Spirit had not brought you out into newness of life. 2. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh the children of disobedience: This is what happened to us all in our unregenerate state, we were carried along by the world, loving what it loved, judging from its views, and acting according to its maxims. Nay, worse than that, the devil himself had dominion over us, as he had over the rest of the world -- "the prince of the power of the air" was the spirit that worked in us as well as in the rest of "the children of disobedience." What a glorious deliverance it was to be saved from the power of death, and the dominion of Satan, and to be made partakers of everlasting life! 3. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. That is the highest point to which human nature can attain; left to itself, it makes us "children of wrath." Even those who are now most assuredly the children of God were once the children of wrath; there was no difference, in that respect, between them and the rest of mankind. It is only the marvellous mercy and grace of God which have made us to differ from our fellow-creatures who are still "dead in trespasses and sins." 4, 5. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, -- Again let us praise the Lord with all our hearts for what he has done for us. It is truly wonderful that he should have loved us when we were "dead in trespasses and sins," -- with no feeling, no holy desire, no repentance; while indifference, heartlessness, powerlessness covered everything. We were dead in sin, yet he loved us, and therefore it was that he "quickened us together with Christ," -- 5. (By grace ye are saved;) Not by human merit, not by the energy of our own will; but, "by grace ye are saved." 6. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: We are not only alive, you see, but we are elevated into the highest position of the new life, -- made to live with Christ, and in Christ, -- made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. 7, 8. That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Both the salvation and the faith that makes it ours are the gift of God. Twice over, the apostle tells us that we are saved by grace, yet men will not believe it. They will somehow or other, get away from this humbling but true and precious doctrine. They will contrive, by some method or other, to squeeze in their own works, and their own will, and so rob Christ, if not of his crown, yet of some of its brightest jewels. 9, 10. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, -- If we have good works, as I trust we have, yet even they are the production of God's grace; praise and glory for them belong to him, and not to us: "For we are his workmanship,

-- 10. Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. This is the great object of our election; we are elected that we may be holy, and ordained that we may walk in good works; -- who can rightly quarrel with such a divine purpose as this? 11, 12. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world: That is the condition of every unbeliever at this time: "having no hope, and without God in the world." Mr. Hume once made the remark that he knew many Christians who were afraid to die, but he was not. The Christian man, to whom he said this, pointed to an ox grazing in the meadow, and said, "You have reached about as high as that bullock has, for he also is not afraid to die; but pray, Mr. Hume," enquired the good man, "have you any hope after death?" At that question, the philosopher shook his head, for he knew nothing of such a hope as that; the utmost point he could reach was, by indifference, to raise himself above fear. "Having no hope," is a true description of every man who has no faith in our crucified and risen Saviour. 13. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. That is the great attracting power, which draws us from our natural distance, and brings us into nearness to God. How we ought to prize that precious blood which does so much for us! It cleanses us from sin; it pleads us before the throne; and here, you see, having made a way of access for us, it also conducts us along that way, and brings us nigh to God. 14. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; There are no privileges now for the Jew from which the Christian is shut out, for Christ "hath made both one." There is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision now, for all believers are one in Christ Jesus. 15-22. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. May we realize that the Holy Spirit is inhabiting his own Church at this moment; and, especially, may all of us, who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, realize our own position in that spiritual temple which is the "habitation of God through the Spirit," for Christ's sake. Amen. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" -- 708, 550, 548.

The Need and Nature of Conversion

A Sermon (No.2797) Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, September 21st, 1902, Delivered by C. H. SPURGEON, At [2]the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington. On Lord's-day Evening, October 13th, 1878. "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." -- Isaiah 55:7. SOME years ago,[3]* I preached from the last four words of this verse, laying special stress upon the abundant pardon which is given to repenting sinners through the rich mercy of our God. On this occasion, I am going to put the emphasis upon the first part of the verse, speaking more upon the necessity of the sinner forsaking his evil way, and of the unrighteous man abandoning his evil thoughts. There is urgent necessity for us continually to insist upon this course of action. This chapter, as we noticed in our reading, is full of gospel teaching, and it expresses, under the most striking and cheering metaphors, both the fullness and the freeness of the gospel. But the prophet also insists most clearly that the wicked man must forsake his way, and the unrighteous man must turn from his thoughts, and return to the Lord, that he may obtain the mercy and pardon that God is waiting and willing to bestow. This is not a merely legal demand; it is a gospel demand, found in the centre of a gospel chapter in the writings of the most evangelical of all the prophets. The chapter begins with a number of gracious and wide invitations, and so naturally leads on to the promise of the coming Saviour. Only God himself could find a Saviour for our ruined race, and none but God's own Son could be that Saviour. Then there follows, in due order, the promise of a people to be saved. The Saviour shall not come to the earth in vain. He shall call a people unto himself, and "nations" shall run unto him. Then, following the promise of a Saviour, and the declaration of the certainty that many shall be saved by him, there comes in this loving invitation, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Since he is to have a people who shall be his for ever, put in your claim to be amongst them; and since, as a Saviour, he is near to you, call upon him, and he will hear your call. This brings us to our text, which is consistent with the rest of the chapter, even though some people think it is not. Here we are told, first, that the wicked must forsake his way. There is no Saviour for the man who will not forsake his sin. Such a man can never be among the people who shall run to Christ, for how can he run to Christ while he continues in the way of sin? Such a man shall seek sin, he cannot embrace the Saviour who hates sin with a perfect hatred. This is the theme upon which I am going to speak now, and I want to do it in the spirit of the Master, of whom Malachi wrote, "For who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." May the Master bless his own searching word, and he shall have all the praise. I. First, then, let us meditate a while upon THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION. If a man is to be saved, he must turn from his sins. "Right about face!" is the marching order for every sinner. There is no hope of forgiveness for him if he will continue with his face as it now is. He must turn from his sin if he would be saved. This will be at once evident to you when I ask, -- How would it be consistent with the holiness of God for him to put aside our past sin,

and then to allow us to go on sinning as we did before? How could he be thought to be just and pure if he should remit the punishment for past transgressions, without seeing in us any determination to abstain from such sin in the future? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, but he never came here to spare their sins. God would never have sent his Son to this earth to be the messenger of sin, yet Christ would be nothing better than the messenger of sin if he had come, and said to men, "You may continue in your sin, yet I will forgive you. You may live as you like, yet you shall find mercy with the Lord at the last." It must strike you, in a moment, that such a course as this would be inconsistent with the character of the Judge of all the earth, who must do right. There is no such teaching as that in the whole of the Scriptures; and he who dares to believe it, believes a lie. Nowhere, in the whole compass of revelation, is there a promise of forgiveness to the man who continues in his iniquity. There is a promise of pardon to the sinner who forsakes his wicked way, and turns from his evil thoughts; there are many promises of forgiveness to those who confess their sins in humble penitence, and who seek to live new lives under the power of the Holy Spirit. Possibly, someone would remind me that the greatest promises are given to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is quite true; but the faith which believes in Jesus is a living and active faith, which works in the soul a hatred of sin; and if a man says, "I believe in Christ," and yet continues to delight in sin, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him, for "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." That faith alone will save us which is proved to be a vital and real faith by bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance." It is no use wanting or trying to be saved without a change of heart, and a change of life. "Ye must be born again," is Christ's own word to all unregenerate sinners. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There has never been any revocation of these truths, and again I repeat that, in the whole compass of the Word of God, there is no promise of pardon to the man who continues in his iniquities. Neither, dear friends, is there a single case in fact, nor one emblem in parable, that would lead any man to hope that he could keep his sins, and yet be saved. If you remind me of the woman in the city who was a sinner, I also remind you that her life had been completely changed, else our Saviour would not have permitted her to wash his feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. Saul of Tarsus was guilty of the great sin of persecuting the saints; but see what a changed man was Paul the apostle of the Gentiles. Zaccheus, the rich tax-gatherer, offered to make full restitution and recompense to any whom he might have wronged. So is it evermore where the grace of God works effectually. When the Lord Jesus Christ saves a sinner from the punishment of sin, he also saves him from the love of sin; -- he makes him holy as well as makes him happy and safe. The same lesson is taught in our Lord's parables. For instance, there was no rejoicing over the lost sheep while it was still wandering away from the fold; the joy began when that lost sheep was found, and was brought home on the shepherd's shoulder. A more striking example is that of the prodigal son. There was no joy over him while he was in the far country, and no kiss for him from his father while he was feeding the swine. He must come back, he must say, "Father, I have sinned," there must be the forsaking of his former evil ways, or else there could be no enjoyment of his father's forgiveness. We must ever say, as plainly as we can possibly say it, -- If thou wilt keep thy sins, thou shalt go to hell; but if thou wouldst go to heaven, thou must part company with thy sins. He who would be married to Christ must first be divorced from sin. There is no possibility of walking in the way of the Lord and, at the same time, treading the pathway of evil. "No man can serve two masters." No one can, at the same time, be a servant of the Saviour and a servant of

Satan. Besides, dear friends, our common sense tells us that it would be highly dangerous to society if men were to be pardoned, and yet were not to be renewed in character and life. If Christ should meet with a man, and say to him, "I forgive thee because of the precious blood I shed for thee on Calvary; go and be a drunkard still, go and be unchaste, go and be a thief," this would be the way to undermine the very pillars of society, and, very soon, we should not be safe in our beds. If there were no laws, or if the laws had no system of punishment for the guilty, human society would cease to be endurable. He who ruleth all things righteously will never set up such a scheme as this. The Judge of all the earth must punish sin; he will by no means clear the guilty. Moreover, it would be a serious injury to the man himself if he could be pardoned, and yet not be changed. For God to forgive us without renewing us, would be a frightful peril to ourselves. A man, finding himself so easily forgiven, and having no change of heart, would plunge into sin worse than ever; and, so far as my observation is concerned, I have come to the conclusion that the very worst form of character is produced in a man who, for some reason or other, thinks himself to be a favourite of heaven, and yet continues to indulge in sin. I recollect the thrill of horror, which passed through me, in my youthful days, when I heard a man, who was accustomed to be drunk, boast that he could say what none of his pot companions could say, namely, that he was one of the elect of God. I felt, child as I was, that he was one of the devil's chosen followers, and I do not doubt that he really was. If a man once gets into his head such a perverted notion of the free grace of God as to imagine that it is compatible with the love of sin, and a life of sin, he is on the high road to being made into the worst conceivable character; and if such a man as that could be delivered from all the consequences of his sin, from all such consequences as might be looked upon as arbitrarily fixed by the punishing hand of God, (I know that I am talking of an impossibility,) even then he must be miserable. Such a man must go on from bad to worse; and sin, whatever we may think of it, is misery. The worm that never dies is sin; the fire that is never quenched is sin; and hell is sin fully developed. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," and that second death is hell. O sirs, if you could get rid of the disease, the pain, the headaches, the qualms of conscience which follow upon indulgence in sin, it would be a mischievous riddance for you, for the very pain that is caused by sin is part of God's way of calling to you to come back to him. As long as you are in this world, the consequences that follow after certain forms of sin are really, with all their bitterness, -- and they are bitter, -- but a healthful tonic that should make you give up sin, and turn to God. If you go on sinning, you cannot be saved. If you continue to love sin, and to practise it, you cannot be saved. Think, for a moment, what any other result would involve; if it were possible for a man to live in sin, and yet be forgiven, what would be the value of the work of the Holy Ghost? He has come in order that we may be born again, and have new hearts and right spirits; but if men could be forgiven without having new hearts and right spirits, of what service would the Holy Spirit be? This would be contrary, also, to the whole design of Christ in our salvation. The angel said to Joseph, before our Saviour's birth, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins;" but if they can be saved in their sins, where is the meaning of his name? When he hung upon the cross, and one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, "forthwith came there out blood and water;" but what is the use of the purifying water if we need not be purified, and can be pardoned without being cleansed? Paul wrote to Titus that Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" but how can that purpose be accomplished if men can be pardoned, and yet continue to live in sin? Beside that, the very character of heaven prevents such a thing being done; we know

that the unholy cannot enter there, nothing that defileth can pass the watchers at the pearly portals; therefore, be ye sure of this, -- that you can never enter heaven, and you can never have forgiveness, if you continue to cling to your sins. You must forsake them, or mercy cannot be yours. II. Having spoken thus upon the necessity of conversion, I turn, for a little while, to the second part of our subject, THE NATURE OF THIS CONVERSION. How is it described here? First, it deals with the life: "Let the wicked forsake his way." Observe that it is "his way" that he is to forsake; that is, his natural way, the way in which he says he was brought up, the way that his natural affections, and propensities, and passions lead him. He must forsake this way, even though it is the way in which he has walked these thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or even eighty years; he will have to get out of this way, however much he may delight in it. Possibly, he has now got to love sin so much that he says he could not give it up. There are some sins which men roll under their tongues as dainty morsels; but if you are to be saved, you will have to give them up. If you would have mercy of God, you must give them all up. You must give up your old sins, your sweet sins, your pet sins; the sins of the flesh, with all their pleasure, and the sins of the mind, with all their pride, must be given up; for notice that word "forsake." "Let the wicked forsake his way." It does not say, "Let him own that his way is bad." There are some who will say, 'Oh, yes, I know that my way is very wrong;' and there they stop. Such an admission as that will not save you, my friend; you must forsake your way as well as own that it is wrong. To know that it is wrong, and yet to go on in it, will double your sin. This kind of confession will not help you in the least; on the contrary, it will only increase your guilt. You must forsake your wicked way if you are to be forgiven. "Oh, sir," you say, "I am very sorry for all the sin that I have committed!" I am glad that you are, and I hope that you will be still more so; but that sorrow alone will never save you. It is not saying, "I am sorry," nor yet your being sorry for your sin that will save you; that is right as far as it goes, but you must forsake the sin as well as be sorry for it. "I must forsake it; well, I resolve that I will do so." Yet that resolve by itself will not save you, for there are plenty of good resolutions that are good for nothing. You have actually to forsake your wicked way before you have complied with the requirements of our text. I know how the devil will try to deceive you, when you have made a good resolution. He will say, "Ah, you are a fine fellow; and that is a splendid resolution of yours!" Yet mere resolutions are not worth a penny a thousand; we must act, not simply resolve what we mean to do. We must not be like the man who owes a lot of money, and has not a penny to pay, yet who keeps on saying to his creditors, "I hope I shall be able to pay you tomorrow." Then, when that day comes, he says he is very sorry, but he missed the friend he expected to see, so he must postpone the payment for a few days; yet, when the few days have passed, there is still nothing forthcoming. So it is with many who resolve to forsake sin; they are like those who promise, but never pay. This will not do; you must forsake your sin if it is to be forgiven. "I will tell you what I will do," says one; "I will still keep to my old way, but I will not travel quite so rapidly in it; I will not live such a fast life as I have done." I tell thee, friend, that thou must forsake that old way of thine altogether if thou wouldst be saved. If thou standest still in it, if thou art decent and respectable in it, all that will avail thee nothing. Thou must clear right out of it, for so our text puts it, "Let the wicked forsake his way." In plain terms, the prophet means just this. Is your way the way of the drunkard? Now, no drunkard can ever inherit the kingdom of God as long as he continues a drunkard, so you cannot be saved if you remain in that condition. Are you a thief? Do you privately cheat in business? All that kind of thing must be given up. It is no use for you to say, "I will do it, and yet go to heaven." You will be damned unless that sin, as well as others, be given up. Or have

you been a blasphemer? Do you talk profanely or filthily? You must wash all that foulness out of your mouth if you would be saved: "Let the wicked forsake his way." Am I addressing any who have practised vice in unmentionable forms? Oh, how many there are who do that, and yet are not ashamed! You must forsake all that, young man, or old man either; it is no use mincing matters with you. If you mean to go to hell, go on with your wickedness; but if you would be forgiven for the past, you must cut all connection with these evil things for the future. I most solemnly assure you, in the name of God, that there can be no compromise about this and every other sin. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, a fleshly way, a way of lust, a way of self-indulgence, any way of sin, -- it must be forsaken. You must abandon it, or else you must abandon all hope of ever getting to heaven."That is pretty strong language," says someone. Do you think so? I shall have to use still stronger expressions presently, for the next point concerning the nature of this repentance is that it deals with the man's thoughts: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." "But thoughts are free," says some unthinking person; "I shall never be hanged for my thoughts." No, perhaps not; but have you never heard that old saying, "A man may not be hanged for his thoughts, but he may be damned for his thoughts;" for, in thought, is often the very essence of sin. A deed might in itself be colourless; but the motive for doing it -- the thought at the back of it -- puts the venom, and virus, and guilt into the deed. As that is the case, what sort of thoughts must the unrighteous man give up? He must give up a great many fine opinions of which he is very proud; -- his opinion about God, for instance. It is possible that he has thought nothing of him; or if he has thought of him at all, he has dared even to judge his Creator, and to find fault with what God does. Ah, sir! You must give up all such thoughts of God, and you must come to reverence him, and to regard him as so great that you are less than nothing in comparison with him. You will also have to give up your opinion concerning God's law. You thought it was too severe, too stringent, and that you could improve it a great deal. You will have to confess, with the apostle Paul, that the law is spiritual, and that you are "carnal, sold under sin." You will have to change your mind upon a great many subjects if you really wish to be saved. You will have to forsake your old thoughts concerning sin. You said, "Oh, it is a mere trifle, -- a peccadillo! Poor helpless creatures as we are, God won't be angry with us for such a little thing as that." You will have to feel that sin is exceedingly sinful, a great and deadly evil, or you will never be likely to seek and to find peace with God. You will also have to change your mind about the Lord Jesus Christ. He is nothing to you now; but he will have to be everything to you if you are to be saved by him. You will have to change your mind about yourself; you fancy that you are a fine fellow now, but you will have to regard yourself as less than nothing before you come to your right position before God. If ever you are to find mercy at his hands, you will have to forsake your present thoughts on all these matters. Do you ask, "What other thoughts shall we have to forsake?" I reply, -- A whole set of thoughts in which many people indulge. To the ungodly man, it is often quite a treat to sit down, and think of what he calls the jolly days of his youth when he sowed his wild oats. He wishes that he had a handful or two of them left. Ah, sir! You will have to give up all thoughts of that sort; but you will have to think of those past days with bitter tears of sorrow over the sins that you then committed. The ungodly man often pictures to himself scenes of carnal delight; and if he cannot have a share in such scenes, he often wishes that he could. I would remind any of you, who have ever done so, that you may commit every sin forbidden in the Decalogue, without having actually committed any one of them, by simply revelling in them in your thoughts. Remember that solemn affirmation of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the seventh commandment, "I say unto you, That

whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" and learn from it how our Lord meant his interpretation to apply to the whole law, so that we should understand that the very thought of evil is sin; and to suck it down as a sweet morsel to think upon, even though we never dared to perpetrate the act, is still a gross evil; and if we would be forgiven, we must forsake all these vile, flesh-delighting thoughts. We must also forsake our thoughts in the sense of turning from all purposes of evil. That, indeed, is the main meaning of the Hebrew word used here: "Let the unrighteous man forsake his purposes." You say that you will do this or that, without any thought of whether God would have it so or not. Possibly it is your purpose, as you express it, "to have your fling." You have come up from the country, young man, you are pleased that you have got away from your mother's apron strings, and now you are going to have your own way. Forsake all such thoughts, I implore you; and, if any, whom I am now addressing, have formed any purpose of sin, -- if you have resolved to indulge in this or that evil, whatever it may be, I charge you, if you desire to have eternal life, to hate all such purposes and thoughts of sin. The garment spotted by the flesh must be flung away from us, and the very thought of evil must be banished from our minds as far as it is possible for us to do so. Nor is this all, for the text further says, "and let him return unto the Lord," so that this conversion deals with the sinner in his relation to God. He who would find mercy must return to God to obtain it. Do you ask how you are to do so? Well, first, you must begin to think about God. I really believe that some of you do not think half as much about God as you do about the Sultan of Turkey; and with some of you, almost anybody is a greater factor in your life than God is. With some of you, it would not make any difference if there were no God at all, except that you would be rather glad if that could be proved to be the case, for you would feel easier in your mind, and could, in such a case, go on in your sin without any of the compunction that you now feel. Yet, is it not a singular state of mind for a man, who knows that he is a creature made by God, but who really cares so little about him that, if he could be assured that there were no such being, he would be better pleased than he is now? Oh, what a wretched state your heart must be in if it feels like that! It will have to be greatly altered if you are ever to be saved. So, first, you must begin to think of God; and then, thinking of him, you must yield to him, give up your will to his will; and, doing that, you must pray to him, cry to him for mercy; and then you must trust him. Especially, you must accept his way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ; and when you do that, then you will be sure to love him. When you get as far as that, you will be a new creature altogether. Then, God will delight in you; then, it will be misery to you to be out of his presence, and it will be the highest joy of your life to have constant communion with him. III. Now I finish with the third part of our subject, that is, THE GOSPEL OF THIS CONVERSION. Possibly, somebody says, "You have been preaching to us the law, sir." No, I have not. The law says nothing about repentance. The law curses you from the very first moment when you have broken it. That gracious message, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," is not the utterance of law, but of the gospel. I will try briefly to show you the gospel of it. It lies, first, in the fact that God has promised that he will abundantly pardon those who turn from their evil ways: "Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." To the man who confesses his guilt, the law says, "Yes, you are guilty, and you must suffer the penalty attached to your crime." If a person pleads "guilty" in a court of law, the judge does not say to him, "If you will promise amendment, you may go free." No, he pronounces sentence upon him, and God, the righteous Judge, might justly have done the same to us; but, instead of doing so, he says, "Forsake your wicked way, and

your evil thoughts, and turn to me, and I will abundantly pardon you. Only repent of your iniquity, and abandon it, and it shall all be blotted out. All the evil of your past life shall be forgiven and forgotten; and your sins and your transgressions I will not remember against you any more for ever." Oh, precious gospel message! Who would not turn from his sin when such a gracious promise awaits him in the turning? Yet there is more even than that, a great deal; for not only does God bid men turn to him, but he enables them to turn to him; so the gospel of this passage is, that God the Holy Ghost is freely given to sinners to turn them, first in their hearts, and then in their lives. What you cannot do of yourself, the Holy Spirit will enable you to do, or will do for you. There is no form of sin which you cannot conquer by the power of the Spirit of God, and that Spirit is freely given to all who sincerely seek his aid. He is here on earth still. On the day of Pentecost, he descended from heaven, and he has never gone back again. "But," says someone, "the Holy Spirit was given to the saints." Yes, I know he was; but he was also given to sinners like yourself, for Peter said to those who were awakened on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." I wish that many of you would pray the prayer, "Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned." You must be turned, by sovereign grace, if you would really turn unto the Lord; and you must forsake your wicked way, and your evil thoughts, if you are to be saved, and you cannot do this of yourself; but the Holy Spirit has been given on purpose to enable you to do it. There is a further gospel message in the fact that Jesus Christ himself came into the world on purpose that this Divine Spirit might be given in connection with the exercise, by men, of faith in him. One of the simplest declarations of the gospel is, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and one of the last sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ before he went back to heaven was, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is to trust; and whosoever trusts Christ Jesus, depends upon the merit of his death, relies upon the excellence of his atoning sacrifice, and proves the reality of his faith by confessing it in the Scriptural way, such a man shall assuredly be saved; and, in order to his being saved, he shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by whose almighty power he shall be enabled to conquer the sin that still dwells within him. Once more, -- and this is the part of the gospel that is the best of all, -- in order that you might be able to believe that God can have mercy on the guilty, and in order that you might be saved, God gave his Son, Jesus Christ, to offer a full and complete atonement for sin. I never weary of preaching that glorious truth to you, but I long that, when I have done so, you may close in with Christ, and that Christ may close in with you, that you may be eternally saved. According to the righteous law of God, sin must be punished. Conscience tells you that it is not possible that guilt should go without its due penalty. Therefore it was that Jesus came, and bore the dread penalty that was due to sin. The lash of the law must fall on someone, so he bared his shoulders to its terrible blows. The sword of divine justice was unsheathed, and it must smite someone; so Jesus gave his heart to that sword's point, and quenched the flaming blade in the crimson fountain of his own blood. Now that this has been done, God can be just, and yet the Justifier of everyone who believes in Jesus; and the effect of that atoning sacrifice upon everyone who truly trusts to it is that he finds himself so changed that he hates the sin he formerly loved, he rushes out of the wicked way in which he once delighted, he abhors the thoughts that once charmed him, and he turns to the Saviour whom once he despised.* See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,195, "Abundant pardon."

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