

# WORKS OF CHARLES SPURGEON

by Charles H. Spurgeon

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*A collection of writings by the renowned Victorian-era Baptist preacher C.H. Spurgeon, including his Defense of Calvinism and other works. Spurgeon expounds the doctrines of grace with characteristic warmth, clarity, and pastoral power.*

9 Chapters

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## A Defense of Calvinism

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A Defense of Calvinism

by

C. H. SPURGEON

(1834-1892) The old truth that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach today, or else be false to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape the truth; I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again.

It is a great thing to begin the Christian life by believing good solid doctrine. Some people have received twenty different "gospels" in as many years; how many more they will accept before they get to their journey's end, it would be difficult to predict. I thank God that He early taught me the gospel, and I have been so perfectly satisfied with it, that I do not want to know any other. Constant change of creed is sure loss. If a tree has to be taken up two or three times a year, you will not need to build a very large loft in which to store the apples. When people are always shifting their doctrinal principles, they are not likely to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God. It is good for young believers to begin with a firm hold upon those great fundamental doctrines which the Lord has taught in His Word. Why, if I believed what some preach about the temporary, trumpety salvation which only lasts for a time, I would scarcely be at all grateful for it; but when I know that those whom God saves He saves with an everlasting salvation, when I know that He gives to them an everlasting righteousness, when I know that He settles them on an everlasting foundation of everlasting love, and that He will bring them to His everlasting kingdom, oh, then I do wonder, and I am astonished that such a blessing as this should ever have been given to me!

"Pause, my soul! adore, and wonder!

Ask, 'Oh, why such love to me?'

Grace hath put me in the number

Of the Saviour's family: Hallelujah! Thanks, eternal thanks, to Thee

I suppose there are some persons whose minds naturally incline towards the doctrine of free-will. I can only say that mine inclines as naturally towards the doctrines of sovereign grace. Sometimes, when I see some of the worst characters in the street, I feel as if my heart must burst forth in tears of gratitude that God has never let me act as they have done! I have thought, if God had left me alone, and had not touched me by His grace, what a great sinner I should have been! I should have run to the utmost lengths of sin, dived into the very depths of evil, nor should I have stopped at any vice or folly, if God had not restrained me. I feel that I should have been a very king of sinners, if God had let me alone. I cannot understand the reason why I am saved, except upon the ground that God would have it so. I cannot, if I look ever so earnestly, discover any kind of reason

in myself why I should be a partaker of Divine grace. If I am not at this moment without Christ, it is only because Christ Jesus would have His will with me, and that will was that I should be with Him where He is, and should share His glory. I can put the crown nowhere but upon the head of Him whose mighty grace has saved me from going down into the pit. Looking back on my past life, I can see that the dawning of it all was of God; of God effectively. I took no torch with which to light the sun, but the sun enlightened me. I did not commence my spiritual life-no, I rather kicked, and struggled against the things of the Spirit: when He drew me, for a time I did not run after Him: there was a natural hatred in my soul of everything holy and good. Wooings were lost upon me-warnings were cast to the wind- thunders were despised; and as for the whispers of His love, they were rejected as being less than nothing and vanity. But, sure I am, I can say now, speaking on behalf of myself, "He only is my salvation." It was He who turned my heart, and brought me down on my knees before Him. I can in very deed, say with Doddridge and Toplady-

"Grace taught my soul to pray,

And made my eyes o'erflow." and coming to this moment, I can add-

"Tis grace has kept me to this day,

And will not let me go."

Well can I remember the manner in which I learned the doctrines of grace in a single instant. Born, as all of us are by nature, an Arminian, I still believed the old things I had heard continually from the pulpit, and did not see the grace of God. When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths in my own soul-when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from a babe into a man-that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, the clue to the truth of God. One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, How did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment- I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, "I ascribe my change wholly to God."

I once attended a service where the text happened to be, "He shall choose our inheritance for us;" and the good man who occupied the pulpit was more than a little of an Arminian. Therefore, when he commenced, he said, "This passage refers entirely to our temporal inheritance, it has nothing whatever to do with our everlasting destiny, for," said he, "we do not want Christ to choose for us in the matter of Heaven or hell. It is so plain and easy, that every man who has a grain of common sense will choose Heaven, and any person would know better than to choose hell. We have no need of any superior intelligence, or any greater Being, to choose Heaven or hell for us. It is left to

our own free- will, and we have enough wisdom given us, sufficiently correct means to judge for ourselves," and therefore, as he very logically inferred, there was no necessity for Jesus Christ, or anyone, to make a choice for us. We could choose the inheritance for ourselves without any assistance. "Ah!" I thought, "but, my good brother, it may be very true that we could, but I think we should want something more than common sense before we should choose aright."

First, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an over-ruling Providence, and the appointment of Jehovah's hand, as to the means whereby we came into this world? Those men who think that, afterwards, we are left to our own free-will to choose this one or the other to direct our steps, must admit that our entrance into the world was not of our own will, but that God had then to choose for us. What circumstances were those in our power which led us to elect certain persons to be our parents? Had we anything to do with it? Did not God Himself appoint our parents, native place, and friends? Could He not have caused me to be born with the skin of the Hottentot, brought forth by a filthy mother who would nurse me in her "kraal," and teach me to bow down to Pagan gods, quite as easily as to have given me a pious mother, who would each morning and night bend her knee in prayer on my behalf? Or, might He not, if He had pleased have given me some profligate to have been my parent, from whose lips I might have early heard fearful, filthy, and obscene language? Might He not have placed me where I should have had a drunken father, who would have immured me in a very dungeon of ignorance, and brought me up in the chains of crime? Was it not God's Providence that I had so happy a lot, that both my parents were His children, and endeavoured to train me up in the fear of the Lord?

John Newton used to tell a whimsical story, and laugh at it, too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of election, "Ah! sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards." I am sure it is true in my case; I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that great Biblical doctrine. I recollect an Arminian brother telling me that he had read the Scriptures through a score or more times, and could never find the doctrine of election in them. He added that he was sure he would have done so if it had been there, for he read the Word on his knees. I said to him, "I think you read the Bible in a very uncomfortable posture, and if you had read it in your easy chair, you would have been more likely to understand it. Pray, by all means, and the more, the better, but it is a piece of superstition to think there is anything in the posture in which a man puts himself for reading: and as to reading through the Bible twenty times without having found anything about the doctrine of election, the wonder is that you found anything at all: you must have galloped through it at such a rate that you were not likely to have any intelligible idea of the meaning of the Scriptures."

If it would be marvelous to see one river leap up from the earth full-grown, what would it be to gaze upon a vast spring from which all the rivers of the earth should at once come bubbling up, a million of them born at a birth? What a vision would it be! Who can conceive it. And yet the love of God is that fountain, from which all the rivers of mercy, which have ever gladdened our race—all the rivers of grace in time, and of glory hereafter—take their rise. My soul, stand thou at that sacred fountain-head, and adore and magnify, for ever and ever, God, even our Father, who hath loved

us! In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in the acorn cup; long ere the echoes awoke the solitudes; before the mountains were brought forth; and long ere the light flashed through the sky, God loved His chosen creatures. Before there was any created being-when the ether was not fanned by an angel's wing, when space itself had not an existence, when there was nothing save God alone-even then, in that loneliness of Deity, and in that deep quiet and profundity, His bowels moved with love for His chosen. Their names were written on His heart, and then were they dear to His soul. Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world-even from eternity! and when He called me by His grace, He said to me, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Then, in the fulness of time, He purchased me with His blood; He let His heart run out in one deep gaping wound for me long ere I loved Him. Yea, when He first came to me, did I not spurn Him? When He knocked at the door, and asked for entrance, did I not drive Him away, and do despite to His grace? Ah, I can remember that I full often did so until, at last, by the power of His effectual grace, He said, "I must, I will come in;" and then He turned my heart, and made me love Him. But even till now I should have resisted Him, had it not been for His grace. Well, then since He purchased me when I was dead in sins, does it not follow, as a consequence necessary and logical, that He must have loved me first? Did my Saviour die for me because I believed on Him? No; I was not then in existence; I had then no being. Could the Saviour, therefore, have died because I had faith, when I myself was not yet born? Could that have been possible? Could that have been the origin of the Saviour's love towards me? Oh! no; my Saviour died for me long before I believed. "But," says someone, "He foresaw that you would have faith; and, therefore, He loved you." What did He foresee about my faith? Did He foresee that I should get that faith myself, and that I should believe on Him of myself? No; Christ could not foresee that, because no Christian man will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift and without the working of the Holy Spirit. I have met with a great many believers, and talked with them about this matter; but I never knew one who could put his hand on his heart, and say, "I believed in Jesus without the assistance of the Holy Spirit."

I am bound to the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart, because I find myself depraved in heart, and have daily proofs that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing. If God enters into covenant with unfallen man, man is so insignificant a creature that it must be an act of gracious condescension on the Lord's part; but if God enters into covenant with sinful man, he is then so offensive a creature that it must be, on God's part, an act of pure, free, rich, sovereign grace. When the Lord entered into covenant with me, I am sure that it was all of grace, nothing else but grace. When I remember what a den of unclean beasts and birds my heart was, and how strong was my unrenewed will, how obstinate and rebellious against the sovereignty of the Divine rule, I always feel inclined to take the very lowest room in my Father's house, and when I enter Heaven, it will be to go among the less than the least of all saints, and with the chief of sinners.

The late lamented Mr. Denham has put, at the foot of his portrait, a most admirable text, "Salvation is of the Lord." That is just an epitome of Calvinism; it is the sum and substance of it. If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, "He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord." I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. "He only is my rock and my salvation." Tell me anything contrary to this truth, and it will be a heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental,

this rock-truth, "God is my rock and my salvation." What is the heresy of Rome, but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ-the bringing in of the works of the flesh, to assist in our justification? And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here. I have my own Private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor.

"If ever it should come to pass,

That sheep of Christ might fall away,

My fickle, feeble soul, alas!

Would fall a thousand times a day"

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be; and then there is no gospel promise true, but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then He will love me for ever. God has a mastermind; He arranged everything in His gigantic intellect long before He did it; and once having settled it, He never alters it, "This shall be done," saith He, and the iron hand of destiny marks it down, and it is brought to pass. "This is My purpose," and it stands, nor can earth or hell alter it. "This is My decree," saith He, "promulgate it, ye holy angels; rend it down from the gate of Heaven, ye devils, if ye can; but ye cannot alter the decree, it shall stand for ever." God altereth not His plans; why should He? He is Almighty, and therefore can perform His pleasure. Why should

He? He is the All-wise, and therefore cannot have planned wrongly. Why should He? He is the everlasting God, and therefore cannot die before His plan is accomplished. Why should He change? Ye worthless atoms of earth, ephemera of a day, ye creeping insects upon this bay-leaf of existence, ye may change your plans, but He shall never, never change His. Has He told me that His plan is to save me? If so, I am for ever safe.

"My name from the palms of His hands

Eternity will not erase;

Impress'd on His heart it remains,

In marks of indelible grace."

I do not know how some people, who believe that a Christian can fall from grace, manage to be happy. It must be a very commendable thing in them to be able to get through a day without despair. If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I think I should be of all men the most miserable, because I should lack any ground of comfort. I could not say, whatever state of heart I came into, that I should be like a well- spring of water, whose stream fails not; I should rather have to take the comparison of an intermittent spring, that might stop on a sudden, or a reservoir, which I had no reason to expect would always be full. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take His Word simply as it stands, and believe it, and ask no questions, just feeling assured that if God has said it, it will be so. I bear my willing testimony that I have no reason, nor even the shadow of a reason, to doubt my Lord, and I challenge Heaven, and earth, and hell, to bring any proof that God is untrue. From the depths of hell I call the fiends, and from this earth I call the tried and afflicted believers, and to Heaven I appeal, and challenge the long experience of the blood-washed host, and there is not to be found in the three realms a single person who can bear witness to one fact which can disprove the faithfulness of God, or weaken His claim to be trusted by His servants. There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know shall happen-

"He shall present my soul,  
Unblemish'd and complete,  
Before the glory of His face,  
With joys divinely great"

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken-many of them are made to be broken-but the promises of God shall all be fulfilled. He is a promise-maker, but He never was a promise- breaker; He is a promise-keeping God, and every one of His people shall prove it to be so. This is my grateful, personal confidence, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me"-unworthy me, lost and ruined me. He will yet save me; and-

"I, among the blood-wash'd throng,  
Shall wave the palm, and wear the crown,  
And shout loud victory"

I go to a land which the plough of earth hath never upturned, where it is greener than earth's best pastures, and richer than her most abundant harvests ever saw. I go to a building of more gorgeous architecture than man hath ever builded; it is not of mortal design; it is "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens." All I shall know and enjoy in Heaven, will be given to me by the Lord, and I shall say, when at last I appear before Him-

"Grace all the work shall crown  
Through everlasting days;  
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,  
And well deserves the praise"

I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merit of the blood of Jesus: if my theological system needed such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds. I cannot, I dare not allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind, it seems so near akin to blasphemy. In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore. There must be sufficient efficacy in the blood of Christ, if God had so willed it, to have saved not only all in this world, but all in ten thousand worlds, had they transgressed their Maker's law. Once admit infinity into the matter, and limit is out of the question. Having a Divine Person for an offering, it is not consistent to conceive of limited value; bound and measure are terms inapplicable to the Divine sacrifice. The intent of the Divine purpose fixes the application of the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work. Think of the numbers upon whom God has bestowed His grace already. Think of the countless hosts in Heaven: if thou wert introduced there to-day, thou wouldst find it as easy to tell the stars, or the sands of the sea, as to count the multitudes that are before the throne even now. They have come from the East, and from the West, from the North, and from the South, and they are sitting down with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob in the Kingdom of God; and beside those in Heaven, think of the saved ones on earth. Blessed be God, His elect on earth are to be counted by millions, I believe, and the days are coming, brighter days than these, when there shall be multitudes upon multitudes brought to know the Savior, and to rejoice in Him. The Father's love is not for a few only, but for an exceeding great company. "A great multitude, which no man could number," will be found in Heaven. A man can reckon up to very high figures; set to work your Newtons, your mightiest calculators, and they can count great numbers, but God and God alone can tell the multitude of His redeemed. I believe there will be more in Heaven than in hell. If anyone asks me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to "have the pre-eminence," and I cannot conceive how He could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in Paradise. Moreover, I have never read that there is to be in hell a great multitude, which no man could number. I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to Paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them! Then there are already in Heaven unnumbered myriads of the spirits of just men made perfect-the redeemed of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues up till now; and there are better times coming, when the religion of Christ shall be universal; when-

"He shall reign from pole to pole,

With illimitable sway,"

when whole kingdoms shall bow down before Him, and nations shall be born in a day, and in the thousand years of the great millennial state there will be enough saved to make up all the deficiencies of the thousands of years that have gone before. Christ shall be Master everywhere, and His praise shall be sounded in every land. Christ shall have the pre-eminence at last; His train shall be far larger than that which shall attend the chariot of the grim monarch of hell.

Some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say, "It is so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men; it commends itself," they say, "to the instincts of humanity; there is something in it full of joy and beauty." I admit there is, but beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might admire in the theory of universal redemption, but I will just show what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were lost before He died. If the

doctrine be true, that He died for all men, then He died for some who were in hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were even then myriads there who had been cast away because of their sins. Once again, if it was Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed, for we have His own testimony that there is a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit of woe have been cast some of the very persons who, according to the theory of universal redemption, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a conception a thousand times more repulsive than any of those consequences which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption. To think that my Savior died for men who were or are in hell, seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain. To imagine for a moment that He was the Substitute for all the sons of men, and that God, having first punished the Substitute, afterwards punished the sinners themselves, seems to conflict with all my ideas of Divine justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of all men, and that afterwards some of those very men should be punished for the sins for which Christ had already atoned, appears to me to be the most monstrous iniquity that could ever have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, to the goddess of the Thugs, or to the most diabolical heathen deities. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the just and wise and good! There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer- I wish to be called nothing but a Christian; but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it. But far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none but Calvinistic Christians within her walls, or that there are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him that, while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan; and if there were wanted two apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield and John Wesley. The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness, and communion with God; he lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians, and was one "of whom the world was not worthy." I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these truths, or, at least, cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have received Christ as their Savior, and are as dear to the heart of the God of grace as the soundest Calvinist in or out of Heaven.

I do not think I differ from any of my Hyper-Calvinistic brethren in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do not believe. I do not hold any less than they do, but I hold a little more, and, I think, a little more of the truth revealed in the Scriptures. Not only are there a few cardinal doctrines, by which we can steer our ship North, South, East, or West, but as we study the Word, we shall begin to learn something about the North-west and North-east, and all else that lies between the four cardinal points. The system of truth revealed in the Scriptures is not simply one straight line, but two; and no man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. For instance, I read in one Book of the Bible, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Yet I am taught, in another part of the same inspired Word, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." I see, in one place, God in providence presiding over all, and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man

acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions, in a great measure, to his own free-will. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act that there was no control of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to atheism; and if, on the other hand, I should declare that God so over-rules all things that man is not free enough to be responsible, I should be driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and yet that man is responsible, are two facts that few can see clearly. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is foreordained, that is true; and if I find, in another Scripture, that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is only my folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths can ever contradict each other. I do not believe they can ever be welded into one upon any earthly anvil, but they certainly shall be one in eternity. They are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the human mind which pursues them farthest will never discover that they converge, but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

It is often said that the doctrines we believe have a tendency to lead us to sin. I have heard it asserted most positively, that those high doctrines which we love, and which we find in the Scriptures, are licentious ones. I do not know who will have the hardihood to make that assertion, when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them. I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, who in successive ages were the great exponents of the system of grace; or what will he say of the Puritans, whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing, but now we are looked upon as the heretics, and they as the orthodox. We have gone back to the old school; we can trace our descent from the apostles. It is that vein of free-grace, running through the sermonizing of Baptists, which has saved us as a denomination. Were it not for that, we should not stand where we are today. We can run a golden line up to Jesus Christ Himself, through a holy succession of mighty fathers, who all held these glorious truths; and we can ask concerning them, "Where will you find holier and better men in the world?" No doctrine is so calculated to preserve a man from sin as the doctrine of the grace of God. Those who have called it "a licentious doctrine" did not know anything at all about it. Poor ignorant things, they little knew that their own vile stuff was the most licentious doctrine under Heaven. If they knew the grace of God in truth, they would soon see that there was no preservative from lying like a knowledge that we are elect of God from the foundation of the world. There is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance, and the immutability of my Father's affection, which can keep me near to Him from a motive of simple gratitude. Nothing makes a man so virtuous as belief of the truth. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without by-and-by having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other. Of all men, those have the most disinterested piety, the sublimest reverence, the most ardent devotion, who believe that they are saved by grace, without works, through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God. Christians should take heed, and see that it always is so, lest by any means Christ should be crucified afresh, and put to an open shame.

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## Against the World

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### Against the World

by Charles Spurgeon

We know there have been great battles where nations have met in strife, and one has overcome the other; but who has read of a victory that overcame the world? Some will say that Alexander was its conqueror; but I answer, nay. He was himself the vanquished man, even when all things were in his possession. He fought for the world, and won it; and then mark how it mastered its master, conquered its conqueror, and lashed the monarch who had been its scourge. See the royal youth weeping, and stretching out his hands with idiotic cries, for another world which he might ravage. He seemed, in outward show, to have overcome Old Earth; but, in reality, within his inmost soul, the earth had conquered him, had overwhelmed him, had wrapped him in the dream of ambition, girdled him with the chains of covetousness, so that when he had all, he was still dissatisfied; and, like a poor slave, was dragged on at the chariot wheels of the world, crying, moaning, lamenting, because he could not win another. Who is the man that ever overcame the world? Let him stand forward: he is a Triton among the minnows; he shall outshine Caesar; he shall outmatch even our Wellington, if he can say he has overcome the world. It is so rare a thing, a victory so prodigious, a conquest so tremendous, that he who can claim to have won it may walk among his fellows, like Saul, with head and shoulders far above them. He shall command our respect; his very presence shall awe us into reverence; his speech shall persuade us to obedience; and, yielding honour to whom honour is due, we'll say when we listen to his voice, "Tis even as if an angel shook his wings."

The Christian overcomes the world. A tough battle: not one which carpet knights might win: no easy skirmish that he might win, who dashed to battle on some sunny day, looked at the host, then turned his courser's rein, and daintily dismounted at the door of his silken tent—not one which he shall gain, who, but a raw recruit today, puts on his regimentals, and foolishly imagines that one week of service will ensure a crown of glory. Nay, it is a life-long war—a fight needing the power of all these muscles, and this strong heart; a contest which shall want all our strength, if we are to be triumphant; and if we do come off more than conquerors, it shall be said of us, as Hart said of Jesus Christ; "He had strength enough and none to spare;" a battle at which the stoutest heart might quail; a fight at which the bravest might shake, if he did not remember that the Lord is on his side, and therefore, whom shall he fear? He is the strength of his life; of whom shall he be afraid? This fight with the world is not one of main force, or physical might; if it were, we might soon win it; but it is all the more dangerous from the fact that it is a strife of mind, a contest of heart, a struggle of the spirit, a strife of the soul. When we overcome the world in one fashion, we have not half done our work; for the world is a Proteus, changing its shape continually; like the chameleon, it hath all the colours of the rainbow; and when you have worsted the world in one shape, it will attack you in another. Until you die, you will always have fresh appearances of the world to wrestle with.

We rebel against the world's customs. And if we do so, what is the conduct of our enemy? She changes her aspect. "That man is a heretic; that man is a fanatic; he is a cant, he is a hypocrite," says the world directly. She grasps her sword, she putteth frowns upon her brow, she scowleth like a demon, she girdeth tempests round about her, and she saith, "The man dares defy my government; he will not do as others do. Now I will persecute him. Slander! come from the depths of hell and hiss at him. Envy! sharpen up thy tooth and bite him." She fetches up all false things, and she persecutes the man. If she can, she does it with the hand; if not, by the tongue. She afflicts him wherever he is. She tries to ruin him in business; or if he standeth forth as the champion of the truth, why then she laugheth, and mocketh, and scorneth. She lets no stone be unturned whereby she may injure him. What is then the behaviour of the Lord's warrior, when he sees the world take up arms against him, and when he sees all earth, like an army, coming to chase him, and utterly destroy him? Does he yield? Does he yield? Does he bend? Does he cringe? Oh, no! Like Luther, he writes "Cedo nulli" on his banner—"I yield to none;" and he goes to war against the world, if the world goes to war against him.

The true-born child of God cares little for man's opinion. "Ah," says he, "let my bread fail me, let me be doomed to wander penniless the wide world o'er; yea, let me die: each drop of blood within these veins belongs to Christ, and I am ready to shed it for His name's sake." He counts all things but loss, that he may win Christ—That he may be found in Him, and when the world's thunders roar, he smiles at the uproar, while he hums his pleasant tune. When her sword comes out, he looketh at it. "Ah," saith he, "just as the lightning leapeth from its thunder lair, splitteth the clouds, and affrighteth the stars, but is powerless against the rock-covered mountaineer, who smiles at its grandeur, so now the world cannot hurt me, for in the time of trouble my Father hides me "in His pavillion, in the secret of His tabernacle doth He hide me, and set me upon a rock." Thus, again, we conquer the world, by not caring for its frowns.

"Well," saith the world, "I will try another style," and this, believe me, is the most dangerous of all. A smiling world is worse than a frowning one. She saith, "I cannot smite the man low with my repeated blows, I will take off my mailed glove, and showing him a fair, white hand, I'll bid him kiss it. I will tell him I love him: I will flatter him, I will speak good words to him." John Bunyan well describes this Madam Bubble: she has a winning way with her; she drops a smile at the end of each of her sentences; she talks much of fair things, and tries to win and woo. Oh, believe me, Christians are not so much in danger when they are persecuted as when they are admired. When we stand upon the pinnacle of popularity, we may well tremble and fear. It is not when we are hissed at, and hooted, that we have any cause to be alarmed; it is when we are dandled on the lap of fortune, and nursed upon the knees of the people; it is when all men speak well of us, that woe is unto us. It is not in the cold, wintry wind that I take off my coat of righteousness, and throw it away; it is when the sun comes, when the weather is warm, and the air balmy, that I unguardedly strip off my robes, and become naked. Good God! how many a man has been made naked by the love of this world! The world has flattered and applauded him; he has drunk the flattery; it was an intoxicating draught; he has staggered, he has reeled, he has sinned, he has lost his reputation; and as a comet that erst flashed across the sky, doth wander far into space, and is lost in darkness, so doth he; great as he was, he falls; mighty as he was, he wanders, and is lost. But the true child of God is never so; he is as safe when the world smiles, as when it frowns; he cares as little for her praise as for her dispraise. If he is praised, and it is true, he says, "My deeds deserve

praise, but I refer all honour to my God. " Great souls know what they merit from their critic; to them it is nothing more than the giving of their daily income. Some men cannot live without a large amount of praise; and if they have no more than they deserve, let them have it. If they are children of God, they will be kept steady; they will not be ruined or spoiled; but they will stand with feet like hinds' feet upon high places,—"This is the victory that overcometh the world."

Sometimes, again, the world turns jailer to a Christian. God sends affliction and sorrow, until life is a prison-house, the world its jailer—and a wretched jailer too. Have you ever been in trials and troubles, my friends? and has the world never come to you, and said, "Poor prisoner, I have a key that will let you out. You are in pecuniary difficulties; I will tell you how you may get free. Put that Mr. Conscience away. He asks you whether it is a dishonest act. Never mind about him; let him sleep; think about the honesty after you have got the money, and repent at your leisure." So saith the world; but you say, "I cannot do the thing." "Well" says the world, "then groan and grumble: a good man like you locked up in this prison!" "No," says the Christian, "my Father sent me into want, and in His own time He will fetch me out; but if I die here I will not use wrong means to escape. My Father put me here for my good, I will not grumble; if my bones must lie here if my coffin is to be under these stones if my tombstone shall be in the wall of my dungeon—here will I die, rather than so much as lift a finger to get out by unfair means." "Ah," says the world, "then thou art a fool." The scorner laughs and passes on, saying, "The man has no brain, he will not do a bold thing; he has no courage; he will not launch upon the sea; he wants to go in the old beaten track of morality." Ay, so he does; for thus he overcomes the world.

I might tell of battles that have been fought. There has been many a poor maiden, who has worked, worked, worked, until her fingers were worn to the bone, to earn a scanty living out of the things which we wear upon us, knowing not that oftimes we wear the blood, and bones, and sinews of poor girls. That poor girl has been tempted a thousand times, the evil one has tried to seduce her, but she has fought a valiant battle; stern in her integrity, in the midst of poverty she still stands upright, "Clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners," a heroine unconquered by the temptations and enticements of vice. In other cases: many a man has had the chance of being rich in an hour, affluent in a moment, if he would but clutch something which he dare not look at, because God within him said, "No! The world said, "Be rich, be rich;" but the Holy Spirit said, "No! be honest; serve thy God." Oh, the stern contest, and the manly combat carried on within the heart! But he said, "No; could I have the stars transmuted into worlds of gold, I would not for those globes of wealth belie my principles, and damage my soul: " thus he walks a conqueror. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

## Bio-The Prince of Preachers

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Charles H. Spurgeon The Prince of Preachers

"An English Nonconformist, was born at Kelvedon, Essex, on the 19th of June 1834. He was the grandson of an Essex pastor, and son of John Spurgeon, Independent minister at Upper Street, Islington. The following is a self written testimony of how Charles Spurgeon came to Christ."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

1834 - 1892

### HOW SPURGEON FOUND CHRIST

I HAD been about five years in the most fearful distress of mind, as a boy. If any human being felt more of the terror of God's Law, I can indeed pity and sympathize with him. Bunyan's "Grace Abounding" contains, in the main, my history. Some abysses he went into I never trod; but some into which I plunged he seems to have never known.

I thought the sun was blotted out of my sky - that I had sinned against God that there was no hope for me. I prayed - the Lord knows how I prayed; but I never had a glimpse of an answer that I knew of. I searched the Word of God; the promises were more alarming than the threatenings. I read the privileges of the people of God, but with the fullest persuasion that they were not for me. The scene of my distress was this: I did not know the Gospel. I was in a Christian land. I had Christian parents, but I did not fully understand the freeness and simplicity of the Gospel.

I attended all the places of worship in the town where I lived, but I honestly believe that I did not hear the Gospel fully preached. I do not blame the men, however. One man preached the Divine sovereignty. I could hear him with pleasure, but what was that to a poor sinner who wished to know what he should do to be saved? There was another admirable man who always preached about the law; but what was the use of plowing up ground that wanted to be sown? Another was a great practical teacher. I heard him, but it was very much like a commanding officer teaching the maneuvers of war to a set of men without feet. What could I do? All his exhortations were lost to me. I knew it was said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," but I did not know what I was to believe in Christ.

I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning, when I was going to a place of worship. When I could go no farther, I turned down a street and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there might be a dozen or fifteen people. The minister did not come that morning; snowed in, I suppose. A poor man, a shoemaker, a tailor, or something of that sort went up into the pulpit to preach.

Now, it is well that ministers should be instructed, but this man was really unlearned, as you would say. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason he had nothing else to say. The text

was, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He didn't even pronounce the words correctly, but that didn't matter.

There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. He began thus: "My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, 'Look.' Now, that doesn't take a great deal of effort. It isn't lifting your foot or your finger. It is just 'look.' Well, a man need not go to college to learn to look. A man need not be worth a lot of money to look. Any one can look; a child can look. But this is what the text says. Then it says, 'Look unto Me'."

"Aye," said he, in broad Essex, "many of ye are looking to yourselves. No use looking there. You'll never find comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No. Look to Him by and by. Jesus Christ says, 'Look unto Me.' Some of you say, 'I must wait the Spirit's working.' You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. It says, 'Look unto Me'."

Then the good man followed up his text in this way: "Look unto Me: I am sweating great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hanging on the cross. Look! I am dead and buried. Look unto Me. I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend; I am sitting at the Father's right hand. Oh, look unto Me! Look unto Me!"

When he had got about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the length of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I dare say, with a few present, he knew me to be a stranger. He then said, "Young man, you look very miserable." Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck. He continued: "And you will always be miserable - miserable in life, and miserable in death - if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment you will be saved."

Then he shouted as only a gospel preacher can. "Young man, look to Jesus Christ!" I did 'look'. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun: I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the precious Blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me that before: Trust Christ and you will be saved.

It was, no doubt, wisely ordered, and I must ever say:

E'er since by faith I saw the stream

Thy wounds supplied for me,

Redeeming love has been my theme,

And shall forever be.

- Written by Spurgeon himself

## Early Religious Impressions

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### Early Religious Impressions

From Spurgeon's Autobiography MY FATHER AND MOTHER.

I do speak of myself with many deep regrets of heart. I hid as it were my face from Him, and I let the years run round,—not without twinges of conscience, not without rebukes, when I knew how much I needed a Saviour; not without the warnings which came from others whom I saw happy and rejoicing in Christ, while I had no share in His salvation. Still, I put it off, as others are doing, from day to day, and month to month, and thought that Christ might come in some odd hour, and when I had nothing else to do, I might think of Him whose blood could cleanse me. O my soul, I could fain smite thee now! Truly, I could lay this rod about my own heart to think that weeks and months should have rolled over my head, and I should have hid as it were my face from Christ in wilful neglect of my dear Lord whose heart had bled for me.

Fathers and mothers are the most natural agents for God to use in the salvation of their children. I am sure that, in my early youth, no teaching ever made such an impression upon my mind as the instruction of my mother; neither can I conceive that, to any child, there can be one who will have such influence over the heart as the mother who has so tenderly cared for her offspring. A man with a soul so dead as not to be moved by the sacred name of "mother" is creation's blot. Never could it be possible for any man to estimate what he owes to a godly mother. Certainly I have not the powers of speech with which to set forth my valuation of the choice blessing which the Lord bestowed on me in making me the son of one who prayed for me, and prayed with me. How can I ever forget her tearful eye when she warned me to escape from the wrath to come? I thought her lips right eloquent; others might not think so, but they certainly were eloquent to me. How can I ever forget when she bowed her knee, and with her arms about my neck, prayed, "Oh, that my son might live before Thee!" Nor can her frown be effaced from my memory,—that solemn, loving frown, when she rebuked my budding iniquities; and her smiles have never faded from my recollection,—the beaming of her countenance when she rejoiced to see some good thing in me towards the Lord God of Israel.

My mother said to me, one day, "Ah, Charles! I often prayed the Lord to make you a Christian, but I never asked that you might become a Baptist." I could not resist the temptation to reply, "Ah, mother ! the Lord has answered your prayer with His usual bounty, and given you exceeding abundantly above what you asked or thought."

I remember seeing a baby sprinkled within less than an hour of its death; and I seem to hear even now the comfort which a certain good man gave to the bereaved parents,—"What a mercy the child was baptized! What a consolation it must be!" This was in-an Independent family, and the words were spoken by an Independent minister.

It is said by some that children cannot understand the great mysteries of religion. We even know some Sunday-school teachers who cautiously avoid mentioning the great doctrines of the gospel,

because they think the children are not prepared to receive them. Alas! the same mistake has crept into the pulpit; for it is currently believed, among a certain class of preachers, that many of the doctrines of the Word of God, although true, are not fit to be taught to the people, since they would pervert them to their own destruction. Away with such priestcraft! Whatever God has revealed ought to be preached. Whatever HE has revealed, if I am not capable of understanding it, I will still believe and preach it. I do hold that there is no doctrine of the Word of God which a child, if he be capable of salvation, is not capable of receiving. I would have children taught all the great doctrines of truth without a solitary exception, that they may in their after days hold fast by them.

In the household in which I was trained, no cooking was ever done on the Sabbath; and if in the winter time something hot was brought on the table, it was a pudding prepared on the Saturday, or a few potatoes, which took but little trouble to warm. Is not this far better, far more Christian-like, than preparing a great Sunday feast, and compelling servants to slave in the kitchen? If the horse was taken out because the distance to the meeting-house was too great, or the weather too rough for walking, Christians of the good old school always gave the animal its Sabbath on the Saturday or the Monday; and as to the coachman, when they employed one, they always took care to give him time to put up the horse, that he might come in and worship with the family, and they were content to wait till he could come round for them after service, for they did not want him to lose even the Benediction.

I recollect, when I was a boy, hearing a minister preach from this text, "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." The opening of that memorable discourse was somewhat in this fashion:—"Who can find a virtuous woman?' Why, anyone who chooses to look for her; and the only reason why Solomon could not find her was because he looked in the wrong place. Virtuous women kept clear of a king who had such a multitude of wives. But," said the preacher, "if Solomon were here now, and were made truly wise, he would not long, ask,—'Who can find a virtuous woman?' He would join the church, and find himself at once among a band of holy women, whose adornment is a meek and quiet spirit. If he were permitted to look in upon the Dorcas meeting, he would see many of the sort of whom he once said, 'She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.' If he would adjourn to the Sunday-school, he would there meet with others of whom he would say, 'She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.' We, who serve the Lord Jesus, meet many a time with virtuous women, of each of whom we could say with the wise king, 'Her price is far above rubies.'"

Whatever one may think of the correctness of the exposition, the sentiment of the preacher was sound and practical.

What a pity that a man who from his heart delivered doctrines of undoubted value, in language the most appropriate, should commit ministerial suicide by harping on one string, when the Lord had given him an instrument of many strings to play upon! Alas! alas! for that dreary voice, it hummed and hummed, like a mill-wheel, to the same unmusical tune, whether its owner spake of Heaven or hell, eternal life or everlasting wrath. It might be, by accident, a little louder or softer, according to the length of the sentence; but its tone was still the same, a dreary waste of sound, howling wilderness of speech in which there was no possible relief, no variety, no music, nothing but horrible sameness. When the wind blows through the AEolian harp, it swells through all the

chords; but the Heavenly wind, passing through some men, spends itself upon one string, and that, for the most part, the most out of tune of the whole. Grace alone could enable hearers to edify under the drum—drum—drum of some divines. I think an impartial jury would bring in a verdict of justifiable slumbering in many cases where the sound emanating from the preacher lulls to sleep by its reiterated note.

I used to hear a minister whose preaching was, as far as I could make it out, "Do this, and do that, and do the other, and you will be saved." According to his theory, to pray was a very easy thing; to make yourself a new heart, was a thing of a few instants, and could be done at almost any time; and I really thought that I could turn to Christ when I pleased, and that therefore I could put it off to the last part of my life, when it might be conveniently done upon a sick bed. But when the Lord gave my soul its first shakings in conviction, I soon knew better. I went to pray; I did pray, God knoweth, but it seemed to me that I did not. What, I approach the throne? Such a wretch as I lay hold on the promise? I venture to hope that God could look on me? It seemed impossible. A tear, a groan, and sometimes not so much as that, an "Ah!" a "Would that!" a "But,"—the lip could not utter more. It was prayer, but it did not seem so then. Oh, how hard is prevailing prayer to a poor God-provoking sinner! Where was the power to lay hold on God's strength, or wrestle with the angel? Certainly not in me, for I was weak as water, and sometimes hard as the nether millstone.

"Once, under a powerful sermon, my heart shook within me, and was dissolved in the midst of my bowels; I thought I would seek the Lord, and I bowed my knee, and wrestled, and poured out my heart before Him. Again I ventured within His sanctuary to hear His Word, hoping that in some favoured hour He would send a precious promise to my consolation; but, ah! that wretched afternoon, I heard a sermon wherein Christ was not; I had no longer any hope. I would have sipped at that fountain, but I was driven away; I felt that I would have believed in Christ, and I longed and sighed for Him. But, ah! that dreadful sermon, and those terrible things that were uttered; my poor soul knew not what was truth, or what was error; but I thought the man was surely preaching the truth, and I was driven back. I dared not go, I could not believe, I could not lay hold on Christ; I was shut out, if no one else was.

## Effective Prayer

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### Effective Prayer

by Charles Spurgeon

"Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments." —Job 23:3-4

IN Job's uttermost extremity he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God is once more to see his Father's face. His first prayer is not, "Oh that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!" nor even, "Oh that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!" but the first and uppermost cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM—who is my God! that I might come even to his seat!" God's children run home when the storm comes on. It is the heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul to seek shelter from all ills beneath the wings of Jehovah. "He that hath made his refuge God," might serve as the title of a true believer. A hypocrite, when he feels that he has been afflicted by God, resents the infliction, and, like a slave, would run from the master who has scourged him; but not so the true heir of heaven, he kisses the hand which smote him, and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of that very God who frowned upon him. You will observe that the desire to commune with God is intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation.

When Job first saw his friends at a distance, he may have entertained a hope that their kindly counsel and compassionate tenderness would blunt the edge of his grief; but they had not long spoken before he cried out in bitterness, "Miserable comforters are ye all." They put salt into his wounds, they heaped fuel upon the flame of his sorrow, they added the gall of their upbraidings to the wormwood of his griefs. In the sunshine of his smile they once had longed to sun themselves, and now they dare to cast shadows upon his reputation, most ungenerous and undeserved. Alas for a man when his wine-cup mocks him with vinegar, and his pillow pricks him with thorns! The patriarch turned away from his sorry friends and looked up to the celestial throne, just as a traveller turns from his empty skin bottle and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earthborn hopes, and cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find my God!" My brethren, nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator as when we learn the emptiness of all besides. When you have been pierced through and through with the sentence, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," then will you suck unutterable sweetness from the divine assurance, "Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Turning away with bitter scorn from earth's hives, where you found no honey, but many sharp stings, you will rejoice in him whose faithful word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb.

It is further observable that though a good man hastens to God in his trouble, and runs with all the more speed because of the unkindness of his fellow men, yet sometimes the gracious soul is left without the comfortable presence of God. This is the worst of all griefs; the text is one of Job's

deep groans, far deeper than any which came from him on account of the loss of his children and his property: "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!" The worst of all losses is to lose the smile of my God. He now had a foretaste of the bitterness of his Redeemer's cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God's presence is always with his people in one sense, so far as secretly sustaining them is concerned, but his manifest presence they do not always enjoy. Like the spouse in the song, they seek their beloved by night upon their bed, they seek him but they find him not; and though they wake and roam through the city they may not discover him, and the question may be sadly asked again and again, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?"

You may be beloved of God, and yet have no consciousness of that love in your soul. You may be as dear to his heart as Jesus Christ himself, and yet for a small moment he may forsake you, and in a little wrath he may hide himself from you. But, dear friends, at such times the desire of the believing soul gathers yet greater intensity from the fact of God's light being withheld. Instead of saying with proud lip, "Well, if he leaveth me I must do without him; if I cannot have his comfortable presence I must fight on as best may be," the soul saith, "No, it is my very life; I must have my God. I perish, I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, and nothing but the arm of God can deliver me."

The gracious soul addresseth itself with a double zeal to find out God, and sends up its groans, its entreaties, its sobs and sighs to heaven more frequently and fervently. "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Distance or labour are as nothing; if the soul only knew where to go she would soon overleap the distance. She makes no stipulation about mountains or rivers, but vows that if she knew where, she would come even to his seat. My soul in her hunger would break through stone walls, or scale the battlements of heaven to reach her God, and though there were seven hells between me and him, yet would I face the flame if I might reach him, nothing daunted if I had but the prospect of at last standing in his presence and feeling the delight of his love. That seems to me to be the state of mind in which Job pronounced the words before us.

But we cannot stop upon this point, for the object of this morning's discourse beckons us onward. It appears that Job's end, in desiring the presence of God, was that he might pray to him. He had prayed, but he wanted to pray as in God's presence. He desired to plead as before one whom he knew would hear and help him. He longed to state his own case before the seat of the impartial judge, before the very face of the all-wise God; he would appeal from the lower courts, where his friends judged unrighteous judgment, to the Court of King's Bench—the High Court of heaven—here, saith he, "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments."

In this latter verse Job teaches us how he meant to plead and intercede with God. He does, as it were, reveal the secrets of his closet, and unveils the art of prayer. We are here admitted into the guild of suppliants; we are shown the art and mystery of pleading; we have here taught to us the blessed handicraft and science of prayer, and if we can be bound apprentice to Job this morning, for the next hour, and can have a lesson from Job's Master, we may acquire no little skill in interceding with God. There are two things here set forth as necessary in prayer—ordering of our cause, and filling our mouth with arguments. We shall speak of those two things, and then if we have rightly learned the lesson, a blessed result will follow.

I. First, IT IS NEEDFUL THAT OUR SUIT BE ORDERED BEFORE GOD.

There is a vulgar notion that prayer is a very easy thing, a kind of common business that may be done anyhow, without care or effort. Some think that you have only to reach a book down and get through a certain number of very excellent words, and you have prayed and may put the book up again; others suppose that to use a book is superstitious, and that you ought rather to repeat extemporaneous sentences, sentences which come to your mind with a rush, like a herd of swine or a pack of hounds, and that when you have uttered them with some little attention to what you have said, you have prayed. Now neither of these modes of prayer were adopted by ancient saints. They appear to have thought a great deal more seriously of prayer than many do now-a-days. It seems to have been a mighty business with them, a long-practised exercise, in which some of them attained great eminence, and were thereby singularly blest. They reaped great harvests in the field of prayer, and found the mercy seat to be a mine of untold treasures.

The ancient saints were wont, with Job, to order their cause before God; that is to say, as a petitioner coming into Court does not come there without thought to state his case on the spur of the moment, but enters into the audience chamber with his suit well prepared, having moreover learned how he ought to behave himself in the presence of the great One to whom he is appealing. It is well to approach the seat of the King of kings as much as possible with pre-meditation and preparation, knowing what we are about, where we are standing, and what it is which we desire to obtain. In times of peril and distress we may fly to God just as we are, as the dove enters the cleft of the rock, even though her plumes are ruffled; but in ordinary times we should not come with an unprepared spirit, even as a child comes not to his father in the morning till he has washed his face.

See yonder priest; he has a sacrifice to offer, but he does not rush into the court of the priests and hack at the bullock with the first pole-axe upon which he can lay his hand, but when he rises he washes his feet at the brazen laver, he puts on his garments, and adorns himself with his priestly vestments; then he comes to the altar with his victim properly divided according to the law, and is careful to do according to the command, even to such a simple matter as the placing of the fat, and the liver, and the kidneys, and he taketh the blood in a bowl and poureth it in an appropriate place at the foot of the altar, not throwing it just as may occur to him, and kindles the fire not with common flame, but with the sacred fire from off the altar. Now this ritual is all superseded, but the truth which it taught remains the same; our spiritual sacrifices should be offered with holy carefulness. God forbid that our prayer should be a mere leaping out of one's bed and kneeling down, and saying anything that comes first to hand; on the contrary, may we wait upon the Lord with holy fear and sacred awe. See how David prayed when God had blessed him—he went in before the Lord. Understand that; he did not stand outside at a distance, but he went in before the Lord and he sat down—for sitting is not a bad posture for prayer, let who will speak against it—and sitting down quietly and calmly before the Lord he then began to pray, but not until first he had thought over the divine goodness, and so attained to the spirit of prayer. Then by the assistance of the Holy Ghost did he open his mouth. Oh that we oftener sought the Lord in this style!

Abraham may serve us as a pattern; he rose up early—here was his willingness; he went three days journey—here was his zeal; he left his servants at the foot of the hill—here was his privacy; he carried the wood and the fire with him—here was his preparation; and lastly, he built the altar and laid the wood in order, and then took the knife—here was the devout carefulness of his worship. David puts it, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up"; which I

have frequently explained to you to mean that he marshalled his thoughts like men of war, or that he aimed his prayers like arrows. He did not take the arrow and put it on the bowstring and shoot, and shoot, and shoot anywhere; but after he had taken out the chosen shaft, and fitted it to the string, he took deliberate aim. He looked—looked well—at the white of the target; kept his eye fixed on it, directing his prayer, and then drew his bow with all his strength and let the arrow fly; and then, when the shaft had left his hand, what does he say? "I will look up." He looked up to see where the arrow went, to see what effect it had; for he expected an answer to his prayers, and was not as many who scarcely think of their prayers after they have uttered them. David knew that he had an engagement before him which required all his mental powers; he marshalled up his faculties and went about the work in a workmanlike manner, as one who believed in it and meant to succeed. We should plough carefully and pray carefully. The better the work the more attention it deserves. To be anxious in the shop and thoughtless in the closet is little less than blasphemy, for it is an insinuation that anything will do for God, but the world must have our best.

If any ask what order should be observed in prayer, I am not about to give you a scheme such as many have drawn out, in which adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and ascription are arranged in succession. I am not persuaded that any such order is of divine authority. It is to no mere mechanical order I have been referring, for our prayers will be equally acceptable, and possibly equally proper, in any form; for there are specimens of prayers, in all shapes, in the Old and New Testament. The true spiritual order of prayer seems to me to consist in something more than mere arrangement. It is most fitting for us first to feel that we are now doing something that is real; that we are about to address ourselves to God, whom we cannot see, but who is really present; whom we can neither touch nor hear, nor by our senses can apprehend, but who, nevertheless, is as truly with us as though we were speaking to a friend of flesh and blood like ourselves. Feeling the reality of God's presence, our mind will be led by divine grace into an humble state; we shall feel like Abraham, when he said, "I have taken upon myself to speak unto God, I that am but dust and ashes."

Consequently we shall not deliver ourselves of our prayer as boys repeating their lessons, as a mere matter of rote, much less shall we speak as if we were rabbis instructing our pupils, or as I have heard some do, with the coarseness of a highway-man stopping a person on the road and demanding his purse of him; but we shall be humble yet bold petitioners, humbly importuning mercy through the Saviour's blood. We shall not have the reserve of a slave but the loving reverence of a child, yet not an impudent, impertinent child, but a teachable obedient child, honouring his Father, and therefore asking earnestly, but with deferential submission to his Father's will. When I feel that I am in the presence of God, and take my rightful position in that presence, the next thing I shall want to recognize will be that I have no right to what I am seeking, and cannot expect to obtain it except as a gift of grace, and I must recollect that God limits the channel through which he will give me mercy—he will give it to me through his dear Son. Let me put myself then under the patronage of the great Redeemer. Let me feel that now it is no longer I that speak but Christ that speaketh with me, and that while I plead, I plead his wounds, his life, his death, his blood, himself. This is truly getting into order.

The next thing is to consider what I am to ask for? It is most proper in prayer, to aim at great distinctness of supplication. There is much reason to complain of some public prayers, that those who offer them do not really ask God for anything. I must acknowledge I fear to having so prayed

myself, and certainly to having heard many prayers of the kind in which I did not feel that anything was sought for from God—a great deal of very excellent doctrinal and experimental matter uttered, but little real petitioning, and that little in a nebulous kind of state, chaotic and unformed. But it seems to me that prayer should be distinct, the asking for something definitely and distinctly because the mind has realized its distinct need of such a thing, and therefore must plead for it. It is well not to beat round the bush in prayer, but to come directly to the point. I like that prayer of Abraham's, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" There is the name and the person prayed for, and the blessing desired, all put in a few words,—"Ishmael might live before thee!" Many persons would have used a roundabout expression of this kind, "Oh that our beloved offspring might be regarded with the favour which thou bearest to those who," etc. Say "Ishmael," if you mean "Ishmael"; put it in plain words before the Lord.

Some people cannot even pray for the minister without using such circular descriptives that you might think it were the parish beadle, or somebody whom it did not do to mention to particularly. Why not be distinct, and say what we mean as well as mean what we say? Ordering our cause would bring us to greater distinctness of mind. It is not necessary, my dear brethren, in the closet to ask for every supposable good thing, it is not necessary to rehearse the catalogue of every want that you may have had, can have, or shall have. Ask for what you now need, and, as a rule, keep to present need; ask for your daily bread—what you want now—ask for that. Ask for it plainly, as before God, who does not regard your fine expressions, and to whom your eloquence and oratory will be less than nothing and vanity Thou art before the Lord; let thy words be few, but let thy heart be fervent.

You have not quite completed the ordering when you have asked for what you want through Jesus Christ. There should be a looking round the blessing in which you desire, to see whether it is assuredly a fitting thing to ask; for some prayers would never be offered if men did but think. A little reflection would show to us that some things which we desire were better let alone. We may, moreover, have a motive at the bottom of our desire which is not Christ-like, a selfish motive, which forgets God's glory and caters only for our own case and comfort. Now although we may ask for things which are for our profit, yet still we must never let our profit interfere in any way with the glory of God. There must be mingled with acceptable prayer the holy salt of submission to the divine will. I like Luther's saying, "Lord, I will have my will of thee at this time." "What!" say you, "Like such an expression as that?" I do, because of the next clause, which was, "I will have my will, for I know that my will is thy will." That is well spoken, Luther; but without the last words it would have been wicked presumption. When we are sure that what we ask for is for God's glory, then, if we have power in prayer, we may say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me": we may come to close dealings with God, and like Jacob with the angel we may even put it to the wrestle and seek to give the angel the fall sooner than be sent away without the benediction. But we must be quite clear, before we come to such terms as those, that what we are seeking is really for the Master's honour.

Put these three things together, the deep spirituality which recognises prayer as being real conversation with the invisible God—much distinctness which is the reality of prayer, asking for what we know we want—and withal much fervency, believing the thing to be necessary, and therefore resolving to obtain it if it can be had by prayer, and above all these complete submission, leaving it still with the Master's will;—commingle all these, and you have a clear idea of what it is to

order your cause before the Lord.

Still prayer itself is an art which only the Holy Ghost can teach us. He is the giver of all prayer. Pray for prayer—pray till you can pray; pray to be helped to pray, and give not up praying because thou canst not pray, for it is when thou thinkest thou canst not pray that thou art most praying; and sometimes when thou hast no sort of comfort in thy supplications, it is then that thy heart all broken and cast down is really wrestling and truly prevailing with the Most High.

II. The second part of prayer is FILLING THE MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS—not filling the mouth with words nor good phrases, nor pretty expressions, but filling the mouth with arguments are the knocks of the rapper by which the gate is opened.

Why are arguments to be used at all? is the first enquiry; the reply being, Certainly not because God is slow to give, not because we can change the divine purpose, not because God needeth to be informed of any circumstance with regard to ourselves or of anything in connection with the mercy asked: the arguments to be used are for our own benefit, not for his. He requires for us to plead with him, and to bring forth our strong reasons, as Isaiah saith, because this will show that we feel the value of the mercy. When a man searches for arguments for a thing it is because he attaches importance to that which he is seeking. Again, our use of arguments teaches us the ground upon which we obtain the blessing. If a man should come with the argument of his own merit, he would never succeed; the successful argument is always founded upon grace, and hence the soul so pleading is made to understand intensely that it is by grace and by grace alone that a sinner obtaineth anything of the Lord.

Besides, the use of arguments is intended to stir up our fervency. The man who uses one argument with God will get more force in using the next, and will use the next with still greater power, and the next with more force still. The best prayers I have ever heard in our prayer meetings have been those which have been fullest of argument. Sometimes my soul has been fairly melted down when I have listened to brethren who have come before God feeling the mercy to be really needed, and that they must have it, for they first pleaded with God to give it for this reason, and then for a second, and then for a third, and then for a fourth and a fifth, until they have awakened the fervency of the entire assembly. My brethren, there is no need for prayer at all as far as God is concerned, but what a need there is for it on our own account! If we were not constrained to pray, I question whether we could even live as Christians. If God's mercies came to us unasked, they would not be half so useful as they now are, when they have to be sought for; for now we get a double blessing, a blessing in the obtaining, and a blessing in the seeking.

The very act of prayer is a blessing. To pray is as it were to bathe one's-self in a cool purling stream, and so to escape from the heats of earth's summer sun. To pray is to mount on eagle's wings above the clouds and get into the clear heaven where God dwelleth. To pray is to enter the treasure-house of God and to enrich one's-self out of an inexhaustible storehouse. To pray is to grasp heaven in one's arms, to embrace the Deity within one's soul, and to feel one's body made a temple of the Holy Ghost. Apart from the answer prayer is in itself a benediction. To pray, my brethren, is to cast off your burdens, it is to tear away your rags, it is to shake off your diseases, it is to be filled with spiritual vigour, it is to reach the highest point of Christian health. God give us to be much in the holy art of arguing with God in prayer.

The most interesting part of our subject remains; it is a very rapid summary and catalogue of a few of the arguments which have been used with great success with God. I cannot give you a full list; that would require a treatise such as Master John Owen might produce. It is well in prayer to plead with Jehovah his attributes. Abraham did so when he laid hold upon God's justice. Sodom was to be pleaded for, and Abraham begins, "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? that be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Here the wrestling begins. It was a powerful argument by which the patriarch grasped the Lord's left hand, and arrested it just when the thunderbolt was about to fall. But there came a reply to it. It was intimated to him that this would not spare the city, and you notice how the good man, when sorely pressed, retreated by inches; and at last, when he could no longer lay hold upon justice, grasped God's right hand of mercy, and that gave him a wondrous hold when he asked that if there were but ten righteous there the city might be spared.

So you and I may take hold at any time upon the justice, the mercy, the faithfulness, the wisdom, the long-suffering, the tenderness of God, and we shall find every attribute of the Most High to be, as it were, a great battering-ram, with which we may open the gates of heaven.

Another mighty piece of ordinance in the battle of prayer is God's promise. When Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok, and his brother Esau was coming with armed men, he pleaded with God not to suffer Esau to destroy the mother and the children, and as a master reason he pleaded, "And thou saidst, surely I will do thee good." Oh the force of that plea! He was holding God to his word: "Thou saidst." The attribute is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon; but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is yet a mightier holdfast. "Thou saidst." Remember how David put it. After Nathan had spoken the promise, David said at the close of his prayer, "Do as thou hast said." That is a legitimate argument with every honest man, and has he said, and shall he not do it? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Shall not he be true? Shall he not keep his word? Shall not every word that cometh out of his lips stand fast and be fulfilled?

Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleads with God to remember the word which he had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note his honour is engaged. He signs his hand, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonours his bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment; he never is before his time, but he never is behind it. You shall search this Book through, and you shall compare it with the experience of God's people, and the two tally from the first to the last, and many a hoary patriarch has said with Joshua in his old age, "Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised: all hath come to pass." My brother, if you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an "if" in it; you may plead with a certainty. If for the mercy which you are now asking, you have God's solemnly pledged word, there will scarce be any room for the caution about submission to his will. You know his will: that will is in the promise; plead it. Do not give him rest until he fulfil it. He meant to fulfil it, or else he would not have given it. God does not give his words merely to quiet our noise, and to keep us hopeful for awhile, with the intention of putting us off at last; but when he speaks, he speaks because he means to act.

A third argument to be used is that employed by Moses, the great name of God. How mightily did he argue with God on one occasion upon this ground! "What wilt thou do for thy great name? The Egyptians will say, "Because the Lord could not bring them into the land, therefore he slew them in the wilderness." There are some occasions when the name of God is very closely tied up with the history of his people. Sometimes in reliance upon a divine promise, a believer will be led to take a certain course of action. Now, if the Lord should not be as good as his promise, not only is the believer deceived, but the wicked world looking on would say, "Aha! aha! Where is your God?" Take the case of our respected brother, Mr. Mueller, of Bristol. These many years he has declared that God hears prayer, and firm in that conviction, he has gone on to build house after house for the maintenance of orphans. Now, I can very well conceive that, if he were driven to a point of want of means for the maintenance of those thousand or two thousand children, he might very well use the plea, "What wilt thou do for thy great name?" And you, in some severe trouble, when you have fairly received the promise, may say, "Lord, thou hast said, 'In six troubles I will be with thee, and in seven I will not forsake thee.' I have told my friends and neighbours that I put my trust in thee, and if thou do not deliver me now, where is thy name? Arise, O God, and do this thing, lest thy honour be cast into the dust."

Coupled with this, we may employ the further argument of the hard things said by the revilers. It was well done of Hezekiah, when he took Rabshakeh's letter and spread it before the Lord. Will that help him? It is full of blasphemy, will that help him? "Where are the gods of Arphad and Sepharvaim? Where are the gods of the cities which I have overthrown? Let not Hezekiah deceive you, saying that Jehovah will deliver you." Does that have any effect? Oh! yes, it was a blessed thing that Rabshakeh wrote that letter, for it provoked the Lord to help his people. Sometimes the child of God can rejoice when he sees his enemies get thoroughly out of temper and take to reviling. "Now," he says, "they have reviled the Lord himself; not me alone have they assailed, but the Most High himself. Now it is no longer the poor insignificant Hezekiah with his little band of soldiers, but it is Jehovah, the King of angels, who has come to fight against Rabshakeh. Now what wilt thou do, O boastful soldier of proud Sennacherib? Shalt not thou be utterly destroyed, since Jehovah himself has come into the fray?"

All the progress that is made by Popery, all the wrong things said by speculative atheists and so on, should be by Christians used as an argument with God, why he should help the gospel. Lord; see how they reproach the gospel of Jesus! Pluck thy right hand out of thy bosom! O God, they defy thee! Anti-christ thrusts itself into the place where thy Son once was honoured, and from the very pulpits where the gospel was once preached Popery is now declared. Arise, O God, wake up thy zeal, let thy sacred passions burn! Thine ancient foe again prevails. Behold the harlot of Babylon once more upon her scarlet-coloured beast rides forth in triumph! Come, Jehovah, come, Jehovah, and once again show what thy bare arm can do! This is a legitimate mode of pleading with God, for his great name's sake.

So also may we plead the sorrows of his people. This is frequently done. Jeremiah is the great master of this art. He says, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage is blacker than a coal." "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" He talks of all their griefs and straitnesses in the siege. He calls upon the Lord to look upon his suffering Zion; and ere long his plaintive cries are

heard. Nothing so eloquent with the father as his child's cry; yes, there is one thing more mighty still, and that is a moan,—when the child is so sick that it is past crying, and lies moaning with that kind of moan which indicates extreme suffering and intense weakness. Who can resist that moan? Ah! and when God's Israel shall be brought very low so that they can scarcely cry but only their moans are heard, then comes the Lord's time of deliverance, and he is sure to show that he loveth his people. Dear friends, whenever you also are brought into the same condition you may plead your moanings, and when you see a church brought very low you may use her griefs as an argument why God should return and save the remnant of his people.

Brethren, it is good to plead with God the past. Ah, you experienced people of God, you know how to do this. Here is David's specimen of it: "Thou hast been my help. Leave me not, neither forsake me." He pleads God's mercy to him from his youth up. He speaks of being cast upon his God from his very birth, and then he pleads, "Now also, when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not." Moses also, speaking with God, says, "Thou didst bring this people up out of Egypt." As if he would say, "Do not leave thy work unfinished; thou hast begun to build, complete it. Thou hast fought the first battle; Lord, end the campaign! Go on till thou gettest a complete victory." How often have we cried in our trouble, "Lord, thou didst deliver me in such and such a sharp trial, when it seemed as if no help were near; thou hast never forsaken me yet. I have set up my Ebenezer in thy name. If thou hadst intended to leave me why hast thou showed me such things? Hast thou brought thy servant to this place to put him to shame?" Brethren, we have to deal with an unchanging God, who will do in the future what he has done in the past, because he never turns from his purpose, and cannot be thwarted in his design; the past thus becomes a very mighty means of winning blessings from him.

We may even use our own unworthiness as an argument with God. "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness." David in one place pleads thus: "Lord, have mercy upon mine iniquity, for it is great." That is a very singular mode of reasoning; but being interpreted it means, "Lord, why shouldst thou go about doing little things? Thou art a great God, and here is a great sinner. Here is a fitness in me for the display of thy grace. The greatness of my sin makes me a platform for the greatness of thy mercy. Let the greatness of thy love be seen in me." Moses seems to have the same on his mind when he asks God to show his great power in sparing his sinful people. The power with which God restrains himself is great indeed. O brothers and sisters, there is such a thing as creeping down at the foot of the throne, crouching low and crying, "O God, break me not—I am a bruised reed. Oh! tread not on my little life, it is now but as the smoking flax. Wilt thou hunt me? Wilt thou come out, as David said, 'after a dead dog, after a flea?' Wilt thou pursue me as a leaf that is blown in the tempest? Wilt thou watch me, as Job saith, 'as though I were a vast sea, or a great whale?' Nay, but because I am so little, and because the greatness of thy mercy can be shown in one so insignificant and yet so vile, therefore, O God, have mercy upon me."

There was once an occasion when the very Godhead of Jehovah made a triumphant plea for the prophet Elijah. On that august occasion, when he had bidden his adversaries see whether their god could answer them by fire, you can little guess the excitement there must have been that day in the prophet's mind. With what stern sarcasm did he say, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." And as they cut themselves with knives, and leaped upon the altar, oh the scorn with

which that man of God must have looked down upon their impotent exertions, and their earnest but useless cries! But think of how his heart must have palpitated, if it had not been for the strength of his faith, when he repaired the altar of God that was broken down, and laid the wood in order, and killed the bullock. Hear him cry, "Pour water on it. You shall not suspect me of concealing fire; pour water on the victim." When they had done so, he bids them, "Do it a second time"; and they did it a second time; and then he says, "Do it a third time." And when it was all covered with water, soaked and saturated through, then he stands up and cries to God, "O God, let it be known that thou only art God." Here everything was put to the test. Jehovah's own existence was now put, as it were, at stake, before the eyes of men by this bold prophet. But how well the prophet was heard! Down came the fire and devoured not only the sacrifice, but even the wood, and the stones, and even the very water that was in the trenches, for Jehovah God had answered his servant's prayer. We sometimes may do the same, and say unto him, "Oh, by thy Deity, by thine existence, if indeed thou be God, now show thyself for the help of thy people!"

Lastly, the grand Christian argument is the sufferings, the death, the merit, the intercession of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I am afraid we do not understand what it is that we have at our command when we are allowed to plead with God for Christ's sake. I met with this thought the other day: it was somewhat new to me, but I believe it ought not to have been. When we ask God to hear us, pleading Christ's name, we usually mean, "O Lord, thy dear Son deserves this of thee; do this unto me because of what he merits." But if we knew it we might go in the city, "Sir, call at my office, and use my name, and say that they are to give you such a thing." I should go in and use your name, and I should obtain my request as a matter of right and a matter of necessity. This is virtually what Jesus Christ says to us. "If you need anything of God, all that the Father has belongs to me; go and use my name." Suppose you should give a man your cheque-book signed with your own name and left blank, to be filled up as he chose; that would be very nearly what Jesus has done in these words, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will give it you." If I had a good name at the bottom of the cheque, I should be sure that I should get it cashed when I went to the banker with it; so when you have got Christ's name, to whom the very justice of God hath become a debtor, and whose merits have claims with the Most High, when you have Christ's name there is no need to speak with fear and trembling and bated breath. Oh, waver not and let not faith stagger! When thou pleadest the name of Christ thou pleadest that which shakes the gates of hell, and which the hosts of heaven obey, and God himself feels the sacred power of that divine plea.

Brethren, you would do better if you sometimes thought more in your prayers of Christ's griefs and groans. Bring before the Lord his wounds, tell the Lord of his cries, make the groans of Jesus cry again from Gethsemane, and his blood speak again from that frozen Calvary. Speak out and tell the Lord that with such griefs, and cries, and groans to plead, thou canst not take a denial: such arguments as these will speed you.

III. If the Holy Ghost shall teach us how to order our cause, and how to fill our mouth with arguments, the result shall be that **WE SHALL HAVE OUR MOUTH FILLED WITH PRAISES**. The man who has his mouth full of arguments in prayer shall soon have his mouth full of benedictions in answer to prayer. Dear friend, thou hast thy mouth full this morning, has thou? What of? Full of complaining? Pray the Lord to rinse thy mouth out of that black stuff, for it will little avail thee, and it will be bitter in thy bowels one of these days. Oh, have thy mouth full of prayer, full of it, full of arguments so that there is room for nothing else. Then come with this blessed mouthful, and you

shall soon go away with whatsoever you have asked of God. Only delight thou thyself in him, and he will give thee the desire of thy heart.

It is said—I know not how truly—that the explanation of the text, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," may be found in a very singular Oriental custom. It is said that not many years ago—I remember the circumstance being reported—the King of Persia ordered the chief of his nobility, who had done something or other which greatly gratified him, to open his mouth, and when he had done so he began to put into his mouth pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, till he had filled it as full as it could hold, and then he bade him go his way. This is said to have been occasionally done in Oriental Courts towards great favourites. Now certainly whether that be an explanation of the text or not it is an illustration of it. God says, "Open thy mouth with arguments," and then he will fill it with mercies priceless, gems unspeakably valuable. Would not a man open his mouth wide when he had to have it filled in such a style? Surely the most simple-minded among you would be wise enough for that. Oh! let us then open wide our mouth when we have to plead with God. Our needs are great, let our askings be great, and the supply shall be great too. You are not straitened in him; you are straitened in your own bowels. The Lord give you large mouths in prayer, great potency, not in the use of language, but in employing arguments.

What I have been speaking to the Christian is applicable in great measure to the unconverted man. God give thee to see the force of it, and to fly in humble prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to find eternal life in him.

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## Exposition on Colossians 3, 4-2-4

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Exposition on Colossians 3:1-25, Colossians 4:2-4

by C. H. Spurgeon

Chapter 3:1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Oh! how often we need to be called to this, for the flesh is grovelling, and it holds down the spirit; and very often we are seeking the things below as if we had not yet attained to the new life, and did not know anything about the resurrection power of Christ within the soul. Now, if it be that you, believers, have risen with Christ, do not live as if you had never done so, but "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

2. Set your affection.

Not "your affections." Tie them up into one bundle. Make one of them.

2. On things above, not on things on the earth.

You say that you were dead with Christ, and that you have risen with Christ. Live, then, the risen life, and not the life of those who have never undergone this matchless process. Live above.

3. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

The old life is dead. You are dead to it. You will not be consumed by it: you cannot be controlled by it. You have a newer and higher life. Let it have full scope.

4. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Christ was hidden while he was here. The world knew him not. So is your life. But there is to be a glorious manifestation. When Christ is made manifest, so shall you be. Wait for him.

5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Since you are dead, let all the lusts of the flesh be put to death. Kill those. They were once a part of you. Your nature lusted this way. Mortify them. Do not merely restrain them and try to keep them under. These things you are to have nothing to do with.

6, 7. For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

"When ye lived in them" But now you do not live in them. You are dead to them. If it should ever come to pass that you fall into any of these things, you will loathe yourself with bitterest repentance that you could find comfort, satisfaction, life in them. You are dead to them.

8-10. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds: And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

No lies. Such communications are filthy. But you put these things away through your union with Christ in his risen life. Therefore, abhor them. Avoid the very appearance of them, and cry for grace to be kept from them, for you have been "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

11. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

In the new life there is no distinction of race and nationality. We are born into one family; we become members of Christ's body; and this is the one thing we have got to keep up--separation from all the world beside: no separations in the church, no disunion, nothing that would cause it, for we are one in Christ, and Christ is all. Now, as we have to put off these things, that is the negative side: that is the law's side, for the law says, "Thou shalt not"--"Thou shalt not." But now look at the positive side.

12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering:

This is what you have got to wear, even on the outside--to put it on; not to have a latent kindness in your heart, and a degree of humbleness deep down in your soul if you could get at it; but you are to put it on. It is to be the very dress you wear. These are the sacred vestments of your daily priesthood. Put them on.

13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Just as readily, just as freely, just as heartily, just as completely.

14-15 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

For that is the great foundation of every godly fruit. We are in such a hurry, in such dreadful haste, so selfish, so discontented, so impetuous, and the major part of our sins spring from that condition of mind. But if we were godly, restful, peaceful, how many sins we should avoid! "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

15. To the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

It looks like a very small virtue to be thankful. Yet, dear friends, the absence of it is one of the grossest of vices. To be ungrateful is a mean thing: to be ungrateful to God is a base thing. And yet how many may accuse themselves of it! Who among us is as grateful as he should be? Be thankful.

16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you.

Alexander had a casket of gold studded with gems to carry Homer's works. Let your own heart be a casket for the command of Christ. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you."

16-18 Richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

See how our being Christians does not relax the bonds of our Christian relationship, but it calls us to the higher exercise of the responsibilities and duties connected therewith.

19. Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Oh! there are some spirits that are very bitter. A little thing puts them out, and they would take delight in a taunt which grieves the spirit. I pity the poor woman who has such bitterness where she ought to have sweetness: yet there be some such husbands.

20-21 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

The duties are mutual. Scripture maintains an equilibrium. It does not lay down commands for one class, and then leave the other to exercise whatever tyrannical oppression it may please. The child is to obey, but the father must not provoke.

22. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers;

How much there is of that! How quickly the hands go when the master's eye looks on! But the Christian servant remembers God's eye, and is diligent always. "Not with eye service as men-pleasers."

Chapter 4:2 But in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

See how he keeps putting that in--"Be ye thankful"--"with thanksgiving." Why, that is the oil that makes the machinery go round without its causing obstruction. May we have much of that thanksgiving.

3, 4. Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

So the preacher of the gospel asks your prayers: and it is a part of the duties arising out of the relationship between Christian men that those who are taught should pray for those who teach God's Word.

## Puritan Catechism

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### THE PURITAN CATECHISM

by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Published about Oct. 14, 1855

"I am persuaded that the use of a good catechism in all our families will be a great safeguard against the increasing errors of the times, and therefore I have compiled this little manual from the Westminster Assembly's and Baptist catechisms, for the use of my own church and congregation. Those who use it in their families or classes must labour to explain the sense; but the words should be carefully learned by heart, for they will be understood better as years pass.

May the Lord bless my dear friends and their families evermore, is the prayer of their loving pastor."

C.H. Spurgeon

1 Question: What is the chief end of man?

A Man's chief end is to glorify God, (1 Corinthians 10:31) and to enjoy him for ever (Psalms 73:25-26)

2 Question: What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify him?

A The Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Ephesians 2:20 2 Timothy 3:16) is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy him (1 John 1:3).

3 Question: What do the Scriptures principally teach?

A The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man (2 Timothy 1:13 Ec 12:13).

4 Question: What is God?

A God is Spirit (John 4:24), infinite (Job 11:7), eternal (Psalms 90:2 1 Timothy 1:17), and unchangeable (James 1:17), in his being, (Exodus 3:14), wisdom, power (Psalms 147:5), holiness (Revelation 4:8), justice, goodness and truth (Exodus 34:6-7).

5 Question: Are there more Gods than one?

A There is but one only (Deuteronomy 6:4), the living and true God (Jeremiah 10:10).

6 Question: How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one God, the same in essence, equal in power and glory (1 John 5:7 Matthew 28:19).

7 Question: What are the decrees of God?

A The decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory he has foreordained whatever comes to pass (Ephesians 1:11-12).

8 Question: How does God execute his decrees?

A God executes his decrees in the works of creation (Revelation 4:11), and providence (Daniel 4:35).

9 Question: What is the work of creation?

A The work of creation is God's making all things (Genesis 1:1) of nothing, by the Word of his power (Hebrews 11:3), in six normal consecutive days (Exodus 20:11), and all very good (Genesis 1:31).

10 Question: How did God create man?

A God created man, male and female, after his own image (Genesis 1:27), in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Colossians 3:10 Ephesians 4:24) with dominion over the creatures (Genesis 1:28).

11 Question: What are God's works of providence?

A God's works of providence are his most holy (Psalms 145:17), wise (Isaiah 28:29), and powerful (Hebrews 1:3) preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions (Psalms 103:19 Matthew 10:29).

12 Question: What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the state wherein he was created?

A When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience (Galatians 3:12), forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death (Genesis 2:17).

13 Question: Did our first parents continue in the state wherein they were created?

A Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the state wherein they were created, by sinning against God (Ec 7:29) by eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:6-8).

14 Question: What is sin?

A Sin is any want of conformity to, or transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4).

15 Question: Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

A The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression (1 Corinthians 15:22 Romans 5:12).

16 Question: Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A The fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery (Romans 5:18).

17 Question: Wherein consists the sinfulness of that state whereinto man fell?

A The sinfulness of that state whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin (Romans 5:19), the want of original righteousness (Romans 3:10), and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin (Ephesians 2:1 Psalms 51:5), together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it (Matthew 15:19).

18 Question: What is the misery of that state whereinto man fell?

A All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God (Genesis 3:8; Genesis 3:24), are under his wrath and curse (Ephesians 2:3 Galatians 3:10), and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever (Romans 6:23 Matthew 25:41).

19 Question: Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?

A God having, out of his good pleasure from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life (2 Thessalonians 2:13) did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the state of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer (Romans 5:21).

20 Question: Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?

A The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5), who being the eternal Son of God, became man (John 1:14) and so was and continues to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person for ever (1 Timothy 3:16 Colossians 2:9).

21 Question: How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A Christ, the son of God, became man by taking to himself a true body (Hebrews 2:14) and a reasonable soul (Matthew 26:38 Hebrews 4:15), being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary, and born of her (Luke 1:31; Luke 1:35) yet without sin (Hebrews 7:26).

22 Question: What offices does Christ execute as our Redeemer?

A Christ as our Redeemer executes the offices of a prophet (Acts 3:22), of a priest (Hebrews 5:6), and of a king (Psalms 2:6), both in his state of humiliation and exaltation.

23 Question: How does Christ execute the office of a prophet?

A Christ executes the office of a prophet, in revealing to us (John 1:18), by his Word (John 20:31), and Spirit (John 14:26), the will of God for our salvation.

24 Question: How does Christ execute the office of a priest?

A Christ executes the office of a priest, in his once offering up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice (Hebrews 9:28), and to reconcile us to God (Hebrews 2:17) and in making continual intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

25 Question: How does Christ execute the office of a king?

A Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to himself (Psalms 110:3), in ruling and defending us (Matthew 2:6 1 Corinthians 15:25) and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

26 Question: Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?

A Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition (Luke 2:7) made under the law (Galatians 4:4), undergoing the miseries of this life (Isaiah 53:3), the wrath of God (Matthew 27:46), and the cursed death of the cross (Php\_2:8); in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time ( ).

27 Question: Wherein consists Christ's exaltation?

A Christ's exaltation consists in his rising again from the dead on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:4), in ascending up into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God the Father (Mr 16:19), and in coming to judge the world at the last day (Acts 17:31).

28 Question: How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

A We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us (John 1:12) by his Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5-6).

29 Question: How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

A The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us (Ephesians 2:8) and by it uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling (Ephesians 3:17).

30 Question: What is effectual calling?

A Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit (2 Timothy 1:9) whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery (Acts 2:37), enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ (Acts 26:18), and renewing our wills (Ezekiel 36:26), he does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel (John 6:44-45).

31 Question: What benefits do they who are effectually called, partake of in this life?

A They who are effectually called, do in this life partake of justification, (Romans 8:30), adoption (Ephesians 1:5), sanctification, and the various benefits which in this life do either accompany, or flow from them (1 Corinthians 1:30).

32 Question: What is justification?

A Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins (Romans 3:24 Ephesians 1:7), and accepts us as righteous in his sight (2 Corinthians 5:21) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (Romans 5:19), and received by faith alone (Galatians 2:16 Php\_3:9).

33 Question: What is adoption?

A Adoption is an act of God's free grace (1 John 3:1) whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God (John 1:12 Romans 8:17).

34 Question: What is sanctification?

A Sanctification is the work of God's Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13) whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God (Ephesians 4:24) and are enabled more and more to die to sin,

and live to righteousness (Romans 6:11).

35 Question: What are the benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

A The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification (Romans 5:1-2; Romans 5:5), are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17), increase of grace, perseverance in it to the end (Proverbs 4:18 1 John 5:13 1 Peter 1:5).

36 Question: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at their death?

A The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness (Hebrews 12:23) and do immediately pass into glory (Php\_1:23 2 Corinthians 5:8 Luke 23:43), and their bodies, being still united to Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:14) do rest in their graves (Isaiah 57:2) till the resurrection (Job 19:26).

37 Question: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

A At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory (1 Corinthians 15:43), shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment (Matthew 10:32), and made perfectly blessed both in soul and body in the full enjoying of God (1 John 3:2) to all eternity (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

38 Question: What shall be done to the wicked at their death?

A The souls of the wicked shall at their death be cast into the torments of hell (Luke 16:22-24), and their bodies lie in their graves till the resurrection and judgment of the great day (Psalms 49:14).

39 Question: What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?

A At the day of judgment the bodies of the wicked being raised out of their graves, shall be sentenced, together with their souls, to unspeakable torments with the devil and his angels for ever (Daniel 12:1-13 : 2 John 5:28,29 2 Thessalonians 1:9 Matthew 25:41).

40 Question: What did God reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?

A The rule which God first revealed to man for his obedience is the moral law (Deuteronomy 10:4 Matthew 19:17) which is summarised in the ten commandments.

41 Question: What is the sum of the ten commandments?

A The sum of the ten commandments is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbour as ourselves ().

42 Question: Which is the first commandment?

A The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

43 Question: What is required in the first commandment?

A The first commandment requires us to know (1 Chronicles 28:9), and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God (Deuteronomy 26:17), and to worship and glorify him accordingly (Matthew 4:10).

44 Question: Which is the second commandment?

A The second commandment is, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

45 Question: What is required in the second commandment?

A The second commandment requires the receiving, observing (Deuteronomy 32:46 Matthew 28:20), and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in his Word (Deuteronomy 12:32).

46 Question: What is forbidden in the second commandment?

A The second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images (Deuteronomy 4:15-16). or any other way not appointed in his Word (Colossians 2:18).

47 Question: Which is the third commandment?

A The third commandment is, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain.

48 Question: What is required in the third commandment?

A The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names (Psalms 29:2), titles, attributes (Revelation 15:3-4), ordinances (Ec 5:1), Word (Psalms 138:2), and works (Job 36:24 Deuteronomy 28:58-59).

49 Question: Which is the fourth commandment?

A The fourth commandment is, Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor they cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

50 Question: What is required in the fourth commandment?

A The fourth commandment requires the keeping holy to God such set times as he has appointed in his Word, expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to himself (Leviticus 19:30 Deuteronomy 5:12).

51 Question: How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?

A The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days (Leviticus 23:3), and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship (Psalms 92:1-2 Isaiah 58:13-14), except

so much as is taken up in the works of necessity and mercy (Matthew 12:11-12).

52 Question: Which is the fifth commandment?

A The fifth commandment is, Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

53 Question: What is required in the fifth commandment?

A The fifth commandment requires the preserving the honour, and performing the duties belonging to every one in their various positions and relationships as superiors (Ephesians 5:21,22 6:1,5 Romans 13:1), inferiors (Ephesians 6:9), or equals (Romans 12:10).

54 Question: What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?

A The reason annexed to the fifth commandment is, a promise of long life and prosperity -- as far as it shall serve for God's glory, and their own good --to all such as keep this commandment (Ephesians 6:2-3).

55 Question: Which is the sixth commandment?

A The sixth commandment is, Thou shalt not kill.

56 Question: What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A The sixth commandment forbids the taking away of our own life (Acts 16:28), or the life of our neighbour unjustly (Genesis 9:6), or whatever tends to it (Proverbs 24:11-12). 57 Question: Which is the seventh commandment?

A The seventh commandment is, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

58 Question: What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?

A The seventh commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts (Matthew 5:28 Colossians 4:6), words (Ephesians 5:4 2 Timothy 2:22), and actions (Ephesians 5:3). 59 Question: Which is the eighth commandment?

A The eighth commandment is, Thou shalt not steal.

60 Question: What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?

A The eighth commandment forbids whatever does or may unjustly hinder our own (1 Timothy 5:8 Proverbs 28:19 21:6) or our neighbour's wealth, or outward estate (Ephesians 4:28).

61 Question: Which is the ninth commandment?

A The ninth commandment is, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

62 Question: What is required in the ninth commandment?

A The ninth commandment requires the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man (Zechariah 8:16), and of our own (1 Peter 3:16 Acts 25:10), and our neighbour's good name (3 John 1:12), especially in witness-bearing (Proverbs 14:5; Proverbs 14:25).

63 Question: What is the tenth commandment?

A The tenth commandment is, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, or his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.

64 Question: What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A The tenth commandment forbids all discontentment with our own estate (1 Corinthians 10:10), envying or grieving at the good of our neighbour (Galatians 5:26), and all inordinate emotions and affections to anything that is his (Colossians 3:5).

65 Question: Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?

A No mere man, since the fall, is able in his life perfectly to keep the commandments of God (Ec 7:20), but does daily break them in thought (Genesis 8:21), word (James 3:8), and deed (James 3:2).

66 Question: Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?

A Some sins in themselves, and by reason of various aggravations are more heinous in the sight of God than others (John 19:11 1 John 5:15).

67 Question: What does every sin deserve?

A Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come (Ephesians 5:6 Psalms 11:6).

68 Question: How may we escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?

A To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, we must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16), trusting alone to his blood and righteousness. This faith is attended by repentance for the past (Acts 20:21), and leads to holiness in the future.

69 Question: What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace (Hebrews 10:39), whereby we receive (John 1:12), and rest upon him alone for salvation (Php\_3:9), as he is set forth in the gospel (Isaiah 33:22).

70 Question: What is repentance to life?

A Repentance to life is a saving grace (Acts 11:18), whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sins (Acts 2:37), and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ (Joel 2:13), does with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it to God (Jeremiah 31:18-19), with full purpose to strive after new obedience (Psalms 119:59).

71 Question: What are the outward means whereby the Holy Spirit communicates to us the benefits of redemption?

A The outward and ordinary means whereby the Holy Spirit communicates to us the benefits of Christ's redemption, are the Word, by which souls are begotten to spiritual life; Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Prayer, and Meditation, by all which believers are further edified in their most holy faith

(Acts 2:41-42 James 1:18).

72 Question: How is the Word made effectual to salvation?

A The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convicting and converting sinners (Psalms 19:7), and of building them up in holiness and comfort (1 Thessalonians 1:6), through faith to salvation (Romans 1:16).

73 Question: How is the Word to be read and heard that it may become effectual to salvation?

A That the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend to it with diligence (Proverbs 8:34; 1 Peter 2:1-2), and prayer (Psalms 119:18) receive it with faith (Hebrews 4:2), and love (2 Thessalonians 2:10), lay it up into our hearts (Psalms 119:11), and practise it in our lives (James 1:25).

74 Question: How do Baptism and the Lord's Supper become spiritually helpful?

A Baptism and the Lord's Supper become spiritually helpful, not from any virtue in them, or in him who does administer them (1 Corinthians 3:7 1 Peter 3:21), but only by the blessing of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:6) and the working of the Spirit in those who by faith receive them (1 Corinthians 12:13).

75 Question: What is Baptism?

A Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, instituted by Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19) to be to the person baptised a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death, and burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3 Colossians 2:12), of his being ingrafted into him (Galatians 3:27), of remission of sins (Mr 1:4 Acts 22:16), and of his giving up himself to God through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4-5).

76 Question: To whom is Baptism to be administered?

A Baptism is to be administered to all those who actually profess repentance towards God (Acts 2:38 Matthew 3:6 Mr 16:16 Acts 8:12,36,37 10:47,48), and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to none other.

77 Question: Are the infants of such as are professing to be baptised?

A The infants of such as are professing believers are not to be baptised, because there is neither command nor example in the Holy Scriptures for their baptism (Exodus 23:13 Proverbs 30:6).

78 Question: How is baptism rightly administered?

A Baptism is rightly administered by immersion, or dipping the whole body of the person in water (Matthew 3:16 John 3:23), in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, according to Christ's institution, and the practice of the apostles (Matthew 28:19-20), and not by sprinkling or pouring of water, or dipping some part of the body, after the tradition of men (John 4:1-2 Acts 8:38-39).

79 Question: What is the duty of such as are rightly baptized?

A It is the duty of such as are rightly baptized, to give up themselves to some particular and orderly Church of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:47 Acts 9:26 1 Peter 2:5) that they may walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (Luke 1:6).

80 Question: What is the Lord's Supper?

A The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the New Testament, instituted by Jesus Christ; wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to his appointment, his death is shown forth (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporeal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace (1 Corinthians 10:16).

81 Question: What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

A It is required of them who would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:28-29), of their faith to feed upon him, (2 Corinthians 13:5), of their repentance (1 Corinthians 11:31), love (1 Corinthians 11:18-20), and new obedience (1 Corinthians 5:8), lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

82 Question: What is meant by the words, until he come, which are used by the apostle Paul in reference to the Lord's Supper?

A They plainly teach us that our Lord Jesus Christ will come a second time; which is the joy and hope of all believers (Acts 1:11 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

## The Prince of Preachers (biography)

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Charles Haddon Spurgeon

1834 – 1892

### HOW SPURGEON FOUND CHRIST

I HAD been about five years in the most fearful distress of mind, as a boy. If any human being felt more of the terror of God's Law, I can indeed pity and sympathize with him. Bunyan's "Grace Abounding" contains, in the main, my history. Some abysses he went into I never trod; but some into which I plunged he seems to have never known.

I thought the sun was blotted out of my sky - that I had sinned against God that there was no hope for me. I prayed - the Lord knows how I prayed; but I never had a glimpse of an answer that I knew of. I searched the Word of God; the promises were more alarming than the threatenings. I read the privileges of the people of God, but with the fullest persuasion that they were not for me. The scene of my distress was this: I did not know the Gospel. I was in a Christian land. I had Christian parents, but I did not fully understand the freeness and simplicity of the Gospel.

I attended all the places of worship in the town where I lived, but I honestly believe that I did not hear the Gospel fully preached. I do not blame the men, however. One man preached the Divine sovereignty. I could hear him with pleasure, but what was that to a poor sinner who wished to know what he should do to be saved? There was another admirable man who always preached about the law; but what was the use of plowing up ground that wanted to be sown? Another was a great practical teacher. I heard him, but it was very much like a commanding officer teaching the maneuvers of war to a set of men without feet. What could I do? All his exhortations were lost to me. I knew it was said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," but I did not know what I was to believe in Christ.

I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning, when I was going to a place of worship. When I could go no farther, I turned down a street and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there might be a dozen or fifteen people. The minister did not come that morning; snowed in, I suppose. A poor man, a shoemaker, a tailor, or something of that sort went up into the pulpit to preach.

Now, it is well that ministers should be instructed, but this man was really unlearned, as you would say. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason he had nothing else to say. The text was, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He didn't even pronounce the words correctly, but that didn't matter.

There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. He began thus: "My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, 'Look.' Now, that doesn't take a great deal of effort. It isn't lifting your foot or your finger. It is just 'look.' Well, a man need not go to college to learn to look. A man

need not be worth a lot of money to look. Any one can look; a child can look. But this is what the text says. Then it says, 'Look unto Me'."

"Aye," said he, in broad Essex, "many of ye are looking to yourselves. No use looking there. You'll never find comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No. Look to Him by and by. Jesus Christ says, 'Look unto Me.' Some of you say, 'I must wait the Spirit's working.' You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. It says, 'Look unto Me'."

Then the good man followed up his text in this way: "Look unto Me: I am sweating great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hanging on the cross. Look! I am dead and buried. Look unto Me. I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend; I am sitting at the Father's right hand. Oh, look unto Me! Look unto Me!"

When he had got about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the length of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I dare say, with a few present, he knew me to be a stranger. He then said, "Young man, you look very miserable." Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck. He continued: "And you will always be miserable - miserable in life, and miserable in death - if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment you will be saved."

Then he shouted as only a gospel preacher can. "Young man, look to Jesus Christ!" I did 'look'. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun: I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the precious Blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me that before: Trust Christ and you will be saved.

It was, no doubt, wisely ordered, and I must ever say:

E'er since by faith I saw the stream  
Thy wounds supplied for me,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall forever be.

— Written by Spurgeon himself

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### Some Facts About Charles Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is history's most widely read preacher (apart from the biblical ones). Today, there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead.

One woman was converted through reading a single page of one of Spurgeon's sermons wrapped around some butter she had bought.

Spurgeon read *The Pilgrim's Progress* at age 6 and went on to read it over 100 times.

The New Park Street Pulpit and The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit - the collected sermons of Spurgeon during his ministry with that congregation - fill 63 volumes. The sermons' 20-25 million words are equivalent to the 27 volumes of the ninth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. The series stands as the largest set of books by a single author in the history of Christianity.

Spurgeon's mother had 17 children, nine of whom died in infancy.

When Charles Spurgeon was only 10 years old, a visiting missionary, Richard Knill, said that the young Spurgeon would one day preach the gospel to thousands and would preach in Rowland Hill's chapel, the largest Dissenting church in London. His words were fulfilled.

Spurgeon missed being admitted to college because a servant girl inadvertently showed him into a different room than that of the principal who was waiting to interview him. Later, he determined not to reapply for admission when he believed God spoke to him, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not!"

Spurgeon's personal library contained 12,000 volumes - 1,000 printed before 1700. The library, 5,103 volumes at the time of its auction, is now housed at William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri.

Before he was 20, Spurgeon had preached over 600 times.

Spurgeon drew to his services Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone, members of the royal family, members of Parliament, as well as author John Ruskin, Florence Nightingale, and General James Garfield, later president of the United States.

The New Park Street Church invited Spurgeon to come for a 6-month trial period, but Spurgeon asked to come for only 3 months because "the congregation might not want me, and I do not wish to be a hindrance." When Spurgeon arrived at The New Park Street Church, in 1854, the congregation had 232 members. By the end of his pastorate, 38 years later, that number had increased to 5,311. Altogether, 14,460 people were added to the church during Spurgeon's tenure. The church was the largest independent congregation in the world.

Spurgeon typically read 6 books per week and could remember what he had read, and where, even years later.

Spurgeon once addressed an audience of 23,654 without a microphone or any mechanical amplification.

Spurgeon began a pastors' college that trained nearly 900 students during his lifetime and it continues today.

In 1865, Spurgeon's sermons sold 25,000 copies every week. They were translated into more than 20 languages.

At least 3 of Spurgeon's works, including the multi-volume Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit series, have sold more than 1,000,000 copies. One of these, All of Grace, was the first book ever published by Moody Press (formerly the Bible Institute Colportage Association) and is still its all-time bestseller.

During his lifetime, Spurgeon is estimated to have preached to 10,000,000 people.

Spurgeon once said he counted 8 sets of thoughts that passed through his mind at the same time while he was preaching.

Testing the acoustics in the vast Agricultural Hall, Spurgeon shouted, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." A worker high in the rafters of the building heard this and became converted to Christ as a result.

Susannah Thompson, Spurgeon's wife, became an invalid at age 33 and could seldom attend her husband's services after that.

Spurgeon spent 20 years studying the Book of Psalms and writing his commentary on them, *The Treasury of David*.

Spurgeon insisted that his congregation's new building, The Metropolitan Tabernacle, employ Greek architecture because the New Testament was written in Greek. This one decision has greatly influenced subsequent church architecture throughout the world.

The theme for Spurgeon's Sunday morning sermon was usually not chosen until Saturday night.

For an average sermon, Spurgeon took no more than one page of notes into the pulpit, yet he spoke at a rate of 140 words per minute for 40 minutes.

The only time that Spurgeon wore clerical garb was when he visited Geneva and preached in Calvin's pulpit.

By accepting some of his many invitations to speak, Spurgeon oft preached 10 times in a week

Spurgeon met often with Hudson Taylor, the well-known missionary to China, and with George Mueller, the orphanage founder.

Spurgeon had two children - twin sons - and both became preachers. Thomas succeeded his father as pastor of the Tabernacle, and Charles, Jr., took charge of the orphanage his father had founded.

Spurgeon's wife, Susannah, called him Tirshatha, a title used of the Judean governor under the Persian Empire, meaning "Your Excellency."

Spurgeon often worked 18 hours a day. Famous explorer and missionary David Livingstone once asked him, "How do you manage to do two men's work in a single day?" Spurgeon replied, "You have forgotten that there are two of us."

Spurgeon spoke out so strongly against slavery that American publishers of his sermons began deleting his remarks on the subject.

Occasionally Spurgeon asked members of his congregation not to attend the next Sunday's service, so that newcomers might find a seat. During one 1879 service, the regular congregation left so that newcomers waiting outside might get in; the building immediately filled again.

## Why Some Leave Christ

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### WHY SOME LEAVE CHRIST

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“Will ye also go away?” — John 6:67

NO mischief that ever befalls our Christian communities is more lamentable than that which comes from the defection of the members. The heaviest sorrow that can wring a pastor's heart is such as comes from the perfidy<sup>3</sup> of his most familiar friend. The direst calamity the Church can dread is not such as will arise from the assault of enemies outside, but from false brethren and traitors within the camp...

In all our churches, among the many who enlist, there are some who desert. They continue awhile, and then they go back to the world. The radical reason why they retract is an obvious incongruity.<sup>4</sup> “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” (1 John 2:19). The unconverted adherents to our fellowship are no loss to the Church when they depart. They are not a real loss, any more than the scattering of the chaff from the threshing-floor is a detriment<sup>5</sup> to the wheat. Christ keeps the winnowing fan always going. His own preaching constantly sifted His hearers. Some were blown away because they were chaff. They did not really believe. By the ministry of the Gospel, by the order of Providence, by all the arrangements of divine government, the precious are separated from the vile, the dross is purged away from the silver [so] that the good seed and the pure metal may remain and be preserved. The process is always painful. It causes great searching of heart amongst those who abide faithful and occasions deep anxiety to gentle spirits of tender, sympathetic mold...I put it to myself. I put it to those who are the officers of the church. I put it to every member without exception: Will ye also go away?

...Why do [some] renounce the religious profession they once espoused? The fundamental reason is [lack] of grace, a lack of true faith, an absence of vital godliness. It is, however, the outward reasons that expose the inward apostasy of the heart from Christ of which I am anxious to treat.

WHY SOME LEAVE CHRIST: Some there are in these days, as there were in our Lord's own day, who depart from Christ because they cannot bear His doctrine. Our Lord had more explicitly than on any former occasion declared the necessity of the soul's feeding upon Himself. They probably misunderstood His language, but they certainly took umbrage<sup>6</sup> at His statement. Hence, there were those who said, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” (John 6:60).

So they walked no more with Him.

There are many points and particulars in which the Gospel is offensive to human nature and revolting to the pride of the creature. It was not intended to please man. How can we attribute such a purpose to God? Why should He devise a Gospel to suit the whims of our poor fallen human nature? He intended to save men, but He never intended to gratify their depraved tastes. Rather

doth He lay the axe to the root of the tree and cut down human pride. When God's servants are led to set forth some humbling doctrine, there are those who say, "Ah! I will not assent to that." They kick against any truth that wounds their prejudices.

What say you, brethren, to the claims of the Gospel on your allegiance? Should you discover that God's Word rebukes your favorite pleasure or contradicts your cherished convictions, will you forthwith take umbrage and go away? Nay, but if your hearts are right with Christ, you will be prepared to welcome all His teaching and yield obedience to all His precepts. Only prove it to be Christ's teaching, and the right-minded professor is ready to receive it. That which is transparent on the face of Scripture he will cordially accept, as he says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). As for that which is merely inferred and argued from the general drift of Scripture, the true heart will not be hasty to reject, but patient to investigate, like the Bereans, who "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). Oh! That the Word of Christ may dwell in us richly! God forbid that any of us should ever turn aside offended because of Him, His blessed person, His holy example, or His sacred teaching! May we be ever ready to believe what He says and prompt to do what He commands!...

Others there are who desert the Savior for the sake of gain. Many have been entangled in that snare...If you would make money—and there need be nothing sinful in that—do let it be made honestly. Never let riches be pursued under the presence of religion. Sell your wares and find a market for your merchandise; but do not sell Christ nor barter a heavenly birthright for a worthless bribe. Put what goods you please into your shop window, but do not put a...hypocritical expression on your face or "wear a holy leer" with a view of turning godliness into

3 perfidy – betrayal.

4 incongruity – lack of conformity; something out of place in its context.

5 detriment – loss; damage.

6 umbrage – a feeling of anger caused by being offended.

gain. God save us from that arrant<sup>7</sup> villainy! May it never have a footing in our midst! Does any man join a church for the sake of the respectability it implies, for the standing it may give him, or for the credit he may get? He will soon find that it does not answer his purpose. Then away he will go. The graver probability is that he will be thrust out with shame.

Some leave Christ and go away terrified by persecution. Nowadays it is supposed that there is no such thing. But that is a mistake...Godless husbands play the part of petty tyrants and will not permit their wives the enjoyment of religion, but make their lives bitter with a galling<sup>8</sup> bondage. Employers full often wreak malice on servants whose piety towards God is their sole cause of offense. Worse still, there are working men who consider themselves intelligent, who cannot allow their fellow-workman liberty to go to a place of worship without sneers, jeers, and cruel mocking. In many cases, the mirth of the workshop is never louder than when it is turned against a believer in Christ. They count it rare fun to hunt a man who cares for the salvation of his soul. They call themselves "Englishmen," but certainly, they are no credit to their country. Look at the base-born,

ill-bred cowards.

Yonder is an atheist: he is raving about his rights because the magistrate will not believe him on his oath. He claims liberty of conscience to be a heathen himself, but denies his comrade's right to be a Christian. Look at that little party of British workmen: they belong to the Sabbath desecration society. They are petitioning Parliament to open museums and theaters on Sundays. At the same time, they are hounding to death a poor fellow who prefers going to chapel. They air their own self-respect by the oaths they utter, while they betray their self-abasement by the scorn they vent on those who presume to sing a hymn. They hail the drunkard as a chum and scout<sup>9</sup> the sober man as a fiend...God give you grace to bear such persecutions as these! If they cut us to the quick, may we learn to bear them with equanimity,<sup>10</sup> and even to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for the Sav-ior's sake!

Some of us have had to run the gauntlet for many years. What we have said has been constantly misrepresented What we have endeav-ored to do has been misjudged and our motives have been misunder-stood. Yet here we are, as happy as anybody out of heaven. We have not been injured by any or all the calumnies<sup>11</sup> that have been heaped upon us. Our foes would have crushed us but, blessed be God, He cheered us often when we were cast down. The Lord give you, in like manner, strength of mind and courage of heart to bear the trial manfully! Then you will care no more for the laughter and the sneers of men than you do for the noise of those migratory birds high overhead, which you hear on an autumn evening as they are making their weary journey to a distant clime. Take heart, man.

Fear God, and face your accusers. True courage grows strong on opposition. Never think of deserting the army of Christ. Least of all should you play the cow-ard because of the insolence of some ill-mannered bully. Let not your faith be vanquished by such scoffing...

Anon,<sup>12</sup> there are people who forsake true religion out of sheer levity.<sup>13</sup> I know not how to account for some men's defections. If you take up the list of wrecks, you will notice some that have gone down through collisions and others through striking upon rocks. But sometimes you meet with a vessel "foundered<sup>14</sup> at sea." How it happened no one knows. The owner himself cannot understand it. It was a calm day, and there was a cloudless sky when the vessel sank. There are some professors who, concerning faith, have made shipwreck under such apparently easy circumstances—so free from trial, so exempt from temptation—that we have not seen anything to awaken anxiety on their behalf; yet all of a sudden they have foundered. We are startled and amazed!

I remember one that fell into a gross sin, of whom a brother unwisely said, "If that man is not a Christian, I am not." His prayers had certainly been sweet. Many a time they have melted me down before the throne of grace; and yet the life of God could not have been in his soul, for he lived and died in flagrant vice and was impenitent to the last. Such cases I can only attribute to a sort of levity that can be charmed with a sermon or a play; take a pew at the chapel or a box at the opera with equal nonchalance;<sup>15</sup> and eagerly follow the excitement of the hour, "everything by turns, and nothing long."<sup>16</sup> Unstable as water, they shall not excel (Genesis 49:4). At the spur of a

7 arrant – thoroughgoing; extreme example of.

8 galling – irritating; offensive to the mind or spirit.

9 scout – mock at.

10 equanimity – steadiness of mind under stress.

11 calumnies – false accusations; malicious misrepresentations.

12 anon – from time to time.

13 levity – instability.

14 foundered – sunk.

15 nonchalance – casual lack of concern.

16 Lord Byron (1788–1824) – English poet; a leading figure of the Romantic Movement.

moment, they profess Christianity; they do not espouse it; and then without troubling themselves to renounce it, they drop off into infidelity...You spring up soon, and suddenly you wither. Hardly is the seed sown before the sprout appears. What a wonderful harvest you promise! But ah! No sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than because there is no earth, the good seed withers away...Never cease to pray that you may be rooted and grounded, established and built up in Christ, so that when the floods come and the winds blow, you may not fall with a great destruction, as that house fell which was built upon the sand (Matthew 7:24-27).

And, oh! How many leave Christ for the sake of sensual enjoyments! I will not enlarge upon this. Certain, however, it is that the pleasures of sin for a season fascinate their minds until they sacrifice their souls at the shrine of sordid vanity. For a merry dance, a wanton amusement, or a transient joy that would not bear reflection, they have renounced the pleasures that never pall,<sup>17</sup> the immortal hopes that never fail, and turned their backs upon that blessed Savior Who gives and feeds the tastes for joys unspeakable, for joys of glory full.

In our pastoral oversight of a church like this, we have painful evidence that a considerable number gradually grow cold. The elders' reports of the absentees reiterate the vain excuses for non-attendance. One has so many children. The distance is too great for another. When they joined the church their family was just as large, and the distance was just the same. But the household cares become more irksome<sup>18</sup> when the concern for religion begins to flag, and the fatigue of travelling increases when their zeal for the house of God falters. The elders fear they are growing cold. No actual transgression can we detect, but there is a gradual declension over which we grieve. I dread that cold-heartedness. It steals so insensibly, yet so surely over the entire frame. I do not say that it is worse than open sin. It cannot be. Yet it is more insidious.<sup>19</sup> A flagrant delinquency would startle one as a fit does a patient; but a slow process of backsliding may steal like paralysis over a person without awakening suspicion. Like the sleep that comes over men in the frozen regions, if they yield to it, they will never wake again...

Unsound doctrine occasions many to apostatize. There is always plenty of that about. Deceivers will beguile the weak. Some have been led aside by modern doubt. Modest infidelity has its partisans. They begin cautiously by reading works with a view to answer scientific or intellectual skepticism. They read a little more and dive a little deep-er into the turbid<sup>20</sup> stream because they feel well able to stand against the insidious influence. They go on until at last they are staggered.

They do not repair to those who could help their scruples; but they continue to flounder on until at last they have lost their footing; and he that said he was a believer has ended in stark atheism, doubting even the existence of a God. Oh! That those who are well taught would be content with their teaching!

Why meddle with heresies? What can they do but pollute your minds?...Why should you be so unwise as to go through pools of foul teaching merely because you think it easy to cleanse yourself of its pollution? Such trifling is dangerous. When you begin to read a book and find it pernicious, put it aside. Someone may upbraid you for not reading it all through. But why should you?...One sentence of some books ought to be quite enough for a sensible man to reject the whole mass. Let those that can relish such meat have it, but I have a taste for better food. Keep to the study of the Word of God. If it be your duty to expose these evils, encounter them bravely with prayer to God to help you. But if not, as a humble believer in Jesus, what business have you to taste and test such noxious fare, when it is exposed in the market?

From *Absconding and Apostasy*, published on Thursday, March 22, 1917.

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Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist minister; history's most widely read preacher (outside the Bible); born at

Kelvedon, Essex, England.

17 pall – become unsatisfying.

18 irksome – troublesome.

19 insidious – spreading harmfully in a subtle way.

20 turbid – murky.

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