

MERCY, OMNIPOTENCE AND JUSTICE

NO. 137

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 21, 1857,
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“The Lord is slow to anger and great in power
and will not at all acquit the wicked.”
Nahum 1:3.*

WORKS of art require some education in the beholder before they can be thoroughly appreciated. We do not expect that the uninstructed should at once perceive the varied excellencies of a painting from some master hand. We do not imagine that the superlative glories of the harmonies of the princes of song will enrapture the ears of clownish listeners. There must be something in the man, himself, before he can understand the wonders either of Nature or of art. Certainly this is true of character. By reason of failures in our character and faults in our life, we are not capable of understanding all the separate beauties and the united perfection of the Character of Christ, or of God, His Father. Were we as pure as the angels in Heaven, were we what our race once was in the Garden of Eden—immaculate and perfect—it is quite certain that we should have a far better and nobler idea of the Character of God than we can by possibility attain unto in our fallen state! But you cannot fail to notice that men, through the alienation of their natures, are continually misrepresenting God because they cannot appreciate His perfection. Does God at one time withhold His hand from wrath? Lo, they say that God has ceased to judge the world and looks upon it with listless phlegmatic indifference! Does He at another time punish the world for sin? They say He is severe and cruel. Men *will* misunderstand Him because they are imperfect and are not capable of admiring the Character of God!

Now, this is especially true with regard to certain lights and shadows in the Character of God which He has so marvelously blended in the perfection of His Nature. Although we cannot see the exact point of meeting, yet if we have been at all enlightened by the Spirit, we are struck with wonder at the sacred harmony! In reading Holy Scripture you can say of Paul that he was noted for his zeal—of Peter that he will always be memorable for his courage—of John that he was noted for his lovingness. But did you ever notice, when you read the history of our Master, Jesus Christ, that you never could say He was notable for any one virtue at all? Why was that? It was because the boldness of Peter did so outgrow itself as to throw other virtues into the shade or else the other virtues were so

deficient that they set forth his boldness. The very feat of a man being noted for something is a sure sign that he is not so notable in other things. And it is because of the complete perfection of Jesus Christ that we are not accustomed to say of Him that He was eminent for His zeal, or for His love, or for His courage. We say of Him that He was a perfect character but we are not very easily able to perceive where the shadows and the lights blended, where the meekness of Christ blended into His courage and where His loveliness blended into His boldness in denouncing sin! We are not able to detect the points where they meet. And I believe the more thoroughly we are sanctified, the more it will be a subject of wonder to us how it could be that virtues which seemed so diverse were in so majestic a manner united into one Character!

It is just the same of God. And I have been led to make the remarks I have made on my text because of the two clauses thereof which seem to describe contrary attributes. You will notice that there are two things in my text—He is “slow to anger,” and yet He, “will not at all acquit the wicked.” *Our* character is so imperfect that we cannot see the congruity of these two attributes. We are wondering, perhaps, and saying, “How is it He is slow to anger and yet will not acquit the wicked?” It is because His Character is perfect that we do not see where these two things melt into each other—the Infallible Righteousness and Severity of the Ruler of the world and His loving kindness, His long-suffering and His tender mercies! The absence of any one of these things from the Character of God would have rendered it imperfect. The presence of them both, though we may not see how they can be congruous with each other, stamps the Character of God with a perfection elsewhere unknown.

And now I shall endeavor this morning to set forth these two attributes of God and the connecting link. “*The Lord is slow to anger,*” then comes the *connecting link*, “great in power.” I shall have to show you how that “great in power” refers to the sentence foregoing and the sentence succeeding. And then we shall consider the next attribute—“He will not at all acquit the wicked”—*an attribute of justice*.

I. Let us begin with the first characteristic of God. He is said to be “SLOW TO ANGER.” Let me declare the attribute and then trace it to its source.

God is “slow to anger.” When Mercy comes into the world, she drives winged steeds. The axles of her chariot wheels are glowing hot with speed. But when Wrath comes, she walks with tardy footsteps. She is not in haste to slay, she is not swift to condemn. God’s rod of mercy is always in His hands outstretched. God’s sword of justice is in its scabbard—not rusted in it—it can be easily withdrawn—but held there by that hand that presses it back into its sheath, crying, “Sleep, O sword, sleep. For I will have mercy upon sinners and will forgive their transgres-

sions.” God has many orators in Heaven, some of them speak with swift words. Gabriel, when he comes down to tell glad tidings, speaks swiftly—angelic hosts, when they descend from Glory, fly with wings of lightning when they proclaim, “Peace on earth, good will towards men.” But the dark angel of wrath is a slow orator—with many a pause between, where melting pity joins his languid notes, he speaks and when but half his oration is completed, he often stops and withdraws himself from his rostrum giving way to pardon and to mercy—he having but addressed the people that they might be driven to repentance and so might receive peace from the scepter of God’s love.

Brothers and Sisters, I shall now try to show you how God is slow to anger.

First, I will prove that He is, “slow to anger,” *because He never smites without first threatening*. Men who are passionate and swift in anger give a word and a blow—sometimes the blow first and the word afterwards! Oftentimes kings, when subjects have rebelled against them, have crushed them, first, and then reasoned with them afterwards. They have given no time of threat, no period of repentance. They have allowed no space for turning to their allegiance. They have at once crushed them in their hot displeasure, making a full end of them! Not so God—He will not cut down the tree that cumpers the ground until He has dug about it and fertilized it. He will not at once slay the man whose character is the most vile—until He has first hewn him by the Prophets, He will not hew him by judgments. He will warn the sinner before He condemns him. He will send his Prophets, “rising up early and late,” giving him “line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.” He will not smite the city without warning. Sodom shall not perish until Lot has been within her. The world shall not be drowned until eight Prophets have been preaching in it and Noah, the eighth, comes to prophesy of the coming of the Lord. He will not smite Nineveh till He has sent a Jonah. He will not crush Babylon till His Prophets have cried through its streets. He will not slay a man until He has given many warnings, by sicknesses, by the pulpit, by Providence and by consequences. He smites not with a heavy blow at once. He threatens first. He does not in Grace, as in Nature, send lightning, first, and thunder afterwards, but He sends the thunder of His Law, first, and the lightning of execution follows it. The Lictor of Divine Justice carries His axe bound up in a bundle of rods, for He will not cut off men until He has reprovved them, that they may repent. He is “slow to anger.”

But again, God is also *very slow to threaten*. Although He will threaten before He condemns, yet He is slow even in His threats. God’s lips move swiftly when He promises, but slowly when He threatens. Long rolls the pealing thunder, slowly roll the drums of Heaven when they sound the

death march of sinners. Sweetly flows the music of the rapid notes which proclaim Free Grace and love and mercy. God is slow to threaten. He will not send a Jonah to Nineveh until Nineveh has become foul with sin. He will not even tell Sodom it shall be burned with fire until Sodom has become a reeking dunghill, obnoxious to earth as well as Heaven! He will not drown the world with a deluge, or even threaten to do it, until the sons of God, themselves, make unholy alliances and begin to depart from Him. He does not even threaten the sinner by his conscience until the sinner has oftentimes sinned. He will often tell the sinner of his sins, often urge him to repent, but He will not make Hell stare him hard in the face, with all its dreadful terror, until much sin has stirred up the lion from his lair and made God hot in wrath against the iniquities of man! He is slow even to threaten.

But, best of all, when God threatens, *how slow He is to sentence the criminal!* When He has told them that He will punish unless they repent, how long a space He gives them in which to turn unto Himself! “He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nothing.” He stays His hand. He will not be in hot haste when He has threatened them, to execute the sentence upon them. Have you ever observed that scene in the Garden of Eden at the time of the Fall? God had threatened Adam, that if he sinned he should surely die. Adam sinned—did God make haste to sentence him? ‘Tis sweetly said, “The Lord God *walked* in the Garden in the cool of the day.” Perhaps that fruit was plucked at early morn. Maybe it was plucked at noontime. But God was in no haste to condemn! He waited till the sun was well near set and in the cool of the day came and as an old expositor has put it very beautifully, “when He did come, He did not come on wings of wrath, but He ‘walked in the Garden in the cool of the day.’” He was in no haste to slay! I think I see Him, as He was represented then to Adam, in those glorious days when God walked with man. I think I see the wonderful similitude in which the Unseen did veil Himself—I see Him walking among the trees so slowly—yes, if it were right to give such a picture—beating His breast and shedding tears that He should have to condemn man! At last I hear His doleful voice—“Adam, where are you? Where have you cast yourself, poor Adam? You have cast yourself from My favor, you have cast yourself into nakedness and into fear, for you are hiding yourself—Adam, where are you? I pity you! You thought to be God. Before I condemn you, I will give you one note of pity. Adam, where are you?” Yes, the Lord was slow to anger, slow to write the sentence even though the command had been broken and the threat was therefore of necessity brought into force! It was so with the Flood—He threatened the earth but He would not fully seal the sentence and stamp it with the seal of Heaven until He had given space for repentance. Noah must come and through his 120 years must preach

the Word of God. He must come and testify to an unthinking and an ungodly generation! The Ark must be built to be a perpetual sermon! There it must be upon its mountaintop, waiting for the floods to float it, that it might be an everyday warning to the ungodly! O Heavens, why did you not at once open your floods? Fountains of the great deep, why did you not burst up in a moment? God said, "I will sweep away the world with a flood"—why, why did you not rise? "Because," I hear them saying with gurgling notes, "because, although God had threatened, He was slow to sentence and He said in Himself, 'Haply, they may repent. Perhaps they may turn from their sin.' And therefore did He bid us rest and be quiet, for He is slow to anger."

And yet once more—even when the sentence against a sinner is signed and sealed by Heaven's broad seal of condemnation—even then, *God is slow to carry it out*. The doom of Sodom is sealed. God has declared it shall be burned with fire. But God is tardy. He stops. He will, Himself, go down to Sodom that He may see the iniquity of it. And when He gets there, guilt is rife in the streets. 'Tis night and the crew of worse than beasts besiege the door. Does He then lift His hands? Does He then say, "Rain Hell out of Heaven, you skies"? No, He lets them pursue their riot all night, spares them to the last moment and though when the sun was risen, the burning hail began to fall, yet was the reprieve as long as possible. God was not in haste to condemn. God had threatened to root out the Canaanites. He declared that all the children of Ammon should be cut off. He had promised Abraham that He would give their land unto his seed forever and they were to be utterly slain—but He made the children of Israel wait 400 years in Egypt—and He let these Canaanites live all through the days of the Patriarchs. And even then, when He led His avenging ones out of Egypt, He kept them forty years in the wilderness because He was reluctant to slay poor Canaan. "Yet," said He, "I will give them space. Though I have stamped their condemnation, though their death warrant has come forth from the Court of King's Bench and must be executed, yet will I reprieve them as long as I can." And He stops until at last, Mercy had had enough and Jericho's melting ashes and the destruction of Ai betokened that the sword was out of its scabbard and God had awaked like a mighty man—and like a strong man full of wrath! God is slow to execute the sentence even when He has declared it.

And ah, my Friends, there is a sorrowful thought that has just crossed my mind. There are some men yet alive who are sentenced now. I believe that Scripture bears me out in a dreadful thought which I just wish to hint at. There are some men who are condemned before they are finally damned—there are some men whose sins go before them unto judgment—who are given over to a seared conscience. Concerning these it may be said that repentance and salvation are impossible. There are

some few men in the world who are like John Bunyan's man in the iron cage—can never get out. They are like Esau—they find no place of repentance, though like he, they do not seek it—for if they sought it they would find it. Many there are who have sinned “the sin unto death,” concerning whom we cannot pray. For we are told, “I do not say that you shall pray for it.” But why, why, why are they not already in the flames? If they are condemned; if Mercy has shut her eyes forever upon them; if she never will stretch out her hand to give them pardon—why, why, why are they not cut down and swept away? Because God says, “I will not have mercy upon them, but I will let them live a little while longer, though I have condemned them. I am reluctant to carry the sentence out. I will spare them as long as it is right that man should live. I will let them have a long life here, for they will have a fearful eternity of wrath forever.” Yes, let them have their little whirl of pleasure. Their end shall be most fearful. Let them beware, for although God is slow to anger, He is sure in it.

If God were not slow to anger, would He not have smitten this huge city of ours, this behemoth city? Would He not have smitten it into a thousand pieces and blotted out the remembrance of it from the earth? The iniquities of this city are so great that if God should dig up her very foundations and cast her into the sea, she well deserves it! Our streets at night present spectacles of vice that cannot be equaled! Surely there can be no nation and no country that can show a city so utterly debauched as this great city of London if our midnight streets are indications of our immorality! You allow, in your public places of resort—I mean you, my lords and ladies—you allow things to be said in your hearing of which your modesty ought to be ashamed! You can sit in theatres to hear plays at which modesty would blush—I say nothing of piety. That the ruder sex could have listened to the obscenities of *La Traviata* is surely bad enough—but that ladies of the highest refinement and the most approved taste should dishonor themselves by such a patronage of vice is, indeed, intolerable! Let the sins of the lower theatres escape without your censure, you gentlemen of England—the lowest bestiality of the nethermost Hell of a playhouse can look to your opera houses for their excuse! I thought that with the pretensions this city makes to piety, for sure, they would not have so far gone and that after such a warning as they have had from the press, itself—a press which is certainly not too religious—they would not so indulge their evil passions! But because the pill is gilded, you suck down the poison—because the thing is popular, you patronize it—it is lustful, it is abominable, it is deceitful! You take your children to hear what yourselves never ought to listen to! You will sit in merry and grand company to listen to things from which your modesty

ought to revolt! And I would surely hope it does, although the tide may for a while deceive you.

Ah, God only knows the secret wickedness of this great city! It demands a loud and a trumpet voice. It needs a Prophet to cry aloud, "Sound an alarm, sound an alarm, sound an alarm," in this city, for verily the Enemy grows upon us, the power of the Evil One is mighty and we are fast going to Perdition unless God shall put forth His hand and roll back the black torrent of iniquity that streams down our streets! But God is slow to anger and does still stay His sword. Wrath said yesterday, "Unsheathe yourself, O sword." And the sword struggled to get free. Mercy put her hand upon the hilt and said, "Be still!" "Unsheathe yourself, O sword!" Again it struggled from its scabbard. Mercy put her hand on it and said, "Back!"—and it rattled back again. Wrath stamped his foot and said, "Awake O sword, awake!" It struggled yet again, till half its blade was outdrawn. "Back, back!"—said Mercy and with a manly push she sent it back rattling into its sheath—and there it still sleeps—for the Lord is "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy."

Now I am *to trace this attribute of God to its source*—why is He slow to anger?

He is slow to anger, *because He is Infinitely Good*. Good is His name—"Good"—God. Good in His Nature—because He is slow to anger. He is slow to anger, again, *because He is great*. Little things are always swift in anger, great things are not so. The silly dog barks at every passerby and bears no insult. The lion would bear a thousand times as much. And the bull sleeps in his pasture and will bear much before he lifts up his might. The leviathan in the sea, though he makes the deep to be hoary when he is enraged, yet is slow to be stirred up, while the little and puny are always swift in anger. God's greatness is one reason of the slowness of His wrath!

II. But to proceed at once to the link. A great reason why He is slow to anger is because He is GREAT IN POWER. This is to be the connecting link between this part of the subject and the last and, therefore, I must beg your attention. I say that these words, *great in power*, connect the first sentence to the last. And it does so in this way. The Lord is slow to anger and He is slow to anger because He is great in power. "How say you so?"—asks one. I answer, he that is great in power has power over himself. And he that can keep his own temper down and subdue himself, is greater than he who rules a city, or can conquer nations. We heard but yesterday, or the day before, mighty displays of God's power in the rolling thunder which alarmed us. And when we saw the splendor of His might in the glistening lightning when He lifted up the gates of Heaven and we saw the brightness thereof and then He closed them again upon the dusty earth in a moment—even then we did not see anything but the crumbs

of His power, compared with the power which He has over Himself. When God's power restrains Himself, then it is power, indeed—the power to curb power—the power that binds Omnipotence is Omnipotence surpassed! God is great in power and, therefore, does He keep in His anger. A man who has a strong mind can bear to be insulted, can bear offenses because he is strong. The weak mind snaps and snarls at the little—the strong mind bears it like a rock. It moves not, though a thousand breakers dash upon it and cast their pitiful malice in the spray upon its summit. God marks His enemies and yet He moves not. He stands still and lets them curse Him, yet is He not wrathful. If He were less of a God than He is, if He were less mighty than we know Him to be, He would long before this have sent forth the whole of His thunders and emptied the magazines of Heaven! He would long before this have blasted the earth with the wondrous mines He has prepared in its lower surface, the flame that burns there would have consumed us and we would have been utterly destroyed! We bless God that the greatness of His power is our protection! He is slow to anger because He is great in power.

And now there is no difficulty in showing how this link unites itself with the next part of the text. "He is great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked." This needs no demonstration in words. I have but to touch the feelings and you will see it. The greatness of His power is an assurance and an insurance that He will not acquit the wicked. Who among you could witness the storm on Friday night without having thoughts concerning your own sinfulness stirred in your bosoms? Men do not think of God, the Punisher, or Jehovah, the Avenger, when the sun is shining and the weather calm. But in times of tempest, whose cheek is not blanched? The Christian oftentimes rejoices in it. He can say, "My soul is well at ease amidst this revelry of earth. I do rejoice at it. It is a day of feasting in my Father's hall, a day of high feast and carnival in Heaven and I am glad—

***"The God that reigns on high,
And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky
And manages the seas,
This awful God is ours!
Our Father and our love,
He shall send down His Heavenly powers
To carry us above."***

But the man who is not of an easy conscience will be ill at ease when the timbers of the house are creaking and the foundations of the solid earth seem to groan! Ah, who is he, then, that does not tremble? Yonder lofty tree is split in half. That lightning flash has smitten its trunk and there it lies forever blasted, a monument of what God can do! Who stood there and saw it? Was he a swearer? Did he swear, then? Was he a Sabbath-

breaker? Did he love his Sabbath-breaking, then? Was he haughty? Did he then despise God? Ah, how he shook! Saw you not his hair stand on end? Did not his cheeks blanch in an instant? Did he not close his eyes and start back in horror when he saw that dreadful spectacle and thought God would smite him, too? Yes, the power of God, when seen in the tempest, on sea or on land, in the earthquake or in the hurricane, is instinctively a proof that He will not acquit the wicked! I know not how to explain the feeling, but it is nevertheless the truth—majestic displays of Omnipotence have an effect upon the mind of convincing even the hardened—that God, who is so powerful, “will not at all acquit the wicked.” Thus have I tried to explain and make bare the link of the chain.

III. The last attribute and the most terrible one, is, “HE WILL NOT AT ALL ACQUIT THE WICKED.” Let me unfold this, first of all, and then let me endeavor to trace it, also, to its source, as I did the first attribute.

God “will not acquit the wicked.” How can I prove this? I prove it thus. Never once has He pardoned an unpunished sin. Not in all the years of the Most High, not in all the days of His right hand has He once blotted out sin without punishment! “What?” you say—“were not those in Heaven pardoned? Are there not many transgressors pardoned and do they not escape without punishment? Has He not said, ‘I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and like a thick cloud your iniquities?’” Yes, true, most true and yet my assertion is also true—not one of all those sins that have been pardoned were pardoned without punishment! Do you ask me why and how such a thing as that can be the truth? I point you to yonder dreadful sight on Calvary! The punishment which fell not on the forgiven sinner fell there! The cloud of Justice was charged with fiery hail—the sinner deserved it—it fell on Him! But, for all that, it fell and spent its fury. It fell there, in that great reservoir of misery. It fell into the Savior’s heart! The plagues which should light on *our* ingratitude did not fall on us, but they fell somewhere and who was it who was plagued? Tell me, Gethsemane. Tell me, O Calvary’s summit, who was plagued? The doleful answer comes, “*Eli, Eli, lama Sabachani!*” “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” It is Jesus suffering all the plagues of sin! Sin is still punished, though the *sinner* is delivered.

But you say this has scarcely proven that He will not acquit the wicked! I hold it *has* proven it and proven it clearly. But do you need any further proof that God will not acquit the wicked? Need I lead you through a long list of terrible wonders that God has worked—the wonders of His vengeance? Shall I show you blighted Eden? Shall I let you see a world all drowned—sea monsters whelping and stabling in the palaces of kings? Shall I let you hear the last shriek of the last drowning man as he falls into the flood and dies, washed by that huge wave from the hilltop? Shall I let you see Death riding upon the summit of a crested

billow, upon a sea that knows no shore and triumphing because his work is done—his quiver empty, for all men are slain, except where life flows in the midst of death in yonder Ark? Need I let you see Sodom, with its terrified inhabitants, when the volcano of Almighty Wrath spouted fiery hail upon it? Shall I show you the earth opening its mouth to swallow up Korah, Dathan and Abiram? Need I take you to the plagues of Egypt? Shall I again repeat the death shriek of Pharaoh and the drowning of his host? Surely, we need not to be told of cities that are in ruins, or of nations that have been cut off in a day. You need not to be told how God has smitten the earth from one side to the other when He has been angry and how He has melted mountains in His hot displeasure! No, we have proofs enough in history, proofs enough in Scripture that “He will not at all acquit the wicked.” If you wanted the best proof, however, you would borrow the black wings of a miserable imagination and fly beyond the world through the dark realm of chaos on—far on—where those battlements of fire are gleaming with a horrid light! If through them, with a spirit’s safety, you could fly and could behold the worm that never dies, the Pit that knows no bottom—and could you there see the unquenchable fire and listen to the shrieks and wails of men and women who are banished forever from God—if, Sirs, it were possible for you to hear the sullen groans and hollow moans and shrieks of tortured ghosts, then would you come back to this world amazed and petrified with horror and you would say, “Indeed, He will not acquit the wicked.” HELL is the argument of the text—may you never have to prove the text by feeling in yourselves the argument fully carried out. “He will not at all acquit the wicked.”

And now *we trace this terrible attribute to its source*. Why is this? We reply, God will not acquit the wicked *because He is good*. What? Does goodness demand that sinners be punished? It does. The judge must condemn the murderer because he loves his nation. I cannot let you go free. I cannot and I must not. You would slay others who belong to this fair Commonwealth if I were to let you go free. “No, I must condemn you from the very loveliness of My Nature.” The kindness of a king demands the punishment of those who are guilty. It is not wrathful in the Legislature to make severe laws against great sinners. It is but love towards the rest that sin should be restrained! Yonder great floodgates which keep back the torrent of sin are painted black and look right horrible, like horrid dungeon gates, they frighten my spirit. But are they proofs that God is not good? No, Sirs. If you could open wide those gates and let the deluge of sin flow on us, then would you cry, “O God, O God! Shut the gates of punishment! Let Law again be established! Set up the pillars and swing the gates upon their hinges! Shut the gates of punishment that this world may not again be utterly destroyed by men who have become

worse than brutes.” It needs for very goodness’ sake that sin should be punished. Mercy, with her weeping eyes, (for she has wept for sinners), when she finds they will not repent, looks more terribly stern in her loveliness than Justice in all his majesty! She drops the white flag from her hand and says—“No. I called and they refused. I stretched out my hand and no man regarded. Let them die, let them die”—and that terrible word from the lips of Mercy’s self is harsher thunder than the very damnation of Justice! Oh, yes, the goodness of God demands that men should perish if they will sin.

And again, *the Justice of God demands it*. God is infinitely Just and His Justice demands that men should be punished unless they turn to Him with full purpose of heart. Need I pass through all the attributes of God to prove it? I think I need not. We must, all of us, believe that the God who is slow to anger and great in power is also sure not to acquit the wicked.

And now, just a home thrust or two with you. What is your state this morning? My Friend—man, woman—what is your state? Can you look up to Heaven and say, “Though I have sinned greatly, I believe Christ was punished in my place?—

***‘My faith looks back to see,
The burden He did bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there.’***

Can you by humble faith look to Jesus and say, “My Substitute, my Refuge, my Shield. You are my Rock, my Trust. In You do I confide”? Then Beloved, to you I have nothing to say, except this—Never be afraid when you see God’s power—for now that you are forgiven and accepted, now that by faith you have fled to Christ for refuge, the power of God need no more terrify you than the shield and sword of the warrior need terrify his wife or his child! “No,” says the wife, “is he strong? He is strong for me. Is his arm brawny and are all his sinews fast and strong? Then are they fast and strong for me. While he lives and wears a shield, he will stretch it over my head. And while his good sword can cleave foes, it will cleave my foes, too, and ransom me.” Be of good cheer—fear not His power.

But have some of you never fled to Christ for refuge? Do you not believe in the Redeemer? Have you never confided your soul to His hands? Then, my Friends, hear me! In God’s name, hear me just a moment. My Friend, I would not stand in your position for an hour—for all the stars twice spelt in gold! For what is your position? You have sinned and God will not acquit you. He will punish you. He is letting you live—you are reprieved. Poor is the life of one who is reprieved without a pardon! Your reprieve will soon run out. Your hourglass is emptying every day. I see on some of you Death has put his cold hand and frozen your hair to whiteness. You need your staff—it is the only barrier between you and the

grave, now, and you are, all of you, old and young, standing on a narrow neck of land between two boundless seas—that neck of land, that isthmus of life, narrowing every moment and you and you and you are yet unpardoned! There is a city to be sacked and you are in it—soldiers are at the gates. The command is given that every man in the city is to be slaughtered save he who can give the password. “Sleep on, sleep on. The attack is not today, sleep on, sleep on.” “But it is tomorrow, Sir.” “Yes, sleep on, sleep on, it is not till tomorrow. Sleep on, procrastinate, procrastinate.” “Hark! I hear a rumbling at the gates, the battering ram is at them. The gates are tottering.” “Sleep on, sleep on. The soldiers are not yet at your doors. Sleep on, sleep on. Ask for no mercy yet. Sleep on, sleep on!” “Yes, but I hear the shrill clarion sound, they are in the streets! Listen to the shrieks of men and women! They are slaughtering them, they fall they fall, they fall!” “Sleep on. They are not yet at *your* door.” “But listen, they are at the gate! With heavy tramp I hear the soldiers marching up the stairs!” “No, sleep on, sleep on, they are not yet in your room.” “Why, they are there, they have burst open the door that parted you from them and there they stand!” “No, sleep on, sleep on, the sword is not yet at your throat, sleep on, sleep on!” It is at your throat! You start with horror. Sleep on, sleep on! But you are a goner. “Demon, why did you tell me to slumber! It would have been wise in me to have escaped the city when first the gates were shaken. Why did I not ask for the password before the troops came? Why by all that is wise—why did I not rush into the streets and cry the password when the soldiers were there? Why stood I till the knife was at my throat? Yes, demon that you are, be cursed! But I am cursed with you forever!”

You know the application, it is a parable you can all expound. You need not that I should tell you that Death is after you, that Justice must devour you, that Christ Crucified is the only password that can save you and yet you have not learned it! And with some of you, Death is nearing, nearing, nearing and with all of you he is close at hand! I need not expound how Satan is the demon, how in Hell you shall curse him and curse yourselves because you procrastinated—how, that seeing God was slow to anger, you were slow to repentance—how, because He was great in power and kept back His anger, therefore you kept back your steps from seeking Him. And here you are what you are!

Spirit of God, bless these words to some souls that they may be saved! May some sinners be brought to the Savior’s feet and cry for mercy! We ask it for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

WHAT ARE THE CLOUDS?

NO. 36

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 19, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

*“That clouds are the dust of His feet.”
Nahum 1:3.*

IT is possible for a man to read too many books. We will not despise learning, we will not undervalue erudition—such acquisitions are very desirable. When his talents are sanctified to God, the man of learning frequently becomes, in the hands of the Spirit, far more useful than the ignorant and the unlearned. But at the same time, if a man acquires his knowledge entirely from books, he will not find himself to be a very wise man. There is such a thing as heaping so many books on your brains that they cannot work—pouring such piles of type and letters and manuscripts and papers and prints and pamphlets and volumes and tomes and folios upon your weary head—that your brain is absolutely buried and cannot move at all. I believe that many of us, while we have sought to learn by books, have neglected those great volumes which God has given us. We have neglected to study this great book—the Bible! Moreover, we have not been careful enough students of the great volume of nature and we have forgotten that other great book, the human heart. For my own part, I desire to be somewhat a student of the heart. And I think I have learned far more from conversation with my fellowmen than I ever did from reading. And the examination of my own experience and the workings of my own heart, have taught me far more of humanity than all the metaphysical books I have ever perused. I like to read the book of my fellow creatures—nothing delights me so much as when I see a multitude of them gathered together or when I have the opportunity of having their hearts poured into mine and mine into theirs. He will not be a wise man who does not study the human heart and does not seek to know something of his fellows and of himself. But if there is one book I love to read above all others, next to the book of God, it is the volume of Nature. I care not what letters they are that I read, whether they are the golden spellings of the name of God up yonder in the stars, or whether I read, in rougher lines, His name printed on the rolling floods, or see it hieroglyphic in the huge mountain, the dashing waterfall, or the waving forest.

Wherever I look abroad in Nature, I love to discern my Father's name spelled out in living characters. And if we had any fields a little greener than Moorfields, Smithfield and Spafields, I would do as Isaac did—go in-

to the fields at eventide and muse and meditate upon the God of Nature. I thought in the cool of last evening I would muse with my God, by His Holy Spirit, and see what message He would give me. There I sat and watched the clouds and learned a lesson in the great hall of Nature's college. The first thought that struck me was this—as I saw the white clouds rolling in the sky, I thought I shall soon see my Savior mounted on the Great White Throne, riding on the clouds of Heaven to call men to judgment! My imagination could easily picture the scene when the quick and the dead would stand before His Great White Throne and hear His voice pronounce their changeless destiny. I remembered, moreover, that text in the Proverbs, "he that observes the wind shall not sow and he that regards the clouds shall not reap." I thought how many a time myself and my brother ministers have regarded the clouds. We have listened to the voice of prudence and of caution. We have regarded the clouds. We have stopped when we ought to have been sowing because we were afraid of the multitude—or we refused to reap and take in the people into our churches because some good Brother thought we were too hasty about the matter.

I rose up and thought to myself—I will regard neither the clouds nor the winds, but when the wind blows a hurricane I will throw the seed with my hands, if perhaps the tempest may waft it still further! And when the clouds are thick, I will still reap and rest assured that God will preserve His own wheat, whether I gather it under clouds or in the sunshine. And then, when I sat there musing upon God, thoughts struck me as the clouds careered along the skies—thoughts which I must give to you this morning! I trust they were somewhat for my own instruction and possibly they may be for yours. "The clouds are the dust of His feet."

I. Well, the first remark I make upon this shall be—*the way of God is generally a hidden one*. This we gather from the text, by regarding the connection, "the Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm and the clouds are the dust of His feet." When God works His wonders He always conceals Himself. Even the motion of His feet causes clouds to arise. And if these clouds are but "the dust of His feet," how deep must be that dense darkness which veils the brow of the Eternal. If the small dust which He causes is of equal magnitude with our clouds—if we can find no other figure to image "the dust of His feet" than the clouds of Heaven—then how obscure must be the motions of the Eternal One, how hidden and how shrouded in darkness! This great Truth suggested by the text is well borne out by facts. The ways of God are hidden ones. Cowper did not say amiss when he sang—

***"He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."***

His footsteps cannot be seen, for, planted on the sea, the next wave washes them out. And placed in the storm, rioting as the air then is, every impression of His chariot wheels is soon erased. Look at God and at whatever He has deigned to do and you will always see Him to have been a hidden God. He has concealed Himself and all His ways have been veiled in the strictest mystery. Consider His works of salvation. How did He hide Himself when He determined to save mankind? He did not manifestly reveal Himself to our forefathers. He gave them simply one dim lamp of Prophecy which shone in words like these, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” And for 4,000 years God concealed His Son in mystery and no one understood what the Son of God was to be. The smoking incense clouded their eyes and while it showed something of Jesus, it did hide far more. The burning victim sent its smoke up towards the sky and it was only through the dim mists of the sacrifice that the pious Jew could see the Savior.

Angels, themselves, we are told, desired to look into the mysteries of Redemption, yet though they stood with their eyes intently fixed upon it until the hour when Redemption developed itself on Cavalry, not a single angel could understand it. The most profound sage might have sought to find out how God could be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly, but he would have failed in his investigations. The most intensely pious man might meditate, with the help of that portion of God’s Spirit which was then given to the Prophets, on this mighty subject and he could not have discovered what the mystery of godliness was—“God manifest in the flesh.” God marched in clouds, “He walked in the whirlwinds.” He did not deign to tell the world what He was about to do—for it is His plan to gird Himself in darkness and “the clouds are the dust of His feet.” Ah, and so it always has been in Providence as well as Grace. God never condescends to make things very plain to His creatures. He always does rightly. And therefore He wants His people always to believe that He does rightly. But if He showed them that He did so, there would be no room for their faith!

Turn your eyes along the pages of history and see how mysterious God’s dealings have been! Who would conceive that a Joseph sold into Egypt would be the means of redeeming a whole people from famine? Who would suppose that when an enemy came upon the land, it would be, after all, but the means of bringing Glory to God? Who could imagine that a harlot’s blood should mingle with the genealogy from which came the great Messiah, the Shiloh of Israel? Who could have guessed, much less could have compassed the mighty scheme of God? Providence has always been a hidden thing—

***“Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,***

***He treasures up His bright designs
And works His Sovereign will.”***

And yet, Beloved, you and I are always wanting to know what God is about. There is a war in the Crimea. We have had some great disasters at Sebastopol and we are turning over the papers and saying, “Whatever is God doing here?” What did He do in the last war? What was the benefit of it? We see that even Napoleon was the means of doing good, for he broke down the aristocracy and made all monarchs respect the future, the power and the rights of the people. We see what was the result even of that dread hurricane, that it swept away a pestilence which would have devoured full many more. But we ask, “What is God doing with this world?” We want to know what will be the consequences. Suppose we should humble Russia, where would it end? Can Turkey be maintained as a separate kingdom? And ten thousand other questions arise! Beloved, I always think, “Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth,” and—as a good old friend of mine says—“Let them crack themselves, too, if they like. We will not interfere.” If the potsherds will go smashing one another, why, then, they must! We pray that old England may come off the safest of them all. But we are not much concerned to know the result. We believe that this war, as well as everything else, will have a beneficial tendency. We cannot see in history that this world ever went a step backwards. God is always moving it in its orbit. And it has always progressed even when it seemed retrograding.

Or, perhaps you are not agitated about Providence in a nation. You believe that, there, God does hide Himself. But then there are matters concerning yourself which you long to see explained. When I was in Glasgow I went over an immense foundry, one of the largest in Scotland—and there I saw a very powerful steam engine which worked all the machinery in the entire building. I saw in that foundry such numberless wheels running round, some one way and some another, I could not make out what on earth they were all about! But, I daresay if my head had been a little wiser and I had been taught a little more of mechanics I might have understood what every wheel was doing, though really they seemed only a mass of wheels very busy running round and doing nothing! They were all, however, working at something. And if I had stopped and asked, “What is that wheel doing?” A mechanic may have said, “It turns another wheel.” “Well, and what is that wheel doing?” “There is another wheel dependent upon that and that, again, is dependent on another.” Then, at last, he would have taken me and said, “This is what the whole machinery is doing.” Some ponderous bar of iron, perhaps, being grooved and cut, shaped and polished—“this is what all the wheels are effecting—but I cannot tell separately what each wheel is doing.” All things are working

together for good. But what the things separately are doing, it would be impossible to explain.

Yet you, child of Adam, with your finite intellect, are continually stopping to ask, "Why is this?" The child lies dead in the cradle. Why was infancy snatched away? Oh, ruthless Death, could you not reap ripe corn—why snatch the rosebud? Would not a chaplet of withered leaves become you better than these tender blossoms? Or you are demanding of Providence, why have you taken away my property? Was I not left, by a parent, well-to-do, but some ravenous leech has swept all my substance away? It is all gone. Why this, O God? Why not punish the unjust? Why should the innocent be allowed to suffer thus? Why am I to be bereft of my all? Says another, "I launched into a business that was fair and honorable. I intended, if God had prospered me, to devote my wealth to Him. I am poor, my business never prospers. Lord, why is this?" And another says, "Here I am toiling from morning till night. And all I do, I cannot extricate myself from my business which takes me off so much from religion. I would rather live on less if I had more time to serve my God." Ah, finite one! Do you ask God to explain these things to you? I tell you, God will not do it and God cannot do it—for this reason—you are not capable of understanding it! Should the ant ask the eagle where it dashes aloft in the skies? Shall leviathan be questioned by a minnow? These creatures might explain their motions to creatures. But the Omnipotent Creator, the uncreated Eternal cannot well explain Himself to mortals whom He has created! We cannot understand Him. It is enough for us to know that His way always must be in darkness and that we must never expect to see much in this world.

II. This second thought is GREAT THINGS WITH US ARE LITTLE THINGS WITH GOD. What great things clouds are to us! There we see them sweeping along the skies! Then they rapidly increase till the whole firmament gathers blackness and a dark shadow is cast upon the world. We foresee the coming storm and we tremble at the mountains of cloud, for they are great. Great things are they? No, they are only the dust of God's feet! The greatest cloud that ever swept the face of the firmament was but one single particle of dust starting from the feet of the Almighty Jehovah. When clouds roll over clouds and the storm is very terrible, it is but the chariot of God, as it speeds along the heavens, raising a little dust around Him! "The clouds are the dust of His feet." Oh, could you grasp this idea, my Friends, or had I words in which to put it into your souls, I am sure you would sit down in solemn awe of that great God who is our Father, or who will be our Judge. Consider that the greatest things with man are little things with God. We call the mountains great but what are they? They are but "the small dust of the balance." We call the nations great and we speak of mighty empires, but the nations before

Him are but as “a drop in the bucket.” We call the islands great and talk of ours boastfully—“He takes up the isles as a very little thing.” We speak of great men and of mighty—“The inhabitants of the earth in His sight are but as grasshoppers.”

We talk of ponderous orbs moving millions of miles from us—in God’s sight they are but little atoms dancing up and down in the sunbeam of existence! Compared with God there is nothing great! True, there are some things which are little with man that are great with God. Such are our sins which we call little but which are great with Him. And His mercies which we sometimes think are little, He knows are very great mercies towards such great sinners as we are. Things which we reckon great are very little with God. If you knew what God sometimes thought of our talk, you would be surprised at yourselves. We have some great trouble—we go burdened with it, saying, “O Lord God! What a great trouble I am burdened with.” Why, I think, God might smile at us, as we do sometimes at a little child who takes up a load too heavy for it (but which you could hold between your fingers) and staggers and says, “Father, what a weight I am carrying.” So there are people who stagger under the great trouble which they think they are bearing. *Great, Beloved?* There are no great troubles at all—“The clouds are the dust of His feet.” If you would but so consider them, the greatest things with you are but little things with God. Suppose, now, that you had all the troubles of all the people in the world, that they all came pouring on your devoted head—what are waterfalls of trouble to God?—“Drops in the bucket.” What are whole mountains of grief to Him? Why, “He takes up the mountains as the dust of the balance.” And He can easily remove your trials. Sit not down, then, you son of weariness and want and say, “My troubles are too great.” Hear the voice of mercy—“Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you, He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

You shall hear two Christians talk. One of them will say, “O my troubles and trials and sorrows, they are so great I can hardly sustain them. I do not know how to support my afflictions from day to day.” The other says, “Ah, my troubles and trials are not less severe, but, nevertheless, they have been less than nothing. I could laugh at impossibilities and say they shall be done.” What is the reason of the difference between these men? The secret is that one of them carried his troubles and the other did not. It does not matter to a porter how heavy a load may be if he can find another to carry it for him. But if he is to carry it all himself, of course he does not like a heavy load! So one man bears his troubles, himself, and gets his back nearly broken. But the other cast his troubles on the Lord. Ah, it does not matter how heavy troubles are if you can cast them on the Lord! The heavier they are, so much the better, for the more you have got rid of and the more there is laid upon the Rock! Never

be afraid of troubles. However heavy they are, God's eternal shoulders can bear them. He, whose Omnipotence is testified by revolving planets and systems of enormous worlds can well sustain you. Is His arm shortened, that He cannot save, or is He weary that He cannot hold you fast? Your troubles are nothing to God, for the very "clouds are the dust of His feet."

And this cheers me, I assure you, in the work of the ministry. For any man who has his eyes open to the world at large will acknowledge that there are many clouds brooding over England and over the world. I received lately a letter from a gentleman at Hull in which he tells me that he sympathizes with my views concerning the condition of the Church at large. I do not know whether Christendom was ever worse off than it is now. At any rate, I pray God it never may be. Read the account of the condition of the Suffolk churches where the Gospel is somewhat flourishing and you will be surprised to find that they have had scarcely any increase at all in the year. So you may go from Church to Church and find scarcely any that are growing. Here and there a Chapel is filled with people. Here and there you find an earnest minister. Here and there an increasing church—here and there a good Prayer Meeting. But these are only like green spots. Wherever I have gone through England, I have been always grieved to see how the glory of Zion is under a cloud—how the precious saints of Zion, comparable to fine gold, have become like earthen pitchers—the work of the hands of the potter. It is not for me to set myself up as universal censor of the Church but I must be honest and say that spiritual life and fire and zeal and piety seem to be absent in ten thousand instances! We have abundance of agencies, we have good mechanism, but the Church nowadays is very much like a large steam engine without any fire—without any hot water in the boiler—without any *steam*! There is everything *but* steam, everything *but* life! England is veiled in clouds. Not clouds of infidelity. I care not one fig for all the infidels in England and I do not think it worth Mr. Grant's trouble to go after them. Nor am I afraid of Popery for old England. I do not think she will go back to that—I am sure she never will. But, I *am* afraid of this deadness, this sloth, this indifference that has come over our Churches.

The Church needs shaking, like the man on the mountaintop does when the cold numbs him into a deadly slumber. The Churches are gone to sleep for lack of zeal, for lack of fire. Even those who hold sound Doctrine are beginning to slumber. Oh may God stir the Church up! One great black cloud only broken here and there by a few rays of sunlight seems to be hanging over the entire of this, our happy island! But, Beloved, there is comfort, "for the clouds are the dust of His feet." He can scatter them in a moment. He can raise up His chosen servants who have only to put their mouth to the trumpet and one blast shall awaken

the sleeping sentinels and startle the sleeping camp. God has only to send out, again, some Evangelist, some flying angel and the Churches shall start up once more and she who has been clothed in sackcloth shall doff her garments of mourning and put on a garment of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness. The day is coming, I hope, when Zion shall sit, not without her diadem, crownless, but with her crown on her head she shall grasp her banner, take her shield and, like that heroic maiden of old who roused a whole nation, shall go forth conquering and to conquer! We hope this much, because “the clouds are the dust of His feet.”

Yes, and what clouds rest on the world at large! What black clouds of Catholic superstition, Mohammedanism and idolatry. But what are all these things? We do not care about them at all, Brothers and Sisters. Some say that I am getting very enthusiastic about the latter-day Glory and the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ. Well, I don't know. I get all the happier the more enthusiastic I am, so I hope I shall keep on at it, for I believe nothing so comforts a servant of God as to believe that his Master is coming! I hope to see Him. I should not be surprised to see Jesus Christ tomorrow morning. He *may* come then. “In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes.” He who learns to watch for Christ will never be surprised when He comes. Blessed shall that servant be, whom, when his Lord comes, He shall find busy about his duty. But some say He cannot come yet. There are so many clouds and so much darkness in the sky it cannot be expected that the sun will yet rise. Is that a fair reason? Do the clouds ever impede the sun? The sun moves on despite all the mists—and Jesus Christ can come, clouds or no clouds. We do not need light before He appears. He will come and give us light, afterwards—scattering the darkness with the glory of His own eyes. But you say, “How are these idolatrous systems to be cast down?” God could do it in a minute if He pleased! Religion never moves by years and weeks. Even false religions grow like mushrooms—much more, true ones. False religions attained colossal proportion in a very few years. Take the case of Mohammedanism—the new-born faith of Islam became the religion of millions in an incredible short period and if a false religion could spread so quickly, shall not a true one run along like fire amidst the stubble, when God shall speak the word? Clouds are but “dust of His feet.”

A little while ago some of us were fretting about this Mormonism and we said, “It will never be broken up.” Some stupid fellows in America began to kill the poor Mormons and so carve them into saints, which was the very way to establish them! Christians trembled and said, “What can this be? We shall have Sodom over again.” But did you read the *Times* newspaper of Thursday last? You will there see a wonderful instance of how God can scatter the clouds and make them dust of His feet. He has

caused to come out of the ground, near Salt Lake, at Utah, thousands of crickets and all kinds of noxious insects that devour the crops. Creatures that have not been seen in Utah before, with swarms of locusts, have made their appearance. And the people, being so far from civilized nations cannot, of course, carry much corn across the desert, so that they will be condemned to starve or else separate and break up. It seems to all appearance that the whole settlement of the Mormons must be entirely broken up and *that* by an army of caterpillars, crickets and locusts!

III. Now, one more remark. "The clouds are the dust of His feet." Then we learn from that, that **THE MOST TERRIBLE THINGS IN NATURE HAVE NO TERROR TO A CHILD OF GOD.** Sometimes clouds are very fearful things to mariners. They expect a storm when they see the clouds and darkness gathering. A cloud, to many of us, when it forebodes a tempest, is a very unpleasant thing. But let me read my text and you will see what I mean by my remark that the most terrible things in Nature are not terrible to the saints. "The clouds are the dust of HIS feet"—of God's feet. Do you not see what I mean? There is nothing terrible, now, because it is only the dust of my Father's feet. Did you ever know a child who was afraid of the dust of his father's feet? No. If the child sees the dust of his father's feet in the distance, what does he do? He rejoices because it is his father and runs to meet him! So the most awful things in Nature, even the clouds, have lost all their terror to a child of God because he knows they are but the dust of his Father's feet. If we stand in the midst of the lightning storm, a flash tears apart yon cedar, or splits the oak of the forest. Another flash follows, and then another, till the whole firmament becomes a sea of flame. We fear not, for they are only the flashes of our Father's sword as He waves it in the sky. Listen to the thunder as it shakes the earth, causes the hinds to calve and discovers the forests. We shake not at the sound—

***"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas.
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our Love."***

We are not afraid, for we hear our Father's voice. And what favored child ever quaked at his Father's speech? We love to hear that voice. Although it is deep, bass, sonorous, yet we love its matchless melody for it issues from the depths of affection. Put me to sea and let the ship be driven along—that wind is my Father's breath—let the clouds gather, they are the dust of my Father's feet! Let the waterspout appear from Heaven, it is my Father dipping His hand in the laver of His earthly temple! The child of God fears nothing. All things are his Father's. And now divested

of everything that is terrible, he can look upon them with complacency, for he says, "The clouds are the dust of His feet"—

***"He drives His chariot through the sky,
Beneath His feet His thunders roar!
He shakes the earth, He veils the sky,
My Soul, my Soul, this God adore—
He is your Father and your Love."***

Fall down before His feet and worship Him, for He has loved you by His Grace. You know there are many fearful events which may befall us. But we are never afraid of them if we are saints, because they are the dust of His feet. Pestilence may ravage this fair city once again. The thousands may fall and the funeral march be constantly seen in our streets. Do we fear it? No. The pestilence is but one of our Father's servants and we are not afraid of it, although it walks in darkness. There may be no wheat, the flocks may be cut off from the herd and the stall—nevertheless famine and distress are our Father's doings and what our Father does we will not view with alarm. There is a man there with a sword in his hand—he is an enemy and I fear Him. My father has a sword and I fear Him not. I rather love to see Him have a sword, because I know He will only use it for my protection.

But there is to come a sight more grand, more terrific, more sublime and more disastrous than anything Earth has yet witnessed! There is to come a fire before which Sodom's fire shall pale to nothingness. And the conflagration of continents shall sink into less than nothing and vanity. In a few more years, my Friends, Scripture assures us, this earth and all that is therein, is to be burned up. That deep molten mass which now lies in the bosom of our mother Earth is to burst up—the solid matter is to be melted down into one vast globe of fire. The wicked—shrieking, wailing and cursing, shall become a prey to these flames that shall blaze upward from the breast of Earth. Comets shall shoot their fires from Heaven. All the lightning shall launch their bolts upon this poor earth and it shall become a mass of fire. But does the Christian fear it? No. Scripture tell us we shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air and shall be forever with Him!

IV. To conclude. The fourth observation is ALL THINGS IN NATURE ARE CALCULATED TO TERRIFY THE UNGODLY MAN. Ungodly men and women now present in this place of worship, it is a very solemn fact that you are at enmity with God. Having sinned against God, God is angry with you—not angry with you today, but angry with you every day, angry with you every hour and every moment! It is, moreover, a most sad and solemn fact that there is a day coming, ungodly Man, when this anger of God will burst out and when God will utterly destroy and devour you! Now listen to me for a moment while I try to make all Nature preach to you a solemn warning—and the wide world, itself, a great high priest—

holding up its finger and calling you to flee for mercy to Jesus Christ, the King of kings! Sinner, have you ever seen the clouds as they roll along the sky? Those clouds are the dust of the feet of Jehovah! If these clouds are but the dust, what is He, Himself? And then, I ask you, O Man, are you not foolish in the extreme to be at war with such a God as this? If “the clouds are the dust of His feet,” how foolish are you to be His enemy! Do you think to stand before His majesty? I tell you, He will snap your spear as if it were but a reed. Will you hide yourself in the mountains? They shall be melted at His Presence and though you cry to the rocks to hide you, they would fail to give you anything of concealment before His burning eyes.

O do but consider, my dear fellow Creatures, you are at enmity with God! Would it not be folly if you were to oppose yourself to an angel? Would it not be the utmost stupidity if you were to commence a war even with Her Majesty, the Queen? I know it would, because you have no power to stand against them—but consider how much more mighty is the Eternal God. Why, Man, He could put His finger upon you at this moment and crush you as I could an insect. Yet this God is your enemy! You are hating Him, you are at war with Him! Consider, moreover, O Man, that you have grievously rebelled against Him. You have incensed His soul and He is angry and jealous and furious against every sinner.

Consider what you will do in that Great Day when God shall fall upon you! Some of you believe in a god that has no anger and no hatred towards the wicked. Such a god is not the God of Scripture! He is a God who punishes the ungodly. Let me ask the question of Inspiration—Can you stand before His indignation? Can you abide the fierceness of His anger? When His fury is poured out like fire and the rocks are thrown down by Him, do you think, Sinner, it will be a good thing to be in the hands of the Almighty who will tear you in sunder? Will you think it easy to lie down in Hell with the breath of the Eternal fanning the flames? Will you delight yourself to think that God will invent torments for you, Sinner, to make your doom most cursed if you do not repent and turn to Him? What? Man! Are the terrors of Jehovah nothing to you? Do you not tremble and shake before the fierceness of His fury? Ah, you may laugh now. You may go away, my Hearer, and smile at what I have said—but the day shall declare it—the hour is coming—and it may be soon—when the iron hand of the Almighty shall be upon you! When all your senses shall be the gates of misery, your body the house of lamentation and your soul the epitome of woe. Then you will not laugh and despise Him!

But now to finish up, let me just give you one word more, for, Beloved, when we use these threats—why do we speak of them? It is but the word of the angel, who, pressing Lot upon the shoulder, said, “Look not behind you. Stay not in all the plain,” and then pointing to the fire behind, said,

“On! On, lest the fiery sleet overtake you and the hail of the Eternal shall overwhelm you!” We only mentioned that fire behind that the Spirit might make you flee to the mountain lest you should be consumed. Do you ask where that mountain is? We tell you there is a cleft in the Rock of Ages where the chief of sinners may yet hide himself—“Jesus Christ for us men and for our salvation, came down from Heaven.” And whoever here, this morning, is a sinner, we now invite to come to Christ. You Pharisees who do not acknowledge the title—I have no Gospel to preach to you! You self-righteous, self-sufficient ones, I have nothing whatever to say to you except what I have said—the voice of threat. But, whoever will confess himself a sinner has the warrant this morning to come to Jesus Christ. Sinnership is the only title to salvation! If you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners, Christ died for you. And if you put your trust in Him and believe that He died for you, you may rely upon Him and say, “Lord, I will be saved by Your Grace.” Your merits are good for nothing! You can get no benefit by them. Your own work is useless. You err like the man in the prison working the treadmill—you never get anything by it—grinding oyster shells without any benefit to yourself. Come to Jesus Christ! Believe in Him. And after you have believed in Him, He will set you to working—working a new work! He will give you works, if you will have but faith—even faith is His Gift.

O may He give it to you now, my Hearers, for “He gives liberally and upbraids not.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized—and you shall be saved”—by His Grace!

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE STRONGHOLD

NO. 2555

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 11, 1883.

*“The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble,
and He knows them that trust in Him.”
Nahum 1:7.*

HAVE you read this chapter through? It is a very terrible one—it is like the rushing of a mighty river when it is nearing a waterfall. It boils, seethes and flows with overwhelming force, bearing everything before it, yet, right in the middle of the surging flood, there stands out, like a green island, this most cheering, comforting and delightful text! Listen a minute to the Prophet's words of terror. “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers: Bashan languishes, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languishes. The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His Presence, yes, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.”

Then, just as there has sometimes been a break and a delightful silence in the very midst of some tremendous chorus of sacred song, so here the thunder pauses, the hurricane is stopped and we hear the sweet music of this still small voice—“Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows them that trust in Him”—from which we may gather that there is always a hiding place for His people—His eyes of love are fixed on them even when they flash fire upon His adversaries! Nothing shall harm them, though the earth is removed and the mountains are cast into the midst of the sea! They may rejoice in the goodness of the Lord in the day of His fierce anger.

I invite you, dear Friends, to consider this text, and may the Holy Spirit make the meditation which will follow to be useful! There are three things, here, to be thought about. First let us think of *God Himself*—“The Lord is good.” Then let our minds ponder a little upon *what God is to us*—“a stronghold in the day of trouble.” And then we will change the theme a little and speak of *God with us*—“He knows them that trust in Him.”

I. First, then, let us think of GOD HIMSELF—"Jehovah is good." It is well for us to be able to say so when the day of trouble is really upon us. It is one thing to sit under your vine and fig tree and sing, "The Lord is good." It is quite another thing when the vine and fig tree have both been cut down and all your comfort is gone, to still say, "The Lord is good." Do you not think that if we fail to say it the second time, it will look as if, after all, it was the vine and fig tree that were good, and not God? Or, at least, that our view of God's goodness was very much derived from the fact of our being in so much comfort? It was an accusation which Satan brought against Job that he loved God for what he got out of him—"Have not You made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?" The devil is very apt to charge God's people with having a cupboard love, but it is well for us to refute that accusation by loving, praising and adoring God when comforts fail, when the hedge is broken and when the things that we received with gratitude are, at length, in wisdom, taken away. Oh, what a rebuff the archfiend had when Job, on his dunghill scraping his sores and with his children dead and his property gone, yet said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

That is the spirit of our text. Here is a man of God, in the midst of the overwhelming flood, standing up and saying—"The Lord is good. The Lord is good." There are some persons who, even in their theology, do not believe God to be good. "It cannot be," they say, "that the wicked will be cast into Hell if God is good." And they argue, therefore, the ungodly will not be punished. But the child of God says that though they will certainly be cast into Hell, God is good for all that. It is true that He will punish sin and punish it everlastingly, but God is good for all that. "No," say others, "but if He is good, He cannot do so." You may make unto yourselves another god and call him God, but the Christian says, "*The Lord* is good, Jehovah is good. He is good as I find Him—good as an angry God—good when I read such words as these, 'With an overrunning flood He will make an utter end of the place, thereof, and darkness shall pursue His enemies.'" God is good, even then—He is always good! Let Him reveal Himself as He pleases, let Him do what He pleases—whatever I find He reveals about Himself, or whatever I see in Providence about Him, my heart is bowed down! Even when my understanding cannot understand, this firm piece of good sound doctrine is still true—"The Lord is and must be good."

The goodness of God is seen *in His very name*, for what is His name, "God," but short for *good*? We call Him God because we count the good. And so good is He that "there is none good save One; that is, God." All other goodness that exists is but a spark from this great Sun, or else it is a lie! There never would have been any goodness in the world apart from God, nor can goodness continue to exist, much less increase, except as God, whose very name is good, shall continue to make that goodness flow forth from Himself unto the sons of men. *God is essentially good*. It is His very Nature to be good. He could not be otherwise than good. If you

and I are good, it is not because of our nature that we are good. Alas, since the Fall, it is true that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing—and any goodness has to be imparted to us. But to God no goodness can be brought—from God all goodness must be fetched, for He is good, essentially!

And *God is good independently*. There are none that make Him good, or help Him to be so. If you and I are good in any way, it is by His Grace, by His teaching, by the example of friends, by Divine restraints, by gracious constraints. By a thousand helps and props our poor goodness stands, but His goodness stands of itself! None can make Him better. None keep Him back from being evil. He is good, He must be good and that entirely in and of Himself—essentially and independently good. I want you to think of this, because I want you never to get the notion in your head that God is good through certain means and under certain circumstances and conditions—or that the goodness of God depends upon the life of such an one, or upon your possession of such-and-such earthly goods. Oh, no! God is good independently of all these and if all these were swept away, God would be just as good and just as good to you! You may question it, but it should never be a matter of question. If every conduit pipe which now conveys to us streams of comfort from the fountainhead were broken and taken away, God could make the waters leap out of the rock, itself, and streams to flow in the desert immediately at our feet! As long as you have God, you have the essence of all good—and as long as God lives, whoever else dies, the goodness on which your soul is to feed has an independent existence.

Note, next, that *God is eternally and unchangeably good*. He cannot be better! He cannot be worse—He is absolutely perfect. There can be no improvement and there can be no depreciation in Him. He was good on your wedding-day, when He gave you the loved one to be the joy of your life. And He was just as good on that sorrowful day when the partner of your being was struck down. You thought God was good when your little child laughed in your lap and the house was glad with his merry ways, but He was just as good when the little coffin went silently out of the door, wet with parents' tears. God was good to you when you walked abroad in the sunlight and every breath of air meant health to you—and He is just as good when every step is a weariness and your body is consuming away with sickness. He has not changed. Why, dear Heart, you have not changed toward your child, have you? Yet you are evil and shall not He who is all good be just as full of love to His children in dark dispensations as in bright times? Assuredly it is so! If you should live till infirmities are multiplied—if it were possible for you to exist till you had numbered the years of Methuselah, yet you would still find God to be just as good as in your young days when first your heart leaped at the sound of His name! Do not be afraid, therefore, of what is yet to be, for *whatever* comes, “Truly God is good to Israel”—truly, “His mercy endures forever,”

Turn this little sentence over many times, and try to get the full meaning out of it. “The Lord is good”—*good in each one of His Divine Persons*. You do not doubt that the Father is good. He chose you before the world was. He gave His Son for you. He “has begotten us, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” He is our Father—surely He is good, is He not? There is Jesus, the second Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity. Is He not good? He “loved me, and gave Himself for me.” He loved, lived, died, rose again and still lives pleading, preparing, waiting to come and take us to Himself. Is not Jesus good? That blessed Truth of God is beyond all question! Well, then, the Father is good and the Son is good. And the Holy Spirit—is He not good? Did He not first turn your eyes to Jesus? Did He not breathe into you the breath of spiritual life? And, since then, has He not been your Teacher, your Guide, your Helper, your Comforter, dwelling with you, suggesting your prayers, helping your infirmities? Oh, He is good! What evil did you ever have at His dear hands? Well, then, the Father is good, the Son is good and the Holy Spirit is good, so, in a threefold sense we may say, “The Lord is good.”

Now, to cheer your faith yet again, let me remind you that *the Lord is good in all His acts of Grace*. Was He not good when first He chose you, when there was nothing in you “to merit esteem, or give the Creator delight”? When you had fallen and lay all in ruins, yet “He loved you not withstanding all”—was He not good then? And when He planned the Covenant, “ordered in all things and sure,” the Covenant of Grace by which He could be just and yet be the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus—was He not good then? And when He gave His Son—His only Son—that He might die to make atonement for our sin, was He not good then? And when He washed us in the precious blood of Christ, clothed us with His perfect righteousness, adopted us into His family and, by our regeneration, gave us the nature as well as the privileges of children—when He promised to preserve us even to the end—was it not all goodness? And must we not say of all His acts of Grace, “The Lord is good”? Further, Brothers and Sisters, you may depend upon it that the Lord’s actions are all for our benefit. Good men, you know, are much the same all through—cut them where you please, there is something sound about them in every part. I am sure that it is so with God—it is not merely one portion of His Character that is good, but it is *all* good. Nor is it one set of His actions that are good, but *all* His acts are good.

That brings us to this point, that *all His Providences are, have been and always shall be good*. What is the Providence that grieves you just now? Perhaps you have been a great loser this week. Ah, but it is a good God that permitted you to be a loser. You have been bereaved. Ah, but it was not a demon that stole away your darling, but the good God permitted it—did it Himself, maybe, so He is good in that. “I should think Him good,” said one to me, “if anything else had happened to me except *this*.” No, Sister, He is good in that, for if you will have it that He is good in all except only the one thing in which He has dealt with you of late, then,

truly, if He had done something else, you would have been of the same mind! You do not believe Him good, I tell you, unless He is all over and altogether good. The Lord has done for His people the best that could be done. He has not suffered any evil to harm them, neither has He denied them anything that would be for their good. It is still true, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." A day shall come when these lips shall tell of God's goodness in a much better style than they can at present—up there, in yonder golden streets! But, meanwhile, I have an opportunity I may not have again, for now I am permitted to say, though I have not been second in mourning to any of the bereaved this week, and though thrice the arrows have wounded me, yet the Lord is good and blessed be His name! Though physical pain and mental depression come together, yet the Lord is good.

When I was away in the South of France enjoying health and every comfort, I kept saying to myself and to my friend, "Let us praise God doubly now, for, maybe we shall be in the dark when we get home and, lest we should run short of praise, then, let us give the Lord an extra quantity now." I felt so glad to be, as it were, laying up a little store of honey against the time when flowers would not be quite so plentiful. But I want to use up that store, now, and bless and magnify and adore the name of the Lord!

Let me say to you mourners and sufferers that your praises of God when you have no trouble are not worth half as much as they may be now. If you can sing His praises on the bed of sickness and extol Him in the fire of a sore bereavement, that will be grand! The praises of the angels, as they bow in perfect happiness, and say, "God is good," must be very blessed. And the praises of men of God on earth, who are prospering in business and who have health and strength, and who say, "God is good," are very precious. But you take me to one who is poor and needy, one who scarcely knows where his daily bread will come from—and when he says, "But God is good," I think the Lord finds a sweeter note in that praise than He does even in the music of the angelic choirs! Then go to one who is racked with pain and suffering, and deprived of every comfort—yet I see her stretch out her bony hand and say, "The Lord is good, blessed be His name." That is sweeter music still! But what praise to God there must have been from those martyrs who lay in prison rotting to death, or who were brought out to the stake and who, as they burnt, when every finger was a candle, yet still loved Him, praised Him, and extolled Him! Oh, that is such music as God, Himself, could not create directly and distinctly. God must go round about by redeeming love to get such melody as that! He has not made a seraph that could so sing—it has to be a fallen and renewed being that could be capable of such love as that, and say, "The Lord is good." I am trying to put this praise into your mouth, but may God put it into your heart! Dear Brother, dear Sister, let this be your continual song, "The Lord is good."

II. Secondly, GOD IS GOOD TO US. What is He to us? "A stronghold in the day of trouble."

It is well to know what God is *under special circumstances*. The special circumstances here mentioned are, “in the day of trouble.” Remember that it is *only a day*—it is not a week, nor a month—and God will not permit the devil to add an extra hour to that day. It is a “*day of trouble*.” There is an end to all our griefs. Well did one say—

**“When God appoints the number ten,
There never can be eleven.”**

And when God measures out the bitter medicine to His people, there cannot be another drop of gall put into the cup.

But it really is “*the day of trouble*.” See how the emphasis is laid there—“a stronghold in *the day of trouble*.” It is the most troublous day that a man has, that day in which the clouds return after the rain, that day in which he seems to have lost every comfort, and sorrows come one after another, like Job’s messengers, all bringing gloomy stories—each one more gloomy than those that went before—“*the day of trouble*.” There is such a day which occurs to most godly people, sooner or later, before they get to Heaven—“*the day of trouble*.” It seems to be trouble’s own day. Trouble has the day all to itself. From early in the morning to the last thing at night, it is trouble, trouble, trouble—“*the day of trouble*.” What is God *then*? He is a “a stronghold.” That is a grand word, “a stronghold”—that is, a fortress, a castle, a tower of defense—“in the day of trouble.”

So that, *in the time of trouble, God guarantees safety to His people*. They dwell surrounded as with impregnable bulwarks! “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.” Troubles are like enemies besieging them, but God is to them like a strong tower of defense in which they are perfectly safe!

What is more, they *are often perfectly at peace*. The enemy comes and spies upon them, throws up his earthworks and prepares his engines of war. But thus says the Lord, as He did to Sennacherib, “The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you and laughed you to scorn. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you.” Often, in the times of their greatest trouble, God’s people are so resigned, so acquiescent to their Lord’s will and, consequently so calm, so brave, that their peace is not in the least degree affected. I had a curious experience in conversing with two ladies who were very deaf. We went for a drive in a carriage and as soon as the rumbling of the wheels began, they could hear everything that I said, so we could easily carry on a conversation while there was a great noise, but inside their own drawing-room it was not so easy for them to hear. And I do believe that, sometimes, when God puts His people into a rumbling tumbler of affliction, they can hear His voice much better than at other times! It seems odd and strange, but it is strangely true—they are most at peace when in the thick of the fight, never so safe as when in danger—and never so much in danger as when apparently safe! God’s people are a mass of contradictions, a paradox and a riddle!

Let the Believer read that riddle as he can, for no one else will. He has a stronghold in the day of trouble, giving safety and perfect peace.

Beside that, it is a stronghold *defying the enemy*. The foe comes tearing up the hill, ready to devour the people of God. What makes them safe against the adversary? Why, there is a bastion, a fortification, so that he cannot come near. He grins at the saints and bites his nails, like Bunyan's Giant Pope! He threatens what he will do to them. Like Rabshakeh, he writes ugly letters, but he cannot really do anything. When a man hides behind the Most High, God Himself bids defiance to that man's adversaries, and their rage is all in vain. There came a watery torrent down upon a little mill and threatens to sweep it away, but Wisdom fitted up a wheel and allowed as much of the water as might be needed to turn the wheel and grind the miller's grain. As for the rest, it was turned aside. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You: the remainder of wrath shall You restrain." So will it be when that great torrent of trouble comes—a part of it shall be used to grind our corn and make us rich and fat in the things of God—the rest of it shall run harmlessly by. We shall hear its noise, but that shall be all. Therefore, in patience let us possess our souls.

Once more, this stronghold means that *God abides forever the same*, always a sure refuge for the needy. Strongholds are not like temporary camps—fortifications are intended to stand from generation to generation and, in that sense, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble." Remember what brave Luther did. I think I hear him saying, when the enemy raved and raged around him, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm, and spite the devil." So they sang, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," and he verily laughed for joy in his holy confidence in his God.

And Luther's God is our God—just the same God as He was then—and He deserves the same confidence from us as He had from Luther! Therefore, let us give it to Him now! Let us praise Him now! Instead of hanging our harps on the willows, let us say, "No, the willows have quite enough weight to bear without having our harps hung on them. And our harps were never made to be hung on willows." Let us strike every string to the praise of that unchanging love which puts the burden on the back and even smites us in love and with wise intent. My Soul, bless you your Lord this very moment and rob Him not of His revenue of praise because you are sad!

III. Now, lastly, we are to think of GOD WITH US—"He knows them that trust in Him."

Of course the Lord knows everything, but there is an emphatic sense in that word, "know," whenever it is applied to God's people. Here it refers to *His intimate acquaintance with them*—their persons, their condition, their needs, their sufferings, their past, their present, their future. He knows all about them. We say, sometimes, to a person whom we do not care to meet, "I do not know you." But we never say that to our own dear child, or to a friend whose concerns interest us. No, we try to know

all about him—we wish to know in order that we may relieve and succor. In a far higher sense, Omniscience concentrates its all-perceiving glance upon each child of God. Your Father is looking at you, Beloved, with as intent a gaze as if there were nobody else in the world but you—yes, and no world, either, but only you. Think how He would know you if, in the whole universe, there were nothing but God and you—just in that way He knows you! He delights to know all about you, for He made you and He new-made you! You are a plant of His planting. He has watched over you and He has said, “I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” It is with the most intimate and intense knowledge that the Lord knows them that trust in Him.

This knowledge also *implies tender care*. Just as a doctor who really cares for a patient, knows all about that patient by making a diagnosis of his condition and studying his symptoms from day to day till he gets to be thoroughly acquainted with him and does not prescribe for him at a venture, so does God care for you with an intense, loving, affectionate, earnest care—wishing to do you good, to make you better—and to turn everything to your benefit. If you are one of those that trust in Him, it is sweet for you to be able to say, “God knows all about me and He cares for me.” Do notice one word in the text, “He knows them that *trust* in Him”—not those that are perfect, not those that are doing certain works—but, “He knows them that *trust* in Him.”

Those who trust in the Lord are not only the objects of His knowledge and care, they are also *the objects of His approval*. There is nothing in the world that God approves of more than faith. To trust God is the greatest of all works. “What shall we do,” said the Jews to our Lord, “that we might work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” To erect a row of almshouses, or to build a cathedral—is not that a big work? No, not compared with *believing on Jesus Christ whom God has sent*. This is the God-like work, the greatest work that we can do! Our action may not please God, however pleasing it may appear to us, but wherever there is faith, God is pleased. And remember, “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” So dear Friends, if you want to please God, trust Him, trust Him implicitly! Trust Him now with your sin, with your sorrow, with everything! The more you trust Him, the more pleasing you are to God. See what an opportunity you have of pleasing Him in times of great trial and trouble. If a person has a burden to carry which he is able to bear, self-reliance will serve his turn. But when he has a load upon him that he *cannot* carry, and he says, “O God, if You will strengthen me, I will carry it”—then it is that he is pleasing to God! If you are only reaching what you can reach, there is nothing notable in that—the real thing is to be doing what you cannot do—by believing in God to give you more strength than by nature you possess! To trust God while you are alive is good, but to say with Job. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” that is the very cream of faith! “He knows”—with approving knowledge—“all them that trust in Him.”

Once more, dear Friends, this word, “know,” here means *loving communion*. We know one another by being with one another, sympathizing with one another, entering into one another’s thoughts and feelings. I have known in this sense some of the choicest of God’s people—and what a loss it is to lose those whom we have known so well! But God knows us. He knows our prayers and tears, He knows our wishes, He knows that we are not what we want to be, but He knows what we do desire to be. He knows our aspirations, our sighs, our groans, our secret lodgings, our own chastening of spirit when we fail—He has entered into it all. He says, “Yes, dear child, I know all about you. I have been with you when you thought you were alone. I have read what you could not read—the secrets of your own heart that you could not decipher. I have known them all, and I still know them.”

And they who trust in the Lord shall have one more thing. That is, *God will acknowledge them as His*. At the Last Great Day, Christ shall say to some, “I never knew you.” Those that do not trust Christ, He will not acknowledge. In that dread hour when they will most of all need a Savior, He will say, “I never knew you.” But if you trust Him, He knows you now and He will acknowledge you then! Jesus Christ Himself cannot say to me at the last day, “I never knew you.” He must know me, for He knows how I have bothered and worried Him! He knows how I had the blood from His heart to wash my sins away and the robe of His righteousness to clothe me. I have needed all that He is to make anything of me and still, day by day I am a poor beggar who will not let Him go down the street without crying, “You, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Therefore He knows my name and Christ will never say that He does not know us if He does. Make Him acquainted with your name even now! Dear Sinner, go and tell the Lord your story and your history, your sin and your transgression. If you confess your sin to Him, He cannot say, “I never knew you.” Then go and cast yourself on Him with all your sin—then He will acknowledge you as His and will never disown you!

“He knows them that trust in Him.” Trusting in Him gives us a wonderful hold on God. If you trust a man, he feels bound, if he is an honorable man, to be true to the trust reposed in him. If it were a poor person in the street, who had only a few shillings, and was afraid of being robbed, and he were to put his little bit of money in your hand, and say, “Good woman, will you take care of this money of mine?”—you would take care of it, would you not? You would do anything rather than lose it. And Christ will keep that which we have committed unto Him. Last Monday night, one of our Brothers, a neighboring minister, told us that, 45 years ago, he gave his soul to Christ and, he said, “It has been like a sealed envelope ever since.” I like that thought of the seal that has never been broken. The devil has never been able to get at the good man’s soul. It has been a sealed envelope ever since his conversion—and so it shall be until the day of his Lord’s appearing, when Christ shall break the seal and reveal to the assembled worlds what He has kept!

Oh, give yourselves to Jesus, dear Hearts! Give yourselves to Jesus! Now that so many are being taken away from us to Heaven, I want to have a great number coming into the Church to fill up the vacuum. During the last few weeks that I have been ill and have been away, I have not been able to see any of you, but I intend, as soon as I can, to see such as wish to make a confession of their faith in Christ. I hope that there are many of you ready to come and that among the rest will be one or another able to say, "Yes, Sir, the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. And I now know that He knows them that trust in Him—and I have the witness of the Spirit that I am one of that happy company." God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 77.**

The Book of Psalms, though it is Divinely Inspired, is also marvelously human—it is everywhere instinct with life—and life in its most sympathetic forms. However glad you are, there is always a Psalm suitable for you to sing. And you are never so sad but a Psalm could be found to help you, in the very depths, to pour out your complaint before God. This 77th Psalm is the song of a man in deep depression.

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me.* It was only a cry. A monotonous cry, redoubled and full of sorrow. Yet the Lord gave ear unto him who cried. There were some who would have stopped their ears and have got out of the way, for the sound made them melancholy and they could not bear it. But the Lord gave ear unto His sad servant's cry. Oh, how sweet is this! Though He hears the songs of angels and though the hallelujahs of the blood-bought in Glory never cease before Him, yet He stoops from His throne of majesty and listens to the cry of misery! "He gave ear unto me." Are any of you troubled? Pour out your hearts before the Lord and He will give ear unto you as He did to the writer of this Psalm!

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.* That was a very wise thing to do! Where else should he go, in the day of trouble, but to Him who sent the trouble, to Him who could help him to bear the trouble, to Him who could sanctify the trouble, to Him who could, if He pleased, remove the trouble? "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." I have heard of some who fly to strong drink to drown their troubles—that will never do—it is like leaping into the fire to escape the flame! Some run to their fellow creatures for comfort—that is a poor way of acting—better by far do as the Psalmist said he did, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord."

2, 3. *My soul ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled.* Yet he says that he sought God. It is a grand thing when your faith leads you to seek God, even though He troubles you! It is better to knock at God's door when He is angry than to go to any other door! Even if He shuts the door in your

face, still wait upon Him. Though He may seem not to heed your cry, there is no door like that of God's! Therefore, continue there. Yet there are times when even Believers in God are so conscious of sin, so conscious of departure from Him by unbelief towards Him, that, as they remember God, they are troubled.

3-5. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. You hold my eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.* What God did with others of His people in their times of trouble, how He rescued them, the splendor of His power in the ages long since gone—these are among the things which the Psalmist considered. It is well, sometimes, to live in the past. If the present seems to be like a fire that has gone out, snatch a live coal from the altars of the past and set the fuel alight again.

6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night.* “How I was once like a nightingale and learned to sing with a thorn at my breast. How, in former times, I triumphed in the hour of trouble and affliction.” It is good to remember all this, for, though past experience will not do to *live* upon, yet sometimes we are like the men with their barges when they push backwards to send the barge forward. We may think of the past to help us in the present.

6, 7. *I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more?* Come, what do you think? Will such a loving, faithful God as ours cast us off forever? Can you harbor such a thought concerning Him? Will He be favorable no more after all the favor He has already shown? Can He change? Will He deny Himself? Do you think that God will play fast and loose with you? “Will He be favorable no more?”

8. *Is His mercy clean gone forever?* We sing, “His mercy endures forever!” Is that a lie? Can it be?

8. *Does His promise fail forevermore?* Does it ever fail at all? And if it does tarry a while, will it always wait? Will God, at last, be found untrue? Come, children of God, in your trouble face these questions and answer them—for you must get comfort out of the only reply that you can give to them.

9. *Has God forgotten to be gracious?* Is He the same God that He used to be? Or has He been overtaken with a fit of forgetfulness? Has He a failing memory, like yours and mine?

9. *Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah.* Can it be? Has He not said, “as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you”? Can it be, then, that in anger He has shut up His tender mercies?

10. *And I said, This is my infirmity.* And so it is. Worse than that, it is sometimes our iniquity, our sin, to think such hard things of God! But inasmuch as faith was there, battling, struggling and striving, the little temporary victory which unbelief seemed to gain was the result of infirmity.

10. *But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.* The glorious years of His electing love. The years in which He has loved His people and never changed that love. The years in which we, ourselves, have realized His Presence and been at His right hand enjoying, day by day, a sense of His love.

11, 12. *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your works, and talk of Your doings.* They will bear talking of, they will bear turning over and meditating upon, for they are full of comfort.

13, 14. *Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? You are the God that does wonders: You have declared Your strength among the people.* Whenever the Hebrew mind was full of exulting joy concerning God's greatness and might, it seemed inevitably to turn back to Egypt and the Red Sea. Just as we, Believers in Jesus, love to sing the song of the Lamb, so did these old Believers sing it by anticipation! We may fitly join with them and together we may sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Here is a part of it.

15. *You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.* There is no song like that of redemption! Whatever our troubles may be—if we are trusting in Christ, we are a redeemed people! Whatever our sins or infirmities, or imperfections—we are a redeemed people, like Israel of old! They were redeemed by power, as well as by price, so we read—

16-18. *The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: Your arrows also went abroad. The voice of Your thunder was in the Heaven: the lightning lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.* This is what Egypt saw when God turned the dark side of the cloud towards the Egyptians and greatly troubled them through that wild tempestuous night!

19, 20. *Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* And so will He continue to lead His people by one and another, till all their wanderings are over and they rest in peace at His right hand forever. "Therefore, comfort one another with these words."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—194, 690, 744.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

WHEN CAN WE FIND COMFORTERS? NO. 2322

INTENDED FOR, READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 20, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Where shall I seek comforters for you?”
Nahum 3:7.*

IT is the business of the Prophet of God and of the minister of Christ to seek comfort for those who are in distress. “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.” It is a part of our calling to seek, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to bring words of consolation to those who are heavy in heart. We have other work to do, but, still, this is a part of our commission. God would not have His people’s heads hang down. He would have their hearts full of joy and peace in believing, so He sends us, with tender, sympathetic words, to strive to comfort all that mourn.

I can truly say that while this is our duty, when we succeed in it, it is also our delight. To take the burden from the heavy heart is a great joy. Whenever I have comforted any mourners, I think that I have had even more comfort than the comforted ones! You cannot impart consolation to others without, at the same time, enjoying it, yourself, in some measure, at any rate. You put out your hands to open the door into the King’s banqueting house for another and, lo, your own fingers drip with sweet-smelling myrrh, from the handle of the door! Try to cheer another heart and you will go the nearest way to cheer your own. So then, I am glad that I have a text like this—only the gladness is sobered and saddened by the connection in which it stands and by the almost hopeless character of the question—“Where shall I seek comforters for you?”

I shall have only two divisions, tonight. First, *sometimes, our work is very easy*. Secondly, *at other times, it becomes so hard as even to be impossible*.

I. First, **SOMETIMES OUR WORK IS VERY EASY**, especially to those long practiced in it. To a young surgeon, a case of a broken bone may be a difficulty, but to one who has long been in his profession, it is a simple matter and he soon sets the bone.

Now, first, it is a comparatively easy thing to find comforts for *true children of God in the day of their adversity*. Dark days come to the brightest saints. A Christian may, perhaps, enjoy worldly prosperity for a long time and then the tide may turn, and the man may find all that he has melt away before his eyes. Nothing that he does may succeed. He may be brought very low, even to poverty. In such a case as that, it is not hard to

comfort the child of God, for the Lord helps him to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." My Brother, your riches consist not in gold and silver—you have in Heaven a more enduring portion and if God, by impoverishing you of these grosser things, enriches you with more refined treasures, you will be a gainer—your loss will turn to your eternal profit. Therefore we comfort you readily enough with words like these.

The same is true with *God's people in bereavement*. We come to them and tell them that it is the Lord who has done it and ask, "Shall He not do what seems good to Him?" In many cases we are able to tell them that they have not lost their relative or friend. Their beloved ones have only crossed the river a little before them and they will soon pass over the same stream and be forever joined where they shall part no more. Though it is some beloved child, or other dear relative, or even the partner of one's bosom, or a much-beloved friend, yet to find consolation for mourners of that kind is not the hardest work that the pastor has to do. Refrain your eyes from weeping, especially keep back your heart from tears. They shall come again from the land of their captivity. They die but to live forever and you shall meet them before long!

And, dear Friends, it is not so very difficult to find comfort for *children of God who are under the trial of persecution*. There are still many of God's people who endure the trial of cruel mockings and something worse than that. Some of you have to suffer in many ways for Christ's sake. "Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you." Let not this trouble you—Christ has provided abundant consolation for all who suffer with Him, for they shall reign with Him forever and ever. They shall be—

**"Brightest of the saints in light,
'Midst the bright ones doubly bright."**

They shall receive larger palms and brighter crowns than others who have suffered less for His dear name's sake. We do not say about these dear Christians, "Where shall I seek comforters for you?" for we know where to point them to most effectual consolation!

Sometimes, we have to deal with *fainting Christians*, yet when we meet with them we do not find their case one of superlative difficulty. Every now and then, I suppose, almost all of us get into a condition in which our joy and comfort have to be looked for and can scarcely be found. Partly through ill-health, partly from the strain of high excitement, which is followed by a reaction, we got to be like Elijah, when he said, "Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." There are times when the pulse scarcely beats and the blood begins to cool and the heart is faint. Beloved, whenever we meet with you in that condition, we tell you that we have been in that state, ourselves. No, we remind you that our Lord, Himself, was in an agony and was greatly depressed in spirit. We have to assure you that the condition of your frames and feelings does not affect your safety in Christ. We have to remind you that, though you are changed, God is not changed. The promise, the Old Covenant, stands just as fast when you are down in distress as when you are on the high places

of exultation. You are saved by *faith*, not by feeling—and when feeling ebbs out to the very last degree, still hold on to Jesus—sink or swim, still trust in Him! When you see no trace of His actual Presence with you, rely upon Him, all the same, and be of good cheer. This is not hard to say—and when the Spirit of God is with us, we find no lack of consolation for fainting saints.

Nor do we find ourselves much embarrassed by cases of *disappointed workers*. We hear them say, “Surely we have labored in vain and spent our strength for nothing. Who has believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” But we tell them of many of God’s saints who labored long without seeing any immediate results and yet they were accepted of God. Jeremiah, the plaintive, Weeping Prophet, saw the people reject everything that he said, yet he was not rejected, but accepted of God! And among honorable men, there is none more excellent than the Prophet Jeremiah. Beloved, you may be sent to warn a people who never will be saved and yet you will be blessed. When Isaiah saw the seraphim, and in answer to God’s call, “Whom shall I send?” said, “Here am I; send me,” remember what his commission was—he was sent, not to bring the people to God, but to go and say to them, “Hear you, indeed, but understand not; and see you, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.”

He obeyed his commission as it was given to him and his Lord rewarded him. That may be your case. Besides, you are no judge of your own success! I think that it has been noticed by ministers, very often—so often as to be like a Baconian induction—that when we think that we preach worst, God usually blesses the people most, and that when we appear to have had the least power, God displays His ability more clearly than at other times! Therefore, when you go home weeping, while you have only sown in tears, you shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you! But you are no judge of what you do, yourself, and you cannot tell what the results of your work may be. If you see them not, the angels may have seen them and while you are weeping, they are rejoicing! At any rate, you are not responsible for the harvest—you are responsible for plowing and sowing. If you have done your work well, in the fear of God, what comes of it rests with God—not with you!

Sometimes, beloved Friends, we have the task of comforting *dying Believers*, and that is no very difficult thing. There is one whom I could mention to you who, not long ago, spent all that he had in taking a new business which he needed for his growing family. And he hoped to prosper in it. He had scarcely been in the house many weeks before his daughter was brought home to him and, when taken upstairs, she was found to be raving with madness! She was watched over carefully but, to the breaking of his heart, she had to be put away. Not long after, another, dear to his heart, was suddenly taken away. By-and-by, he, himself, fell ill and, at last, going to a physician, he was told that his case was a very serious one—he had better see a specialist. He saw the specialist, who told him that he had an internal cancer, that he might be operated upon, but that,

in all probability, he would die under the operation. And he would advise him to live as long as he could.

That happened not long ago. If I were to introduce him to you, what kind of a man would you expect him to be, with his bereavements and with his prospect of soon dying probably a very painful death? You would suppose that he would look very dull, haggard, and so forth. There is not a more cheerful person beneath the cover of Heaven! And when he crawled up to London, the other day, to do some business, and some persons wondered that he did it, he said, "While I can, I will do my best in the place where God has put me. When I can get out no more, I will sit still and praise God. And when the time comes, I will die with my face towards the New Jerusalem." That is how Christians live and that is how Christians die! We do not find, when we have to deal with a believer in Christ, that it is at all a difficult thing to cheer the heart either in the near or the distant prospect of death.

Nor, dear Friends, do we find ourselves much troubled in seeking to comfort *repenting backsliders*. It is grievous that any should backslide. It is horrible that the Church of God should have her name disgraced, that the Christ of God should have His religion spattered by the iniquities of professing Christians. But when the Lord touches the wandering heart and it breaks under a sense of guilt—and the man turns back to his God, we find it easy to say, "The Lord delights in mercy. Return, you backsliding children! God is willing to receive you, He is waiting to bless you." The Word of God is full of consolation to backsliders who are seeking His face. Guilty as you are, the Lord says, "Return unto Me, for I am married to you." He might well divorce you, but the Lord, the God of Jacob, says that He hates putting away. He will not cast off the people of His choice! He is glad to receive them back after all their uncleanness and filthiness. Yes, there is much comfort for returning backsliders and if there are any such here, tonight, I would put out my hand and say, "Come back, my Brother, my Sister—come and welcome to the Savior."

And certainly there is no difficulty in trying to comfort *seeking sinners*. If any man is seeking the Savior, the Savior is seeking him—

***"Your seeking His face
Is all of His Grace!"***

He has begun with you, or else you would not have begun with Him, and now, if you will simply trust Him, only trust Him, you shall have immediate peace! "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." That is a glorious passage. "He that believes on Him is not condemned," is another blessed phase of the same comforting Truth of God. If you have received Christ, to you He gives the power to become one of the sons of God, "even to them that believe on His name." There is a whole hive full of real honey for a soul that comes to Christ! You may even dip your hand in it, if you will, and eat as much sweetness as you please, for you will never exhaust it.

Thus I have explained how, sometimes, in seeking comforters, our work is easy.

II. But, dear Friends, AT OTHER TIMES IT BECOMES SO HARD AS TO BE IMPOSSIBLE. Nahum says, concerning Nineveh, “Where shall I seek comforters for you?”

Assyria, of which Nineveh was the capital, *was an empire which existed entirely for itself*. No Assyrian monarch ever thought of what would be for the good of the nations that he conquered. I should think that if anybody ever mentioned such a thing, he would have laughed at him, or he would have put out his eyes, or cut off his head! There was no idea that anybody else had *any* rights at all except the king of Assyria, for even his subjects were simply his puppets, destroyed by his will and pleasure. And Assyria was thus the incarnation of pure, or rather of *impure* selfishness. Well, when a selfish man goes down as Nineveh did, who comforts him? He never did anybody any good and he may say, if he likes, “I care for nobody, and nobody cares for me.” It is very hard, indeed, to say anything by way of comfort to a man who is broken down and who never cared for other people. Do not get into that state of mind, I pray you, dear Friends. I believe that selfishness is the front-door key of despair, for it never did any good to anybody. So, when it gets into trouble, nobody brings it comfort and everybody says, Who will bemoan you? “Where shall I seek comforters for you?”

The Assyrians also *dealt very cruelly with others*. On the great stones that Mr. Layard brought home, there are awful pictures of what was being done with the captives, heaps of heads cut off from men who had been taken in war, eyes gouged out, and all sorts of dreadful things with which I will not horrify you. And, consequently, when that cruel power was put down, who would wish to seek comfort for it? Oh, that we may be prevented from ever being cruel to others! If we are cruel to others, when our turn comes, there will be no comfort for us. These people plundered every nation wherever they went. They took away everything that they could and left them penniless. They devoured the fruits of the ground and cared nothing what desolation they left behind. And when the time came for them to be robbed and their capital to be despoiled, nobody thought of comforting them. They were left to reap what they had sown.

Besides that, *they were famous for their pride*, and that pride rose up into *blasphemy*. Remember how the Assyrian messenger, Rabshakeh, defied Jehovah? He said, “Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arphad? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of my hands that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?” So, when their corpses were all piled up in the streets, no nation wept for them, nobody cared for them. Oh, dear Friends, conduct your business in such a way that you do not crush the poor! Manage everything in such a way that you rob nobody. Be straight. Be just. Be kind. “Live and let live,” or else, if your turn to fall should come, one of these days, nobody will bemoan you, or be sorry for you! If you lift up your hand in proud blasphemy against God and He brings you down to the dust, you will be quoted as an instance of how the Justice of God overtakes the proud. The Lord keep us from all this! I cannot help mentioning it because it is in the chapter and has to do with the text. It is much better that you

and I should go humbly on in laborious poverty and find our way to Heaven with good repute, than that we should become, even, kings of the earth and lords of all her wealth—and after all should be found to have lived only for self and to have cared for none besides—for then our downfall will be terrible in the day of the Lord's vengeance.

But, besides this, there are other people whom we cannot comfort. There is a man in a good deal of trouble about his soul, so he says. He comes to me and, on talking with him, and probing him a bit, I find that he is *living in the commission of a known sin*. He says that he cannot believe. He cannot pray. He cannot get comfort. Of course he cannot while he indulges any known sin! "Where shall we find comforters for you?" God will not forgive you while you continue in that sin! Christ will not cleanse you from the guilt of it while you continue in the practice of it! You must part with sin, or we cannot comfort you. We will not even *try* to do so!

And, next, there are some who do not get any comfort, though they have left off sin, because *they have never made restitution*. If you have robbed or wronged anybody, when you come to Christ, do what Zaccheus did, who said that if he had taken anything from any man by false pretense, he would restore him four-fold. There was a minister in this city, a dear friend of mine, who preached a sermon upon the necessity of restitution when wrong had been done, and some of his friends told him that if he preached in that way he would drive the people away. But, during the week, he met in the street a man of about his own age, who said to him, "Were you not in Messrs. So-and-So's warehouse once?" "Yes, I was." Did you not lose a watch while you were there?" "Yes, I did." Well, I was there at the same time. Do you remember me?" "What is your name? Oh, yes, I remember your name!" "I stole your watch. I came to hear you last Sunday night and I cannot rest till I have given you ten pounds to make restitution for that watch." "No," said my friend, "I do not want money." "But I must make restitution," said the other.

At last my friend explained that the watch was not worth ten pounds, though it might have been worth four. So the man gave him the four pounds—and he came back to his critics, and said—"I have made four pounds profit by that sermon, whatever you may have thought of it. I had forgotten all about my lost watch, but my sermon has brought me back the money for it." The man who thus made restitution is now, I believe, an honorable Christian man. I do not see how he could have been so with that watch on his conscience, and I do not believe that, do what we may, we can give comfort to people who have wronged others till, to their very utmost, they have made restitution! How shall I comfort you, if you repent not of your robbery, but keep the proceeds of it?

Again, there is another sort of people whom we cannot comfort, people who seem very concerned to get pardon, but when you come to understand them, you discover that *they are living in enmity against somebody*—a brother, a mother-in-law, a cousin, or a friend whom they will not forgive. They keep on harboring hatred in their minds. I am grieved to say that it is not altogether an unusual thing to find fathers who will not forgive a daughter, or a son. They did not happen to marry the person you

would have liked to choose for them and, of course, you have a perfect right, have you not, to make the selection for them? You thought *you* had a right to pick for *yourself*, but you will not give that right to your children—so you have a grudge against them on that account—and then you go whining to God to forgive you and yet you will not forgive your daughter! Here you are on your knees, crying, “Lord have mercy upon me,” yet you will not have mercy upon that friend who once did you wrong and whom you ought to have forgiven long ago! Now, remember, that it is of no use for you to pray, or do anything else if you will not, *from your heart forgive those who have offended you*—for neither will God, even for Christ’s sake—forgive you! There must be a clean sweep of everything like enmity out of your heart, or else you cannot be at peace with God. Enmity cannot lie down with love! Darkness cannot weld with light! You cannot enter into the peace of God till you are willing to forgive others. There are many people who get hung up on that nail—I wish they could get released from it, by God’s Grace.

We meet with some also who profess to be very anxious to be saved. Perhaps I have some such here, tonight, and yet *they do not pray*. You rise in the morning and you go to bed at night without a prayer! And all day long God is not at all in your thoughts. Do you expect, then, to be saved by accident? Do you really reckon that, one of these days, as you walk down the street, salvation will drop on you, whether you will or not? Beloved, if you desire this great Gift of God, ask for it! “He that asks, receives.” If you want to find this treasure, look for it! “He that seeks, finds.” If you would get Heaven’s door opened, I pray you, use the knocker! “To him that knocks, it shall be opened.” No prayer, no Bible-reading, no going to hear the Word of God with the earnest intent to find out what the way of salvation is, why, dear me, how can you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? You are evidently living in constant neglect! Nobody ever prospers in business who does not pay attention to it and no man can expect to enter into peace with God when he goes on in a sort of slipshod way, going sometimes to a place of worship, occasionally feeling a little earnest, but never seeking the Lord with his whole heart! You will have to be awakened out of this fatal lethargy! May the Spirit of God awaken you this very night! Resolve that you will not let the Angel go unless He bless you. May the great Master bring you to that state of mind at once!

There are others, and these are the people we have so often to deal with, who feel their sin and who really wish to be saved—and they do a great deal in the hope of being saved—but there is one thing they will *not* do. They will not *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. They try to be saved by their prayers, as if there was any promise that God would save us for our praying. They try Bible-reading, for in the Scriptures they think they have eternal life—but they forget that eternal life is not in the Bible except as the Bible testifies of Christ and points to Christ—Christ *is* eternal life! They have been christened, they have been confirmed, they are members of churches and so on, and there they rest! No, they do not “rest.” They feel that there is still something needed which they have not yet obtained. That which is needed, my Friend, is that you should come and—

**“Cast your deadly doing down,
Down at Jesus’ feet,”**

and trust in what He has done and then are you saved. That is the whole philosophy of salvation!

There are two ways of salvation. The one is self-salvation, and it is a dream, an empty thing, an awful disappointment. The other is Christ’s salvation—come, and put yourself wholly into His hands and say, “Save me, Lord. By profession, You are a Savior. Execute Your holy craft upon me and save me. Save me from my sin, the guilt of it. Save me from sinning, the practice of it. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, purify me from the love of evil and make me clean. You can do it, and You, alone, can do it.” Now, if you trust the Savior, you are saved. I will repeat again that declaration of Christ, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” But if you will not believe, I know of nothing whereby I can comfort you. If you will not have Christ, there remains nothing but condemnation for you! There can be no other Sacrifice for sin. You have insulted God by rejecting His Son and you must go before your God unsaved and unforgiven. Beware of such a doom as that!

Sometimes we have to feel what an awful thing it would be if we had to deal with a soul that was eternally lost. Then, indeed, we might say, in the language of our text, each word dripping with tears of blood, “Where shall I seek comforters for you?” Will any of my Hearers be lost? Will any here die without Christ? Will any here refuse the great salvation to the last? If so, what comfort could I administer to such? I shall have, on the contrary, to put it thus—“You know the way of salvation, but you chose the other road, yes, chose it deliberately. And if you have come into the place of wrath and death, who shall bemoan you? Who shall comfort you?” You made your choice and you must have your choice forever. All that you will suffer in the next world will be the fruit of your own sin. Hell is sin fully ripe. Drunkenness, lechery, dishonesty, lying, enmity—when these come to seed, they make Hell! They pain men enough in this world. And if the softening influences of Christianity were taken away and men were just left in the world to act according to their own passions and their own lusts, that would be all the Hell they would need!

You will have to feel forever, in every pang that you endure, “This is nothing but my old sin.” Whenever you are overwhelmed with woe in the next world, and look your own woe in the face, you will say to yourself, “Why, that is what I used to call, ‘pleasure,’ and it has come to me here in this shape! And I was told that I would say that. I was warned and yet I perished, despite the warning.” If you are lost, my Hearers, you will have refused the great Sacrifice of which you know, for to the best of my power, in the simplest words that I could find, I have set forth Christ among you evidently crucified—and I have said, “There is your only hope of salvation. Look to Jesus and live.” If you will not have God’s Gift. If you put far from you the Christ who alone has life eternal, you need not wonder when He leaves you to yourselves!

Besides, in that day some of you will especially have to remember how you *stifled conscience*. You have gone into some worldly pleasure on pur-

pose to silence the voice of conscience. Sometimes, sitting in this House, you have been almost brought to decision. You have said, "Please God, when I get home, I will seek my chamber, and fall upon my knees before Him in prayer." How often have you been brought very near the Kingdom of God and how terrible is it to be so near and then deliberately to turn back! Your blood will be upon your own heads and, truly, if it is so, "where shall I seek comforters for you?" Some of you would not be persuaded. You have had a mother's tearful admonition. Teachers have pleaded with and for you in the most earnest way. You have had judgments, too, from God—sicknesses that have shaken every bone of your body! You have been brought to feel that there is a God and that He would deal with you. Remember that solemn prophecy, "He that being often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

I sometimes start in my sleep at the thought of one of my Hearers being in Hell. Ah, Sirs, if you do not care about your own souls, we, at least, will care about them for you! How can I be clear of the blood of you all, so many of you, and so often addressed? Do you wonder that I am often distressed beyond measure at my own position? It were better for me to have broken stones on the road than to have preached to you if I have been unfaithful to your souls! For then, in the next world, you will curse me and it shall be my Hell to bear the reproaches that you shall justly fling at me. But I beseech you, by the living God, and as you believe yourselves to be immortal beings, accept, tonight, His way of salvation, so simple and so easy!

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized"—which is the Christian method, the Biblical method of confessing your faith—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

I leave you all in God's hands. Pray, dear Christian people, that everyone who has heard me, tonight, may be saved, and that this rainy night may be, indeed, memorable as the night in which many a sinner cried—

***"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me!
That on the Cross
He shed His blood,
For sin to set me free."***

Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
NAHUM 2:11-13, 3.**

This is a prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh. Remember that Assyria had been one of the great powers that swayed the world—a cruel, ty-

rannical empire—and God at last determined to destroy Nineveh which was its seat of government. In a high poetical strain, the Prophet cries out,

Nahum 2:11. *Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid?* You will remember how Mr. Layard took out of the ruins at Nineveh those immense lions that now stand in the British Museum. They were the very type of this great empire that boasted itself in its lion-like strength and ferocity. So the Prophet cries, "Where is the lair of the lion?"

12. *The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.* They were always destroying and plundering, and carrying home the spoil, so that everybody was fattened with the plunder of the nations.

13. *Behold, I am against you, says the LORD of Hosts.* And whenever that is the case, a man does not need any other adversary! If God is against you, O my dear Hearer, what will become of you? Though you should have all the power of the world and possess robust health, abundant riches and keen wit, what can you do against God? "I am against you, says Jehovah of Hosts." He throws down the gauntlet to Nineveh.

13. *And I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions: and I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall no more be heard.* It is time that they were stopped. You remember in what foul-mouthed language Rabshakeh addressed King Hezekiah and God now declares that there shall be no more such letters as his. God may allow evil to lord it over His people for a while, but He puts a hook in the mouth of the leviathan, by-and-by. He that restrains the sea and the waves thereof, Jehovah is His name, and He restrains the wickedness of men!

Nahum 3:1. *Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departs not.* Assyria became a great empire through violence, falsehood and robbery. The soldiers had no respect for justice. They trod out the last spark of liberty and crushed all nations under their feet.

2, 3. *The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifts up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is no end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses.* When the Medo-Babylonian army came against the great city, it inflicted a terrible slaughter, killing the inhabitants without mercy, making a very holocaust of human bodies. But, inasmuch as it was a den of criminals, this horrible execution was well deserved. Yet is the story dreadful.

4, 5. *Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that sells nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.* Behold, I am against you, says the LORD of Hosts. These people had been steeped in sin of the worst kind. They had led other nations into it and had practiced the witchcrafts which God abhors. Therefore, again, Jehovah says, "I am against you." When God is in arms against a triumphant nation, He soon makes an end of it.

5, 6. *And I will discover your skirts upon your face, and I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon you, and make you vile, and will set you as a gazing stock.* See what God can do! They were the proudest of the proud and now He makes them the scorn of the scorner, and sets them as a gazing stock. May God never deal in that way with any proud man, here! He can easily do it—when we set ourselves up to be little gods, He can soon make us utterly mean and contemptible—and bring us down to nothing at all. It is His way to deal thus with the proud.

7. *And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon you shall flee from you, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? Where shall I seek comforters for you?* If you could go, today, and see the vast heaps of Kouyunjik, and of the great monuments of that mighty city all destroyed and crumbling into powder, you would know something of what God can do! It does not look likely to you that London can ever become a heap of ruins and yet it may be, for its sins reek up to Heaven as the sins of Nineveh did! The Lord can strike this city as He smote that.

8. *Are you better than populous No Amon, that was situated among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?* The Prophet quotes the destruction of the city called No Amon, probably Thebes, as an instance of what God can do.

9. *Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite.* There seemed to be no measure to her strength. If she needed assistance from other nations, she had only to call them in and the mercenary tribes were ready to defend her.

9, 10. *Put and Lubim were your helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.* So one city is a warning to another. No Amon in Egypt is a warning to Nineveh in Assyria, and both of these a warning to our city, and a warning to every man who is proud, haughty, domineering and oppressive to the poor—great in his own wisdom and careless for the comfort of others!

11. *You also shall be drunken: you shall be hid, you also shall seek strength because of the enemy.* Nineveh never dreamed of doing that! She said, “I am a queen, I shall see no sorrow! I am the greatest of all cities.”

12. *All your strongholds shall be like fig trees with the first-ripe figs: if they are shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.* As figs do when they are ripe. These castles, towers, fortresses, built to stand the siege, would be no sooner attacked than they would fall into the hands of the enemy!

13. *Behold, your people in the midst of you are women.* You see, on those great Assyrian stones, the strong men that are sculptured, there, with their enormous muscles, telling of gigantic force. When God came to deal with them, they became weak and cowardly.

13, 14. *The gates of your land shall be set wide open unto your enemies: the fire shall devour your bars. Draw you waters for the siege.* The Prophet challenges them to defend themselves.

14. *Fortify your strongholds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick kiln.* That was to mend the walls whenever they were broken. They did this with great industry. “Do it,” says God, “yet you shall not be able to stand.”

15-17. *There shall the fire devour you; the sword shall cut you off, it shall eat you up like the cankerworm: make yourself many as the cankerworm, make yourself many as the locusts. You have multiplied your merchants above the stars of Heaven: the cankerworm spoils, and flees away. Your crowned are as the locusts, and your captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun arises they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.* What marvelous poetry is this! How terrible! Their soldiers, their rulers, their captains, were as many as the locusts and the grasshoppers, but when they were needed, all these hosts would flee away. What cannot God do when He comes out to fight with men? “The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name.” He brings confusion to His enemies. Oh, fight not against Him! Beloved, let us be at peace with Him, the strong and mighty God. Let us confess our faults to Him, acquaint ourselves with Him and be at peace.

18. *Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria.* They who should have taken care of the people, the chief governors, neglected them. They who should have defended the people were out of the way when they were needed—“Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria.”

18. *Your nobles shall dwell in the dust: your people are scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathers them.* Let not the same be said of London. Are there any who can say, “No man cares for my soul”? Let them not be without a helper—

**“Oh, come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam.
At the close of the day ‘twill be sweet to say,
‘I have brought some lost one home.’”**

Brothers and Sisters, awaken yourselves—be shepherds to the people of this modern Nineveh and seek to gather the scattered flock of Christ!

19. *There is no healing of your bruise; your wound is grievous.* Thank God we have not come to that point—yet there is still healing for the bruised sinner! Though the wounds of our people are grievous, there is a balm for them! We know where it is and what it is—let us not be slow to tell them about it.

19. *All that hear bruit of you shall clap the hands over you.* I think that is the old Norman-French word, “bruit,” signifying noise or tumult, that has been left in our Bible.

19. *For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?* Nineveh had been so wicked and had done so much evil that when men heard that it was destroyed, they would even clap their hands for very joy that such an evil-doer was out of the way! I know not to what purpose I was moved to read this passage, but it is specially meant for someone, to whom may God apply it by his Spirit!

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