

THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT VOL. 9

(Sermons Nos. 487-546)

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by Charles Spurgeon

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PREFACE

How soon has 1863 hurried forward to the years beyond the flood! Truly our years fly as the eagle, and are as the swift ships. We cannot say that our days are here, but only that they are gone. As the waters of the cataract are ever leaping down the rock and hurrying on their way, even so our days hasten as a torrent, and are gone as the bubble on the stream. Let us be content that it is so; for the unmoving air yieldeth no music to the harp of Aeolus, and the stagnant pool turneth not the wheel of industry. A horse in its stable winneth not the race: it must speed if it would serve its owner. Time, like a ship, bringeth no wealth except as it maketh its passages. To stay the flight of time were to clip the wings of angels. If we use our hours in the service of God, they are better spent than hoarded: to have a wealth of time to come, is not to be compared with the riches of time already spent for the God of heaven. Our days unused are the ploughed field; but the good time past has already yielded its harvest. As the shipwright is happy that the vessel is launched — as the warrior shouteth that the battle is fought — and as the woman in travail rejoiceth that a man-child is born — so are we grateful to the eternal God that another year has gone.

When our year's ministry is over, we feel a sweet relief; we sit down upon the milestone of our preface, and remember that we are nearer home; looking back with gratitude upon the steps already trodden, we are cheered in our onward way. This volume is the record of another year's campaign against sin and Satan; the memorial of another series of struggles, contentions, buffetings, wrestlings, defeats, and triumphs. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: we began with trembling hope, we close with deep repentance for our shortcomings, and hearty thanksgiving for our successes. Little doth any man know, beside the man who endureth the like, the agonies and joys of a preacher; a stranger intermeddleth not therewith. As the weaver seeth every thread dyed with the sweat of his brow, and marketh in the fabric his own nerves and sinews interwoven in its tissue, even so does the minister of God when he reviews his sermons. The husbandman has been *first* partaker of the fruits; and in that first feasting he tasted his own labors, anxieties, and hopes, sweetened with the dew of heaven and flavoured with the genial sunshine of God: no other man can partake of the fruits with such a zest as he. Permit me, then, to pour out my whole soul unto God in praise, for the unceasing mercy which

has given me this series of discourses. O God, most gracious, be thou extolled, and be thou very high! Thou hast dealt well with thy servant according unto thy Word.

Here, reader, thou hast the fragments of the bread and of the fishes with which the Master has fed the multitude in the wilderness: that the cakes were made of barley is our fault, that the fishes were little is due to the small net which caught them, but that they have been blessed and multiplied is to the Master's honor, and should make thee bless his name. None were more surprised than the disciples when the crowd were supplied from their meagre store, and no one marvels more than the preacher that the Lord works such great things by his slender abilities.

Thou hast here, reader, ox-goats which have slain Philistines, stones which have smitten Goliaths, and nails which have pierced the brains of Siseras. Call these sermons blasts of the ram's horn if thou wilt, Jericho is fallen, go thou up and smite the inhabitants thereof. As no man might despise the youth of Timothy, so contemn not the weakness of the author; but as the Lord was seen in the bush, so behold thou his glory in our bramble. So far from desiring to be esteemed eloquent and learned, the preacher glories in his infirmities, because the power of Christ doth rest upon him. The vessel is earthen, and may be clearly seen to be such, but the golden treasure is put into such keeping that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. It is not the pole, but the brazen serpent to which men are bidden to look and live. Woe unto us if we attract gazers to ourselves rather than to our Lord. Look, reader, look to Jesus as our subject matter; to the Holy Spirit as our only strength, and to the eternal Father as the alone object of praise.

During the year we have heard with joy of conversions wrought by the Holy Spirit from most of these discourses; but, to assist the judgment of those who wish to distribute the most useful, we would mention as having had many seals put upon them, "The Voice from Heaven," "Nominal Christians — Real Infidels," "The Root of the Matter," "Comfort to Seekers from what the Lord has not said," "The Bridgeless Gulf," "Believing with the Heart," and "Mealtime in the Cornfields."

The sermon entitled "The Warrant of Faith" has caused some little controversy, and one very absurd pamphlet has been issued in order to disprove it, but the writer was far too ignorant of Scripture and the fundamental principles of all theology to be worthy of an answer. It is

geatly to be desired that those who are led captives by ultracalvinistic theories would weigh the arguments of this sermon carefully, and begin to preach the whole gospel instead of a part, and preach it freely to sinners in the name of Jesus. Truth is no more to be contained in one rigid system than the ocean in a shell. Divine sovereignty is a great and undoubted fact, but human responsibility is quite as indisputable. God in his plan of grace contemplates man as a reasonable being, and not as a stone, or a beast. His deeds of grace never violate the will, but sweetly constrain it to consent. Salvation is all of grace; but God works by means. Faith is God's gift, but it is also the act of renewed manhood. Damnation is the result of justice, not of arbitrary predestination. O that the time were come when seeming opposites would be received, because faith knows that they are portions of one harmonious whole. Would that an enlarged view of the dispensations of God to man would permit ministers to be faithful to the human race, and at the same time true to the Sovereign Lord of all. The Lord knows with what earnestness of soul the preacher has striven to declare not a part, but the whole of the counsel of God.

Thanks are hereby very affectionately tendered to those earnest friends who have diligently circulated these sermons. May their reward be great in the day of account.

Many friends send us texts, requesting us to preach from them — this we cannot engage to do. Our habit has been to look to the Lord for our guidance, and when a text comes with power to our soul, we preach from it without hesitation; but, as we dare not select our own themes, so neither can we receive those suggested to us unless our Master seals them upon our heart. Remarks are also occasionally made upon our style, and our reflections upon different denominations and doctrines; these we accept with deferential respect; but, at the same time venture to observe, that we can never hope to please all, and do not aim to gratify any; that our style has been useful hitherto to the many, and that we shall be very slow to change it to oblige the few. We must work in our own way, however rough that way may be. Saul's armor we have not proved; and without finding fault with it as worn by Saul, we must be permitted to go out as aforetime, with our sling and stone. Indeed, without any human allowance, our mind is made up to do so. As to sharp remarks upon the errors of different Churches, fidelity compels us to make them, and no one should wish us to be faithless to our sense of duty, and our reverence to God.

Believers, we entreat you give your continued prayers for a blessing upon our endeavors. Let all who read to profit pray with fervor, and who can tell the blessed result? O for an unction from on high! This is the one thing needful. Let us pray that the ever-present Spirit may work among us more and more. O Lord, send now prosperity. Amen.

Reader, thy Friend,

A TEMPTED SAVIOR — OUR BEST SUCCOR.

NO. 487

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 4TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.” — Hebrews 2:18.

My text, furnishing the motto for the congregation for the New Year, is, as you know, always supplied to me by a most venerable clergyman of the Church of England, who has ever showed to me the most constant and affectionate regard. I have no doubt that the present text has been suggested to this aged servant of the Lord by his deep experience at once of affliction and deliverance: for thence he has learned his need of solid, substantial food, fat things full of marrow, fit for the veteran warriors of the cross. Having been tempted these many years in the wilderness, my esteemed friend finds that as his natural strength decays, he needs more and more to cast himself upon the tenderness of the Redeemer’s love; and he is led more fully to look to Him who is his only help and succor in every day of trouble, finding consolation alone in the person of Christ Jesus the Lord. My text seems to me to be a staff fitted for hoary age to lean upon in the rough places of the way; a sword, with which the strong man may fight in all hours of conflict; a shield with which youth may cover itself in the time of peril, and a royal chariot in which babes in grace may ride in safety.

There is something here for every one of us, as Solomon puts it, a portion for seven and also for eight. If we consider the Great Prophet and High Priest of our profession — Jesus Christ — as being tempted in all points, we shall not grow weary or faint in our minds, but shall gird up our loins

for our future journey, and like Elijah go in the strength of this meat for many days to come.

Ye that are tempted — and I suppose the major part of this present congregation are included in the list; — ye that are tempted — and indeed if you know yourselves you are all in your measure thus exercised — ye that are tempted, listen to me this morning whilst I endeavor to speak of your temptations, and in parallel lines of the temptations of Him who, having known your trials is able to succor you at all times.

I. Our first point this morning is this — MANY SOULS ARE TEMPTED — CHRIST WAS TEMPTED. All the heirs of heaven pass under the yoke; all true gold must feel the fire; all wheat must be threshed; all diamonds must be cut; all saints must endure temptation.

1. They are tempted *from all quarters*. It is as Christ's parable puts it concerning the house whose foundation was on the rock: "The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house but it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." The descending rain may represent temptations from above; the floods pouring their devastating torrents upon the land may well denote the trials which spring from the world; while the howling winds may typify those mysterious influences of evil which issue from the Prince of the power of the air. Now whether we shudder at the descending rain, or fear before the uprising flood, or are amazed at the mysterious energy of the winds, it is well to recollect our blessed Lord was tempted in all points like as we are. This is to be our consolation, that nothing strange to the Head has happened to the members.

Beloved friends, it is possible that we may be tempted *by God*. I know it is written that "God is not tempted, neither tempteth he any man;" yet I read in Scripture "It came to pass that God did tempt Abraham," and I know it is a part of the prayer which we are taught to offer before God — "Lead us not into temptation," by which it is clearly implied that God does lead into temptation, or why else should we be taught to entreat him not to do so. In one sense of the term "tempt," a pure and holy God can have no share, but in another sense he does tempt his people. The temptation which comes from God is altogether that of trial; trial, not with an ill-design as are the temptations of Satan, but trial meant to prove and strengthen our graces, and so at once to illustrate the power of divine grace, to test the genuineness of our virtues, and to add to their energy. You remember that

Abraham was tried and tested of God when he was bidden to go to a mountain that God would show him, there to offer up his son Isaac. You and I may have the like experience. God may call us in the path of obedience to a great and singular sacrifice, the desire of our eyes may be demanded of us in an hour; or he may summon us to a tremendous duty far surpassing all our strength, and we may be tempted by the weight of the responsibility, like Jonah, to flee from the presence of the Lord. We can only know when placed in the position what temptations the Lord's message may involve, but, beloved, whatever these may be, our Great High Priest has felt them all. His Father called him to a work of the most terrific character. He laid upon him the iniquity of us all. He ordained him the second Adam, the bearer of the curse, the destroyer of death, the conqueror of hell, the seed of the woman doomed to be wounded in the heel, and elected to bruise the serpent's head. Our Lord was appointed to toil at the loom, and there, with ever-flying shuttle, to weave a perfect garment of righteousness for all his people. Now, beloved, this was a strong and mighty testing of the character of him who was found in fashion as a man, and it is not possible that we can ever be thrust into such a refiner's fire as that which tried this most pure gold. No other can be in the crucible so long, or subjected to such a tremendous heat as that which was endured by Christ Jesus. If, then, the trial be sent direct from our heavenly Father, we may solace ourselves with this reflection — in that he himself hath suffered, being tried of God, he is able also to succor them that are likewise tried. But, dear friends, our God not only tries us directly but *indirectly*. All is under the Lord's control of Providence; everything that happeneth to us is meted out by the decree and settled by his purpose. We know that nothing can occur to us save as it is written in the secret roll of providential predestination; consequently all the trials resulting from circumstances are traceable at once to the great First Cause. Out of the golden gate of God's ordinance the armies of trial march forth in array. No shower falls unpermitted from the threatening cloud; every drop has its order ere it hastens to the earth. Consider poverty for instance. How many are made to feel its pinching necessities. They shiver in the cold for want of raiment; they are hungry and athirst; they are houseless, friendless, despised. This is a temptation from God, but all this Christ knew —

“Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay my head.” When he had fasted forty days and forty nights he was an hungered, and then it was that he was tempted of the devil. Nor does the scant table and the ragged garment alone invite

temptation, for all Providences are doors to trial. Even our mercies, like roses, have their thorns. Men may be drowned in seas of prosperity as well as in rivers of affliction. Our mountains are not too high, and our valleys are not too low for temptation to travel. Whither shall we flee from their presence? What wings of wind can carry us? What beams of light can bear us? Everywhere, above and beneath, we are beset and surrounded with dangers. Now, since all these are under the superintendence and direction of the great Lord of Providence, we may look upon them all as temptations which come from him. But in every one of these Christ had his part. Let us choose the special one of *sickness*; sickness is a strong temptation to impatience, rebellion, and murmuring, but he himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses. That visage had not been marred more than that of any man, had not the soul been sore vexed, and the body consequently much tormented. *Bereavement*, too, what a trial is this to the tender heart! Ye arrows of death, ye kill, but ye wound with wounds worse than death. "Jesus wept," because his friend Lazarus slept in the tomb. In that great loss he was schooled to sympathize with the widow in her weeds, with the orphan in his fatherless estate, and with the friend whose acquaintance has been thrust into darkness. Nothing can come from God to the sons of men the like of which did not also happen unto the Lord Jesus Christ. Herein let us wrap our selves about with the warm mantle of consolation, since Christ was tempted in this point like as we are.

2. But still more do temptations *arise from men*. God doth try us now and then, but our fellow-men every day. Our foes are found in our own household, among our friends. Out of a mistaken kindness, it often happeneth that they would lead us to prefer our own ease to the service of God. Links of love have made iron chains for saints. It is hard to ride to heaven over our own flesh and blood. Kinsfolk and acquaintance may much hinder young disciples. This, however, is no novelty to our Lord. You know how he had to say to Peter, well-beloved disciple though he was, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou savourest not the things that be of God." Poor, ignorant human friendship, would have kept him back from the cross, would have made him miss his great object in being fashioned as a man, and so have despoiled him of all the honor which only shame and death could win him. Not only true, but false friends attempt our ruin. Treason creeps like a snake in the grass, and falsehood, like an adder, biteth the horse's heels. Doth treachery assault us, let us remember how the Son of David was betrayed. "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted

up his heel against me.” “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” What shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Eternal silence rest on thee! And yet, thou hast spent thy venom on my Lord; why need I marvel if thou try thy worst on me?

As by friends you and I are tempted, so often are we assailed by enemies. Enemies will waylay us with subtle questions, seeking to entrap us in our speech. O cunning devices of a generation of vipers! They did the same with Christ. The Herodian, the Sadducee, the Pharisee, the lawyer, each one has his riddle, and each one is answered — answered gloriously by the Great Teacher, who is not to be entrapped. You and I are sometimes asked queer questions; doctrines are set in controversy with doctrines; texts of Scripture are made to clash with other portions of God’s Word, and we hardly know how to reply. Let us retire into the secret chamber of this great fact — that, in this point, also Christ was tempted. And then, when his foes could not prevail against him thus, they slandered his character. “A drunken man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners,” said they, and he became the song of the drunkard, till their reproach had broken his heart. This may happen to us. We may be subjected to slander just in that very point where we are most clear. Our good may be evil spoken of; our motives misinterpreted; our words misreported; our actions misconstrued; but here, also, we may shelter ourselves beneath the eagle wings of this great truth, that our glorious Head hath suffered, and, being tempted, he can afford us aid. But his foes did even more than this: when they found him in an agony of pain, they taunted him to his face; pointing with the finger, they mocked his nakedness; thrusting out the tongue, they jeered at his claims, and hissed out that more than diabolical temptation, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe in thee.” How often do the sons of men, when they have gone to the full length of their tether, charge us in like manner. They have caught us in some unhappy moment — surprised us when our spirits were broken, when our circumstances were unhappy, and then they say, “Now — now where is your God? If you be what you profess to be, now prove it.” They ask us to prove our faith by a sinful action, which they know would destroy our characters — some rash deed, which would be contrary to the profession we have espoused. Here, too, we may remember that, having been tempted, our High Priest is able to succor those that are tempted. Moreover, remember that there are temptations which come from persons

who are neither friends nor foes, from those with whom we are compelled to mix in ordinary society. Jesus went to the pharisee's table; the example of the pharisee reeked with infectious pride; he sat with the publicans, whose characters were contagious with impurity; but, whether it was in one lazar-house or another, the Great Physician walked through the midst of moral plagues and leprosy unharmed. He associated with sinners, but was not a sinner, he touched disease, but was not diseased himself; he could enter into the chambers of evil, but evil could not find a chamber in him. You and I are thrown by our daily avocations into constant contact with evil. It were impossible, I suppose, to walk among men without being tempted by them. Inadvertently, men who have no studied design to betray us, by the mere force of their ordinary behavior entice us to evil, and corrupt our good manners. Here, too, if we have to cry, "Woe is me, for I dwell in Meshech, and sojourn in the tents of Kedar," we may remember that our great Leader sojourned here too, and being here he was tempted even as we are.

Dear friends, we shall not complete the list of temptations if we forget that a vast host, and those of a most violent character, can only be ascribed to *Satanic influence*. These are usually threefold; for Christ's temptation in the wilderness, if I read it aright, was a true picture of all the temptations which Satan uses against God's people. The first grand temptation of Satan is usually made against our faith. Being an hungered, Satan came to our Lord and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Here it was that devilish "if," that cunning suggestion of a doubt concerning his Sonship, coupled with the enticement to commit a selfish act, to prove whether he were the Son or no. Ah! how often doth Satan tempt us to unbelief. "God hath forsaken thee," saith he; "God hath no love to thee; thine experience has been a delusion; thy profession is a falsehood; all thy hopes will fail thee; thou art but a poor miserable dupe; there is no truth in religion; if there be, how is it that you are in this trouble? Why not do as you like, live as you list, and enjoy yourself?" All! foul fiend, how craftily dost thou spread thy net; but it is all in vain, for Jesus has passed through and broken the snare. My hearers, beware of intermeddling with divine providence; Satan tempts many believers to run before the cloud, to carve their own fortunes, build their own house, to steer their own vessels; mischief will surely befall all who yield to this temptation. Beware of becoming the keepers of your own souls, for evil will soon o'ertake you. Ah! when you are thus tempted by Satan, and your

adoption seems in jeopardy, and your experience appears to melt, fly at once to the good shepherd, remembering this, "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." The next foul temptation of Satan with Christ, was not to unbelief, but to the very reverse — presumption. "Cast thyself down," said he, as he poised the Savior on the pinnacle of the temple. Even so he whispers to some of us, "You are a child of God; you know that, and therefore you are safe; live as you like; cast thyself down, for it is written, 'He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee.'" Oh! that foul temptation. Many an Antinomian is led by the nose by this, driven like a fatted bullock to the slaughter, and like a fool to the correction of the stocks: for many an Antinomian will say, "I am safe, therefore I may indulge my lusts with impunity." But you who know better, when you are thus molested, when the devil brines doctrine of election, or the great truth of the final perseverance of the saints, and seeks to soil your purity, and stain your innocency by temptations drawn from the mercy and love of God, then console yourselves by this fact, that Christ was tempted in this point too, and is able to succor you even here. The last temptation of Christ in the wilderness was to idolatry; ambition was the temptation, but idolatry was the end at which the tempter aimed. "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." The old serpent will suggest, "I will make you rich if you will only venture upon that one swindling transaction; you shall be famous, only palm off that one falsehood; you shall be perfectly at ease, only wink at one small evil; all these things will I give thee if thou wilt make me Lord of thy heart." Ah! then it will be a noble thing if you can look up to Him who endured this temptation aforetime, and bid the fiend depart with "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord with all thy heart, and him only shalt thou serve." Thus shall Satan leave thee, and angels minister unto thee as they did to the tempted one of old.

Still further, to enlarge on this point, let me observe that we are tempted not only from all quarters, but *in all positions*. No man too lowly for the shafts of hell: no person too elevated for the arrows of evil. Poverty has its dangers — "Lest I be poor and steal" — Christ knew these. Contempt has its aggravated temptations — to be despised often makes men bitter of spirit, exasperates them into savage selfishness, and wolfish cruelty of revenge. Our great Prophet knew experimentally the temptations of contempt. It is no small trial to be filled with pain; when all the strings of our manhood are strained and twisted, it is little wonder if they make a

discord. Christ endured the greatest amount of physical pain, especially upon the cross. And on the cross, where all the rivers of human agony met in one deep lake within his heart, he bore all that it was possible for the human frame to bear; here, then, without limit he learned the ills of pain.

Turn the picture — Christ knew the temptations of riches. You will say, “How?” He had the opportunities to be rich. Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, would have been too glad to give him their substance; the honorable women who ministered to him, would have grudged him nothing. There were many opportunities when he might have made himself a king; he might have become famous and great like other teachers, and so have earned emolument; but as he knew, so also he overcame the temptations of wealth. The temptations of ease — and these are not small — Christ readily escaped. There would always have been a comfortable home for him at Bethany; there were many disciples who would have thought themselves but too honored to have found for him the softest couch on which head ever rested, but he who came not to enjoy but to endure, spurned all, but not without knowing the temptation. He learned, too, the trials of honor, of popularity, and of applause. “Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna,” said the multitudes in the streets of Jerusalem, when palm-branches were strewed in the way, and he rode in triumph over the garments of his disciples; but, knowing all this, he was still meek and lowly, and in him was no sin. We cannot either be cast down or lifted up, we cannot be put into the most strange and singular positions, without still being able to remember that Christ has made a pilgrimage over the least trodden of our paths, and is therefore able to succor them that are tempted.

3. Further, let me remark *that every age has its temptations*. The young while yet children, if believers, will discover that there are peculiar snares for the little ones. Christ knew these. It was no small temptation to a youth, a lad of some twelve years of age, to be found sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and answering their questions; it would have turned the heads of most boys, and yet Jesus went down to Nazareth and was subject unto his parents. It is small peril to grow in knowledge and in favor with God and man, if it were not for the word “God” put in it; to grow in favor constantly with men would be too much of a temptation for most youths. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth, for youth, when honored and esteemed, is too apt to lift its head and grow self-conceited, vain, and froward. When a young man knows that by-and-bye he shall become something great, it is not easy to keep him balanced.

Suppose that he is born to an estate, and knows that when he comes of full age he will be lord and master, and will be courted by everybody, why he is apt to be very wayward and self-willed. Now there were prophecies that went before concerning Mary's son — which marked him out as King of the Jews and a Mighty One in Israel, and yet I find not that the holy child Jesus was ever decoyed by his coming greatness into any actions inconsistent with the duty of a child. So young believers, you who are like Samuels and Timothys you can look to Christ and know that he can succor you. In his full manhood it is unnecessary for me to repeat the various afflictions which beat upon him. You who to-day bear the burden and heat of the day will find an example here; nor need old age look elsewhere, for we may view our Redeemer with admiration as he goes up to Jerusalem to die. His last moments are manifestly near at hand; he knows the temptations of an expected dissolution; he sees death more clearly than any of you, even though your temples are covered with hoar hairs; and yet, whether in life or in death, on Tabor's summit or on the banks of the river of death, he is still the same; tempted ever, but never sinning; tried always, but never found wanting.

O Lord! thou art able thus to succor them that are tempted; help thou us! I need not say more. If I have not mentioned the particular trial of every one here to-day, yet I think it may be included in some one of the general descriptions, and whatever it may happen to be, it cannot be so out of the catalogue as not to come in somewhere or other in the temptations of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I, therefore, now turn to the second part of the discourse upon which I shall speak with brevity.

II. Our second point is THAT AS THE TEMPTED OFTEN SUFFERED; CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED.

Notice, the text does not run — “In that he himself also hath been tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.” It is better than that — “In that he himself *hath suffered*, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.” Temptation, even when overcome, brings with it to the true child of God a great degree of suffering. The suffering consists in two or three things. It lies, mainly, *in the shock which sin gives to the sensitive, regenerate nature*. A man who is clothed in armor may walk in a brake through the midst of tearing thorns and brambles without being hurt, but let the man be stripped of his garments, and then let him attempt the same journey, and how sadly will he be rent and torn. Sin, to the man who

is used to it, is no suffering; if he be tempted it is no pain to him; in fact, frequently temptation yields pleasure to the sinner. To look at the bait is sweet to the fish which means to swallow it by-and-bye. But to the child of God, who is new-made and quickened, the very thought of sin makes him shudder; he cannot look at it without abhorrence and detestation, and without being alarmed to think that he is likely ever to fall into so abominable a crime. Now, dear friends, in this case, Christ indeed has fellowship, and far outruns us. His detestation of sin must have been much more deep than ours. A word of blasphemy, a thought of sin, must have cut him to the very quick. We cannot get a complete idea of the degree of wretchedness which Jesus must have endured in merely being upon earth among the ungodly. For infinite purity to dwell among sinners must be something as if you could suppose the best educated, the most pure, the most amiable person, condemned to live in a den of burglars, blasphemers, and filthy wretches: such a man's life must be a misery; no whip, no chain would be needed; merely associating with such people would be pain and torment enough. So the Lord Jesus, in merely bearing the neighborhood of sin, without any other troubles, would have had to suffer a vast, incalculable amount of woe. Suffering, too, arises to the people of God *from a dread of the temptation when its shadow falls upon us ere it comes*. At times there is more dread in the prospect of a trial than there is in the trial itself. We feel a thousand temptations in fearing one. Christ knew this. What an awful dread was that which came over him in the black night of Gethsemane! 'Twas not the cup, 'twas the fear of drinking it. "Let this cup pass from me," just seemed to indicate what the sorrow was. He knew how black, how foul, how fiery were its deeps, and it was the dread of drinking of it that bowed him to the ground till he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. When you have the like overwhelming pressure upon your spirit in the prospect of a trial yet to come, fly you to the loving heart of your sympathizing Lord, for he has suffered all this, having been himself tempted.

The suffering of temptation also lies often *in the source of it*. Have you not often felt that you would not mind the temptation if it had not come from where it did? "Oh!" say you, "to think that my own friend, my dearly beloved friend, should try me!" You are a child, and you have said, "I think I could bear anything but my father's frown, or my mother's sneer." You are a husband, and you say, "My thorn in the flesh is too sharp, for it is an ungodly wife;" or you are a wife, and this is more frequently the case, and

you think there is no temptation like yours, because it is your husband who assaults your religion, and who speaks evil of your good. It makes all the difference where the temptation comes from. If some scoundrel mocks us we think it honor, but when it is an honored companion we feel his taunt. A friend can cut under our armor and stab us the more dangerously. Ah! but the Man of Sorrows knew all this, since it was one of the chosen twelve who betrayed him. And besides, “it pleased the Father to bruise him, He hath put him to grief.” To find God to be in arms against us is a huge affliction. “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” is the very emphasis of woe. Jesus surely has suffered your griefs, come whence they may.

I have no doubt, too, that a portion of the sorrow and suffering of temptation may also lie in the fact *that God’s name and honor are often involved in our temptation*. It happens to some of us who are more publicly placed than others to be reviled, and when the reviling is merely against our own personal character, against our modes of speech or habit, we cannot only receive it gratefully but thankfully, blessing God that he has counted us worthy to suffer for his Name’s sake. But sometimes the attack is very plainly not against us but against God, and there will be things said of which we should say with the Psalmist David — “Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that keep not thy law?” When direct blasphemies are uttered against the person of Christ, or against the doctrine of his holy gospel, we have been “very heavy,” because we have thought

— “If I have opened this dog’s mouth against myself it matters not, but if I have made him roar against God, then how should I answer, and what should I speak.” This has often been the bitterness of it — “If I fall, God’s cause is stained; if I slip through the vehemence of this assault, then one of the gates of the church will be carried by storm; mischief cometh not to me alone, but to many of the Israel of God.” David says, of grieving the saints — “When I thought to know this it was too painful for me.” David’s Lord had to suffer this, for he says, “The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” He was made the target for those errors which were really shot at God, and so he had to feel first this bitterness of sympathy with his ill-used God.

I cannot, of course, particularize this morning so as to hit upon the precise sorrow which you, beloved brother in Christ, are enduring as the result of temptation, but whatever phase your sorrow may have assumed this should always be your comfort, that he has suffered in temptation; that he has not

merely known the temptation as you sometimes have known it, when it rattled on your harness and fell harmless to the ground, but it has rankled in his flesh. It has not made him sin, but it has made him smart; it has not made him err, but it has caused him to mourn. Oh! child of God, I know not a deeper well of purer consolation than this — “He himself hath suffered being tempted.”

III. Now for the third and last point. THEY THAT ARE TEMPTED HAVE GREAT NEED OF SUCCOR, AND CHRIST IS ABLE, HAVING HIMSELF BEEN TEMPTED TO SUCCOR THEM THAT ARE TEMPTED.

Of course this is true of Christ as God. Apart from any temptation he has ever endured, he would be able to succor the tempted, but we are now speaking in our text of Christ as a High Priest, in which we are to regard him in his complex character as God-man, for Christ is not only God but man, and not only man but God. The *Christos*, the anointed one, the High Priest of our profession, is in his complex character able to succor them that are tempted. How? Why, first, *the very fact that he was tempted has some succor in it to us*. If we had to walk through the darkness alone we should know the very extremity of misery, but having a companion we have comfort; having such a companion, we have joy. It is all black about me, and the path is miry, and I sink in it and can find no standing; but I plunge onwards, desperately set on reaching my journey’s end. It frets me that I am alone, but I hear a voice; (I can see nothing,) but I hear a voice which says, “Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.” I cry out, “Who goes there?” and an answer comes back to me — “I, the faithful and true witness, the Alpha and the Omega, the sufferer who was despised and rejected of men, I lead the way;” and at once I feel that it is light about me, and there is a rock beneath my feet, for if Christ my Lord hath been here, then the way must be safe, and must conduct to the desired end. The very fact that he has suffered, then, consoles his people.

But further, the fact *that he has suffered without being destroyed is inestimably comforting to us*. If you could see a block of ore just ready to be put into the furnace, if that block of ore could look into the flames, and could mark the blast as it blows the coals to a vehement heat, if it could speak it would say, “Ah! woe is me that ever I should be put into such a blazing furnace as that! I shall be burnt up; I shall be melted with the slag; I shall be utterly consumed!” But suppose another lump all bright and

glistening could lie by its side, and say, "No, no, you are just like I was, but I went through the fire and I lost nothing thereby; see how bright I am; how I have survived all the flames." Why then that piece of ore would rather anticipate than dread the season when it too should be exposed to the purifying heat, and come out all bright and lustrous like its companion. I see thee, I see thee, thou Son of Mary; bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; thou hast felt the flames, but thou art not destroyed; not the smell of fire has passed upon thee; thine heel has been bruised, but thou hast broken the serpent's head; there is no scar, nor spot, nor injury in thee; thou hast survived the conflict, and I, bearing thy name, purchased with thy blood, and dear to God as thou art dear to him, I shall survive it too, therefore will I tread the coals with confidence, and bear the heat with patience. Christ's conquest gives me comfort, for I shall conquer too.

And you will please to remember, too, that Christ in going through the suffering of temptation was not simply no loser *but he was a great gainer*, for it is written, it pleased God "to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It was through his suffering that he obtained the mediatorial glory which now crowns his head. Had he never carried the cross he had never worn that crown, that transcendently bright and glorious crown which now he wears as King in Zion, and as leader of his people whom he hath redeemed by blood. God over all blessed for ever he would have been, but as God-man-mediator he could never have been extolled unless he had been obedient even unto death, so that he was a gainer by his suffering, and glory be to his name, we get comfort from this too, for we also shall be gainers by our temptations. We shall come up out of Egypt enriched; as it is written, "He brought them forth also with silver and gold," so shall we come forth out of trial with better than these treasures. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall obtain a crown of life which fadeth not away." The deeper their sorrows the louder their song; the more terrible their toil the sweeter their rest; the more bitter the wormwood the more delightful the wine of consolation. They shall have glory for their share; they shall have honor for their contempt; they shall have songs for their sufferings, and thrones for their tribulations.

But more, in that Christ hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor us who are tempted *by sending his grace to help us*. He was always able to send grace, but now as God and man he is able to send just the right grace at the right time, and in the right place. You know a doctor may have all

the drugs that can be gathered, but an abundance of medicine does not make him a qualified practitioner; if however he has been himself and seen the case, then he knows just at what crisis of the disease such and such a medicine is wanted. The stores are good, but the wisdom to use the stores — this is even more precious. Now it pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell, but where should the Son of Man earn his diploma and gain the skill with which to use the fullness aright? Beloved, he won it by experience. He knows what sore temptations mean, for he has felt the same. You know if we had comforting grace given us at one time of our temptation it would tempt us more than before; even as certain medicines given to the patient at one period of the disease would aggravate the malady, though the same medicine would cure him if administered a little later. Now Christ knows how to send his comfort at the very nick of time, to afford his help exactly when it will not be a superfluity; to send his joy when we shall not spend it upon our own lusts; and how knows he this? Why, he recollects his own experience; he has passed through it all. There appeared an angel unto him strengthening him; that angel came just when he was wanted; Jesus knows just when to send his angelic messenger to strengthen you, when to lay on the rod more heavily, and when to stay his hand and say, “I have forgiven thee; go thou in peace.”

Once more, dear friends, lest I keep you too long. Having suffered himself, being tempted, Christ knows how to succor us *by his prayers for us*. There are some people whose prayers are of no use to us because they do not know what to ask for us. Christ is the intercessor for his people; he has prevalence in his intercession, but how shall he learn what to ask for? How can he know this better than by his own trials? He hath suffered being tempted. You hear some brethren pray with such power, such unction, such fervor. Why? Part of the reason is that they are experimental prayers; they pray out their own life; they just tell out the great deep waters over which they themselves sail. Now the prayer of our great High Priest in heaven is wonderfully comprehensive; it is drawn from his own life, and it takes in every sorrow and every pang that ever rent a human heart, because he himself hath suffered being tempted. I know you feel safe in trusting your case in the hand of such an intercessor, for he knows which is the precise mercy to ask for, and when he asks for it, he knows how to put the words and frame the petition so that the mercy shall surely come to you at the right time.

Ah, dear friends, it is not in my power to bring out the depth which lieth under my text, but I am certain of this, that when through the deep waters he shall cause you to go, or you are made to pass through furnace after furnace, you cannot want a better rod and staff, nor a better table prepared for you in the wilderness than this my text, "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Hang this text up in your house; read it every day; take it before God in prayer every time you bend the knee, and you shall find it to be like the widow's cruse, which failed not, and like her handful of meal, which wasted not; it shall be unto you till the last of December what now it is when we begin to feed upon it in January.

Will not my text suit the awakened sinner as well as the saint. There are timid souls here. They cannot say they are saved; yet here is a loophole of comfort for you, you poor troubled ones that are not yet able to get a hold of Jesus. "He is able to succor them that are tempted." Go and tell him you are tempted; tempted, perhaps, to despair; tempted to self-destruction; tempted to go back to your old sins; tempted to think that Christ cannot save you. Go and tell him that he himself has suffered being tempted, and that he is able to succor you. Believe that he will, and he will, for you can never believe anything too much of the love and goodness of my Lord. He will be better than your faith to you. If you can trust him with all your heart to save you, he will do it; if you believe he is able to put away your sin, he will do it; if you can but honor him by giving him a good character for grace, you cannot give him too good a name.

*"Trust him, he will not deceive
you, Though you hardly on him
lean; He will never, never leave
you, Nor will let you quite leave
him."*

Receive, then, the blessing.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you for ever. Amen and Amen.

THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

NO. 488

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER
23RD, 1862,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither.”
— *Revelation 11:12.*

WHAT may be the particular meaning of the prophecy concerning the witnesses clothed in sackcloth, their death, their resurrection, and their subsequent entrance into heaven, I am unable to guess, nor am I clear that anybody else has hit upon it. Although I do not despise prophesyings, I entertain a very intense disgust of those who know nothing about them, and yet pretend to be their interpreters. I am free to confess that I have not the key to the book of Revelation, and dare not set up to be its expositor. This, however, is no great matter, for without my venturing upon that line of things, there are quite enough who are always spelling over the apocalyptic mysteries, and a sufficient number who believe that they can comprehend them. No branch of literature has more devoted students, and in none are men more successful in refuting one another, or more sure that they have established their own theories by demolishing those of others. It may be that there are some whose office it is to open sealed books; I know that it is mine to enforce the teachings of the unsealed volume. They may have a call to expound Daniel and Ezekiel; mine is of a much humbler, but, I think I may add, of a much more usefull character — not so much to foretel the fall of dynasties and the deaths of monarchs, as to deal with matters of vital godliness, and with eternal realities; with things that are plainly revealed, which certainly belong unto us and unto our children. I had rather be a sweet savor unto God in souls converted, than explain all the last vials; and I would prefer rather to comprehend the heights and

depths of my Great Master's love, than to count the number of the beast, or calculate the duration of the little horn.

I. Waiving, then, all attempts at explaining the text from its connection, I intend to use it as the voice of God to his people. We shall regard it, first of all, AS A SUMMONS SENT AT THE APPOINTED HOUR TO EVERY SAINT. When the time shall come, fixed by irreversible decree, there shall be heard "a great voice from heaven" to every believer in Christ, saying, "Come up hither."

This should be to us — each one of us, if we be in Christ — *the subject of very joyful anticipation*. Instead of decoding the time when we shall leave this world to go unto the Father, we should be thirsting and panting for the hour that shall set our soul at liberty, and give our spirit once for all its full discharge from an imprisonment of clay, and from the bondage of "the body of this death." To some Christians it will be not only joyful in anticipation, but it will be intensely delightful when it arrives. It is not true, as some suppose, that death when it really appears is necessarily a dreadful and hideous apparition.

*"Death no terrific foe appears;
An angel's lovely form he wears;
A friendly messenger he proves
To every soul whom Jesus loves."*

I doubt not that many believers welcome the kind approach of death as the arrival of their best friend, and salute their last hour with intense delight. Witness the saint who has been for years bed-ridden. She is tossed to and fro as on a sea of pains, never resting at the anchorage of ease. She cries at night, "Would God 'twere morning," and, when the light of day affects her eyes, she longs for the returning darkness, that she may slumber for a little season and forget her pains. Her bones have worn through her skin by long lying upon a bed made as soft as kindness can render it, but, alas! still too hard for so weak and tormented a body. Pangs have shot through her frame as arrows piercing the foe; every vein has been a river flushed with agony, and every nerve a telegraph conveying messages of pain to the spirit. Oh! how welcome shall it be when the voice shall cry from heaven, "Come up hither!" No more weakness now! the joyful spirit shall leave all bodily pain behind; the last tear shall be wiped away by the Divine Father's hand; and she that was a mass of disease and decay shall now become an embodiment of intense delight, full to the brim with satisfaction and infinite

pleasure. In that land where Jehovah-Rophi reigns, the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick."

With what joy will the voice from heaven sound in the ear of the man wearied with labor! The world shall know of some of us when we die that we have not been idle, but we have served our God beyond our strength. He who finds the ministry an easy profession shall find the flames of hell no pleasant resting-place. Oh! there may be some of you in whose name I can speak now who have served God with throbbing brow, with palpitating heart, weary in your Master's service, but never weary of it — springing to the collar when the load was far too heavy for your single strength; ready to labor, or ready for fight, never putting off your armor; standing harnessed both by night and day, crying in your Master's name,

*"Is there a foe before whose face
I fear his cause to plead?
Is there a lamb among his flock
I would refuse to feed?"*

The time must come when age shall take away the juvenile vigor which for a while carried off weariness, and you shall be constrained to lament, saying, "When shall the shadows be drawn out? When shall I fulfill as a hireling my day?" Happy for the minister, if in his pulpit he shall hear the voice, "Come up hither," and shall

*"His body and his charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."*

Happy for you, fellow-laborers in the kingdom of Christ, and in the tribulation of our common Savior, if just when you think you can do no more, your doing shall be ended and your reward shall come, and your Savior shall say, "Come up hither," and you shall see the glory which you have believed in, upon the earth.

Beloved, with what intense delight will death be hailed by the sons of abject poverty, I mean "such as are of the household of faith." From shivering in the winter's cold to the brightness of heaven; from the solitude and desolation of friendless penury to the communion and fellowship of saints made perfect; from the table scantily furnished with hard-earned bread; from famishing and want; from the poor emaciated bones; from the form ready to be bowed down with hunger; from the tongue that cleaveth to the mouth with thirst; from crying children and a wailing wife — wailing

for bread, crying that they may be fed; oh, to be snatched away to heaven! Happy man, to have known so much of ill, that he may allow the better the sweetness of perfect bliss! Mansions of the blessed, how bright ye are in contrast with the cotter's hut! Streets of gold, how ye shall make the beggar forget the cold doorstep and dry arch! Paupers become princes; pensioners are peers; and peasants are kings and priests. O land of Goshen, how long before the sons of Israel receive thee for an heritage!

And, dear friends, I think I ought to add to this — with what seraphic joy must this voice have been heard in the martyrs' ears. In caves and dens of the earth where the holy wander in their sheepskins and goatskins, what holy triumph must this message create! Blandina, tossed in the Roman amphitheatre on the horns of bulls, then seated in her red-hot iron chair, and mocked while she is there consumed before the leering multitude — oh! that voice, "Come up hither!" how it must have cheered her in those horrid agonies which she bore with more than masculine heroism. The many who have perished on the rack; surely they have seen visions like those of Stephen, who, when the stones were rattling about his ears, saw heaven open, and heard the heaven-sent voice, "Come up hither." The multitude of our ancestors — our venerated predecessors, who carried the banner of the cross before our day, who stood on flaming faggots, and bore the flames with patience, with their bodies consumed by fire till their lower limbs were burnt away and life just remained within a mass of ashes; oh! the joy with which they would leap into their fiery chariots, drawn by horses of fire straight to heaven, at this omnipotent bidding of the Master, "Come up hither!" Though yours and mine may never be the lot of protracted sickness, or abject penury, or excessive labor, or the death of martyrdom, yet let us still believe that if we are true followers of Christ, whenever death shall come, or rather whenever life and immortality shall come, it shall be a joyous and blessed time for us. Seek not of the Most High to delay the time when he shall summon thee to the upper chamber, but listen every morning, listen with thy heart, desiring to hear it; listen for the royal message, which saith, "Come up hither." An ancient singer sweetly words it —

*“I said sometimes with tears,
 Ah me! I’m loth to die!
 Lord silence thou these fears;
 My life’s with thee on high.
 Sweet truth to me!
 I shall arise,
 And with these eyes
 My Savior see.*

*“What means my trembling
 heart, To be thus shy of death?
 My life and I shunt part,
 Though I resign my
 breath.
 Sweet truth to me!
 I shall arise,
 And with these eyes
 My Savior see.*

*“Then welcome harmless grave
 I By thee to heaven I’ll go:
 My Lord, try death shall save
 Me from the flames below.
 Sweet truth to me!
 I shall arise,
 And with these eyes
 My Savior see.”*

To change the note a moment; while this should be the subject of joyous anticipation, it should also be *the object of patient waiting*. God knows best when it is time for us to be bidden to “Come up hither.”

We must not wish to antedate the period of our departure. I know that strong love will make us cry,

*“O Lord of Hosts the waves divide,
 And land us all in heaven;”*

but patience must have her perfect work. I would not wish to die while there is more work to do or more souls to win, more jewels to place in the Redeemers crown, more glory to be given to his name, and more service to be rendered to his Church. When George Whitfield lay sick and wanted to die, his negro nurse had prayed for him, and at last said, “No massa Whitfield there is no dying for you; there’s many a poor negro yet to be brought to Christ and you must live;” and live he did. You know when

Melancthon lay very sick, Martin Luther said he should not die, and when his prayers began to work a cure, Melancthon said, "Let me die Luther, let me die, leave off your prayers," and Luther said, "No, man, I want you; God's cause wants you, and you shall not die yet." And when Melancthon refused to eat, or to take the necessary medicine because he hoped to be soon with Christ, Luther threatened him with excommunication, if he did not there and then do as he was bidden, for he must not die. It is not for us by neglect of means, or wanton waste of strength, or profligate zeal, to cut short a life which may be useful. "Do thyself no harm" — the advice of the jailor to Paul — is not at all amiss here. God knows the pace at which time should travel, and how long the road of life should be. Why if it were possible for there to be regrets in heaven it might be that we did not live longer here to do more good. More sheaves! more jewels! But how, unless there be more work? True there is the other side of it — that living so briefly we sinned the less, and our temptations were the fewer; but oh, when we are fully serving God, and he is giving us to scatter precious seed, and reap a hundred-fold, we would even say it is well for us to abide where we are. An aged Christian, being asked whether she would rather die or live, said, she would rather it should be as God willed it. "But if you might have your choice, which would you have?" "If I might have my choice," said she, "I would ask God to choose for me, for I should be afraid to choose for myself." So be you ready to stay on this side Jordan, or to cross the flood, just as your Master wills it.

And then another thought. As this "Come up hither" should excite joyous anticipation, tempered by patient waiting, so, beloved, it should always be to us *a matter of absolute certainty as to its ultimate reception*. I would not give sleep to my eyes nor slumber to my eyelids, if this were a subject of doubt personally as to whether at the last I should stand among the justified. I can understand a man being in doubt about his interest in Christ, but I cannot understand, and I hope I never may, a man's resting content to be in these doubts. This is a matter about which we want absolute certainty. Young man yonder! are you sure that the King will say to you, "Come up hither?" If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, that call from the divine throne is as certain to meet thine ear as that other cry, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life. No "ifs" or "peradventures" ought to be tolerated in our hearts. I know they will come up like ill weeds but it is ours to pull them up, heap them together, and set

them on fire, as farmers do with the twitch in their furrows. The devil loves us to cast lots at the foot of the cross; but Christ would have us look unto him and find a sure salvation. No, no, we are not to be put off with guess-work here. My friend, can you be easy without infallible certainty? What! you may die to-night, and be lost for ever, and can you be happy? No, man, I charge thee by the living God, shut not those eyes until thou art sure that thou shalt open them either in earth or heaven! But if there be this fear that thou mayest lift up those eyes in hell, how darest thou sleep? — How darest thou sleep, lest thy bed become thy tomb, and thy chamber become the door of Tophet to thee? Oh, brethren in Christ, let us seek to have the seal of God upon us, the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness with our spirits, that we are born of God, that so we may both joyfully hope and quietly wait to see the salvation of God when the Master saith, “Come up hither.”

I will add this fourth thought, and then proceed. I think very often, besides joyfully anticipating, patiently waiting, and being confidently assured of it, the Christian should *delightfully contemplate it*. Ah! let every Christian now say, “I shall soon be dying: time swiftly speeds away. There is my chamber. I can paint the picture now. They have told me that I am very sick, but they have kept back from me till I asked them plainly the news that I must very speedily die, but now I know it and feel the sentence of death in myself. Now for the joyous secret. In a few minutes I shall know more of heaven than an assembly of divines could teach me. But how solemn is the scene around me: they are moving quietly about the room; very silently they are catching each word that is uttered — treasuring it up.” Now saint, thou must play the man! say a good word for thy Master! Stir the deeps of Jordan with thy bold march of victory, O soldier of Jesus! Make its shelving shores resound with thy melodies now! Show them how a Christian can die; now let thy full heart overflow with flood-tides of glory; drink thou up the bitter cup, and say, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “But, how is this that my mind seems fluttering as though about to take wing —

*“What is this absorbs me quite —
Steals my senses — shuts my sight —
Drowns my spirit — draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?”*

I cannot see; the film is forming on my eyes; it is the death-glaze. A clammy sweat is on my brow, it is the dew from the damps of death. The

kind hand of affection has just wiped my forehead, and I fain would speak, but there is a throttle in my throat which keeps down the word; this is the monitor to me of the silence of the tomb. I will strive against it.

*“Joyful, with all the strength I have,
My quivering lips shall sing,
Where is thy victory, boasting grave?
And where’s the monster’s sting?”*

The effort has exhausted the dying one. He must fall back again. They stay him up with pillows. Ah! ye may prop him up with pillows, but he has a better arm beneath him than that of the fondest friend. Now doth his beloved “Stay him with apples, and comfort him with flagons,” for while sick to death, he is also “sick of loves.” His Master makes his bed in his sickness. His left hand is under his head, and his right hand doth embrace him. The Husband of that chosen soul is now answering the prayer for his presence which it delighted to offer, saying, “Abide with me.” Now is the poet’s prayer granted to the letter —

*“Hold then thy cross before my closing eyes!
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies!
Heaven’s morning breaks and earth’s vain shadows flee;
In life and death, O Lord, abide with me!”*

We cannot paint the last moment; the rapture, the dawning glory, the first young flash of the beatific glory, we must leave all that. On earth the scene is far more sombre, and yet not sad — see you yon friends: — they gather round, they say, “Yes he is gone: how placidly he slept! I could not tell the moment when he passed from sleep to death. He is gone.” They weep, but not with hopeless sorrow, for they mourn the body, not the soul. The setting is broken, but the gem is safe. The fold is removed, but the sheep is feeding on the hill-tops of glory. Worms devour the clay, but angels welcome the soul. There is general mourning wherever the good man was known; but mark ye, it is only in the dark that this sorrow reigns. Up there in the light, what are they doing? That spirit as it left the body found not itself alone. Angels had come to meet it. Angelic spirits clasped the disembodied spirit in their arms, and bore it upward beyond the stars — beyond where the angel in the sun keeps his everlasting watch — beyond, beyond this lower sky immeasurable leagues. Lo! the pearly gates appear, and the azure light of the city of bejewelled walls! The spirit asketh, “Is yonder city the fair Jerusalem where they need no candle, neither light of

the sun?" He shall see for himself ere long, for they are nearing the Holy City, and it is time for the cherub-bearers to begin their choral. The music breaks from the lips of those that convey the saint to heaven — "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, that the blood-bought of the King of glory may come in!" The gates of pearl give way, the joyous crowds of heaven welcome their brother to the seats of immortality. But what next, I cannot tell. In vain the fancy strives to paint it. Jesus is there, and the spirit is in his arms. In heaven, where should it be but in the arms of Jesus? O joy! joy! joy! Boundless oceans of joy! I shall see Him; I shall see Him. These eyes shall see Him, and not another.

*"Shall see him wear that very flesh
On which my guilt was laid;
His love intense, his merit fresh,
As though but newly slain.
These eyes shall see him in that day
The man that died for me!
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like to thee."*

I could lose myself while talking upon this subject, for my heart is all on fire. I wander, but I cannot help it; my heart is far away upon the hills with my Beloved Lord. What will the bliss of glory be? A surprise, I think, even to those who shall obtain it. We shall scarcely know ourselves when we get to heaven, we shall be so surprised at the difference. That poor man yonder is to be robed in all the splendours of a king. Come with me, and see those bright ones; that son of toil, who rests for ever; that child of sin, washed by Jesus, and now a companion of the God of heaven, and I the chief of sinners singing out his praise; Saul of Tarsus, hymning the music of Calvary; the penitent thief, with his deep bass note, exalting dying love; and Magdalen, mounting to the alto notes, for there must be some voices even in heaven which must sing alone and mount to higher notes where the rest of us cannot reach — the whole together singing, "Unto him that loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever." Oh that we were there! Oh that we were there! But we must patiently wait the Master's will. It shall not be long ere he shall say, "Come up hither."

II. And now we shall turn to a second part of the subject. We will take the text this time, not as a summons to depart, but as a WHISPER FROM THE SKIES TO THE BELIEVER'S HEART. There is a voice that sounds from

heaven to-night, not as a peremptory summons, but as a gently-whispered invitation — “Come up hither.”

The Father seems to say this to every adopted child to-night. We say, “Our Father which art in heaven.” The Father’s heart desires to have his children round his knee, and his love each day beckons us with a tender “Come up hither.” Nor will your Father and my Father ever be content till every one of his children shall be in the many mansions above. And *Jesus* whispers this in your ear to-night too. Hearken! do you not hear him say, “I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory — the glory which thou hast given me — the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” Jesus beckons thee to the skies, believer. Lay not fast hold upon the things of earth. He who is but a lodger in an inn must not live as though he were at home. Keep thy tent ready for striking. Be thou ever prepared to draw up thine anchor, and to sail across the sea and find the better port, for while Jesus beckons, here we have no continuing city. No true wife hath rest save in the house of her husband.

Where her consort is, there is her home — a home which draws her soul towards it every day. Jesus, I say, invites us to the skies. He cannot be completely content until he brings his body, the Church, into the glory of its Head, and conducts his elect spouse to the marriage feast of her Lord. Besides the desires of the Father and the Son; all those who have gone before, seem to be leaning over the battlements of heaven to-night, and calling, “Courage, brothers! Courage, brothers! Eternal glory awaits you. Fight your way, stem the current, breast the wave, and come up hither. We without you cannot be made perfect: there is no perfect Church in heaven till all the chosen saints be there; therefore come up hither.” They stretch out their hands of fellowship; they look with glistening eyes of strong affection upon us, and still again they say, “Come up hither.” Warriors who wear your laurels, ye call us to the brow of the hill where the like triumphs await us. The angels do the same to-night. How they must wonder to see us so careless, so worldly, so hardened! They also beckon us away, and cry from their starry seats, “Beloved, ye over whom we rejoiced when you were brought as prodigals to your Father’s house, ‘Come up hither,’ for we long to see you; your story of grace will be a strange and wondrous one — one which angels love to hear.

***“stretch your wings, ye saints, and fly,
Straight to yonder worlds of joy.”***

I have kept my pledge to be short on that point. You can walk in this meditation as in a garden when you are quiet and alone. All nature rings the bell which calls you to the temple above. You may see the stars at night, looking down like the eyes of God upon you, and saying, "Come up hither." The whispers of the wind as they come in the stillness of the night talk to you, and say, "There is another and a better land; come away with us; 'Come up hither.'" Yes, every cloud that sails across the sky, may say to you, "Mount up beyond me, into the clear ether which no cloud can dim; behold the sun which I can never hide — the noon which I can never mar. "Come up hither."

III. I shall want your attention to my third point for a few minutes, for I think these words may be used as A LOVING INVITATION TO UNCONVERTED PERSONS. There are many spirit voices which cry to them, "Come up hither; come up to heaven."

I like to see so many crowding here on these dark, cold, wintry days. This huge place is just as crowded as though it were some little vestry. You press upon one another as did the throngs in the days of the Master. God gives a spirit of hearing now-a-days in a most wonderful manner; and oh, I would that while you are hearing, some living spark of divine fire may fall into your hearts, and become the parent of a glowing fire. If we ask any man whether he desires to go to heaven, he will say, "Yes;" but alas! his desires for heaven are not strong enough to be of practical use. They are such sorry winds, that there is no sailing to heaven with them. Perhaps if we can quicken those desires to-night, God the Spirit may bless our words to the bringing of men into the way of life. Sinner, wanderer, far from God, many voices salute thee to-night, albeit thou hast chosen the paths of the destroyer, there are many who would turn thee to the way of peace.

First, *God our Father calls thee*. Thou sayest, "How?" Sinner, thou hast had many troubles of late; business goes amiss; thou hast been out of work, unfortunate, troubled, disappointed; thou hast tried to get on, but thou canst not do it; in thy house everything is out of order; somehow or other, whatever you put your hand to, nothing prospers; you are always floundering from one slough into another; and are growing weary of your life. Dost thou not know, sinner, this is thy Father saying, "Come up hither?" Thy portion is not here; seek thou another and a better land. Thou hast built thy nest on a tree that is marked for the axe, and he is pulling thy nest down for thee that thou mayest build on the rock. I tell thee, these

troubles are but love-strokes to deliver thee from thyself. If thou hadst been left unchastised, I had had little hope of thee. Surely then, God would have said, "Let him alone; he will have no portion in the next life, let him have his portion here." We have heard of a wife, a godly woman, who for twenty years had been persecuted by a brutal husband — a husband so excessively bad, that her faith at last failed her, and she ceased to be able to believe that he would ever be converted; but all this while she was more kind to him than ever. One night, at twelve o'clock, in a drunken debauch, he told his friends he had such a wife as no other man had; and if they would go home with him, he would knock her up, and she should get a supper for them, in order to try her temper. They came, and the supper was very soon ready, consisting of such things as she had prepared as well and as rapidly as the occasion would allow; and she waited at the table with as much cheerfulness as if the feast had been held at the proper time. She did not utter a word of complaint. At last, one of the company more sober than the rest, asked how it was she could always be so kind to such a husband. Seeing that her conduct had made some little impression, she ventured to say to him, "I have done all I can to bring my husband to God, and I fear he will never be saved, and therefore his portion must be in hell for ever; I will therefore make him as happy as I can while he is *here*, for he has nothing to expect hereafter." Now, such is your case to-night; you may get some pleasure here, but you have nothing to expect hereafter. God has been pleased, I said just now, to take your pleasures away. Here, then, I have good hopes that, since he shakes you from the present, you may be driven to the future. God your Father is thus making you uncomfortable in order that you may seek Him. It is the beckoning of his love-finger, "Come up hither." And you know, those deaths you have had lately, all say, "Come up hither." You remember when your mother died — that was a saint indeed — do you remember, John, what she said to you? She said, "I could die happy, if it were not for you and your brother; but O that I might have a hope that you may yet come to God." Do you remember, man, how that little daughter of yours, that had been to the Sunday School, and died so young, kissed you and said to you, "Frather, dear father, do give up the drunkard's cup, and follow me to heaven; do not be angry, father, I am dying; do not be angry because I said that, father. Follow me to heaven." You have not yielded to that loving entreaty; you are descending into hell. Yet remember, all this was God beckoning to you, and saying, "Come up hither." He has called, and you have refused; take care, lest when *you* call, he should refuse you. Besides, you have had a sickness yourself. If I

mistake not, I am speaking to the right man now. It is not so long ago since you had a fever, or what was it? It was an accident, and everybody said you had a near escape for life; you had time for reflection when you lay in that hospital-ward, or in your own little room; do you remember what conscience said to you? How it rent away the curtain, and made you look at your destiny, until you read in fiery letters these words, "Thou shalt make thy bed in hell." Oh! how you trembled then. You had no objection to see the minister; you could not laugh then at the gospel of Christ; you made a great many vows and resolutions, and you have broken them all; you have lied unto the Most High; you have perjured yourself to the God of Israel, and mocked at the God of mercy and of justice. Beware, lest he take you away with a stroke, for then a great ransom shall not deliver you. These things, then, have been beckonings of your Father's hand to you, saying, "Come up hither."

But more, *the Lord Jesus Christ* has also beckoned to you to come. Thou hast heard that he made a way to heaven. What does a way mean? Is not a road an invitation to a traveler to walk therein? I have crossed the Alps, and have seen the mighty roads which Napoleon made that he might take his cannon into Austria; but how shall we compare the works which men have made through the solid granite, and over pathless mountains — mountains that before were pathless — how shall we compare these with the road which Christ has made to heaven through the rocks of justice, over the gulfs of sin, throwing himself into the gaps, leaping himself into the chasm to complete the way? Now, the way itself speaks to you; the blood of Christ, which made the way, speaks better things than that of Abel; and it says, "Sinner, believe on Christ and thou art saved." By every drop of blood which streamed in sweat from him in the garden; by every drop which poured from his hands and feet; by all the agony which he endured, I do beseech thee hear the voice which crieth, "Go and sin no more;" trust thy soul with him, and thou art saved.

But, my dear hearer, have patience with me; give me thine ear. *The Spirit of God* strives with thee and cries, "Come up hither." The Spirit of God wrote this book; and wherefore was this book written? Hear the words of Scripture, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name." Here is the book full of promises, perfumed with affection, brimming with love. Oh! wherefore, wherefore wilt thou spurn it, and put the voice of mercy from thee? Every time thou seest the Bible, think thou seest on its

cover, "Go up to heaven, seek eternal life." Then there is *the ministry* through which the Spirit of God speaks. I have often prayed my Master to give me a Baxter's heart to weep for sinners, and a Whitfield's tongue to plead. I have neither; but if I had them, oh! how would I plead with you! But such as I have I give you. As God's ambassador, I do beseech you, sinner, turn from the error of your ways. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but would rather that he turn unto me and live." "Why will ye die?" Is hell so pleasant? Is an angrier God a trifle? Is sin a thing to be laughed at? Is the right hand of God, when bared in thunder, a thing to be despised? Oh! turn thee; flee to the refuge; the Spirit bids thee fly.

Moreover, does not *thy conscience* say the same? Is not there something in thy heart to-night which says — "Begin to think about your soul; trust thy soul with Christ. May grace divine constrain you to listen to the still small voice, that you may be saved!

And, last of all, *the spirits of your friends departed* cry from heaven to you to-night — that voice which I would you could hear, "Come up hither." Mother — unconverted woman — you have a babe in heaven; perhaps not one or two, but a family of babes in heaven. You are a mother of angels, and those young cherubs cry to you, "Mother, come up hither." But this can never be unless you repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I know there are some of you who have carried to the tomb the most sainted of relatives. Your hoary-headed father at last went the way of all flesh, and from his celestial seat before the eternal throne he cries, "Come up hither." A sister, sicklied by consumption, who has long since left your house for you to mourn her absence, cries "Come up hither." I adjure you, ye sons of saints in glory; I adjure you, daughter of immortal mothers; despise not now the voice of those who speak from heaven to you. Oh! were they here — could it be possible for them to come here to speak to you to-night, I know the notes of fond affection which would spring from your lips — "There's my mother." "There's my father." *They* cannot come; but I am the spokesman for them. If I cannot speak as *they* might, yet remember, if ye be not converted when you hear the gospel preached, "neither would you be converted if one rose from the dead." They could but tell you the gospel; I do no less. That gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" says the Evangelist. To believe is to trust Christ; to be baptized is not baby sprinkling — for *that* there is no warrant but in the inventions of man. To

be baptized is to be buried with Christ in baptism after faith; for that which is done without faith, and not done of faith, is contrary to the Lord's command. Baptism is for saints, not for sinners: like the Lord's Supper, it is *in* the Church, not *out* of it. Believing you are saved. Baptism does not save you; you are baptized because you are saved. Baptism is the outward recognition of the great inward change which the Spirit of God has wrought. Believe, then, in Jesus. Flat on thy face before his cross, cast thyself now; then rise thou and say, "Now will I confess his name," and be united with his Church, and believe that at last, having confessed him before men, he may confess me before my Father which is in heaven.

And now you are going home to-night — I am clear of your blood remember. I know not how many may be here, but I suppose there are seven thousand people here to-night who will be without excuse in the day of judgment. I have warned you as best I can; I have pleaded with you. Sinner! sinner! thy blood be on thine own head if thou refuse this great salvation. O God the Holy Ghost, make them willing in the day of thy power, and save them this night, and for ever, for thy name's sake. Amen.

BROAD RIVERS AND STREAMS.

NO. 489

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 18TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us. Thy tacklings are loosed, they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great Spoil divided; the lame take the prey.” —
Isaiah 33:20-23.

THIS prophecy was uttered when the city of Jerusalem was reduced to the direst extremity. The Assyrian hosts threatened the city with utter destruction. Rabshakah, a fitting herald for his tyrannical master, had advanced to invest the walls while Sennacherib tarried at Lachish. False to all treaties, the heavy sum paid down by Hezekiah could not ensure the promised mercy from the ferocious despot. The treasuries of the city were exhausted, and therefore no further attempt in that direction could be made. No help could be looked for from any other nation; even Egypt was in deadly fear of the great power of Nineveh. The Assyrians were strong as lions, and cruel as evening wolves; no nation had ever equalled them in remorseless and wanton cruelty; punishments the most horrible were constantly executed upon those whom they vanquished; impalement, flaying alive, and piercing out the eyes were their ordinary amusements after the close of battle. Look at the stones disinterred from Nineveh, and

you will see engraven there by themselves memorials of the horrible barbarities which they constantly perpetrated. Sennacherib's army was exceeding great; it had already stormed many cities; Arphad, and Sepharvaim, Hamath, and Samaria, had fallen an easy spoil; cities that were surrounded by rivers had been carried by diverting the current, and so drying up the stream, or else by using galleys with oars, the Assyrian monarch had reached the walls and applied the scaling ladders. The army was so well accoutred, so numerous, and so thoroughly well supplied with all munitions of war, that there was not the slightest hope of the escape of Jerusalem except by divine power. Yet the Assyrians did not shoot an arrow there, nor did they cast up a mound against it, for at night-fall the angel of the Lord went forth and slew a hundred and forty thousand men, and Sennacherib hastened back to his own land.

Brethren, you know the analogy here, how the Church of Christ is every day surrounded by the most ferocious adversaries; she is like Jerusalem; all round about her the dogs of hell are yelping for her as their prey; for Satan has multitudes of faithful servants too glad to engage in battle against the Lord's anointed, and against the Church which he has redeemed by his own blood. They are well armed with an infernal panoply; they are very skillful, determined and resolute; not a stone will be left unturned to blot out the remembrance of Christ's kingdom from under heaven. But rejoice ye; even if the darkest day should come, be not dismayed; God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The Church is not in danger; she is impregably garrisoned; the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, and she shall abide in her place until He shall come who hath made her beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; until He shall come to translate her to the skies; to be the New Jerusalem, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, to glitter for ever in the brightness which far outshineth the light of the sun.

Let us now with profound attention meditate upon our text, and notice that, as the existence of Jerusalem was imperilled, the first promise of Isaiah was *that Jerusalem should still exist* — “Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation,” and so on; but, further, inasmuch as during the siege many unbelieving persons had found fault with the position of Jerusalem, because it was not surrounded by a river, the promise is given *that she shall have a glorious position* — “There the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams;” nay, more than this, as a climax of blessing, *she is promised perpetual triumph over all her enemies*, since in her streams “shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship

pass thereby;" or, if they come they shall prove a wreck — "Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail."

I. The first promise made to the Church of God in our text is one SECURING TO HER AN EVERLASTING EXISTENCE. The Church is not a temporary institution; it shall never be removed, but abideth for ever.

1. From the words of the text I gather that the Jerusalem of God *shall exist as she is*. What was she in those days? She was the city of solemnities; she was the place where prayer and praise were wont to be made. So is she to continue throughout all generations. The Church of God is in this world the city of all true solemnities. Any prayer and praise that are not offered by the chosen of the Lord, who constitute the true and invisible Church of God, are but vain oblations. Zion — the chosen Church, redeemed by blood, called by the Spirit, and preserved by grace — Zion is the one consecrated enclosure in which sacrifices of righteousness can be acceptably offered. This hallowed temple shall stand for ever as the Lord's chosen dwelling-place. Beloved, the day shall never come when the Church shall cease to be the *temple of prayer*. The fire upon this altar shall never be quenched day nor night.

*“To Him shall constant prayer be made,
And princes throng to crown his head;
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning's sacrifice.”*

There shall never lack a man in our Israel to hold up holy hands, like Moses upon the mountain, that the hosts of God may prevail in the plain below. Elijahs may be taken away, but Elishas shall follow. Apostles may cease their perpetual supplications, but a train of intercessors shall follow in their footsteps. While earth brings forth her harvests, the Church shall yield her sheaves of prayer. Nor shall *praise* ever cease; the hallowed hymn, the psalm of victory, the hallelujah of triumphant joy, these shall never be suspended. In the worst days of the Church, even when she assembled in the catacombs and gathered her sons for worship in the caves of the earth, even then she had her hymn of praise, even then they sang of Christ ascended and about to come. The roaring of the sea may cease, the thunders may be hushed, and the spheres may end their song, but the redeemed of the Lord must praise the name of Jehovah world without end. Neither shall the Church ever cease to be *the fountain of ministry*. The

ministration of the Word is a part of our solemnities. There shall never come a time when the prophet's voice shall be stilled. Our Lord will still give pastors after his own heart, and teachers anointed for his work. The living waters shall ever gush from the foot of Mount Zion, and the stream which welled up when Jesus sent forth his twelve disciples, shall flow on, ever widening, ever deepening, "Till, like a sea of glory, it spreads from pole to pole." City of our solemnities! We delight to behold the feet of the ambassadors of the Lord; they are beautiful upon the mountains, for they proclaim to us glad tidings. How greatly do we rejoice that we shall never lack the heaven-sent messenger, nor shall the candlestick be removed out of its place. Moreover, beloved, the ordinances of God's house, *such as baptism and the sacred supper*, these shall never cease. There was a day when baptism was hardly known in the Christian Church, save only among a persecuted few who were called heretics; nevertheless, the hallowed stream has always been stirred by some who, "faithful to their Master found," were buried with him in baptism unto death, and gave in baptism the answer of a good conscience towards God. And the Lord's Supper, too, had almost ceased from the Christian Church. The mass, of course, continued; but what of that? Is that the Lord's Supper? Nay, verily, but a profane prostitution of the simplicity of God, a silly mystery more fitted to be styled the incantation of a haggard witch, than to be called the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. But still, there were a faithful few, called heretics, who met together and brake bread in remembrance of their Lord and Master. And so, brethren, while seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, shall continue, until He come we will show forth his death, we will set forth his burial, celebrating, according to his own will, the commands and ordinances which he himself has given us. City of our solemnities, methinks I see thee now in vision! Thou art the place where God dwelleth between the curtains, hidden from the gaze of unhallowed eyes, seen only by those whom Christ has made kings and priests unto God! Never, never, never from thee, O Church of God, shall the presence of the Holy One depart! No rushings of wings shall be heard, as in the siege of Jerusalem; no mysterious voice shall thunder, "Arise, let us go hence." "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," secures to thee, O Zion, the presence of thy Lord and Master for ever. Methinks I see thine altar; on it smokes the Lamb that has just been slain, still acceptable before the Lord, and ever to remain the finished sacrifice.

*“Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its Power,
Till all the ransom’d Church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”*

Hallowed courts, ye shall never be desecrated; sacred rites, ye shall never cease! The Lord hath said it and it must be; his Church abideth; though the mountains depart and the hills be removed, yet shall not his covenant of love depart from her, nor shall her safety ever be imperilled even unto the world’s end.

2. Further, my brethren; it appears to me that the city is to exist; not only as the city of our solemnities, which it is, but as *a quiet habitation* which we would desire it to be. The Church of God is always a quiet habitation, *even when her enemies surround her*. Some of you may have seen, some months ago in the Exhibition, a Belgian picture representing the reading of the statute of the Duke of Alva in the Flemish Towns, establishing the Inquisition. Godly merchants are listening in deep solemnity of sorrow; the young maiden weeps upon her sister’s bosom, the aged woman turns her streaming eyes to heaven. All this the painter could depict, but he could not paint the deep heaven-born peace which still possessed the souls of the threatened ones, who for the Master’s sake could suffer all worldly loss. That peace of God which passeth all understanding, lives even in the day of trial. You know what Martin Luther said, whenever any trouble came, “Come, let us go in and sing the forty-sixth Psalm, and defy the devil.” And oh, how grandly that old Psalm would swell from the deep bass voices of the Reformer and his companions: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” With all her foes about her, I say, the Church of God is evermore a quiet habitation. But how quiet is she, beloved, *when her enemies are not allowed to prey upon her!* “Then had the Churches rest,” says the Holy Ghost in the Acts of the Apostles, and verily, the text applies to us now. We sit, every man, under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, none making us afraid. And besides the quiet we enjoy politically, I thank God, in this Church at least, we know what quiet means *in our communion with one another*. Anywhere where the Holy Spirit dwells, there will be quietness. The Holy Spirit, you know, is represented to us as a dove: doves love not the storm, and the Spirit of God abides not where there is noise, strife, controversy, and division. No; there must be peace and quietness.

And you, my beloved friends, who are really in the Church of Christ — mark, you may be in our Church, and not in the Church of Christ; you may make a profession of being in the Church, and not be in the invisible, mysterious, secret body of the faithful — but if you really be among that chosen number, you will enjoy great quietness, you will be able to say with the apostle, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;” you will get a hold of the Psalmist’s meaning when he said, “So he giveth his beloved sleep;” you will rest in God’s love even as God rests in it.

Happy day! happy day! for those who, by the eye of faith, can look into the future after Christ shall come; who can behold the glad millennial age, for they shall understand yet more fully the meaning of this prophecy, “Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation;” when everywhere Christ shall be known; when in every land the fifth and last empire shall rule; then, as in the days of Solomon, there shall be no war, but peace, peace for ever. Till then the God of all peace is with us, and we may be sure that all is well.

Our quietness must continue, for the Church nestles under the wings of God. How can she be disquieted? The mountains of his power are round about her. How can she be carried by storm? Her Lord is a wall of fire encircling her. Who can touch her? He is the glory in the midst of her. How can she fear? He is all in all to her; he wears her on his breast; he has written her name on his hands; she is the jewel of his crown, and the bracelet of his arm. Oh, how blessed must she be!

3. But, further, our text seems to indicate that there were some persons who doubted all this, and said, “Well, but you speak of this city as though it could stand an attack; it cannot; it is such a feeble place, it is like a tent, it can soon be stormed; a gust of wind can blow it over.” The Lord anticipates this difficulty, and shows *that the feebleness of Jerusalem should be no reason why she should not still continue to exist*. She is a tabernacle — a mere tent; but she is a tabernacle that shall not be taken down. It is true that to human eyes she seems to have no huge stones, no gates of brass, no bulwarks of solid masonry. But, though she have nothing but cords and stakes, yet her stakes shall not be loosed, nor shall her cords be snapped. Oh! beloved, one delights to think of the feebleness of the Church, as magnifying the power of Him who keeps her! What can be more feeble than the Church of God? She has no carnal weapons. “My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight.” The Church has no great riches; the most of her followers are poor. She has no

wisdom; they who use logic and cunning can soon overthrow her disciples and ridicule her advocates; she understandeth not the wisdom of human speech, or, rather, she forsweareth it, and speaks with simplicity, as she ought to speak. Philosophers laugh at her; kings hardly take her into account; they think the Church so insignificant that they can put out her candle when they will. But, ah! not so; the Church is still secure, despite her feebleness. It is wonderful how during these last nineteen centuries God has been pleased to keep that spark alive. All the devils in hell have been spitting at this candle, but it burns still: they have sought to throw the whole of the floods of evil upon the heaven-kindled spark, but the spark has lived still; they have tried to stamp it out but it has blazed the more.

The Church's feebleness, because it drives her to God, is the Church's strength. I pray God that our Church may never confide in wisdom, or wit, or eloquence, or riches, or rank, or fame. No, Lord; thou art the unbuttressed pillar of thy Church's sure support, and if we rest on thee we are secure; but if once we depend elsewhere, we fall to our confusion.

4. Further, complete this part of the promise, the city, notwithstanding all her feebleness, *is to be forever complete*. If I understand the last two sentences, — “Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken,” we learn here *that all the true members of the Church are safe*. Some of them may be driven into the earth as the stakes are driven, with a heavy mallet; but the strokes of tribulation shall only give them a better hold, and minister stability to the whole structure. Satan may seek to pull them up, and the winds may blow on the tent enough to tear up the stakes that hold it, but no hurricane or raging Simoom shall cast down the divine habitation. Cords are apt to be snapped, and if they be long used, the strands at last may rot, and new cords and new stakes may be required, but not so with the Church of God. If you are one of the cords or the stakes of the Church, you shall never be cast away, the Lord will take care, not only to preserve the Church as a whole, but each individual part of it. I need not enlarge here, for you are all sound in your belief of final perseverance. What should we do without that precious doctrine! Oh! brethren, if one cord could be snapped surely it were myself; if one stake could be removed, I think I hear you say, “It must be myself; I must be moved; I must be cast away.” But not one shall be. Just as the stones were taken out of the quarry, and all shaped, to be put in their own position in Solomon's temple, and no one stone could take another stone's niche, so you have your place appointed you, and you are

being quarried to-day to be made into the right shape for it, and you, and no one but you, can occupy that place in the temple of God in heaven; and you shall shine there as a polished stone for ever. But I think, dear friends, that this also relates *to the doctrines of the Gospel*. Every day produces some improved divinity. Every now and then, to suit the times, a new edition of the Gospel is issued. Young gentlemen at college are taught not to preach the common ordinary doctrines, such as John Calvin, St.

Augustine, and the Apostle Paul preached; they must go to Germany and muddle their own heads, and then come forth to muddle other people's, they must have some philosophical divinity, some novelty, something more refined than that which would attract the mob and gather together the common people. *Thinking* people must be cared for; sermons must be full of intellectual matter; the old apostles were but fishermen, and of course they could not preach more than fishermen's education would enable them to comprehend, but these gentlemen have taken their degrees, and can climb to far greater heights and descend into far profounder depths than plain Peter or illiterate John. Well, dear friends, *we* are content with the old wine since it is the best; Christ's gospel is no new gospel; and moreover, we are old-fashioned enough to believe that not one doctrine is to be altered, nor half a doctrine, nor the thousandth part of a doctrine, no nor yet the form of a doctrine. We would "hold fast the form of sound words" — not only the principle mark, but the *words*; and not only the words, but the very *form* in which the words were moulded. "Words, words, words," says somebody; "what is the use of words, and forms, and creeds? Why, these are old musty crusty documents, only sectarians care about them." Ay, then let us be sectarians; let us hold with force and strength of mind the very form of sound words which has been delivered unto us. Not one of the stakes shall be removed, nor one of the cords thereof be loosened. So with *the ordinances*. We do not believe, for instance, that we have any power to change the immersion which was practiced by the apostles into sprinkling, nor take infants instead of believers; we think that not one of the cords can be removed, nor one of the stakes be taken out of its place. We do not think we have any right to change the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine into a mass, and thus make a new ceremony, instead of perpetuating that which was delivered unto us. No, let the old gospel be the old gospel. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We must keep to the same practices, and believe the same truths even unto the end.

Alas for you, ye cities of earth, ye have tottered to your fall! A heap of sand, a mountain of ruin is to be found where once Babylon lifted her proud head, and where Nineveh exalted her brazen brow! Even old Rome has crumbled and her pillars lie prostrate; her theatres are but a place of emptiness, and her temples but deserted fanes. But thou, O Church of God, thou still existest; not one of thy pillars has been shaken; not a column has left its base or lost its capital. Rivetted and held fast by more than iron bands, the whole of thy fabric is as unmoved as the pillars of the universe. Every stone is as new and strong as when first Jehovah digged thy deep foundations, and laid thy stones in the fair vermilion cement of Jesu's precious blood. Still do thy pinnacles glisten in the sun, O thou bejewelled city! No change hath tarnished thee. Time hath no tooth to devour the glories, no foot to trample on thy joys. Thou art the Eternal City, and all things else are but shadow, mist, and dream. Like the God that made thee, thou art immortal, invisible, the only true Church, as He is the only true God. Unto him that built thee and that dwelleth in thee, be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

II. The second part of our subject is THE PRE-EMINENT POSITION.

It was a cause of lamenting to many of the sinners in Zion that Jerusalem was not better defended. The most approved method of ancient defense was to surround the city by a broad moat. Joab thought it no mean achievement when he took the "city of waters." Hence, God here meets all the wishes of his people by telling them that he will be to them all that broad rivers and streams could possibly be. Jerusalem had nothing but its little brook Kedron, which was not worth the mentioning; for it could be no means of defense at all in a day of siege; but He, even Jehovah, will be to them all that broad rivers and streams would by comparison suggest.

At the meaning of this promise I must now very hastily glance. First I think it means *fertility*. Understand that especially in the East broad rivers and streams are very necessary to fertilize the earth. Egypt owed all her harvests to the Nile. And the great plain of Mesopotamia, in which Nineveh and Babylon were situated, was watered by two great rivers — the Tigris and the Euphrates, and by innumerable streams which intersected the intervening country, and by canals and little rills, by means of which the whole land was irrigated. It is now a desert because there is no irrigation, but then it was the most fertile part of the world. We are told in the first chapters of Genesis concerning Eden, that there went a river through it; it

had not been Eden without its Hiddekel. Well, now, Jerusalem had none of these broad rivers or streams, but her God is to be all that to her. O, beloved, how fertile God makes his Church. Let but the Lord Jehovah come among his people, and there are many conversions; her sons and daughters are as many as the sand of the sea, and her offspring like the gravel thereof. Only let the Lord be with the minister and with the Church, and we shall have to say, — “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and like doves to their windows? Moreover, in your heart and mine, if we have Jehovah there, he will be to us a place of broad rivers and streams, and we shall be fertile in all graces. Perhaps this morning you feel like a desert, bringing forth no fruit. Ah! but think of your glorious Lord; think of the glory of all his attributes; specially think of the glory of his grace, the glory of his finished work for you, the glory of his cross and of his throne; you will find that he will give you fertility; your faith shall grow, and all your graces shall flourish. The glorious Lord can make us like a tree planted by the rivers of water so that we shall bring forth our fruit in our season. And as for good works, which are the true fruit of such as the Lord loveth, let but Jehovah dwell in us, let his Spirit abide in us, let Christ be in constant fellowship with our souls, and we shall abound in every good work to the glory of God. We want no Tigris; we need no Euphrates; we seek no Nile; Jehovah is to us a place of broad rivers and streams; our fruit surely blossometh and ripeneth in its time when God, the glorious Lord, is with us.

Broad rivers signify not only fertility in the soil, but *abundance to the inhabitants*. Places near broad rivers produce a great variety of plants. We know that the children of Israel regretted that they had left the leeks, and garlic, and onions, and cucumbers, and melons of Egypt — plants that grew by the rivers. Besides, where there are rivers there is an abundance of fish of all kinds, and in the fat pastures, such as Goshen, which was well watered by the Nile, abundance of cattle are reared, while the abundant harvests which are there produced through the admirable irrigation make the lands blessed with broad rivers and streams the sunniest of climes. Well now, our God is all this to his Church. Having God she has abundance.

What can she ask for that he will not give her? What want can she have which he will not supply? Oh! ye citizens of Zion, what are your wants this morning? My Master sends me out like a herald from a king, and he bids me cry in the streets of this Zion, “Ho ye that have any need, come to your king, and he will supply you.” Want ye the bread of life? It drops like

manna from the sky. Want ye refreshing streams? The rock follows you, and that Rock is Christ. "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." If you have any want it is your own fault; if you are straitened you are not straitened in him, but in your own bowels.

Broad rivers and streams in like manner point to *commerce*. We know that in Holland especially the broad rivers and streams make that nation what it is; the harbours are so safe, the rivers so broad, and the canals so innumerable, that in every place commerce is easy, and the ends of the earth are linked to the nation by its broad rivers and streams. In that country we find curious importations hardly known to any other people, because they have gathered up the treasures of the far-off lands, and there was a time when their broad rivers and streams enabled them to engross the mercantile power of the whole universe. Well, beloved, our *glorious* Lord — keep the adjective as well as the noun — our glorious Lord is to be to us a place of commerce. Through God we have commerce with the past; the riches of Calvary, the riches of the covenant, the riches of the old age of election, the riches of eternity, all come to us down the broad stream of our gracious Lord. We have commerce, too, with the future. What galleys, laden to the water's edge, come to us from the millennium! What visions we have of the days of heaven upon earth. Through our glorious Lord we have commerce with angels; commerce with the bright spirits washed in blood that sing before the throne; nay, better still, we have commerce with the Infinite One, with eternity, with self-existence, with immutability, with omnipotence, with omniscience; for our glorious Lord is to us a place of broad rivers and streams. I wonder how Unitarians find comfort, since they have no glorious Lord — they have an inglorious Lord, and I think I may say of Unitarianism as our prophet here says concerning Assyria, that, having no glorious Lord, "their tacklings are loosed, they cannot well strengthen their mast, they cannot spread the sail; there is the prey of a great spoil taken from them, the lame take the prey." But we who have a glorious Lord, an Incarnate God, God in Christ Jesus, we, I say, have commerce with heaven.

Finally, broad rivers and streams are specially intended to set forth *security*. We have already alluded to our own happy island. Dr. Watts has said of it —

***“Oh, Britain, praise thy mighty God,
And make his honors known abroad;
He bade the ocean round thee flow,
Not bars of brass could guard thee
so.”***

In the memorable '88, when the Spanish Armada, as the old divines of that age said, “turreted the seas” till the high prows of the vessels hid the waves of the ocean, God blew with his winds and all Spain’s mighty hosts were broken, and God’s favored isle was free. We were doubtless spared the horrors of war under the first Napoleon through our narrow frith. It was especially so in the old times of ancient warfare; then a narrow trench was almost as useful as a broad channel would be now, for they had no ready means of crossing so well, though, on old Assyrian sculptures we see galleys with oars crossing over rivers, and we have one or two sculptures, I believe, in the British Museum, of the Assyrian king turning the river into another channel so that he might the more easily take the city. But still, rivers were for a defense. Oh! beloved, what a defense is God to his Church! Ah! the devil cannot cross this broad river of God. Between me and thee, O fiend of hell, is my God. Do remember this, Christian, between you and your arch-enemy is your God; Satan has to stand on the other side, and oh, how he wishes he could dry up that stream, but God is omnipotent. How he wishes he could change the current, but fear not, for God abideth immutably the same. How he wishes he could get at you and me; but only once let us get safe landed in Zion, we may look over its walls across the broad rivers and streams, and remember that we are out of gun-shot of the enemy so far as our spiritual existence is concerned. He cannot destroy us; worry us he may; for we are such timid souls, but kill he cannot, for God, even our mighty God keeps us safe beyond all possibility of destruction.

III. We come now to offer one or two words on the last point, upon which we have already intrenched. The last point is ETERNAL SAFETY.

I have already said that these broad rivers did not always answer the purpose of defending the city, because the Assyrian king carried galleys with him overland, and thus took the city. But concerning this broad river it is written, “There shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby,” to come up to the walls to attack the bulwarks. Our text teaches us *that to the eye of faith the Church has no enemies at*

all. “Wherein shall go no galley with oars.” “No enemies at all,” says one;

“why there are enemies to the truth everywhere; we see the enemies of God creeping in everywhere; the whole world is in arms against us.” But faith so clearly perceives the feebleness and the frailty of man that, like her Lord, she taketh up all the nations as a very little thing, and counteth all her adversaries to be but as a drop in the bucket. You ramble in your garden, perhaps, in the summer-time, and a spider has spun its stoutest web across your path; you walk along, and you never think that there is anything to hinder you, and yet there are those spiders’ strong webs, which would have caught a thousand flies, but they do not impede you. So is it with God’s glorious Church: there are barriers across her path, but they are only spider’s webs; on she walks; she has no adversaries, for she counts her adversaries to be nothing. “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.” This is the heritage of the people of the Lord; “they that war against us shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought;” thus saith the Lord.

Further, remark, dear friends, that when we are compelled to see that the Church has adversaries, yet, according to the promise, *those adversaries shall be put to confusion*. They have launched the bark; the galley with oars is on the sea. The text does not say that no galley with oars shall ever be there, but “no galley with oars shall go there.” Now, in order to make it “go” they must fix the mast; they must gird the tacklings, or how shall they spread the sail, and how shall they proceed on their way? Ah! but they cannot, they cannot strengthen their mast; their tacklings are loosed; they are like mariners reeling to and fro; they stagger like drunken men; they are at their wit’s end; they know not how to make the mast stand in its socket; it was shaped and fashioned at Nineveh; it has been used in other sieges and it answered well, but this time it will not fit into its socket; the wind blows furiously; they cannot fasten the tacklings in their proper places; they know not where to find the ropes and spars; they cannot strengthen the mast nor spread the sail! Oh! how glorious it is to see the confusion of God’s enemies! Some say the devil is wise, but he is a fool, and has been a fool from the very beginning. All he has ever done has been to throw stones in the sky which have fallen down upon his own head; he always shoots his arrows the wrong end foremost, and then they come back again with their points to him. Somehow or other the crafty old fox when undermining the Church’s fall, manages to cover himself with filth. When the whole of this world’s drama shall come to an end, there will be one

tremendous laugh from earth and heaven against the devil, for they will say, “Aha! Aha! Aha! he has been God’s drudge all the while; he has been but God’s drudge, working out God’s glory; he thought he was having his own way, and doing his own will, and he has been but a black slave to carry the materials out of which God shall bring forth triumphs that shall shine throughout eternity.” O beloved, we need not be afraid; our enemies are in confusion; they do not know how to attack us.

And then, faith not only sees the confusion of her adversaries, but she also believes *they are so utterly destroyed that she may go out and spoil them*. They could not spread the sails; they could not fix the mast; see, the wind has driven them on yonder rock; how the ship breaks; how she splits. There now, she divides in pieces, and her cargo is drifted on the shore, and the men, and the women, and lame men leaning on their staves, and little children all run down to the beach, and gather the spoil from the wrecked ship. So it always has been in every attack that has been made on the Church; we have always seen the wreck of our adversaries, and gathered spoils therefrom. I see the ship launched once again. She has had her name altered; she has sailed from a distant port — not quite from the land whence Solomon derived his apes and peacocks, but almost as far; she has a proud helmsman, who wears a mitre on his head and this time there are terrible expectations that Zion’s city will be taken and destroyed. What will be the result, do you suppose, of the recent attack upon Christianity? Why, the result of it will be, that we shall have the richest spoil we have had for years. The Pentateuch, the blessed old Pentateuch, which was the only Bible, you remember, David ever had to read, the book which David used to spell over, and say, blessed was the man who searched it day and night — that old-fashioned Pentateuch — why, we had almost forgotten it! People said, “Ah, yes, all very well to preach on the Gospels, and sometimes on the Epistles, but the Pentateuch is an old-fashioned book of little importance.” Consequently there are very few comments upon the Pentateuch, which is, perhaps, the most neglected part of all inspired writ. And what will be the effect of this new galley with oars? Why, we shall all read the Pentateuch more. I believe that the Pentateuch is the text of all the Bible, that the Pentateuch is the law, the statute, *the* book; and if any part of Scripture has the pre-eminence, it is the five books of Moses. We shall look over those five books again. “In his law we will begin to meditate both day and night;” and then there will be comments written, there will be sermons preached, and even those who are the feeblest in our Zion, even

the little children, will get some of the spoil; we shall gather some of the rich and rare treasures that have been hidden in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers. We shall have to say, "Thank God that ever the galley with oars came here, for the spoil is very great, and we are all made rich thereby." I wish they would attack some other part of Scripture. Let some other portion of Scripture be attacked, and as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, so shall the Word of God be.

Wherever I see the devil's black finger I am obliged to him, for I feel inclined to think there must be something there that is good, or else he would not have pointed it out as an object of attack to his followers. Let us rest assured, dearly beloved, that the spoil shall surely come in, and that we shall not be destroyed.

And what is to be the end of it all? Our text *ascribes glory to a Triune God*. The Church is, after all her attacks and all her salvations, to ascribe glory to the three-one Jehovah. Read the verse, dear friends, "For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our law-giver; the Lord is our king," — three, yet one. O Lord, be thou exalted! Our Father which art in heaven, thou sittest on the throne and thou art Judge! Jesus, son of Mary and Son of God, thou by thy holy life, hast set us such an example that thou art our Law-giver!

And thou, indwelling Spirit, thou art with us, and therefore the shout of a king is in the midst of our camps. Instead of doubting, fearing, and trembling, let us betake ourselves to song. The hope of the Church does not rest in her ministers, but in her God; not in her wisdom, but in him; not in her eloquence, but in his promise; not in her might or in her numbers, but in His great strength, and in the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. Dear friends, let us roll all our cares on God this morning. Look up to God alone. Remember, you are saved. Do not believe Satan's lies. Hold fast to God's truth. He is on your side; you have trusted yourselves in your Redeemer's hand; you are a believer in Christ; you are therefore saved.

Being saved, expect to see every temptation minister to your growth; expect that every trial shall make you richer in grace; and go home and keep your heart in tune, singing unto God, praising, and blessing, and magnifying his name.

Oh! I wish we were all citizens of Zion! I wish we were all members and had rights of burgesship in this blessed city! The gates are open, and aliens who enter become citizens at once. To become a citizen all that is needed is to be nothing and to let Christ be everything. Trust Christ and you are enrolled a freeman, and then from that day all the glorious things that are

spoken of Zion are spoken of you; you shall share her blessedness on earth and her triumph above.

The Lord now seal these words with his own Spirit for his own sake.
Amen.

GRACIOUS RENEWAL.

NO. 490

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 25TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Renew a right spirit within me.” — Psalm 51:10.

WE had a joyful meeting last Wednesday evening. As a Church we all met together as a loving family, and it was a sight of the most encouraging kind to see a great host, like the host of God, of brothers and sisters all dwelling together in unity. That solemnly joyful sight suggested to my heart the propriety of addressing you to-day upon the subject of the renewal of your consecration to Christ. I thought that the season, the annual season when we *all* meet together, would be but a fit and proper opportunity for our giving ourselves over again to him whose we are and whom we serve. In an honored sanctuary in the neighborhood it is the custom at the early part of the year to have a solemn form of covenant read at communion, when the Church members all give their verbal assent with a solemn “Amen.” There must be something very solemn, and at the same time something very delightful, in the uttered consent of a multitude of persons to the will and law of Christ. Days of annual celebration should be days of solemn dedication.

Dear friends, there are other occasions when you might very rightly, I think, renew your covenant with God. *After recovery from sickness*, when, like Hezekiah, you have had a new term of years added to your life, and have risen from the bed of languishing to tread the greensward and breathe the fresh air, then should you sing —

*“My life which thou hast made thy care
Lord I devote to thee.”*

After any extraordinary deliverance, when your troubles have a pause, when your joys bud forth anew, when after a season of deep downcasting of spirit you can once again lift up your brow and bathe it in the light of God — then, again, should you visit the foot of the cross of Christ, and by the blood that is sprinkled there renew your consecration to your Lord.

Especially will it be incumbent upon you to do this *after any sin*, after any such sin, I mean, as may have grieved the Holy Spirit, or brought dishonor upon the cause of God; then, like David, repair to your chamber, and, with bitter tears of penitence, look to the hyssop and the blood which can make you whiter than snow, and again offer yourself unto the Lord Most High as a teacher of sinners, or a singer of his praise. I think, brethren, we should not only let our troubles confirm our dedication to God, but *our prosperity* should do the same. If we should ever meet with occasions which deserve to be called, in Oliver Cromwell's words, "crowning mercies," then, surely, if he hath crowned *us*, we ought also to crown our God, if he has been pleased to give you a coronal of lovingkindnesses, and of tender mercies, then bring forth anew all the jewels of the divine regalia that have been stored in the jewel-closet of your heart, and let your God sit upon the throne of your love, arrayed in royal apparel. If we would get good out of our prosperity, we should not need so much adversity. If we would gather from a kiss all the good it might confer upon us, we should not so often smart under the rod. If we will not gather wisdom from vines and fig trees, we must be taught it with briars and thorns. Our folly makes rods for its own back. Do any of you come here to-day with hearts leaping for joy?

Have you received a valued favor which you little expected? Has the Lord put your feet in a large room? Oh! can you sing of mercies multiplied?

Then this is the day to put your hand upon the horns of the altar, and say, "Bind me here, my God; bind me here with cords, even for ever." I may also suggest that there are *certain seasons in life* when this fresh espousal is very comely. In arriving at manhood, at the birth of children, at the death of friends, in passing the anniversaries of our birth, in advancing from strength to grey hairs, we may read anew the memorials of our love.

Inasmuch as we need the fulfillment of new promises from God, let us give fresh promises to God, or, rather, let us offer renewed prayers that the old ones may not be dishonored. I have known persons who have religiously set apart a certain day in the month, or year, when they would anew look over their obligations, survey their state before God, and determine to be the Lord's for ever. Let us commend their zeal, if we do not imitate their precision. Well, beloved, I suggest — and I am sure such a joyous act as

this will never be out of season — I suggest that this morning, if God shall enable us, we do renew our vows unto him.

These were the thoughts which possessed my heart; but there was another which over-rode them all, and prevented my following out my desire. You see my text deals not with renewing our vows before God, nor with our proclaiming anew in the courts of the Lord's house our surrender to him; no, it goes deeper than all this — “Renew a right spirit within me.” Surely, if the Lord will do this, then our consecration will be renewed; if the fountain be filled, then the streams must flow; if the sun be made to shine, then the plants must bud; if the sap within the tree flow vigorously, then the fruit without will be plentiful. Perhaps we have done well to lay the axe at the root of the tree, by going to the very soul and core of this matter.

We have our hand upon the lever now; it is a dead weight when a man tries to renew his own vows; but now we have the lever under it, if we cry to God in prayer “Renew a right spirit within me.” We shall accomplish our end none the less certainly, even though we do not so much preach upon the subject of consecration as upon the power of God the Holy Spirit, to renew our spirit, and bring us afresh to himself.

Come then, beloved; I want, not so much to preach, as to lead you now to the footstool of divine mercy in humble, earnest entreaty that the Lord may renew within you a constant spirit, and invigorate the life of your piety. For this there are several reasons, which we will give at once.

I. And, first, a cogent motive of desiring the renewal of our graces is to be found in THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR IT, IF WE WOULD PERSEVERE.

That we need renewal is very clearly seen when we reflect that *all created things need it*. Nothing that God has made is self-existent. Self-existence belongs exclusively to the “I AM THAT I AM.” Even the tall archangel, who stands nearest the eternal throne, can only claim a borrowed existence, which is immortal only in the immortality of God. The very mountains crumble, rocks dissolve, and marble wears away. Those old rivers that have even been adored by idolaters for their antiquity yet need to be refreshed with the melted snows from the mountain's brow. It is rumoured of our mother earth herself, that her soil is losing its former fruitfulness; certain it is, that the most fertile fields yield no perpetual harvests unless the labor of man manure the soil. All things on earth need perpetually to be renewed. “Thou renewest the face of the year,” said the Psalmist; for in winter earth

sleeps like a wearied giant; as if hoary with the decay of age, the snow

covers its slumbering head. In winter the world shows none of her youthful verdure; all her beauty lies buried beneath the sod. Are not all things hushed and quiet in winter's bedchamber of life? But spring comes leaping on; the song of birds arouses the slumbering earth, and she awakes refreshed; but were it not for the renewings of delicious spring, would not earth become everywhere as intolerable as at her frozen poles? Nor here alone are refreshings needed, for doubtless the upper spheres require fresh fuel for their ardent flames. The orb of day shines in radiance lent him by the great Father of Lights, albeit that he is, in Milton's noble phrase, "of this great world both eye and soul;" that eye must soon grow dim with age, and that soul must lose its overflowing life, if the all-filling God refuse his ever-flowing aid. No created thing standeth by itself. 'Tis only an infernal conceit that anything can be without the great Creator's perpetual presence; and wilt thou lend thy soul to this blasphemy of hell? If thy piety can live without God, it is not of divine creating; it lives not but in thy fancy; it is but a dream; for if God had begotten it, it would wait upon him as the flowers wait for the dew.

Moreover, this truth is especially applicable to those creatures of God *which are endowed with life*. Those without life need preserving; but the truth is not so clearly seen in their case as in living objects; but life, if God would sustain it, must often, nay, constantly, receive renewal. What animal can live without the refreshment of sleep and food? Job's war-horse, whose neck is clothed with thunder, must humble himself to his stall and to

his provender. The wild asses of the wilderness, whose bands the Lord hath loosed, have the range of the mountains for their pasture. The unicorn abideth not by the crib, neither will he harrow the valleys for the husbandman; yet he groweth weary, and lieth down to rest. Behemoth, whose bones are as bars of iron, eateth grass as an ox, and Leviathan, which maketh the deep to boil like a pot, whose eyes are like the eyelids of the morning, receiveth the breath in his nostrils each hour from his Maker. Even the trees, those motionless things, which wear not themselves with care, nor shorten their fires with labor, these must drink of the rain of heaven, and suck from the hidden treasures of the soil. The cedars of Lebanon, which God has planted, only live because day by day they are full of sap fresh drawn from the earth. You and I, having life, cannot expect that it should be sustained without renewal from God. Our natural life needs constantly its bread and water. The strongest man that ever lived must soon yield to the weakness of death, unless he were reinvigorated by

nourishment. Sampson himself must have a cleft opened in the rock that he may drink, for though he has slain the Philistines, yet will he perish unless his thirst be quenched. Assuredly it must be so in spiritual life, or else all the analogies of nature must be reversed. You must drink again of the living water; you must feed anew upon the living bread. What mean those texts in Scripture that speak of waiting upon the Lord, and renewing our strength? What can be the meaning of “renewing our strength like the eagle’s?” And what could be David’s meaning when, in his matchless pastoral, he sings, “Thou restorest my soul,” if we do not need full often the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord?

But I need not travel so far to fetch my arguments. *In your own inner consciousness*, my brother Christian, you are aware that your piety requires constant renovation. What downward tendencies the thoughtful must perceive in themselves. We could travel down-hill to hell how easily, but upwards to heaven how hardly! Downward, without a hand to help; but upward, no hand less than the Omnipotent must speed our course. Do you not find, Christians, that us men must eat, so you must pray? Is there not a vacuum in your heart, and a pang within it, if you have neglected supplication? Do you not discover that as men must breathe so you must exercise faith on Christ, for if your faith be suspended for a moment there is a suffocation of all your hope, your joy, your love, nay, of your very life. Have you not found that, as it is necessary to repair the waste of the body by the frequent meal, so you must repair the waste of the soul by feeding upon the Book of God, or by listening to the preached Word, or by the soul-fattening table of the ordinances? I will not give a farthing for your experience; it cannot be the experience of a child of God, unless you discover a hungering and a thirsting in your inner man, and what are these but proofs that renewal is wanted — signs by which your new nature setteth forth to you a secret necessity which moveth it to these outward longings. Oh! how dull our love becomes if we go for a little time without a sight of Christ! How our faith flickers if we are for a little season absent from the Cross! How depressed are our graces when means are neglected! What poor starvelings some saints are who live without the diligent use of the Word of God and secret prayer! You *know* you want renewal; you *feel* you do. What need I say more?

Moreover, if you do not perceive this very apparent truth, let me remind you that *you may be made to see it, and that terribly, by some surprising sin*. Just as this prayer was forced out of David by his adultery with

Bathsheba, and his bloody murder of Uriah, so thou — yes, thou, my brother, a saint before the Lord — yes, thou preacher — thou mayest be made to know it, by being suddenly overtaken in a fault, to thine own shame for ever. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” There are north winds in the hand of the Almighty which he has not yet permitted to come forth upon men; but when the whirlwind shall be loosed, woe, woe to the tree that hath not sucked up fresh sap, and grasped the rock with many intertwined roots. There are tempests yet to come forth from the secret treasuries of God if they come, woe, woe to the mariners that have not yet strengthened their mast, nor cast their anchor, nor sought the haven. Without perpetual restoration, I say, we are not ready for the perpetual assaults of hell, or the stern afflictions of heaven, nor even for the strifes within us. If you suffer the good to grow weaker the evil will surely gather strength and struggle desperately for the mastery over you, and so may hap a sad downfall, a painful desolation, and a lamentable disgrace may follow from your neglect of the renewing of your spirit be fore God.

Once more here, and though this reason may not seem so forcible as the last, the wise man will understand it and see that there is yet mighty power therein, “*That unconscious backsliding from God*, which is, perhaps, even more dangerous though not so disgraceful as open sin that unconscious apostacy from God, I say, will certainly be upon you unless you have seasons of renewal. Doth not Hosea speak of Ephraim as having grey hairs here and there upon him but he knew it not? Oh, beloved, I do protest — I speak not in any severity against God’s saints, but I do believe that this is *the sin in the Church of God at the present moment, that the most of us have grey hairs here and there and know it not*. We walk so carelessly before God, we do not make such heart-work of religion as we should. Indifference I find to be my own temptation I do not know that I am assaulted with certain other sins which prevail over other men, but this I find to be harder to meet than even a temptation to lust or covetousness, this indifference. I do believe that the Church to a great extent is just now just where Bunyan’s Pilgrim was when he went through the Enchanted ground, and the air was head and the Pilgrim had much ado to keep himself from sleeping. The Church has rest now-a-days; these are times of quietness; and therefore we are in danger of being given to slumber. Perhaps it is a “ruthless legend that the holidays of Capua ruined the veterans of Hannibal, but if it be a legend in his case it is a fact in ours; the peace and quietness of the Church in these halcyon times bring on an

idleness, a dulness, an indifference, a lethargy, as deadly and as damnable as outrageous sin itself, and unless the Holy Spirit arouse us and constrain us to come back again to the simple earnestness of our first love, we shall slip and slide and discover not how low we have fallen till out of the depths we have to cry in agony, “Renew a right spirit within me.” Now, brethren, for these reasons, I do persuade you, and therein I do persuade myself — let us take with us words; let us turn unto the Lord; let us beg hire to heal our backslidings and to receive us graciously; let us entreat him to be as the dew unto our souls that we may grow as the lily and cast out our roots as Lebanon. In the words of Jeremy in the Lamentations let us pray, “Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned, renew our days as of old.” If the crown is fallen from our head because we have sinned, let us seek the Lord with deep humiliation of soul; if the joy of our heart hath ceased, if our dance is turned into mourning, let us return unto him from whom we have erred and renew our marriage covenant. “Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals.” My brethren, if thus he remembers us, let us remember him, and offer this supplication, “Renew a right spirit within me.”

This brings me now to a second method of reasoning with you.

II. Secondly, let us pray the brief but very forcible prayer of the text because of our OWN POWERLESSNESS TO RENEW OUR OWN SPIRITS.

It is a doctrine acknowledged by all orthodox Christians and confessed in some form or other by all believers, that without the Spirit of God we are unable to do anything aright, but, nevertheless, I question if any of us have given our full consent to the doctrine of human inability in its fullest bearings. “Without me ye can do nothing,” is a text upon which our life is the sermon; but until its very close it is probable we shall not fully fathom the depth of our own weakness. Brethren, when a ship is in sailing order and in good condition yet she cannot speed on her journey of herself; even though the sails be spread, there is no hope of her making port unless the wind shall blow; if that be so, how much more is it true that if that ship leak, if the worm hath begun to eat her timbers, or if by grazing upon a rock she has done serious damage to her bottom, it is impossible that she should repair her own damage! If her sails be tattered how shall she mend them? If her masts be strained, if any injury whatever be done to her tackling, how shall she be able to recover of herself? Brethren, you can see the analogy. If the child of God, even when in a healthy state, needs to cry

for the divine Spirit, how much more when he has fallen under spiritual decays, or has grievously backslidden does he need the divine hand of the Mighty Carpenter to set him right! As for ungodly men, the analogy might be pushed still farther if that were in the subject of this morning. If the ship built and manned cannot sail without the wind, how much less could the trees of the forest hew themselves, convey them selves to the shipwright's yard, fashion themselves into timbers, keel and beam, and mast, and then arrange themselves into a bark, and launch themselves upon the sea! Yet even this were less a miracle than for an unconverted man to regenerate himself. But we must return to our point, that the Christian when his heart is out of order has no power to put himself right again without the blessed Spirit. The disease of the living must be cured by the same voice which removes the sleep of the dead. He who said "Lazarus come forth!" is needed to say "Take up thy bed and walk!" for, indeed, if you will think for a moment you will find the work of renewal to be a stern work. It is called in Scripture — *conversion*. Now, in conversion the same power is exercised that was put forth in raising Jesus Christ from the dead. What power, then, must be required in the renewal of a soul! Besides, to renew a soul *is to go directly opposite to nature*. What power is necessary to make water leap up-hill, to suspend the cataract in mid-air, to compel a flame to blaze in the midst of the depths of the sea! Yet such a power as this is absolutely needed to reverse the efforts of the flesh, and to make our old carnal corruptions, which had begun to get the mastery, resign it once more. The strong man armed keeps the house till a stronger than he bind him; and sin, when it once prevails in a believer, would continue to prevail unless the Mighty One who first broke our chains shall come to set us free.

Do you not know, beloved, that in the renewal of our spirits *every grace is wanted that was nestled for our first conversion*? We needed repentance in order to our first salvation: we certainly need it now, that we may be renewed. We wanted faith that we might come to Christ at first: only the like grace can bring us to Jesus now. We wanted a word from the Most High, a word from the lip of the Loving One, to end our fears then: we shall soon discover, when under a sense of present sin, that we need it now. No man can be renewed, I say, without as real and true an exercise of the Holy Spirit's energy as he felt at first, because the work is as great, the same graces are needed and flesh and blood are as much in the way now as ever they were. Let thy powerlessness, O Christian, be an argument to make thee pray earnestly to thy God. Remember, David when he felt

himself powerless, did not fold his arms or close his lips, but he hastened to the mercy seat with “Renew a right spirit within me.” Let not the doctrine that you, unaided can do nothing, make you sleep; but let it be a goad in your side to drive you with an awful earnestness to the great fountain from which all streams must flow to satisfy your wants, and plead it, plead it as though you pleaded for your very life, as though you pleaded for your only son — “Lord, now renew a right spirit within me.” Nor pray this falsely, prove that you mean it by going forth to use the means. Continue much in prayer; live much upon the word of God; attend constantly a soul-satisfying ministry; kill the lusts that have driven your Lord from you; be careful to watch over the future uprisings of sin; otherwise your prayer cannot be sincere. The man who prays to God to do a thing must use the means through which God works. He is a hypocrite who asks the Lord to visit him and then nails up his door, or asks for life and then refuses to eat. The Lord has his own appointed ways, and sitting by the wayside you will be ready when he passes by. Oh! continue then in all those blessed ordinances which will foster and nourish your dying graces; and strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. Knowing that all the power must be from him, cease not to cry, “Renew a right spirit within me.”

III. But we change our note, and come to a third point. I would the Holy Spirit might honor the word this morning, and I should look upon it as no mean privilege, if I might stir up any of you, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, truly to-day to come afresh to the fountain filled with blood, and to renew again your entire surrender and resignation of yourselves to your Lord. The argument I use shall be found in *THE BLESSED RESULTS WHICH ARE SURE TO FOLLOW*, if the Lord shall renew your spirit.

Think *what joy you will experience!* There are some things, beloved, that perhaps may need to be renewed, but they would bring no joy. The physician may require you to receive a new draught of medicine; it may be possible that an operation once performed may have lost its potency; painful though it be, it may be required to be performed again, But that of whom I speak has no pain to the child of God; it is in itself so sweet that it ought to tempt you to perform it. What is it my brethren; is it not the renewal of a *brotherly* covenant, just as Jonathall and David went into the wood and renewed their covenant? I do not believe it was a sorrowful hour to Jonathan; I can imagine that David shed tears when he parted from his beloved friend, tears of deep affection perhaps, but oh! with what joy did

they clasp each other in the wood! With what true love did they make a covenant when Jonathan loved David as his own soul. The prince stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David, and his garments even to his sword and to his bow, and to his girdle. And surely you will not object to renew your embrace of your David to-day! Can it be a hard matter to you once more to go without the camp bearing his reproach, to clasp the man once again who is better to you than all the treasures of Egypt? Besides, there is a sweeter figure. The covenant we have with Christ is a *marriage* covenant. I believe in Sweden it is common when a happy pair have been wedded for five-and-twenty years to have what they call "A silver wedding;" and if they should be spared to old age, until their children's children are round-about them, on the fiftieth year, they have "A golden wedding." Who would not wish to have a repetition of the happy day! Let us celebrate to-day, dear friends, a silver wedding with the Christ whom we married years ago; and oh, we will wait awhile longer, and anticipate our golden wedding, in the year of jubilee, when we shall see him as he is, and be like him. What, will you not give him the kiss that is the token of continued affection? Do you refuse to give him fresh pledges of *your* love, which is the fruit of *his* everlasting love to you? Why, the thing is so joyous that I cannot refrain from crying, "Let the marriage-bells be rung again; bring forth the wedding-dainties once more, and let us sit at the table of the marriage-festival!" Jesu, we do embrace thee! We are thine, 'tis happiness, 'tis heaven, 'tis bliss superlative to renew our vows to thee, and to receive fresh tokens of thy regard to us.

Do you remember, beloved, that in our early days, besides having an abundance of joy, how full of heavenly lift our graces were, and how real everything appeared to our faith at the first? Now if we can have our spirit renewed and made as it was at first, why, then we shall have back the same satisfactory reality in our emotions. I speak for one. I know that when my eyes first looked to Christ he was a very real Christ to me, and when my burden of sin rolled from off my back it was a real pardon and a real release from sin to me; and when that day I said for the first time, "Jesus Christ is mine," it was a real possession of Christ to me. When I went up the sanctuary then in that early dawn of youthful piety, every song was really a psalm, and when there was a prayer, oh! how I followed every word! It was prayer indeed! And so was it too in silent quietude, when I drew near to God, oh it was no mockery, no routine, no matter of mere duty; it was a real talking with my Father who is in heaven. And oh! how I

loved my Savior Christ then! I can talk about loving him now, and methinks if he said to me as he did to Simon Peter — “Lovest thou me?” I would dare to answer, “thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;” but still, my consciousness of loving Christ is not always as vivid now as it once was. Why, then I was quite sure I loved him, I know I could have burned for him, or suffered anything for his dear sake. Was it not so with you? Well, beloved, if we will come now and put our hand within his hand afresh, which will be the effect of his renewing our spirit, then we shall have back again all the fullness and reality that distinguished our early, new-born piety, oh, how blessed this will be!

Moreover, at that time *how active all our graces were!* Do you not recollect? Why, you had no doubts then, your faith was so strong; you had no lukewarmness then, your zeal was so burning. You recollect, some of you, when first the Lord met with you; perhaps it was in this house, or in the Surrey Music Hall; you would stand in the crowd till you were almost ready to drop, but there were no sleepy eyes, no dull, lethargic spirits. Oh, how you used to drink in the word! It was marrow and fatness to you when you fed upon it. If anybody would have bribed you to stop away from a prayer meeting or from a week-night lecture, they might have offered the world, but it would have been a bribe too low. But now, too often, if there is a little discomfort in getting in the gate, if you happen not to get the very seat you want, or if you happen to be seated uncomfortably, or in a cramped position, you cannot worship as once you did. I know it may be the fault of the minister; perhaps he does not preach as he did in your younger days, when you were first converted; that is possible. Still I do think it is more likely that you have lost the ears you once had or that your ears are become dull of hearing, that your eyes have lost their quickness of sight, or that your hearts may be less tender and sensitive; for certainly your graces are not in such active exercise as they were. Well now, if we come back to our Master we shall have our youthful force and vigor renewed. To my mind it is always a pleasant sight to see lambs skipping in the meadows, because it shows they have more strength than they well know what to do with, and so they do a great many things that are improper for sheep to do. What odd, fantastic gestures they have! It is even so with young Christians; they will often do many rash things just because they have an excess of vivacity; they have such a full tide of love and zeal that they do not know how to put it into action. Young life demands exercise. O that some of you who are old in years, and others of

you upon whose graces there are signs of decay, could but recover some of this juvenile effervescence! Ah! and you can have it. In the answer to this prayer you will find it. "Renew a right spirit within me."

A subject like this grows upon me while speaking of it. I cannot doubt that you will find it equally enlarge upon you in thinking it over. But on no account let us forget the practical ends that ought to be kept in view.

Dear friends, *your usefulness to others* will be increased if the Lord should graciously visit you with times of refreshing. You want the renewal of your own spirit in your Sunday-school class; in the district where you distribute tracts; in the little room where you preach; or in your family, with your own children. You do want to have more grace in your own hearts that you may have power with them. Well, you must get this by coming anew to your Lord.

Ah! and some of you came up here this morning *complaining of the world and its trials*. The world is very hard with you, and troubles are multiplied. How little weight the sorrows of this life will have in the scale, if balanced against the joy of your heart, when the Lord renews your spirit. What did you care when you were first converted, whether you were rich or poor? It seemed no matter to you. Like Peter, you left the net and the fishes that you might but get at your Lord; like the woman at the well, you left the water-pot that you might go and tell others that you had seen a man who told you all things that ever you did. Well, now, if your former piety come back, if the zeal of your young days shall be restored to you, the world will be just as much a trifle to you, and you will tread it beneath your feet with just as much heroic contempt as you did when first you received the gospel, not in word only, but in power.

Since all these blessed results will follow, let me therefore beseech you — by your love to your own souls, by your care to grow in grace, by your anxiety to prosper in the Lord's way, and by your interest in the welfare of others — pray with me this prayer, "Renew a light spirit within me." And do thou, O Lord, hear it in heaven thy dwelling-place. Let thine eyes be open unto the supplication of thy servants, to hearken unto us in all that we call for unto thee."

IV. One other argument only, where many might be given. Do not GOSPEL OBLIGATIONS irresistibly constrain us by the means of this our prayer to renew our covenant with God?

Legal motives I would disdain to urge with you; but gospel motives I may and must. Did you do right in giving your soul to Christ at first? Was it a mistake? Was it the effect of a juvenile excitement, misled by some fanatical speech? No, you cannot say that; you believe it was the best thing you ever did in your life; you have often regretted you never did it before. There are a thousand things you repent of, but this one thing, that you gave yourself to God, is a subject of perpetual congratulation with you. Very well then, *if it was well to do it then, do it now*. If you would not make out yourself to have been a fool, and your faith to have been a lie, if you would not before the eyes of men and of angels declare that the whole thing is a farce, this day, even this day, let us go into Gilgal, and there let us renew the kingdom before the Lord. Oh! once again do what thou didst at the first — if it were a wise, if it were a good thing.

Moreover, brethren, *remember how often Jesus renewed his covenant with his people*. It was not enough to have spoken it in the ear of Adam, and whispered it to the heart of Eve; Enoch must testify of it; Abraham must understand it on the plains of Mamre, as Noah adores time had done when floating securely in the ark. There must be a renewed revelation to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and to Joshua. Symbols of renewed covenant must be seen in the tabernacle and in the temple. Each day, each week, each month, each year, each jubilee must give some fresh form of Christ setting his seal anew to the love which he bore to his people and his purpose to redeem his Church by blood. Does Christ do this, and will you blush to do it? Oh! do as Jesus did to you; as you would that “the man” should do to you, do you also unto him likewise.

And moreover, *he has renewed his covenant with you*. Come, I want you to look back at your old diaries. You have not burned your pocketbooks, in which you set down in some mysterious marks that others could not read, some mementoes of your Tabors, your Mizars, and the hills of the Hermonites. I want you to look back. Has not Christ renewed his covenant with some of us many times? My soul looks back and sees some joyous seasons, some days marked with the red Dominical letter among the days of my history, when he said to me afresh “Thou art mine; I have redeemed thee by blood.” It may be it was on a bed of sickness; perhaps it was when you were walking in the streets; it may be it was in a season of holy retirement, or it may be in a moment when you were brought down to the earth. Oh! he has renewed his covenant with us many and many a time with such sweet re-assuring words that our soul, which was tired of this world,

has been willing to stay her three-score years and ten, because her husband had visited her. Thou has stayed me with flagons; thou hast comforted me with apples; thou hast made me sick with love; thy left-hand has been under my head, and thy light-hand did embrace me; therefore will I renew my vows unto thee even as thou didst unto me!

Yet farther, dear friends, and I shall not stay longer than this, though it is a very wide field. Let us be moved to-day to renew our covenant with Christ, or rather to ask him to renew our spirit, because *every covenant transaction binds us to it*. You believe in the doctrine of election. We do not blush to preach it, and you love to hear it. What does election mean? It means that God has chosen you; very well, if it be so, then you will acknowledge it anew to-day, by choosing his way and word. You believe in a special and efficacious redemption, that you were redeemed from among men; very well, then you are not your own, you are bought with a price. You believe in effectual calling; you know that you were called out; if it be so, recognize your distinction and separateness as a sacred people set apart by God. You believe that this distinction in you is perpetual, for you will persevere to the end: if you are to be God's for ever, be his to-day. And are you not looking for a heaven from which selfishness shall be banished? Are you not expecting a heaven where glory shall consist in being wholly absorbed in Christ? Well then, this day, by all that is coming, as well by all that is cast, let your soul be bound as with cords that cannot be snapped to the altar of your God.

Backsliders, you that have gone astray, pray this prayer to-day. He bids you pray it, and he will therefore answer it. The text in the margin reads "renew a constant spirit within me." You have been froward, wayward, unstable, fickle. Poor backslider, he has put this prayer here for you — "Renew a constant spirit within me." My brother, the Church has had to cast thee out, but if still there be a desire in thy soul toward God, return! return! return! Thy Father waits to meet thee; the Church, thy mother, longs for thee; thy brethren desire to see thy face again. Say, and we will say it with thee, "Renew a right spirit within me," and it shall be done. And you, Christians, that have not backslidden, you, my brethren, whose heads are covered with the hoary honors of long service, offer you to-day this prayer, for you need to pray it as well as the youngest of us, "Renew a right spirit within me." Ask the Master who has kept you in your youth to preserve you till, in life's latest hour, YOU bow, "and bless in death a bond so dear." Ye strong men and fathers, who are struggling with the world,

battling day by day with business and its cares, forget not your God through being mindful of many things; do you to-day, in this little pause in the noise, and turmoil, and strife of the world's bustle, come now, and renew your vows. Ye young men and maidens, ye little ones in God's Israel, whose portion it is to be the lambs carried in his bosom, do you also say, "Renew thou, O God, a right spirit within me." Come, renew the dedication so lately made. You that are brought, like Samuels, to God's house, that you may wear the vestments of prophets before you wear the garments of manhood, give yourselves anew to the Lord. Let your youthful voices, so full of sweet music, unbroken as yet to the deeper bass which the world's care is sure to give them by-and-bye, do you sing unto the Lord, and let this be your cry — " Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaiden; thou hast loosed my bonds! "

May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, so dwell in us, that each of us may renew our vows, through his renewing a right spirit within us. Amen.

OUR STRONGHOLD.

NO. 491

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 26TH,
1862,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it,
and is safe.” — Proverbs 18:10.*

STRONG towers were a greater security in a bygone age than they are now. Then when troops of marauders invaded the land, strong castles were set upon the various hill-tops, and the inhabitants gathered up their little wealth and fled thither at once. Castles were looked upon as being very difficult places for attack; and ancient troops would rather fight a hundred battles than endure a single siege. Towns which would be taken by modern artillery in twelve hours, held out for twelve years against the most potent forces of the ancient times. He that possessed a castle was lord of all the region round about, and made their inhabitants either his clients who sought his protection, or his dependents whom he ruled at will. He who owned a strong tower, felt however potent might be his adversary, his walls and bulwarks would be his sure' salvation. Generous rulers provided strongholds for their people; mountain fastnesses where the peasantry might be sheltered from marauders. Transfer your thoughts to a thousand years ago, and picture a people, who after ploughing and sowing, have gathered in their harvest, but when they are about to make merry with the harvest festival, a startling signal banishes their joy. A trumpet is blown from yonder mountain, the tocsin answers it from the village tower, hordes of ferocious robbers are approaching, their corn will be devoured by strangers; burying their corn and furniture, and gathering up the little portable wealth they have, they hasten with all their might to their tower of defense which stands on yonder ridge. The gates are shut; the drawbridge is pulled up; the portcullis is let down; the warders are on the battlements,

and the inhabitants within feel that they are safe. The enemy will rifle their deserted farms, and search for hidden treasure, and finding that the inhabitants are quite beyond their reach, they will betake themselves to some other place. Such is the figure which is in the text. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

I. Of course we all know that by the name of God is meant the character of the Most High, so that our first lesson is that THE CHARACTER OF GOD FURNISHES THE RIGHTEOUS WITH AN ABUNDANT SECURITY.

The character of God is the refuge of the Christian, *in opposition to other refuges* which godless men have chosen. Solomon suggestively puts the following words in the next verse — "The rich man's *wealth* is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit." The rich man feels that his wealth may afford him comfort. Should he be attacked in law, his wealth can procure him an advocate; should he be insulted in the streets, the dignity of a full purse will avenge him; should he be sick, he can fee the best physicians; should he need ministers to his pleasures, or helpers of his infirmities, they will be at his call; should famine stalk through the land, it will avoid his door; should war itself break forth he can purchase an escape from the sword, for his wealth is his strong tower. In contra-distinction to this, the righteous man finds in his God all that the wealthy man finds in his substance, and a vast deal more. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I trust in him." God is our treasure; he is to us better than the fullest purse, or the most magnificent income; broad acres yield not such peace as a well attested interest in the love and faithfulness of our heavenly Father. Provinces under our sway could not bring to us greater revenues than we possess in him who makes us heirs of all things by Christ Jesus.

Other men who trust not in their wealth, nevertheless make *their own names* a strong tower. To say the truth, a man's good name is no mean defense against the attacks of his fellow-men. To wrap one's self about in the garment of integrity is to defy the chill blast of calumny, and to be mailed against the arrows of slander. If we can appeal to God, and say, "Lord, thou knowest that in this thing I am not wicked," then let the mouth of the liar pour forth his slanders, let him scatter his venom where he may, we bear an antidote within before which his poison yields its power. But this is only true in a very limited sense; death soon proves to men that their own good name can afford them no consolation, and under conviction of sin a good repute is no shelter. When conscience is awake, when the judgment is unbiassed, when we come to know something of the

law of God and of the justice of his character, we soon discover that self-righteousness is no hiding-place for us, a crumbling battlement which will fall on the neck of him that hides behind it — a pasteboard fortification yielding to the first shock of the law — a refuge of lies to be beaten down with the great hailstones of eternal vengeance — such is the righteousness of man. The righteous trusteth not in this; not his own name, but the name of his God, not his own character, but the character of the Most High is his strong tower. Numberless are those castles in the air to which men hasten in the hour of peril: ceremonies lift their towers into the clouds; professions pile their walls high as mountains, and works of the flesh paint their delusions till they seem substantial bulwarks; but all, all shall melt like snow, and vanish like a mist. Happy is he who leaves the sand for the rock, the phantom for the substance.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower to the Christian, not only in opposition to other men's refuges but *as a matter of fact* and reality. Even when he is not able to perceive it by experience, yet God's character is the refuge the saint. If we come to the bottom of things, we shall find that the basis of the security of the believer lies in the character of God. I know you will tell me it is the covenant; but what is the covenant worth, if God were changeable, unjust, untrue? I know you will tell me that the confidence of the believer is in the blood of Christ; but what were the blood of Christ if God were false; if after Christ had paid the ransom the Lord should deny him the ransomed, if after Christ had stood the substitute, the Judge of Men should yet visit upon our heads, for whom he suffered, our own guilt; if Jehovah could be unrighteous; if he could violate his promise and become faithless as we are, then I say that even the blood of Christ would afford us no security. You tell me that there is his promise, but again I remind you that the value of a man's promise must depend on his character. If God were not such that he cannot lie, if he were not so faithful that he cannot repent, if he were not so mighty that he cannot be frustrated when he intends to perform, then his promise were but waste paper; his words like our words, would be but wind, and afford no satisfactory shelter for a soul distressed and anxious. But you will tell me he has sworn with an oath. Brethren, I know he has. He has given us two immutable things in which it is impossible for him to lie, that we may have strong consolation. But still what is a man's oath worth irrespective of his character? Is it not after all what a man is, that makes his asseveration to be eminently mistrusted or profoundly believed. And it is because our God

cannot by any means foreswear himself but must be true, that his oath becomes of value to you and to me. Brethren, after all, let us remember that the purpose of God in our salvation is the glorifying of his own character, and this it is that makes our salvation positively sure, if everyone that trusts in Christ be not saved then is God dishonored, the Lord of Hosts hath hung up his escutcheon, and if in the face of the whole earth he accomplisheth not that which he declares he will perform in this book, then is his escutcheon stained. I say it, he hath flung down the gauntlet to sin, and death, and hell, and if he be not the conqueror over all these in the heart of every soul that trusteth in him, then he is no more the God of Victories, nor can we shout his everlasting praise as the Lord mighty in battle. His chancier then, you see, when we come to the basis of all, is the great granite formation upon which must rest all the pillars of the covenant of grace and the sure mercies thereof. His wisdom, truth, mercy, justice, power, eternity, and immutability, are the seven pillars of the house of sure salvation. If we would have comfort, we can surely find it in the character of God. This is our strong tower, we run into it and we are safe.

Mark you, beloved, not only is this true as a matter of fact, but it is true *as a matter of experience*. I hope I shall now speak the feelings of your hearts, while I say, we have found the character of God to be an abundant safeguard to us. We have known full well the trials of life! thank God we have, for what would any of us be worth, if we had no troubles? Troubles, like files, take away our rust; like furnaces, they consume our dross; like winnowing-fans they drive away the chaff, and we should have had but little value, we should have had but little usefulness, if we had not been made to pass through the furnace. But in all our troubles we have found the character of God a comfort. You have been poor — very poor: I know some of you here have been out of work a long time, and you have wondered where your bread would come from, even for the next meal.

Now what has been your comfort? Have you not said, “God is too good to let me starve; he is too bountiful to let me want.” And so, you see, you have found his character to be your strong tower. Or else you have had personal sickness; you have long lain on the bed of weariness, tossing to and fro, and then the temptation has come into your heart to be impatient: “God has dealt hardly with you,” so the Evil One whispers; but how do you escape? Why you say, “No, he is no tyrant, I know him to be a sympathizing God.” “In all their afflictions he was afflicted, the angel of his presence saved them.” Or else you have had losses — many losses, and

you have been apt to ask, “How can these things be? How is it I have to work so long and plod so hard, and have to look about me with all my wits to earn but little, and yet when I have made money it melts? I see my wealth, like a flock of birds upon the fields, here one moment and gone the next, for a passer by claps his hand, and everything takes to itself wings and flies away.” Then we are apt to think that God is unwise to let us toil for naught; but, lo, we run into our strong tower, and we feel it cannot be. No; the God who sent this affliction could not have acted in a thoughtless, reckless, wisdomless manner; there must be something here that shall work for my good. You know, brethren, it is useless for me to attempt to describe the various ways in which your trials come; but I am sure they that know Jehovah’s name will put their trust in him. Perhaps your trial has been want, and then you have said, “His name is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide;” or else you have been banished from friends, perhaps from country, but you have said, “Ah! his name is Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there;” or else you have had a disturbance in your family; there has been war within, and war without, but you have run into your strong tower, for you have said, “His name is Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord send peace;” or else the world has slandered you, and you your- self have been conscious of sin, but you have said, “His name is Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness,” and so you have gone there, and been safe; or else many have been your enemies, then his name has been “Jehovah-Xissi, the Lord my banner;” and so he has been a strong tower to you. Defy, then, brethren — defy, in God’s strength, tribulations of every sort and size. Say, with the poet,

*“There is a safe and secret place
 Beneath the vyings divine,
 Reserved for all the heirs of grace;
 That refuge now is mine.
 The least and feeblest here may
 hide Uninjured and unawed;
 While thousands fall on every side, I rest secure in God.”*

But, beloved, besides the trials of this life, we have *the sins of the flesh*, and what a tribulation these are; but the name of our God is our strong tower then. At certain seasons we are more than ordinarily conscious of our guilt; and I would give little for your piety, if you do not sometimes creep into a corner with the poor publican and say. “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Broken hearts and humble walkers, these are dear in Jesu’s eyes.

There will be times with all of us when our saintship is not very clear, but our sinnership is very apparent; well, then, the name of our God must be our defense: “He is very merciful “ — “ For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Yea, in the person of Christ we even dare to look at his justice with confidence, since “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Possibly it is not so much the guilt of sin that troubles you, as the power of sin. You feel as if you must one day fall by the hand of this enemy within. You have been striving and struggling, but the old Adam is too much for you. It is a stern conduct, and you fear that the sons of Anak will never be driven out. You feel you carry a bombshell within your heart; your passions are like a powder magazine; you are walking where the flakes of fire are flying, and you are afraid a spark may fall and then there will be a terrible destruction of everything Ah! then there is the power of God, there is the truth of God, there is the faithfulness of God, and, despite all the desperate power of sin, we find a shelter here in the character of the Most High. Sin sometimes cometh with all the terrors of the law; then, if thou knowest not how to hide thyself behind thy God, thou wilt be in an evil plight. It will come at times with all the fur, of the flesh, and if thou canst not perceive that thy flesh was crucified in Christ, and that thy life is a life in him, and not in thyself, then wilt thou soon be put to the rout. But he who lives in his God, and not in himself, and he who wraps Christ’s righteousness about him, and is righteous in Christ, such a man may defy all the attacks of the flesh and all the temptations of the world; he shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

Then, beloved, there are the temptations of the devil, and these are very dreadful; but how sweet it is still to feel that the character of God is our strong tower. Without walls of grace and bulwarks of mercy, how can a tempted soul escape the clutches of the archdestroyer? But where the soul lies in the entrenchments of divine promise all the devils in hell cannot carry it by storm. I saw this week, one whom many of you greatly respect — the former pastor of this Church, Mr. James Smith, of Cheltenham <fn>Since departed “to be with Christ, which is far better.”</fn> — a name well-known by his innumerable little works which are scattered everywhere, and cannot fail to do good. You will remember that about a year ago, he was struck with paralysis, and one half of his body is dead. But yet, when I saw him on the bed, I had not seen a more cheerful man in the full heyday of

strength. I had been told that he was the subject of very fearful conflicts at times; so after I had shaken hands with him, I said, "Friend Smith, I hear you have many doubts and fears!" "Who told you that?" said he, "for I have none." "Never have any? why I understood you had many conflicts." "Yes," he said, "I have many conflicts, but I have no doubts; I have many wars within, but I have no fears. Who could have told you that? I hope I have not led any one to think that. It is a hard battle, but I know the victory is sure. After I have had an ill night's rest — of course, through physical debility — my mind is troubled, and then that old coward, Satan, who would be afraid to meddle with me perhaps if I were strong, attacks me when I am weak; but I am not afraid of him; don't you go away with that opinion; he does throw many fiery darts at me, but I have no doubt as to my final victory." Then, he said, in his own way, "I am just like a packet that is all ready to go by train, packed, corded, labelled, paid for, and on the platform, waiting for the express to come by and take me to glory. I wish I could hear the whistle now," said he, "I had hoped I should have been carried to heaven long ago; but still I am right." "And then," he said, "I have been telling your George Moore, over there, that I am not only on the rock, but that I am cemented *to* the rock, and that the cement is as hard as the rock, so there is no fear of my perishing; unless the rock falls, I cannot; unless the gospel perishes, I cannot perish." Now, here was a man attacked by Satan, he did not tell me of the bitter conflicts he had within, I know they were severe enough; he was anxious to bear a good testimony to the faithfulness of his gracious Lord; but you see, it was his God that was his stronghold; he ran to this — the immutability, the faithfulness, the truthfulness, the mightiness of that God upon whose arm he leaned. If you and I will do the same, we can always find an attribute of God to oppose to each suggestion of the Evil One. "God will leave thee," says the Evil One. "Thou old liar, he cannot, for he is a faithful God." "But thou wilt perish after all." "O thou vile deceiver, that can never be, for he is a mighty God and strong to deliver." "But one of these times he will abhor thee." "No; thou false accuser and father of lies, that cannot be, for he is a God of love." "The time shall happen when he shall forget thee." "No, traitor; that cannot be, for he is a God omniscient, and knows and sees all things." I say, thus we may rebut every mischievous slander of Satan, running still into the character of God as our strong tower.

Brethren, even when the Lord himself chastens us, it is most blessed to appeal against God to God. Do you understand what I mean? He smites us

with his rod, but then to look up and say, “Father, if I could believe what thy rod seems to say, I should say thou lovest me not; but I know thou art a God of love, and my faith tells me that thou lovest me none the less because of that hard blow.” See here, brethren, I will put myself in the case a moment — Lo, He spurns me as though he hated me; drives me from his presence; gives me no caresses; denies me sweet promises; shuts me up in prison, and gives me the water of affliction and the bread of distress; but my faith declares, “He is such a God that I cannot think hardly of him; he has been so good to me that I know he is good now, and in the teeth of all his providences, even when he puts a black mask over his face, I still believe that

*“Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.”*

But, friends, I hope you know, I hope each of us may know by experience, the blessed art of running into the bosom of God and hiding therein. This word to the sinner who has not yet found peace. Do not you see, man, the Christian is not saved by what he is, but by what his God is, and this is the groundwork of our comfort — that God is perfect, not that we are perfect. When I preached last Thursday night about the snuffers of the temple, and the golden snuffer trays, and the necessity there was for the lamps in the sanctuary to be trimmed, one foolish woman said, “Ah, you see, according to the minister’s own confession, these Christians are as bad as the rest of us, they have many faults; oh!” said she, “I dare say I shall be as well off at the last as they will.” Poor soul! she did not see that the Christian’s hope does not lie in what he is, but in what Christ is; our trust is not in what we suffer, but in what Jesus suffered; not in what *we* do, but in what *He* has done. It is not our name, I say again, that is a strong tower to us, it is not even our prayer, it is not our good works; it is the name, the promise, the truth, the work, the finished righteousness of our God in Christ Jesus. Here the believer finds his defense, and nowhere besides. Run sinner, run, for the castle gate is free to all who seek a shelter, be they who they may.

II. By your leave I shall turn to the second point. How THE RIGHTEOUS AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THIS STRONG TOWER. They run into it. Now, running seems to me to imply that *they do not stop* to make any preparation. You will remember our Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, that when the Romans surrounded Jerusalem, he that was on the house-top was not to come down into his house, but to run down the outer staircase,

and escape. So the Christian, when he is attacked by his enemies, should not stop for anything, but just run into his God and be safe. There is no need for thee to tarry until thou hast prepared thy mind, until thou hast performed sundry ablutions, but run man straight away at once. When the pigeons are attacked by the hawk, their better plan is not to parley, nor to stay, but swift as they can cut the air fly to the dove-cot. So be it with you. Leave fools who will to parley with the fiend of hell; but as for you, fly to your God, and enter into his secret places till the tempest be over, past. A gracious hint this to you anxious souls who are seeking to fit yourselves for Jesus. Away with such legal rubbish, run at once; you are safe in following the good example of the righteous. This running appears to me to imply, that they have nothing to carry. A man who has a load, the heavier the load may be, the more will he be impeded in his flight. But the righteous run, like racers in the games, who have thrown off everything, their sins they leave to mercy, and their righteousness to the moles and bats. If I had any righteousness I would not carry it, but run to the righteousness of Christ without it; for my own righteousness must be a drag upon me which I could not bear. Sinners I know, when they come to Christ, want to bring tons of good works, waggon loads of good feelings, and fitnesses, and repentings, and such like; but the righteous do no such thing; they just foreswear every thing they have of their own, and count it but dross and dung, that they may run to Christ and be found in him. Gospel righteousness lies in all in Jesus, not in the believer.

It seems to me too, that this expression not only implies a want of preparation, and having nothing to carry, but it imports that *fear quickens them*. Men do not run to a castle unless they are afraid. But when the avenger of death is close behind, then swiftly they fly. It is marvellous how godly fear helps faith. There is a man sinking there in the river; he cannot swim, he *must* be drowned! See! see he is going down! We push him a plank; with what a clutch he grasps it; and the more he is convinced that he has no power to float, the more firmly doth he grip at this one hope. Fear may even drive a man, I say, to faith, and lend him wings to fly, where else he might have crept with laggard feet. The Bight is the flight of fear, but the refuge is the refuge of faith. O sinner, if the righteous fly, what ought thy pace to be? Again, it seems to me that *there is great eagerness here*, as if the Christian did not feel safe till he had entered into his God. And therefore, as the stag pursued by the hounds quickens its flight by reason of the baying of the dogs, as the clamor grows louder, and louder, see how

the stag leaps from crag to crag, dashes through the stream, flies over yonder hill, is lost in yonder brake, and anon springs through the valley; so the Christian flies to his dear God for safety, when the hounds of hell, and the dogs of temptation are let loose against him. Eagerness! Where indeed shall the like be found? “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? “O convinced sinner, what should thine eagerness be if thus the righteous pant for God? Brethren, I may add here, that there is an *absence of all hesitation*. He runs. You know, if we want somebody to help us, we put our hand to our brow, and consider, “Let us see, where shall we go? I am in great straits, to whom shall I fly? Who will be the best friend to me?” The righteous never ask that question, at least when they are in a right mind they never do; but the moment their trouble comes they run at once to their God, for they feel that they have full permission to repair to him; and again they feel they have nowhere else to fly. “To whom, or whither should I go, if I could turn from thee,” is a question which is its own answer. Then understand, in our text there is eagerness, the absence of all hesitation, there is fear, and yet there is courage; there is no preparation, there is the flinging aside every burden. “The righteous runneth into his high tower, and is safe.”

Beloved, I will leave that point, when I have just said, please to remember that when a man gets into a castle, he is safe because of the impregnability of the castle; he is not safe because of the way in which he entered into the castle. You hear some man inside saying, “I shall never be hurt, because I came into the castle the right way.” You will tell him, “No, no, no, it is not the way you came into the castle but the castle itself is our defense.” So some of you may be thinking, “I do come to Christ, but I am afraid that I do not come aright.” But it is not *your coming*, it is Christ that saves you. If you are in Christ, I do not care a pin how you got in, for I am sure you could not act in except by the door; if you are once in, he will never throw you out; he will never drive away a soul that cometh unto him, for any reason whatsoever. Your safety does not lie in how you came, for in very truth, your safety is in Him. If a man should run into a castle and carry all the jewels of a kingdom with him, he would not be safer because of the jewels; and if another man should run in with hardly a fresh suit of clothes with him, he would not be any the more in danger because of his raggedness. It is the castle, it is the castle, not the man. The solid walls, the strong bastions, the frowning ramparts, the mighty munitions, these make

up the defense, not the man, nor yet the man's wealth, nor yet the way the man came. Beloved, it is most true that salvation is of the Lord, and whosoever shall look out of self to-night, whosoever shall look to Christ only, shall find him to be a strong tower, he may run into his Lord and be safe.

III. And now for our third and closing remark. You that have Bibles with margins, just look at them. You will find that the second Part of the text is put in the margin thus — “The righteous runneth into it, and is set aloft.” Our first rendering is, “The righteous runneth into it, and is safe” — there is the matter of fact. The other rendering is, “He is set aloft “ — there is the matter of joyous experience.

1. Now first let us see to the *matter of fact*. The man that is sheltered in his God — a man that dwells in the secret places of the tabernacle of the Host High, who is hidden in his pavillion, and is set upon a rock, he is safe; for, first, *who can hurt him?* The Devil? Christ has broken his head. Life? Christ has taken his life up to heaven; for we are dead, and “our life is hid with Christ in God.” Death? No; the last enemy that *shall be destroyed* is death. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” The law? That is satisfied, and it is dead to the believer, and he is not under its curse. Sin? No; that cannot hurt the believer, for Christ has slain it. Christ took the believer's sins upon himself, and therefore they are not on the believer any more. Christ took the believer's sins, and threw them into the Red Sea of his atoning blood; the depths have covered them, not one of them is left. All the sin the believer hath ever committed is now blotted out, and a debt that is cancelled can never put a man in prison; a debt that is paid, let it be never so heavy, can never make a man an insolvent — it is discharged, it has ceased to be. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Who can harm us? Let him have permission to do what he will; what is there that he can do? *Who again has the power to reach us?* We are in the hand of Christ. What arrow shall penetrate his hand to reach our souls? We are under the skirts of Deity. What strength shall tear away the mantle of God to reach his beloved? Our names are written on the hands of Jesus, who can erase those everlasting lines? We are jewels in Immanuel's crown. What thievish fingers shall steal away those jewels? We are in Christ. Who shall be able to rend us from his innermost heart? We are members of his body. Who

shall mutilate the Savior? "I bare you," saith God, "as on eagles' wings." Who shall smite through the breast of the Eternal One, heaven's great eagle? he must first do it ere he can reach the eaglets, the young sons of God, begotten unto a lively hope. Who can reach us? God interposes; Christ stands in the way; and the Holy Spirit guards us as a garrison. Who shall stand against the Omnipotent? Tens of thousands of created puissances must fall before him for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. *What weapon is there that can be used against us?* Shall they kill us? Then we begin to live. Shall they banish us? Then we are but nearer to our home. Shall they strip us? How can they rend away the garment of imputed righteousness? Shall they seize our property? Can they touch our treasure since it is all in heaven? Shall they scourge us? Sweet shall be the smart when Christ is present with us? Shall they cast us into a dungeon? Where shall the free spirit find a prison? What fetters can bind the man who is free in Christ? Shall the tongue attack us? Every tongue that riseth against us in judgment we shall condemn. I know not what new weapon can be formed, for certain it is that the anvil of the Church has broken all the hammers that were ever used to smite it, and remains uninjured still. The believer is — he must be safe. I said this morning, that if the believer in Christ be not saved for ever, then, beloved, there is no meaning whatever in God's Word; and I say it once again, and I say it without any word of apology for so doing, I could never receive that book as the book of God at all, if it could be proved to me that it did not teach the doctrine of the safety of those that trust in Christ. I could never believe that God would speak in such a manner as to make tens of thousands of us, yea millions of us, believe that He would keep us, and yet after all he should cast us away. Nor do I believe that he would use words which, to say the very least, seem to teach final perseverance if he had not intended to teach us the doctrine. All the Arminian divines that ever lived cannot prove the total apostacy of believers; they can attack some other points of the Calvinistic doctrine; there are some points of our form of doctrine which apparently are far more vulnerable. God forbid we should be so foolish as to deny that there are difficulties about every system of theology, but about the perseverance of the saint there is no difficulty. It is as easy to overthrow an opponent here as it would be to pierce with a spear through a shield of pasteboard. Be ye confident, believer, that this is God's truth, that they who trust in God shall be as Mount Zion which shall never be removed, but abideth for ever.

2. But now we conclude by noticing that our text not only teaches us our safety, but *our experience of it*. “He shall set him up aloft.” The believer in his high-days, and they ought to be every day, is like an eagle perched aloft on a towering crag. Yonder is a hunter, down below, who would fain strike the royal bird; he has his rifle with him; but his rifle would not reach one third of the way; so the royal bird looks down upon him; sees him load and prime, and aim; and looks in quiet contempt on him, not intending even to take the trouble to stretch one of his wings; he sees him load again, hears the bullet down below, but he is quite safe, for he is up aloft. Such is the faithful Christians state before God. He can look down upon every trial and temptation; upon every adversary and every malicious attack, for God is his strong tower, and “he is set up aloft.” When some people go to the newspaper and write a very sharp, bitter, and cutting letter against the minister, oh, think they, “How he will feel that; how that will out him to the quick!” And yet, if they had seen the man read it through, double it up, and throw it into the fire, saying, “What a mercy it is to have somebody taking notice of me;” if they could see the man go to bed and sleep all the better because he thinks he has had a high honor conferred on him, for being allowed to be abused for Christ, surely they would see that their efforts are only “hate’s labor lost.” I do not think our enemies would take so much trouble to make us happy, if they knew how blessed we are under their malice. “Thou hast prepared a table before me in the presence of mine enemies,” said David. Some soldiers never eat so well as when their enemies are looking on; for there is a sort of gusto about every mouthful which they eat, as they seem to say, “snatched from the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, and in defiance of you all, in the name of the Most High God I feast to the full, and then set up my banner.” The Lord sets his people up aloft. There are many who do not appear to be much up aloft. You meet them on the corn market, and they say, “Wheats do not pay as they used to; farming is no good to anybody.” Hear others, after those gales, those equinoctial gales, when so many ships have gone down, say, “Ah I you may well pity us poor fellows that have to do with shipping, dreadful times these, we are all sure to be ruined.” See many of our tradesmen — “This Exhibition has given us a little spurt, but as soon as this is over there will be nothing doing; trade never was so dull.” Trade has been dull ever since I have been in London, and that is nine years! I do not know how it is, but our friends are always losing money, yet they get on pretty comfortably too. Some I know begun with nothing; and they are getting pretty rich now, but, it is all with losing money, if I am to believe

what they tell me. Surely this is not sitting up aloft; surely this is not living up on high. This is a low kind of life for a child of God. We should not have liked to see the Prince of Wales in his boyhood playing with the children in the street, and I do not suppose you would like to see him now among coal-heavers at a hustling match. Nor should the child of God be seen pushing and grasping as if this world were all, always using that muck-rake to scrape together the things of this world; instead of in full satisfaction, being content with such things as he has, for God has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." I am not a little ashamed of myself that I do not live more on high, for I know when we get depressed in spirits and down cast, and doubting, we say many unbelieving and God-dishonoring words. It is all wrong. We ought not to stay here in these marshes of fleshly doubts. We ought never to doubt our God. Let the heathen doubt his God, for well he may, but our God made the heavens.

What a happy people ye ought to be! When we are not, we are not true to our principles. There are ten thousand arguments in Scripture for happiness in the Christian; but I do not know that there is one logical argument for misery. Those people who draw their faces down, and like the hypocrites pretend to be of a sad countenance, these, I say, cry, "Lord, what a wretched land is this, that yields us no supplies." I should think they do not belong to the children of Israel; for the children of Israel find in the wilderness a rock following them with its streams of water, and manna dropping every day, and when they want them there are the quails, and so the wretched land is filled with good supplies. Let us rather rejoice in our God. I should not like to have a serving man who always went about with a dreary countenance, because do you know people would say, "What a bad master that man has." And when we see Christians looking so sad, we are apt to think they cannot have a good God to trust to. Come, beloved, let us change our notes, for we have a strong tower and are safe. Let us take a walk upon the ramparts, I do not see any reason for always being down in the dungeon, let us go up to the very top of the ramparts, where the banner waves in the fresh air, and let us sound the clarion of defiance to our foes again, and let it ring across the plain, where yonder pale whitehorsed rider comes, bearing the lance of death; let us defy even him. Ring out the note again; salute the evening, and make the ontgoings of the morning to rejoice. Warder, upon the castle-top, shout to thy companion yonder, and let every tower and every turret of the grand old battlements be vocal with the praise of him who has said —

*“Munitions of stupendous
rock, Thy dwelling-place shall
be;
There shall thy soul without a shock
The wreck of nature see.”*

Sinner, again I say the door is open; run to the mercy of God in Christ and be safe.

NOMINAL CHRISTIANS — REAL INFIDELS.

NO. 492

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY
1ST, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me “ — John 8:46.

As we meet this evening to commune at the table of the Lord, it will then be necessary for me to seek the edification of God’s people. I therefore think it best to occupy our time this morning with an exhortation to those that are out of the way. May the Holy Spirit make our words like arrows from the bow of a mighty man; may he graciously direct them to the chosen hearts which he has ordained to bless, and may this hallowed hour be a time of salvation to many among you. Whatever may be lacking in the human instrument, I trust there will be no absence of true affection and solemn earnestness, and O may the Holy Ghost use those infirmities under which I labor this morning to magnify his own strength.

You know, dear friends, there has been a great deal of talk lately about the infidelity which like a whirlwind shakes the Establishment. We felt a very stiff breeze caused by certain “Essays and Reviews,” and ere that could blow over, a perfect hurricane from the African shore astonished many and alarmed a few. Everybody agrees to censure the inconsistency of a man who wears a mitre and quarrels with Moses; professes to be a minister of the Church and undermines her foundations. Too much importance has been attached to the poor attempts of the Arithmetical Unbeliever, and what was in reality nothing more than a storm in a teacup has been exaggerated until all the sea of Christendom is tossed with tempest. To my mind, there is a terrible foeman abroad far more worthy of our steel than

the recreant prelate and his Zulu teachers. Spare your voices, O watchmen of Zion, for a mightier enemy, and reserve your swords for a sterner adversary of our Israel. Secret unbelief, as the mother and foster-parent of all open infidelity, requires to be watched and wept over. Let us mourn over the professed unbelief of the age; but there is an unbelief more gross than this, more dishonest, more inconsistent, more widely-spread, and more deceptive in its character, an infidelity so impalpable that we cannot readily arrest it and drag it into the court of conscience; so unreasonable that argument is out of place in contending with it. This “pestilence which walketh in darkness,” broods frightfully over our congregations, and smothers beneath its death-bearing wings not a few of you whose souls I would win for Christ. Into the lists with this destroyer of souls I enter this day. Oh, may my Lord and Master give me power to strike home.

Solemnly I protest against that dishonest, inconsistent infidelity of which some of you are the victims. You tell me that you believe the Bible to be inspired of God; no suspicions as to its divine authority linger in your mind; you have faith in the gospel which we preach, that it is genuine, true, and sound, but here lies your inconsistency or dishonesty, — you say it is true, but you do not believe it; you admit that it came from God, but practically you reject it, you will not deny that it is worthy of all acceptance — it must be so if it came from God, since it deals with all-important matters — and yet you practically say it is not worthy of your attention, since many of you are still in disobedience to the voice of love, neglecting the great salvation.

Before charging home upon your consciences, my hearers, I feel constrained to remark that many professors of religion deserve the rebuke of the text, for they say they believe the Bible, but they do not act in accordance with it. We have been boasting, in the language of Chillingworth, that the Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants, but the boast requires a little examination. Do we not tolerate many things among Protestants which can never be vindicated from Scripture. Tell me that the Bible is your religion and yet bring your infants for baptism, sprinkle their brows or sign their foreheads with a cross, and where find you your warrant for thus profaning an ordinance which sets forth the burial of believers with their Lord? Tradition may lend a forced and lame support to baby sprinkling, but to the Bible it is a novelty unknown. Moreover I ask you whence comes confirmation; will any one be bold enough to assert that there is anything in God’s Word like it? Ay, and

more — where find you a State Establishment? Verily, not in the New Testament, since our Lord hath said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” and his unworldly gospel is a standing protest against the spiritual fornication which State religion involves. Everywhere, in all sects, I see inventions of men arrogating the place of the commandments of God. Let us sweep our temples, and return unto the Word of the Lord. Say not that ye believe the Book, when ye act as though it were not true — when ye advocate practices and set up rites and ceremonies unknown to apostolic times and scriptural records. Brethren, again I say it, our Churches require to be brought face to face with the infallible Word. By this test try them all; they say the thing is true — will they believe it? Will they practice it? Will they abide by the standard? High professors, the love of this world is enmity against God. You profess to love God, you are as worldly, as fond of fashion and its frivolities, as pleased with pomp and its fooleries, as hungry for honor and its fripperies as you can well be; and yet you say this Book is true! Verily, by your acts you prove that you believe it not. I might draw up to-day a bill of dreadful indictment against the visible Church of this age; I might prove to a demonstration that it is not delivered from this present evil world, according to the will of God, even the Father; and that it teaches for doctrines the commandments of men: so that it deserves to be met with the unanswerable question and faithful rebuke of our Lord Jesus

— “If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?”

Although fidelity to my Lord required these few remarks, which are not meant as an angry discovery of a brother’s faults, but as the faithful wounds of a friend, I turn to the matter which has most to do with you, the people of my charge. Having shown you the many giants’ heads which might be smitten by this smooth stone, taken out of the brook, I shall now take aim at *your* hearts, O ye who believe not on my Lord.

I. Unbelievers in Christ, MY TEXT SETS FORTH VERY PITHILY AND PERTINENTLY YOUR INCONSISTENCY.

“If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” If you boldly meet me by saying “I am not converted, for I do not believe in the mission of Christ,” your position is a consistent though a terrible one; if you tell me you have suspicions about the inspiration of Scripture, and therefore you do not believe in Christ, your position is certainly dangerous, it is not despicable; but when you tell me that you believe Jesus Christ was sent from heaven, and that his gospel is the revelation of God to man, if you are still at this

day unconverted, your position, besides its tremendous responsibility and danger, is extraordinarily inconsistent, so inconsistent that an honest man should blush to remain in it for an hour. Were you rightly to weigh the matter you would say, "I will not, I will not be thus a liar unto my soul any longer; will not contradict myself, but I will be consistent, and since the thing is true I will believe it."

Remember, first of all, that *Jesus Christ has revealed to you your need*. He has told you in express words that you need regeneration. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Enlarging upon the doctrine, he adds — "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." He has laid the new birth before you as an imperative necessity. You admit that this is true; your admission that this Book came from God is clearly an assent to this teaching. Why, then, is it that you who have never passed from death unto life, remain contented without that divine change, and are satisfied with moral reformation or outward respectability, while the Book assures you that these will never avail? The Great Master assures you that *you must be converted*. Hear his express words — "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." This you allow to be correct, for it is in the Book which you agree to reverence. Oh, sinner, how then canst thou be at ease in an unconverted state? How is it that thou canst remain so careless when heaven is barred against thee because thou art not converted. Thou canst not delude thyself with the thought that mayhap all will be well with thee, when Christ assures thee it cannot be well with thee except thou experience his converting grace. Has he not told thee, too, in many a passage of prophetic and apostolic Scripture, that *thou must return unto the God from whom thou hast wandered*, and leave thy sins and give thy heart to him? What meant that gracious parable concerning the prodigal? Did it not set thee forth, thou who hast spent thy living with harlots, and art brought to the degradations of sin? Did he not teach thee that thine only hope lies in quick return to thy offended but loving Father in heaven. "I will arise and go to my Father," — is not this fit language for thee?

The citizens of this country — what can they do for thee? The, send thee into their fields to feed swine, but thou canst not fill thy belly with the husks which the swine do eat. Doth not Jesus in that loving parable say affectionately to thee, "Return unto thy God." Oh! if this be true, and thou sayest it is, then believe it, and sure I am thy bowels will yearn towards thy

Father's house, and thou wilt run towards thy home at once. Is it not true that we must abhor that which is evil, and turn with full purpose of heart unto the Lord? "True," you answer, "certainly it is." Why then, I reply, do ye not believe it and act upon the belief? Dear friends, if any physician, well-known and honored, should meet you to-day on your way home, and should most affectionately and solemnly inform you that you bear about in your person a dreadful disease; methinks if you should profess to believe his warning, and yet you should seek no remedy for it, but remain totally unaffected by the dreadful assurance, it might well be asked of you, "How can you say it is true, for you evidently do not believe it?" O my hearers, as though Christ spoke to you by me, so ask I you this question — How can you, as candid persons, how can you as honest men admit this Book to be true, when it tells you that your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint, when it warns you that, dying as you now are, without a work of grace in you, you are lost to all eternity — how can you, I say, admit these things to be true, and yet prove by your apathy and carelessness that you do not believe them? May God press that enquiry home upon you!

Our Lord Jesus Christ came not only to reveal your need, but also to *set forth his claims*. The claims of Jesus of Nazareth are briefly stated by Peter, "Repent and be converted every one of you, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." He demands *repentance*; that is, a change of mind — the changing of your mind with reference to sin, caring no more for its pleasures, despising it and turning away from it; a change of mind with regard to holiness; seeking your happiness in it; a change of mind with regard to Christ himself, so that you shall no longer look upon him as without form or comeliness, but as a most precious Savior, such as you need. Sinner, Christ demands of thee that thou shouldst take thine ornaments of self-righteousness from thee, and wrap thyself in the sackcloth of humiliation, and cast the ashes of penitence upon thy head, and cry, "Unclean! unclean! unclean!" Moreover, he requires *faith* of thee. "Repent ye and believe the gospel." "This is the commandment that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent." The Jews said, "What shall we do that we may do the work of God?" Christ said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." He demands that faith which will accept him to be the sole cleanser from sin, and to be sole possessor, as he is sole redeemer, of the heart. Friend, you believe that no less a person than the Son of God thus bids you look unto him and be

saved; you believe that the Son of God was nailed to the cross, and that out of love to you he demands that you forsake the sin which will destroy you, and believe in his blood which will cleanse you. Does Jesus thus speak? Are these demands the hard inventions of a tyrannical priesthood, or the mild and tender claims of love. Is it a mere man who bids you believe and live, or is it the Redeemer, “in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” who commands you to believe and be baptized? If the claim to faith be true and just, why do you not accede to it? Wherefore harden ye your hearts? Wherefore stand ye out against incarnate love, pleading and persuading you? Oh, strange inconsistency, to know the Savior’s truth, but not to believe him! Oh, shameful dishonesty, to grant the validity of his claim, but to be careless concerning the discharge thereof! To grant the justness of the requirement, and refuse to accede to it with your hearts, is to write yourselves down as deceitful and unrighteous. “If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?”

Further, *Christ came to provide the remedy for your soul*. Christ did not preach an impossible gospel — one out of the reach of sinners — he provided a real, ready, and available salvation. No, beloved, he came to preach glad tidings of great joy to men, a gospel worthy of all acceptance, in which even the vilest have a share, and this is it — that God willeth not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto him and live; that, in order that mercy and justice might both meet, Christ, God’s own dear Son, was sacrificed on Calvary for the ungodly, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, and that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This is the gospel — a gospel to be preached to every creature, from the cold snows of Lapland to the palmy plains of the torrid zone — a gospel to be published among “very people wherever sinners are found — that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief, and that an act of faith in him saves the soul; a simple trusting in him, and the soul is delivered from all sin. My friends, you profess that this is true. O my hearers, very few among you doubt that this gospel is divine; the most of you who sit in these seats Sunday after Sunday, never raise any difficulties of that sort. You say, “Our minister has preached the gospel to us,” but oh, if this be true, why do you not believe it? If there be a remedy, a sure one, a God-appointed one, why do you not receive it? O sirs, this damnable inconsistency of yours will ruin your soul irretrievably, unless you repent of it. Deny it altogether, and I can understand your position though I weep over it, but

say that it is true and yet reject it, and your folly is so glaring that it shall be a theme for laughter in the pit, when fiends shall be your companions and the eternal burnings your perpetual abode. How can it be? You are hanging over the jaws of hell, the flames flash into your face, a strong hand that can save you is stretched out, you refuse its grasp, and will refuse it still unless it lay hold on you by force. Perishing! The very medicine offered you which will cure you, and you will not receive it although you know its healing virtue! You do not believe it; there is infidelity in your heart, and ere you condemn open unbelievers, search your own hearts, for what are you better than they? May not your sins be less excusable and your state less hopeful than theirs?

Dear friends; our blessed Lord came *also to reveal the freeness of his grace*. Oh! what freeness was there in the Gospel when Christ preached it! No cold theology froze his lips; words did not hang like icicles there, but out of his mouth there flowed rivers of living water. What can be freer than this — “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest?” Or what more wide than this — “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink?” Or what more gracious than this, by the lip of his servant John — “Whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely?” Oh! I need not repeat these invitations; I shall rather remind you that you admit them to be true, hearty, divine invitations; why then, oh! why do you not believe them? You say, “Yes, it is freely presented; I have not a doubt about that.” Then wherefore standest thou shivering, and refusing to lay hold on eternal life? Soul, if this gospel were hedged with thorns or guarded with bayonets I would recommend thee to fling thyself upon their very points to reach it, but when the door is opened, and when Christ himself, dressed in bleeding love, woos thee to come, how shall I make an excuse for thee when thou canst say it is true, and yet thou dost not believe it. May God give thee wisdom, and teach thy reason right reason.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ in his preaching gave a very clear description of *the danger of unregenerate souls*. Hear how he puts it — “Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.” Mark how he speaks of the unprofitable servant — “Cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Observe how he describes the goats on the left hand, these are the thundering accents of the Judge of all — “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” No preacher was ever so awfully explicit upon future

punishment as Jesus of Nazareth. No human ministry ever gave such graphic and harrowing descriptions of hell as Christ has given. You say you believe the words of Jesus; you do not suspect a loving Savior of exaggeration. Oh, my hearers, I ask you now in the name of God, if it be true, why do ye not believe it? You do not believe it; that is clear enough. Would you sit quietly in your seat this morning, young man, if you really believed that within one instant you may beinhell? Old man, old in years and old in sin, would you be as quiet in your soul to-day as you are if you knew and believed that there is but a step between you and the flames? Oh! all of you who can make merry while yet you have no hope in Jesus, could it be so with you if you really believed in the wrath of God which abideth on you. So near the lake of fire and yet so full of levity! Death and damnation at your doors, and yet jesting and unconcerned! My soul is full of horror at your madness. My heart is ready to burst with anguish at the ruin which will so soon overtake you. What shall I say unto you? How shall I reason with you? — Surely if the thunders of an angry God do not arouse you, you will sleep yourselves into the lowest *hell*.

Brethren, let me add, *Christ has brought to light the hope of immortality, eternal life, and heaven*. What glowing pictures does the Word of God give of the state of the blessed in the land of the hereafter! What music streams from angels' harps! What joy irradiates every celestial brow! What hallowed blessedness floats along the river of the water of life in the midst of every street of the new Jerusalem! You admire the poetry of the Book of God, and marvel at its matchless painting of scenes beyond the flood; you believe that Jesus has revealed that which eye had not seen and ear had not heard; then why do you not believe it? If you believed it you would seek after it, you would strive to enter in at the strait gate; you would labor for the meat which perisheth not; the Spirit of God would lead you to prize the world to come; you would tread this present fleeting world beneath your feet, and be looking for and hasting unto the glories which are yet to be revealed in those who love the Lord. The sum of all this is the weighty enquiry of our Lord Jesus. "If I say the truth why do ye not believe me?" If Christ be no liar, if his word be no fiction, how can you remain as you now are, ungodly, unthinking, unconverted men and women? May the Holy Ghost constrain you to give heed to this searching question.

II. You OFFER SOME SOME DEFENCE OF YOUR INCONSISTENCY, BUT I ANSWER THAT YOUR APOLOGIES DO NOT MEET THE CASE.

I hear one say, "Sir, I do not feel myself entitled to come to Christ, the revelation of God is true, *but I do not believe in Christ because I do not feel any need as I should.*" I answer that this is no excuse; this is rather a proof of guilt. You do not believe that which Christ has told you concerning yourself. The Word of God informs you in many places that your case is an awful and a lamentable one; if you believed this you would never have to complain that you did not feel it. In matters relating to the body, we feel first and then believe; my hand smarts, and therefore I believe that it has been wounded. But in things relating to the soul, you believe first and feel afterwards. A woman cannot feel grief on account of the loss of her child till she believes she has lost it; a young man cannot feel joy at the inheritance of a large estate till he believes he has inherited it; but it is impossible for a loving mother to believe that her child is lost and not to weep, or for an ambitious young man to believe himself suddenly made rich and not to rejoice. Now, if you really believed your heart to be as deceitful as the Bible says it is, if you really believed sin to be as dreadful a thing as God regards it to be, you would feel repentance and conviction necessarily. Alas! it is only when the Spirit of God gives you a real belief in these things that you do repent in earnest. The real root of your hardness of heart lies in your not believing what you admit to be true. You say the Bible is true' but you say what you do not mean. Oh! I would that this inconsistency would strike you! You say it is true, but you cannot believe it, or you would be at once aroused to anxious conviction.

But you make a second apology. "*But, sir, I do not see how faith can save me.*" Here, again, there is no excise, because the basis of your doubt, after all, is this: you do not believe what Scripture reveals. If you speak honestly you really mean to say, "The testimony of the Bible concerning salvation through faith is not true." Let me affectionately remove this stumblingblock, if it be ignorance and not wilffil unbelief. You say you cannot see how faith can save you. Do you not know that faith in itself does not save? Faith saves by reason of that which it lays hold of. Christ stood in the room, place, and stead of every man living that ever did or will believe on him; he took the sins of those persons, and was punished for them; and those who trust him receive the effect of what he suffered. To say that faith could save would be an unreasonable thing; but that the object of faith, the Divine suffering Savior can save, is no unreasonable doctrine. Now, if you do really believe what Scripture tells you concerning this, you cannot again raise this objection, that you do not see how faith

can save. But you say you: prefer works. But then Scripture tells you, times without number, that by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified; and it; adds, that all your righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. So that all hope in that quarter is destroyed. You admit that Scripture is trues and yet you want to be saved by your own works! This is to say that black is white; this is to make God a liar, and yet to make your bow and compliment him as the God of truth at the same time. Sinner, if thou believest the Bible it is as clear as noon-day that he that believeth on him is not condemned, and that he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.

Perhaps you meet me by saying, *that you hays long thought that the good things promised in the Gospel, simply and only to faith, are too good to be true*; that, conscious of being a lost sinner and a very wretched offender, you have not the presumption to believe that if you were to trust Christ this very morning, all your sins would be forgiven. Wells friend, come now, you talk like a humble man, but it is very likely you are very proud; let me get a-hold of you by the button. What does all this mean, my dear friend, but just this — that you think very meanly *of God*? I do not believe you think so meanly of yourself an you think you do. You think meanly *of God*; you think that he has but little mercy, at least not so much mercy as you need, and so you limit the Holy One of Israel. But I shall meet you on the ground of my text. You allow that this Book is true; very well; has not the Lord declared, both by instances and by express words of promise, that though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, and though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow? However aggravated guilt may be, it can damn no man that believes in Christ. I pray you read the gospel aright. You cannot then make the greatness of its grace a ground of doubt. The thing is great, but it is not too great for God. As high as the heavens are above the earth so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts.

But do I hear you answer *that you are not quite sure that the promise made to you*. Sinner, I must not lose patience with you, but I would you would lose patience with yourself, for this is trifling. You say the Bible is true. Sir, if you say it is true, you know that the very object for which it was sent *to you* was, that it might save *you*. What is said in the twentieth chapter of the Gospel by John? — “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name.” God did not send this book to you, I am sure, to play with you; he

sent it that you might be saved. But how can you say the invitations do not include you? “Whosoever will.” Does that shut you out? The Gospel not sent to you? Why, does it not say, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel *to every creature?*” Are you not a creature? Can you escape there? Soul, you know that, inasmuch as the Gospel is to be preached to every creature, and inasmuch as you are condemned already for not believing, on the Son of God, therefore the Gospel must have been sent to *you*. You say you do not feel your need, and you are not prepared. No preparation was ever asked. “This he gives you — ’tis his Spirit’s rising beam.” You say you do not feel this, and you do not feel that; he never asked you to feel anything as a preparation for him. All this is the gift of his grace. You know we preach here every Sabbath-day to you a gospel which meets you as you are, not as quickened sinners, but as sinners, not as convinced sinners, but as sinners, naked, poor, and helpless. You know we speak the truth; wherefore do you not believe us when we tell you that to you, even to you is the word of this Gospel sent, for him that cometh to Christ he will in no wise cast out?

Ah! *you will think of this, but the time has not yet come.* I answer, again, that you do not believe the Bible to be true. If you believed, as the Bible describes, that life is short, and death is certain, and eternity is near, and there is a dreadful hell into which you will be plunged, and a bright and glorious heaven which you will lose, you would cry out, “Lord, save or I perish.” As when the hand of the angel hastened Lot from the burning city, so would a full conviction of these things hasten you to the cross for shelter.

Ah! I repeat what I commenced with, I would care but little for open infidelity if this secret unbelief could be killed. You know why men are infidels openly. It is because they want to find an excuse for their inward infidelity. When men with some few grains of honesty, and a little pride mingled with it, begin to reason with themselves, they argue thus — “Now I love my sins too well to give them up; the Bible is true, but it demands of me repentance, faith, and other things not at all palatable. If I say the old Book is true, and do not heed it, I shall be inconsistent; I will at least get one virtue; I will be consistent; I will deny the authority of the Scriptures, and then, though conscience may prick me, yet before men I shall earn a reputation for daring consistency, my actions and my words agreeing.” Well, sir, I like you not for this, but I must say this, that we have seen some of the greatest unbelievers converted to God in this house of prayer, while

others remain unblest. We have seen many baptized into Christ who once did not believe his Deity, and who doubted the inspiration of Scripture; but all the while there are some of you who say the Word is true, but do not believe it, and I am almost ready to give you up. You are like some persons we visit on their sick beds. They say, "Yes, sir," "Yes, sir," to all we say, and they die, and are damned with "Yes, sir," on their tongue, but with "No, sir" in their heart! This is what you are doing. You say, "Yes, sir," "Yes, sir," "Yes, sir," but you do not repent, you do not believe; you *live*, and I fear some of you will *die*, without God.

III. Again, I would aim at your consciences from another quarter.

Friend, friend, be not thou offended with me while I tell thee now a -piece of solemn truth. In the forty-fifth verse Jesus gives the reason why some did not believe on him. It is a most unreasonable reason. It is this — "Because I tell you the truth ye believe me not." Why, that should be the very reason why they should believe him. Now, I fear some of you do not believe the truth, *simply because it is the the truth*. Some of you, my hearers, hate the truth. You say, "That is too severe; it is not true." I would not be untrue even with a good design, for I do not think we should tell a lie even to save a soul. But it is true, solemnly true. Now I will tell one part of the truth as it is taught in Scripture — "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Well now, that teaches that if you continue to sow sin you will have to reap the result of it, and that, unless through divine grace you are led to give up your right-eye sins, and to cut off your right-arm lusts, you will perish. Now this is a truth which you hate. That man who comes here on Sabbath-days, and often has pangs of conscience, but is a drunkard still, a secret drunkard still — *he* hates this truth. Where shall I find that other man who listens to the Word, ay, and often with tears, but he has his midnight crime when he thinks no man sees him, and even now, when I press hardly upon his vice, he likes it not. You that are here this morning listening to me, and this afternoon will be busy with your shops on God's own day, and you, too, that so trade in business that you no more dare to show your books than you dare to look at the flames of hell — you hate the truth. I am sure you do. You abhor the doctrine that all this must be given up; you prove you do not like it, because you do not practice it. Some of you will even say — "Ah! the preacher is puritanical; he is too severe; he cuts too close." No; here it is, you believe it not *because it is the truth*.

The pharisees, my friends, hated God's truth *deliberately*. I think I hear one of you say, "I do not do that; I may hate the truth in the sense you have explained, in rejecting it and going on in my sins, but I do not do it deliberately." Ah, but how long does it take to make an action deliberate? I have preached to some of you nine years now — nine years! — and you are still what you were! Is not that deliberate? Some of you have heard the gospel forty years, and you are unregenerate still, and hate the truth, and prove you do by living in sin! Is not that deliberate? And you, young man, the other Sabbath-day you were so impressed that you felt as if you must yield to God that very day; you stood on those steps under those pillars, and you said to your soul — "To be or not to be, that is the questions, A companion met you, and asked you — asked you before the impression had died away, to go with him to the haunt of sin, and you stood and poised it in the balance thus — which shall it be? and you did deliberately choose your own damnation when you chose sin. Take care, lest God shall say, "Thou hast chosen thine own delusions, and I will give thee up unto them, and that for ever." I lay this charge with all the boldness of a Nathan at the door of some of you, that you have chosen deliberately to despise the truth of God.

But the pharisees, you will tell me, *scoffed at it*. Yes, and I lay that, too, at the door of some of you. There may be here the regular scoffer, who mocks at everything sacred; with him I have little to do this morning; he shall measure out his iniquities, and receive vengeance for them. But you who sit here Sabbath after Sabbath, and hear appeals which you reject; have Christ preached to you, and will not look at him; have his sufferings set forth as we try to paint him, dipping the pencil in his own blood, and yet he is nothing to you — do you not despise him? I do not know any contempt that is more sorrowful to the man that is smitten by it than the contempt of utter silence. Do we not say, "We pass you by in silent contempt?" Thus you treat my Lord! We have another expression; we say of some people that they tare beneath our contempt, and some of you have not enough esteem for my Master to treat him with open contempt. You think religion such a trifle, that it is not worth your sneering at it; you so despise it, that you think it is not worth your despising. Oh! is it so? is it so? Then are ye of your father the devil, and his works you do! May God bring you out of that black family, and translate you into the kingdom of his own dear Son.

IV. Having spoken feebly, but yet desiring the Master to make what I have said mighty, I close by asking these questions.

If these things be trite, why do you not believe them? Is there anything to hinder you? Is the doctrine unreasonable? You say the Bible is true. Now the Bible contains many things which are harder to believe than that Jesus Christ died for the ungodly. If you can believe that Jonah was in the whale's belly; if you can believe all the marvellous miracles of Scripture, you cannot say that the doctrine of the cross is unreasonable. To believe that Christ stood as a substitute, and that through his substitution God can pardon sin, is no tax upon faith. Nor can you tell me that the precept is intolerable. "His yoke is easy, and his burden is light." It is your sin that is intolerable, not the precept; he only bids you give up that which will ruin you; he only asks you to do that which will make you happy.

But there is one answer you will give. You will tell me you cannot believe. *How do you know you cannot?* "Well," says one, "I cannot believe without the Spirit of God." That is true, but are you sure the Spirit of God is not with you? Let me ask you whether you can now trust Jesus Christ. This is what I am about to experiment upon. Jesus Christ, who took the sin of men, declares that whosoever will trust him to save them shall be saved. Now Christ is God, he is a mighty Savior, he has suffered as man, therefore he has all that is necessary for the office; do you think you can now trust Christ to save you? I think I hear one say, "Yes, I could trust such a Savior as that." Then you can do it, you see, and inasmuch as you can do it the Spirit of God is with you. Do not expect to see the Spirit of God! He is a great mystery; you cannot know his operations except by their effects. Faith is the effect of his secret operation; if you can now believe in Christ, then doubtless the Spirit of God is with you, and I doubt not the Spirit of God is often with you when you know it not. If you can now believe, he is with you. Do I hear one say, "Well, I have often thought I could trust Christ, but I thought if I could do it then it was not the work of the Spirit of God, but the work of the creature." May, verily, beloved, there is no such thing as a simple trust in Christ that comes of the creature; it is always the work of the Spirit of God, and if you can trust in Christ you need not question about the Spirit; the Spirit of God must be in you, or else your trust, in Christ would never have been there. Only if now the thing seemeth right and reasonable to thee, cast thyself on Jesus and thou art saved.

I might multiply words, but I might not, perhaps, increase the force of the text, and therefore let me entreat you who stand to the Scriptures as being true and yet deny their veracity by remaining unregenerate — let me conjure you to decide one way or the other. Do be consistent. “How long halt ye between two opinions?” Say the Book is false, and then we shall know what you are and where you stand, and you yourselves will, probably, begin to be alarmed at your position. Say the Book is false, and then you will be openly numbered with the disciples and slaves of hell, and it may be your conscience will then begin to work. But, oh! if you are not prepared to take that side, if Baal be not god and you will not serve him, then if God be God — and that is the only other conclusion — *serve him*. I bring you to that awful place where the two roads meet — the right, the left — to heaven, to hell — to righteousness, to sin — to God, to fiends! There stand you. I am glad to have made you stand there. If it is a thing that needs consideration, consider. Put your hand to your brow now, and turn this matter over, and I do trust that through the word which we have spoken to you the Spirit of God will work on your conscience and on your heart, and you will say, “For God; for Christ; for holiness; for everlasting life.” But mark you, I had sooner you would say, “For the devil; for sin; for hell;” than say nothing, for if you say nothing you will go on and be as careless and as indifferent as ever; but if you make this last choice deliberately, it may be that then God will alarm your conscience and stir your soul, so that you may see your danger and may fly to Jesus.

May he bless you now, and guide your heart into the way of truth, and to his name be glory for ever. Amen.

GETHSEMANE.

NO. 493

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 8TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” — Luke 22:44.

FEW had fellowship with the sorrows of Gethsemane. The majority of the disciples were not there. They were not sufficiently advanced in grace to be admitted to behold the mysteries of “the agony.” Occupied with the Passover feast at their own houses, they represent the many who live upon the letter, but are mere babes and sucklings as to the spirit of the gospel. The walls of Gethsemane fitly typify that weakness in grace which effectually shuts in the deeper marvels of communion from the gaze of ordinary believers. To twelve, nay, to eleven only was the privilege given to enter Gethsemane and see this great sight. Out of the eleven, eight were left at some distance; they had fellowship, but not of that intimate sort to which the men greatly beloved are admitted. Only three highly favored ones, who had been with him on the mount of transfiguration, and had witnessed the life-giving miracle in the house of Jairus — only these three could approach the veil of his mysterious sorrow: within that veil even these must not intrude; a stone’s-cast distance must be left between. He must tread the wine-press alone, and of the people there must be none with him. Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, represent the few eminent, experienced, grace-taught saints, who may be written down as “Fathers;” these having done business on great waters, can in some degree, measure the huge Atlantic waves of their Redeemer’s passion; having been much alone with him, they can read his heart far better than those who merely see him amid the crowd. To some selected spirits it is given, for the good of others, and to strengthen them for some future, special, and tremendous

conflict, to enter the inner circle and hear the pleadings of the suffering High priest; they have fellowship with him in his sufferings, and are made conformable unto his death. Yet I say, even these, the elect out of the elect, these choice and peculiar favourites among the kings courtiers, even these cannot penetrate the secret places of the Savior's woe, so as to comprehend all his agonies. "Thine unknown sufferings" is the remarkable expression of the Greek liturgy; for there is an inner chamber in his grief, shut out from human knowledge and fellowship. Was it not here that Christ was more than ever an "Unspeakable gift" to us? Is not Watts right when he sings —

*"And all the unknown joys he gives,
Were bought with agonies unknown."*

Since it would not be possible for any believer, however experienced, to know for himself all that our Lord endured in the place of the olivepress, when he was crushed beneath the upper and the nether mill-stone of mental suffering and hellish malice, it is clearly far beyond the preacher's capacity to set it forth to you. Jesus himself must give you access to the wonders of Gethsemane: as for me, I can but invite you to enter the garden, bidding you put your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground. I am neither Peter, nor James, nor John, but one who would fain like them drink of the Master's cup, and be baptized with his baptism. I have hitherto advanced only so far as yonder band of eight, but there I have listened to the deep groanings of the man of sorrows. Some of you, my venerable friends, may have learned far more than I; but you will not refuse to hear again the roarings of the many waters which strove to quench the love of the Great Husband of our souls.

Several matters will require our brief consideration. Come Holy Spirit, breathe light into our thoughts, life into our words.

I. Come hither and behold the SAVIOR'S UNUTTERABLE WOE.

The emotions of that dolorous night are expressed by several words in Scripture. John describes him as saying four days before his passion, "Now is my soul troubled," as he marked the gathering clouds he hardly knew where to turn himself, and cried out "What shall I say?" Matthew writes of him, "he began to be sorrowful and very heavy." Upon the word *ademonein* translated "very heavy," Goodwin remarks that there was a distraction in the Savior's agony since the root of the word signifies

“separated from the people — men in distraction, being separated from mankind.” What a thought, my brethren, that our blessed Lord should be driven to the very verge of distraction by the intensity of his anguish.

Matthew represents the Savior himself as saying “My soul is *exceeding sorrowful*, even unto death.” Here the word *Perilupos* means encompassed, encircled, overwhelmed with grief. “He was plunged head and ears in sorrow and had no breathing-hole,” is the strong expression of Goodwin. Sin leaves no cranny for comfort to enter, and therefore the sin-bearer must be entirely immersed in woe. Clark records that he began to be *sore amazed*, and to be very heavy. In this case *thambeisthai*, with the prefix *ek*, shows extremity of amazement like that of Moses when he did exceedingly fear and quake. O blessed Savior, how can we bear to think of thee as a man astonished and alarmed! Yet was it even so when the terrors of God set themselves in array against thee. Luke uses the strong language of my text — “being in an agony.” These expressions, each of them worthy to be the theme of a discourse, are quite sufficient to show that the grief of the Savior was of the most extraordinary character; well justifying the prophetic exclamation “Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which was done unto me.” He stands before us peerless in misery. None are molested by the powers of evil as he was; as if the powers of hell had given commandment to their legions, “Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king himself.”

Should we profess to understand all the sources of our Lord’s agony, wisdom would rebuke us with the question “Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in search of the depths?” We cannot do more than look at the revealed causes of grief. It partly arose from the horror of his soul *when fully comprehending the meaning of sin*. Brethren, when you were first convinced of sin and saw it as a thing exceeding sinful, though your perception of its sinfulness was but faint compared with its real heinousness, yet horror took hold upon you. Do you remember those sleepless nights? Like the Psalmist, you said “My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” Some of us can remember when our souls chose strangling rather than life; when if the shadows of death could have covered us from the wrath of God we would have been too glad to sleep in the grave that we might not make our bed in hell. Our blessed Lord saw sin in its natural blackness. He had a most distinct perception of its treasonable assault upon his God, its

murderous hatred to himself, and its destructive influence upon mankind. Well might horror take hold upon him, for a sight of sin must be far more hideous than a sight of hell, which is but its offspring.

Another deep fountain of grief was found in the fact that Christ now *assumed more fully his official position with regard to sin*. He was now made *sin*. Hear the word! he, who knew no sin, was made *sin* for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. In that night the words of Isaiah were fulfilled — “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Now he stood as the sin-bearer, the substitute accepted by Divine justice to bear that we might never bear the whole of wrath divine. At that hour heaven looked on him as standing in the sinner’s stead, and treated as sinful man had richly deserved to be treated. Oh! dear friends, when the immaculate Lamb of God found himself in the place of the guilty, when he could not repudiate that place because he had voluntarily accepted it in order to save his chosen, what must his soul have felt, how must his perfect nature have been shocked at such close association with iniquity?

We believe that at this time, *our Lord had a very clear view of all the shame and suffering of his crucifixion*. The agony was but one of the first drops of the tremendous shower which discharged itself upon his head. He foresaw the speedy coming of the traitor-disciple, the seizure by the officers, the mock-trials before the Sanhedrim, and Pilate, and Herod, the scourging and buffeting, the crown of thorns, the shame, the spitting. All these rose up before his mind, and, as it is a general law of our nature that the foresight of trial is more grievous than trial itself, we can conceive how it was that he who answered not a word when in the midst of the conflict, could not restrain himself from strong crying and tears in the prospect of it. Beloved friends, if you can revive before your mind’s eye the terrible incidents of his death the hounding through the streets of Jerusalem, the nailing to the cross, the fever, the thirst, and, above all, forsaking of his God, you cannot marvel that he began to be very heavy, and was sore amazed.

But possibly a yet more fruitful tree of bitterness was this — *that now his Father began to withdraw his presence from him*. The shadow of that great eclipse began to fall upon his spirit when he knelt in that cold midnight amidst the olives of Gethsemane. The sensible comforts which had cheered his spirit were taken away; that blessed application of promises which Christ Jesus needed as a man, was removed, all that we

understand by the term “consolations of God” were hidden from his eyes. He was left single-handed in his weakness to contend for the deliverance of man. The Lord stood by as if he were an indifferent spectator, or rather, as if he were an adversary, he wounded him “with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one.”

But in our judgment the fiercest heat of the Savior’s suffering in the garden lay in *the temptations of Satan*. That hour above any time in his life, even beyond the forty days’ conflict in the wilderness, was *the time of his temptation*. “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” Now could he emphatically say, “The prince of this world cometh.” This was his last hand-to-hand fight with all the hosts of hell, and here must he sweat great drops of blood before the victory can be achieved.

We have glanced at the fountains of the great deep which were broken up when the floods of grief deluged the Redeemer’s soul. Brethren, this one lesson ere we pass from the contemplation. “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Let us reflect that no suffering can be unknown to him.

We do but run with footmen — he had to contend with horsemen; we do but wade up to our ankles in shallow streams of sorrow — he had to buffet with the swellings of Jordan. He will never fail to succor his people when tempted; even as it was said of old, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.”

II. Turn we next to contemplate THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.

At the outset of his career, the serpent began to nibble at the heel of the promised deliverer; and now as the time approached when the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, that old dragon made a desperate attempt upon his great destroyer. It is not possible for us to lift the veil where revelation has permitted it to fall, but we can form some faint idea of the suggestions with which Satan tempted our Lord. Let us, however, remark by way of caution, before we attempt to paint this picture, that whatever Satan may have suggested to our Lord, his perfect nature did not in any degree whatever submit to it so as to sin. The temptations were, doubtless, of the very foulest character, but they left no speck or flaw upon him, who remained still the fairest among ten thousand. The prince of this world came, but he had nothing in Christ. He struck the sparks, but they

did not fall, as in our case, upon dry tinder; they fell as into the sea, and were quenched at once. He hurled the fiery arrows, but they could not even scar the flesh of Christ; they smote upon the buckler of his perfectly righteous nature, and they fell off with their points broken, to the discomfiture of the adversary.

But what, think you, were these temptations? It strikes me, from some hints given, that they were somewhat as follows — there was, first, *a temptation to leave the work unfinished*; we may gather this from the prayer — “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” “Son of God,” the tempter said, “is it so? Art thou really called to bear the sin of man? Hath God said, ‘I have laid help upon one that is mighty,’ and art thou he, the chosen of God, to bear all this load? Look at thy weakness! Thou sweatest, even now, great drops of blood; surely thou art not he whom the Father hath ordained to be mighty to save; or if thou be, what wilt thou win by it? What will it avail thee? Thou hast glory enough already. See what miscreants they are for whom thou art to offer up thyself a sacrifice. Thy best friends are asleep about thee when most thou needest their comfort; thy treasurer, Judas, is hastening to betray thee for the price of a common slave. The world for which thou sacrificest thyself will cast out thy name as evil, and thy Church, for which thou dost pay the ransom-price, what is it worth? A company of mortals! Thy divinity could create the like any moment it pleaseth thee; why needest thou, then, pour out thy soul unto death?” Such arguments would Satan use; the hellish craft of one who had then been thousands of years tempting men, would know how to invent all manner of mischief. He would pour the hottest coals of hell upon the Savior. It was in struggling with this temptation, among others, that, being in an agony, our Savior prayed more earnestly.

Scripture implies that our Lord was assailed by *the fear that his strength would not be sufficient*. He was heard in that he feared. How, then, was he heard? An angel was sent unto him strengthening him. His fear, then, was probably produced by a sense of weakness. I imagine that the foul fiend would whisper in his ear — “Thou! thou endure to be smitten of God and abhorred of men! Reproach hath broken thy heart already; how wilt thou bear to be publicly put to shame and driven without the city as an unclean thing? How wilt thou bear to see thy weeping kinsfolk and thy broken-hearted mother standing at the foot of thy cross? Thy tender and sensitive spirit will quail under it. As for thy body, it is already emaciated; thy long fastings have brought thee very low; thou wilt become a prey to death long

ere thy work is done. Thou wilt surely fail. God hath forsaken thee. Now will they persecute and take thee; they will give up thy soul to the lion, and thy darling to the power of the dog." Then would he picture all the sufferings of crucifixion, and say, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the day when the Lord shall deal with thee?" The temptation of Satan was not directed against the Godhead, but the manhood of Christ, and therefore the fiend would probably dwell upon the feebleness of man. "Didst thou not say thyself, 'I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the despised of the people?' How wilt thou bear it when the wrath-clouds of God gather about thee? The tempest will surely shipwreck all thy hopes. It cannot be; thou canst not drink of this cup, nor be baptized with this baptism." In this manner, we think, was our Master tried. But see he yields not to it. Being in an agony, which word means in a wrest ring, he struggles with the tempter like Jacob with the angel. "Nay," saith he, "I will not be subdued by taunts of my weakness; I am strong in the strength of my Godhead, I will overcome thee yet." Yet was the temptation so awful, that, in order to master it, his mental depression caused him to "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Possibly, also, the temptation may have arisen from a suggestion *that he was utterly forsaken*. I do not know — there may be sterner trials than this, but surely this is *one* of the worst, to be utterly forsaken. "See," said Satan, as he hissed it out between his teeth — "see, thou hast a friend nowhere! Look up to heaven, thy Father hath shut up the bowels of his compassion against thee. Not an angel in thy Father's courts will stretch out his hand to help thee. Look thou yonder, not one of those spirits who honored thy birth will interfere to protect thy life. All heaven is false to thee; thou art left alone. And as for earth, do not all men thirst for thy blood? Will not the Jew be gratified to see thy flesh torn with nails, and will not the Roman gloat himself when thou, the King of the Jews, art fastened to the cross? Thou hast no friend among the nations; the high and mighty scoff at thee, and the poor thrust out their tongues in derision. Thou hadst not where to lay thy head when thou wast in thy best estate; thou hast no place now where shelter will be given thee. See the companions with whom thou hast taken sweet counsel, what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there thy brother James, see there thy loved disciple John, and thy bold Apostle Peter — they sleep, they sleep; and yonder eight, how the cowards sleep when thou art in thy sufferings! And where are the four hundred others?

They have forgotten thee; they will be at their farms and their merchandize by morning. Lo! thou hast no friend left in heaven or earth. All hell is against thee. I have stirred up mine infernal den. I have sent my missives throughout all regions summoning every prince of darkness to set upon thee this night, and we will spare no arrows, we will use all our infernal might to overwhelm thee; and what wilt thou do, thou solitary one?" It may be, this was the temptation; I think it was, because the appearance of an angel unto him strengthening him removed that fear. He was heard in that he feared; he was no more alone, but heaven was with him. It may be that this is the reason of his coming three times to his disciples — as Hart puts it —

*“Backwards and forwards thrice he ran
As if he sought some help from man.”*

He would see for himself whether it was really true that all men had forsaken him; he found them all asleep; but perhaps he gained some faint comfort from the thought that they were sleeping, not from treachery, but from sorrow, the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak.

We think Satan also assaulted our Lord with a bitter taunt indeed. You know in what guise the tempter can dress it, and how bitterly sarcastic he can make the insinuation — *“Ah! thou wilt not be able to achieve the redemption of thy people. Thy grand benevolence will prove a mockery, and thy beloved ones will perish. Thou shalt not prevail to save them from my grasp. Thy scattered sheep shall surely be my prey. Son of David, I am a match for thee; thou canst not deliver out of my hand. Many of thy chosen have entered heaven on the strength of thine atonement, but I will drag them thence, and quench the stars of glory; I will thin the courts of heaven of the choristers of God, for thou wilt not fulfill thy suretyship; thou canst not do it. Thou art not able to bring up all this great people; they will perish yet. See, are not the sheep scattered now that the Shepherd is smitten? They will all forget thee. Thou wilt never see of the travail of thy soul. Thy desired end will never be reached. Thou wilt be for ever the man that began to build but was not able to finish.”* Perhaps this is more truly the reason why Christ went three times to look at his disciples. You have seen a mother; she is very faint, weary with a heavy sickness, but she labors under a sore dread that her child will die. She has started from her couch, upon which disease had thrown her, to snatch a moment’s rest. She gazes anxiously upon her child. She marks the faintest sign of recovery.

But she is sore sick herself, and cannot remain more than an instant from her own bed. She cannot sleep, she tosses painfully, for her thoughts wander; she rises to gaze again — “How art thou, my child, how art thou? Are those palpitations of thy heart less violent? Is thy pulse more gentle? “But, alas! she is faint, and she must go to her bed again, yet she can get no rest. She will return again and again to watch the loved one. So, methinks, Christ looked upon Peter, and James, and John, as much as to say, “No, they are not all lost yet; there are three left,” and, looking upon them as the type of all the Church, he seemed to say — “No, no; I will overcome; I will get the mastery; I will struggle even unto blood; I will pay the ransom- price, and deliver my darlings from their foe.”

Now these, methinks, were his temptations. If you can form a fuller idea of what they were than this, then right happy shall I be. With this one lesson I leave the point — “*Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*” This is Christ’s own expression; his own deduction from his trial. You have all read, dear friends, John Bunyan’s picture of Christian fighting, with Apollyon. That master-painter has sketched it to the very life. He says, though “this sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent, I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then indeed, he did smile and look upward! But it was the dreadfulest sight I ever saw.” That is the meaning of that prayer, “Lead us not into temptation.” Oh you that go recklessly where you are tempted, you that pray for afflictions — and I have known some silly enough to do that — you that put yourselves where you tempt the devil to tempt you, take heed from the Master’s own example. He sweats great drops of blood when he is tempted. Oh! pray God to spare you such trial. Pray this morning and every day, “Lead me not into temptation.”

III. Behold, dear brethren, THE BLOODY SWEAT.

We read, that “he sweat as it were great drops of blood.” Hence a few writers have supposed that the sweat was not actually blood, but had the appearance of it. That interpretation, however, has been rejected by most commentators, from Augustine downward, and it is generally held that the words “as it were” do not only set forth *likeness* to blood, but signify that it was actually and literally blood. We find the same idiom used in the text — “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.” Now, clearly, this does not mean that Christ was like the only-begotten of

the Father, since he is really so. So that generally this expression of Holy Scripture sets forth, not a mere likeness to a thing, but the very thing itself. We believe, then, that Christ did really sweat blood. This phenomenon, though somewhat unusual, has been witnessed in other persons. There are several cases on record, some in the old medicine books of Galen, and others of more recent date, of persons who after long weakness, under fear of death have sweat blood. But this case is altogether one by itself for several reasons. If you will notice, he not only sweat blood, but it was in great drops; the blood coagulated, and formed large masses. I cannot better express what is meant than by the word “gouts” — big, heavy drops. This has not been seen in any case. Some slight effusions of blood have been known in cases of persons who were previously enfeebled, but great drops never. When it is said “falling to the ground” — it shows their copiousness, so that they not only stood upon the surface and were sucked up by his garments till he became like the red heifer which was slaughtered on that very spot, but the drops fell to the ground. Here he stands unrivalled. He was a man in good health, only about thirty years of age, and was laboring under no fear of death; but the mental pressure arising from his struggle with temptation, and the straining of all his strength, in order to baffle the temptation of Satan, so forced his frame to an unnatural excitement, that his pores sent forth great drops of blood which fell down to the ground. This proves how tremendous must have been the weight of sin when it was able so to crush the Savior that he distilled drops of blood! This proves too, my brethren, the mighty power of his love. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphire-tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the cross; but see, it giveth forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound. This sets forth the voluntariness of Christ’s sufferings, since without a lance the blood flowed freely. No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife; it flows spontaneously. No need for the rulers to cry “Spring up, O well;” of itself it flows in crimson torrents. Dearly beloved friends, if men suffer some frightful pain of mind — I am not acquainted with the medical matter — apparently the blood rushes to the heart. The cheeks are pale; a fainting fit comes on; the blood has gone inward, as if to nourish the inner man while passing through its trial. But see our Savior in his agony; he is so utterly oblivious of self, that instead of his agony driving his blood to the heart to nourish himself, it drives it outward to bedew the earth. The agony of

Christ, inasmuch as it pours him out upon the ground, pictures the fullness of the offering which he made for men.

Do you not perceive, my brethren, how intense must have been the wrestling through which he passed, and will you not hear its voice *to you?*

— “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” It has been the lot of some of us to have sore temptations — else we did not know how to teach others — so sore that in wrestling against them the cold, clammy sweat has stood upon our brow. The place will never be forgotten by me — a lonely spot; where, musing upon my God, an awful rush of blasphemy went over my soul, till I would have preferred death to the trial; and I fell on my knees there and then, for the agony was awful, while my hand was at my mouth to keep the blasphemies from being spoken. Once let Satan be permitted really to try you with a temptation to blasphemy, and you will never forget it, though you live till your hairs are blanched; or let him attack you with some lust, and though you hate and loathe the very thought of it, and would lose your right arm sooner than indulge in it, yet it will come, and hunt, and persecute, and torment you. Wrestle against it even unto sweat, my brethren, yea, even unto blood. None of you should say, “I could not help it; I was tempted.” Resist till you sweat blood rather than sin. Do not say, “I was so pressed with it; and it so suited my natural temperament, that I could not help falling into it.” Look at the great Apostle and High Priest of your profession, and sweat even to blood rather than yield to the great tempter of your souls. Pray that ye enter not into temptation, so that when ye enter into it ye may with confidence say, “Lord, I did not seek this, therefore help me through with it, for thy name’s sake.”

IV. I want you, in the fourth place, to notice THE SAVIOR’S PRAYER.

Dear friends, when we are tempted and desire to overcome, the best weapon is prayer. When you cannot use the sword and the shield, take to yourself the famous weapon of All-prayer. So your Savior did. Let us notice his prayer. *It was lonely prayer.* He withdrew even from his three best friends about a stone’s cast. Believer, especially in temptation, be much in solitary prayer. As private prayer is the key to open heaven, so is it the key to shut the gates of hell. As it is a shield to prevent, so is it the sword with which to fight against temptation. Family-prayer, social prayer, prayer in the Church, will not suffice, these are very precious, but the best

beaten spice will smoke in your censer in your private devotions, where no ear hears but God. Betake yourselves to solitude if you would overcome.

Mark, too, it was *humble prayer*. Luke says he knelt, but another evangelist says he fell on his face. What! does the King fall on his face? Where, then, must be thy place, thou humble servant of the great Master? Doth the Prince fall flat to the ground? Where, then, wilt thou lie? What dust and ashes shall cover thy head? What sackcloth shall gird thy loins? Humility gives us good foot-hold in prayer. There is no hope of any real prevalence with God, who casteth down the proud, unless we abase ourselves that he may exalt us in due time.

Further, it was *filial prayer*. Matthew describes him as saying "O my Father," and Mark puts it, "Abba, Father." You will find this always a stronghold in the day of trial to plead your adoption. Hence that prayer, in which it is written, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," begins with "Our Father which art in heaven." Plead as a child. You have no rights as a subject; you have forfeited them by your treason, but nothing can forfeit a child's right to a father's protection. Be not then ashamed to say, "My Father, hear my cry."

Again, observe that it was *persevering prayer*. He prayed three times, using the same words. Be not content until you prevail. Be as the importunate widow, whose continual coming earned what her first supplication could not win. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Further, see how it glowed to a red-hot heat — *it was earnest prayer*. "He prayed more earnestly." What groans were those which were uttered by Christ! What tears, which welled up from the deep fountains of his nature! Make earnest supplication if you would prevail against the adversary.

And last, *it was the prayer of resignation*. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Yield, and God yields. Let it be as God wills, and God will will it that it shall be for the best. Be thou perfectly content to leave the result of thy prayer in his hands, who knows when to give, and how to give, and what to give, and what to withhold. So pleading, earnestly, importunately, yet mingling with it humility and resignation, thou shalt yet prevail.

Dear friends, we must conclude, turn to the last point with this as a practical lesson — "*Rise and pray.*" When the disciples were lying down

they slept; sitting was the posture that was congenial to sleep. Rise; shake yourselves; stand up in the name of God; rise and pray. And if you are in temptation, be you more than ever you were in your life before, instant, passionate, importunate with God that he would deliver you in the day of your conflict.

V. As time has failed us we close with the last point, which is, THE SAVIOR'S PREVALENCE.

The cloud has passed away. Christ has knelt, and the prayer is over. "But," says one, "did Christ prevail in prayer?" Beloved, could we have any hope that he would prevail in heaven if he had not prevailed on earth? Should we not have had a suspicion that if his strong crying and tears had not been heard *then*, he would fail *now*? His prayers did speed, and therefore he is a good intercessor for us. "How was he heard?" The answer shall be given very briefly indeed. He was heard, I think, in three respects. The first gracious answer that was given him was, *that his mind was suddenly rendered calm*. What a difference there is between "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," — his hurrying too and fro, his repetition of the prayer three times, the singular agitation that was upon him — what a contrast between all these and his going forth to meet the traitor with "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Like a troubled sea before, and now as calm as when he himself said, "Peace be still," and the waves were quiet. You cannot know a profounder peace than that which reigned in the Savior when before Pilate he answered him not a word. He is calm to the last, as calm as though it were his day of triumph rather than his day of trouble.

Now I think this was vouchsafed to him in answer to his prayer. He had sufferings perhaps more intense, but his mind was now quieted so as to meet them with greater deliberation. Like some men, who when they first hear the firing of the shots in a battle are all trepidation, but as the fight grows hotter and they are in greater danger, they are cool and collected; they are wounded, they are bleeding, they are dying; yet are they quiet as a summer's eve; the first young flush of trouble is gone, and they can meet the foe with peace — so the Father heard the Savior's cry, and breathed such a profound peace into his soul, that it was like a river, and his righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Next, we believe that he was answered *by God strengthening him through an angel*. How that was done we do not know. Probably it was by what the angel said, and equally likely is it that it was by what he did. The angel

may have whispered the promises; pictured before his mind's eye the glory of his success; sketched his resurrection; pourtrayed the scene when his angels would bring his chariots from on high to bear him to his throne; revived before him the recollection of the time of his advent, the prospect when he should reign from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth; and so have made him strong. Or, perhaps, by some unknown method God sent such power to our Christ, who had been like Samson with his locks shorn, that he suddenly received all the might and majestic energy that were needed for the terrific struggle. Then he walked out of the garden no more a worm and no man, but made strong with an invisible might that made him a match for all the armies that were round about him. A troop had overcome him, like Gad of old, but he overcame at last. Now he can dash through a troop; now he can leap over a wall. God has sent by his angel force from on high, and made the man Christ strong for battle and for victory.

And I think we may conclude with saying, that God heard him in granting him now, not simply strength, *but a real victory over Satan*. I do not know whether what Adam Clarke supposes is correct, that in the garden Christ did pay more of the price than he did even on the cross; but I am quite convinced that they are very foolish who get to such refinement that they think the atonement was made on the cross, and nowhere else at all. We believe that it was made in the garden as well as on the cross; and it strikes me that in the garden one part of Christ's work was finished, wholly finished, and that was his conflict with Satan. I conceive that Christ had now rather to bear the absence of his Father's presence and the revilings of the people and the sons of men, than the temptations of the devil. I do think that these were over when he rose from his knees in prayer, when he lifted himself from the ground where he marked his visage in the clay in drops of blood. The temptation of Satan was then over, and he might have said concerning that part of the work — "It is finished; broken is the dragon's head; I have overcome him." Perhaps in those few hours that Christ spent in the garden the whole energy of the agents of iniquity was concentrated and dissipated. Perhaps in that one conflict all that craft could invent, all that malice could devise, all that infernal practice could suggest, was tried on Christ, the devil having his chain loosened for that purpose, having Christ given up to him, as Job was, that he might touch him in his bones and in his flesh, yea, touch him in his heart and his soul, and vex him in his spirit. It may be that every devil in hell and every fiend of the pit was

summoned, each to vent his own spite and to pour their united energy and malice upon the head of Christ. And there he stood, and he could have said as he stood up to meet the next adversary — a devil in the form of man — Judas — “I come this day from Bozrah, with garments dyed red from Edom; I have trampled on my enemies, and overcome them once for all; now go I to bear man’s sin and my Father’s wrath, and to finish the work which he has given me to do.” If this be so, Christ was then heard in that he feared; he feared the temptation of Satan, and he was delivered from it; he feared his own weakness, and he was strengthened; he feared his own trepidation of mind, and he was made calm.

What shall we say, then, in conclusion, but this lesson. Does it not say “Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall have.” Then if your temptations reach the most tremendous height and force, still lay hold of God in prayer and you shall prevail. Convinced sinner! that is a comfort for you. Troubled saint! that is a joy for you. To one and all of us is this lesson of this morning — “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.” If in temptation let us ask that Christ may pray for us that our faith fail not, and when we have passed through the trouble let us try to strengthen our brethren, even as Christ has strengthened us this day.”

THE BETRAYAL.

NO. 494

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY
15TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” — Luke 22:47, 48.

WHEN Satan had been entirely worsted in his conflict with Christ in the garden, the man-devil Judas came upon the scene. As the Parthian in his flight turns round to shoot the fatal arrow, so the arch-enemy aimed another shaft at the Redeemer, by employing the traitor into whom he had entered. Judas became the devil's deputy, and a most trusty and serviceable tool he was. The Evil One had taken entire possession of the apostate's heart, and, like the swine possessed of devils, he ran violently downwards towards destruction. Well had infernal malice selected the Savior's trusted friend to be his treacherous betrayer, for thus he stabbed at the very center of his broken and bleeding heart. But, beloved, as in all things God is wiser than Satan, and the Lord of goodness outwitteth the Prince of Evil, so, in this dastardly betrayal of Christ, prophecy was fulfilled, and Christ was the more surely declared to be the promised Messiah. Was not Joseph a type? and, lo! like that envied youth, Jesus was sold by his own brethren. Was he not to be another Samson, by whose strength the gates of hell should be torn from their posts? lo! like Samson, he is bound by his countrymen, and delivered to the adversary. Know ye not that he was the anti-type of David? and was not David deserted by Ahithophel, his own familiar friend and counsellor? Nay, brethren, do not the words of the Psalmist receive a literal fulfillment in our Master's betrayal? What prophecy can be more exactly true than the language of the forty-first and fifty-fifth Psalms? In

the first we read, “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me;” and in the fifty-fifth the Psalmist is yet more clear; “For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.” Even an obscure passage in one of the lesser prophets, must have a literal fulfillment, and for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a base slave, must the Savior be betrayed by his choice friend. Ah! thou foul fiend, thou shalt find at the last that thy wisdom is but intensified folly; as for the deep plots and plans of thy craft, the Lord shall laugh them to scorn; after all, thou art but the unconscious drudge of him whom thou abhorrest; in all the black work thou doest so greedily, thou art no better than a mean scullion in the royal kitchen of the King of kings.

Without further preface, let us advance to the subject of our Lord’s betrayal. First, concentrate your thoughts upon Jesus, *the betrayed one*; and when ye have lingered awhile there, solemnly gaze into the villanous countenance of *Judas, the betrayer* — he may prove a beacon to warn us against the sin which gendereth apostacy.

I. LET US TARRY AWHILE, AND SEE OUR LORD UNGRATEFULLY AND DASTARDLY BETRAYED.

It is appointed that he must die, but how shall he fall into the hands of his adversaries? Shall they capture him in conflict? It must not be, lest he appear an unwilling victim. Shall he flee before his foes until he can hide no longer? It is not meet that a sacrifice should be hunted to death. Shall he offer himself to the foe? That were to excuse his murderers, or be a party to their crime. Shall he be taken accidentally or unawares? That would withdraw from his cup the necessary bitterness which made it wormwood mingled with gall. No; he must be betrayed by his friend, that he may bear the utmost depths of suffering, and that in every separate circumstance there may be a well of grief. One reason for the appointment of the betrayal, lay in the fact *that it was ordained that man’s sin should reach its culminating point in his death*. God, the great owner of the vineyard, had

sent many servants, and the husbandmen had stoned one and cast out another; last of all, he said, "I will send my Son; surely they will reverence my Son." When they slew the heir to win the inheritance, their rebellion had reached its height. The murder of our blessed Lord was the extreme of human guilt; it developed the deadly hatred against God which lurks in the heart of man. When man became a deicide, sin had reached its fullness; and in the black deed of the man by whom the Lord was betrayed, that fullness was all displayed. If it had not been for a Judas, we had not known how black, how foul, human nature may become. I scorn the men who try to apologize for the treachery of this devil in human form, this son of perdition, this foul apostate. I should think myself a villain if I tried to screen him, and I shudder for the men who dare extenuate his crimes. My brethren, we should feel a deep detestation of this master of infamy; he has gone to his own place, and the anathema of David, part of which was quoted by Peter, has come upon him, "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office." Surely, as the devil was allowed unusually to torment the bodies of men, even so was he let loose to get possession of Judas as he has seldom gained possession of any other man, that we might see how foul, how desperately evil is the human heart. Beyond a doubt, however, the main reason for this was *that Christ might offer a perfect atonement for sin*. We may usually read the sin in the punishment. Man betrayed his God. Man had the custody of the royal garden, and should have kept its green avenues sacred for communion with his God; but he betrayed the trust; the sentinel was false; he admitted evil into his own heart, and so into the paradise of God. He was false to the good name of the Creator, tolerating the insinuation which he should have repelled with scorn. Therefore must Jesus find man a traitor to him. There must be the counterpart of the sin in the suffering which he endured. You and I have often betrayed Christ. We have, when tempted, chosen the evil and forsaken the good; we have taken the bribes of hell, and have not followed closely with Jesus. It seemed most fitting, then, that he who bore the chastisement of sin should be reminded of its ingratitude and treachery by the things which he suffered. Besides, brethren, that *cup must be bitter to the last degree which is to be the equivalent for the wrath of God*. There must be nothing consolatory in it; pains must be taken to pour into it all that even Divine wisdom can invent of awful and unheard of woe, and this one point — "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me," was absolutely necessary to intensify the bitterness. Moreover, we

feel persuaded that by thus suffering at the hand of a traitor *the Lord became a faithful High Priest*, able to sympathize with us when we fall under the like affliction. Since slander and ingratitude are common calamities, we can come to Jesus with full assurance of faith; he knows these sore temptations, for he has felt them in their very worst degree. We may cast every care, and every sorrow upon him, for he careth for us, having suffered with us. Thus, then, in our Lord's betrayal, Scripture was fulfilled, sin was developed, atonement was completed, and the great all-suffering High Priest became able to sympathize with us in every point.

Now let us *look at the treason itself*. You perceive how black it was. Judas was *Christ's servant*, what if I call him his confidential servant. He was a partaker in apostolic ministry and the honor of miraculous gifts. He had been most kindly and indulgently treated. He was a sharer in all the goods of his Master, in fact he fared far better than his Lord, for the Man of Sorrows always took the lion's share of all the pains of poverty and the reproach of slander. He had food and raiment given him out of the common stock, and the Master seems to have indulged him very greatly.

The old tradition is, that next to the apostle Peter he was the one with whom the Savior most commonly associated. We think there must be a mistake there, for surely John was the Savior's greatest friend; but Judas, as a servant had been treated with the utmost confidence. Ye know, brethren, how sore is that blow which comes from a servant in whom we have put unlimited trust. But Judas was more than this: *he was a friend, a trusted friend*. That little bag into which generous women cast their small contributions had been put into his hands, and very wisely too, for he had the financial vein. His main virtue was economy, a very needful quality in a treasurer. As exercising a prudent foresight for the little company, and watching the expenses carefully, he was, as far as men could judge, the right man in the right place. He had been thoroughly trusted. I read not that there was any annual audit of his accounts; I do not discover that the Master took him to task as to the expenditure of his privy purse.

Everything was given to him, and he gave, at the Master's direction, to the poor, but no account was asked. This is vile indeed, to be chosen to such a position, to be installed purse-bearer to the Ring of kings, Chancellor of God's exchequer, and then to turn aside and sell the Savior; this is treason in its uttermost degree. Remember that the world looked upon Judas *as colleague* and partner with our Lord. To a great extent the name of Judas was associated with that of Christ. When Peter, James, or John had done

anything amiss, reproachful tongues threw it all on their Master. The twelve were part and parcel of Jesus of Nazareth. One old commentator says of Judas — “He was Christ’s alter ego” — to the people at large there was an indentification of each apostle with the leader of the band. And oh! when such associations have been established, and then there is treachery, it is as though our arm should commit treason against our head, or as if our foot should desert the body. This was a stab indeed! Perhaps, dear brethren, our Lord saw in the person of Judas *a representative man*, the portraiture of the many thousands who in after ages imitated his crime. Did Jesus see in Iscariot all the Judases who betray truth, virtue, and the cross? Did he perceive the multitudes of whom we may say, that they were, spiritually, in the loins of Judas? Hymeneus, Alexander, Hermogenes, Philetus, Demas, and others of that tribe, were all before him as he saw the man, his equal, his acquaintance, bartering him away for thirty pieces of silver.

Dear friends, the position of Judas must have tended greatly to aggravate his treason. Even the heathens have taught us that ingratitude is the worst of vices. When Caesar was stabbed by his friend Brutus, the world’s poet writes —

*“This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitor’s arms,
Quite vanquish’d him; then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey’s statua,
— great Caesar fell.”*

Many ancient stories, both Greek and Roman, we might quote to show the abhorrence which the heathens entertain towards ingratitude and treachery. Certain, also, of their own poets, such, for instance, as Sophocles, have poured out burning words upon deceitful friends; but we have no time to prove what you will all admit, that nothing can be more cruel, nothing more full of anguish, than to be sold to destruction by one’s bosom friend. The closer the foeman comes the deeper will be the stab he gives; if we admit him to our heart, and give him our closest intimacy, then can he wound us in the most vital part.

Let us notice, dear friends, while we look at the breaking heart of our agonizing Savior, *the manner in which he met this affliction*. He had been

much in prayer; prayer had overcome his dreadful agitation; he was very *calm*; and we need to be very calm when we are forsaken by a friend. Observe his gentleness. The first word he spake to Judas, when the traitor had polluted his cheek with a kiss, was this — “FRIEND!” FRIEND!! Note that! Not “Thou hateful miscreant,” but “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” not “Wretch, wherefore dost thou dare to stain my cheek with thy foul and lying lips?” no, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” Ah! if there had been anything good left in Judas, this would have brought it out. If he had not been an unmitigated, incorrigible, thrice-dyed traitor, his avarice must have lost its power at that instant, and he would have cried — “My master! I came to betray thee, but that generous word has won my soul; here, if thou must be bound, I will be bound with thee; I make a full confession of my infamy!” Our Lord added these words — there is reproof in them, but notice how kind they are still, how much too good for such a caitiff — “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” I can conceive that the tears gushed from his eyes, and that his voice faltered, when he thus addressed his own familiar friend and acquaintance — “Betrayest *thou*,” my Judas, my treasurer, “betrayest thou *the Son of Man*,” thy suffering, sorrowing friend, whom thou hast seen naked and poor, and without a place whereon to lay his head. Betrayest thou *the Son of Man* — and dost thou prostitute the fondest of all endearing signs — *a kiss* — that which should be a symbol of loyalty to the King, shall it be the badge of thy treachery — that which was reserved for affection as her best symbol — dost thou make it the instrument of my destruction? Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” Oh! if he had not been given up to hardness of heart, if the Holy Ghost had not utterly left him, surely this son of perdition would have fallen prostrate yet again, and weeping out his very soul, would have cried — “No, I cannot betray thee, thou suffering Son of man; forgive, forgive; spare thyself; escape from this bloodthirsty crew, and pardon thy treacherous disciple!” But no, no word of compunction, while the silver is at stake! Afterwards came the sorrow that worketh death, which drove him, like Ahithophel, his prototype, to court the gallows to escape remorse. This, also, must have aggravated the woe of our beloved Lord, when he saw the final impenitence of the traitor, and read the tearful doom of that man of whom he had once said, it would be better for him that he had never been born.

Beloved, I would have you fix your eyes on your Lord in your quiet meditations as being thus despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows

and acquainted with grief; and gird up the loins of your minds, counting it no strange thing if this fiery trial should come upon you, but being determined that though your Lord should be betrayed by his most eminent disciples, yet, through his grace you will cling to him in shame and in suffering, and will follow him, if needs be, even unto death. God give us grace to see the vision of his nailed hands and feet, and remembering that all this came from the treachery of a friend, let us be very jealous of ourselves, lest we crucify the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame by betraying him in our conduct, or in our words, or in our thoughts.

II. Grant me your attention while we make an estimate of the man by whom the Son of man was betrayed — JUDAS THE BETRAYER.

I would call your attention, dear friends, *to his position and public character*. Judas was *a preacher*; nay, he was a foremost preacher, “he obtained part of this ministry,” said the Apostle Peter. He was not simply one of the seventy; he had been selected by the Lord himself as one of the twelve, an honorable member of the college of the apostles. Doubtless he had preached the gospel so that many had been gladdened by his voice, and miraculous powers had been vouchsafed to him, so that at his word the sick had been healed, deaf ears had been opened; and the blind had been made to see; nay, there is no doubt that he who could not keep the devil out of himself, had cast devils out of others. Yet how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! He that was as a prophet in the midst of the people, and spake with the tongue of the learned, whose word and wonders proved that he had been with Jesus and had learned of him — he betrays his Master. Understand, my brethren, that no gifts can ensure grace, and that no position of honor or usefulness in the Church will necessarily prove our being true to our Lord and Master. Doubtless there are bishops in hell, and crowds of those who once occupied the pulpit are now condemned for ever to bewail their hypocrisy. You that are Church-officers, do not conclude that because you enjoy the confidence of the Church, that therefore of an absolute certainty the grace of God is in you. Perhaps it is the most dangerous of all positions for a man to become well known and much respected by the religious world, and yet to be rotten at the core. To be where others can observe our faults is a healthy thing though painful; but to live with beloved friends who would not believe it possible for us to do wrong, and who if they saw us err would make excuses for us — this is to be where it is next to impossible for us ever to

be aroused if our hearts be not right with God. To have a fair reputation and a false heart is to stand upon the brink of hell.

Judas *took a very high degree officially*. He had the distinguished honor of being entrusted with the Master's financial concerns, and this, after all, was no small degree to which to attain. The Lord, who knows how to use all sorts of gifts, perceived what gift the man had. He knew that Peter's unthinking impetuosity would soon empty the bag and leave the company in great straits, and if he had entrusted it to John, his loving spirit might have been cajoled into unwise benevolence towards beggars of unctious tongue; he might even have spent the little moneys in buying alabaster boxes whose precious ointments should anoint the Master's head. He gave the bag to Judas, and it was discreetly, prudently, and properly used; there is no doubt he was the most judicious person, and fitted to occupy the post. But oh! dear friends, if the Master shall choose any of us who are ministers or Church-officers, and give us a very distinguished position; if our place in the ranks shall be that of commanding officers, so that even our brother ministers look up with esteem, and our fellow-elders or deacons regard us as being fathers in Israel — oh! if we turn, if we prove false, how damnable shall be our end at the last! What a blow shall we give to the heart of the Church, and what derision will be made in hell!

You will observe that the character of Judas *was openly an admirable one*. I find not that he committed himself in any way. Not the slightest speck defiled his moral character so far as others could perceive. He was no boaster, like Peter; he was free enough from the rashness which cries, "Though all men should forsake thee yet will not I." He asks no place on the right hand of the throne, his ambition is of another sort. He does not ask idle questions. The Judas who asks questions is "not Iscariot." Thomas and Philip are often prying into deep matters, but not Judas. He receives truth as it is taught him, and when others are offended and walk no more with Jesus, he faithfully adheres to him, having golden reasons for so doing. He does not indulge in the lusts of the flesh or in the pride of life. None of the disciples suspected him of hypocrisy; they said at the table, "Lord, is it I?" They never said, "Lord, is it Judas?" It was true he had been filching for months, but then he did it by littles, and covered his defalcations so well by financial manipulations that he ran no risk of detection from the honest unsuspecting fishermen with whom he associated. Like some merchants and traders we have heard of — invaluable gentlemen as chairmen of speculating companies and general

managers of swindling banks — he could abstract a decent per-centage and yet make the accounts exactly tally. The gentlemen who have learned of Judas, manage to cook the accounts most admirably for the shareholders, so as to get a rich joint for their own table; over which they, no doubt, entreat the divine blessing. Judas was, in his known life, a most admirable person. He would have been an alderman ere long there is no doubt, and being very pious and richly-gifted, his advent at churches or chapels would have created intense satisfaction. “What a discreet and influential person;” say the deacons. “Yes,” replies the minister; “what an acquisition to our councils; if we could elect him to office he would be of eminent service to the Church.” I believe that the Easter chose him as apostle on purpose that we might not be at all surprised if we find such a man a minister in the pulpit, or a colleague of the minister, working as an officer in Christ’s Church. These are solemn things, my brethren; let us take them to heart, and if any of us wear a good character among men and stand high in office, let this question come home close to us — “Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?” Perhaps he who shall last ask the question is just the man who ought to have asked it first.

But, secondly, I call your attention *to his real nature and sin*. Judas was a man with a conscience. He could not afford to do without it. He was no Sadducee who could fling religion overboard; he had strong religious tendencies. He was no debauched person; he never spent a two-pence in vice on his life, not that he loved vice less, but that he loved the two-pence more. Occasionally he was generous, but then it was with other people’s money. Well did he watch his lovely charge, the bag. He had a conscience, I say, and a ferocious conscience it was when it once broke the chain, for it was his conscience which made him hang himself. But then it was a conscience that did not sit regularly on the throne; it reigned by fits and starts. Conscience was not the leading element. Avarice predominated over conscience. He would get money, if honestly, he liked that best, but if he could not get it conscientiously, then anyhow in the world. He was but a small trader; his gains were no great things, or else he would not have sold Christ for so small a sum as that — ten pounds at the outside, of our money at its present value — some three or four pounds, as it was in those days. It was a poor price to take for the Master; but then a little money was a great thing to him. He had been poor; he had joined Christ with the idea that he would soon be proclaimed King of the Jews, and that then he should become a nobleman, and be rich. Finding Christ a long while in

coming to his kingdom, he had taken little by little, enough to lay by in store; and now, fearing that he was to be disappointed in all his dreams, and never having had any care for Christ, but only for himself, he gets out of what he thinks to have been a gross mistake in the best way he can, and makes money by his treason against his Lord. Brethren, I do solemnly believe, that of all hypocrites, those are the persons of whom there is the least hope whose God is their money. You may reclaim a drunkard; thank God, we have seen many instances of that; and even a fallen Christian, who has given way to vice, may loathe his lust, and return from it; but I fear me that the cases in which a man who is cankered with covetousness has ever been saved, are so few, that they might be written on your finger-nail. This is a sin which the world does not rebuke; the most faithful minister can scarce smit its forehead. God knoweth what thunders I have launched out against men who are all for this world, and yet pretend to be Christ's followers; but yet they always say, "I is not for me." What I should call stark naked covetousness, they call prudence, discretion, economy, and so on; and actions which I would scorn to spit upon, they will do, and think their hands quite clean after they have done them, and still sit as God's people sit, and hear as God's people hear, and think that after they have sold Christ for paltry gain, they will go to heaven. O souls, souls, souls, beware, beware, beware, most of all of greed! It is not money, nor the lack of money, but *the love* of money which is the root of all evil. It is not getting it; it is not even keeping it; it is loving it; it is making it your god; it is looking at that as the main chance, and not considering the cause of Christ, nor the truth of Christ, nor the holy life of Christ, but being ready to sacrifice everything for gains' sake. Oh! such men make giants in sin; they shall be set up for ever as butts for infernal laughter; their damnation shall be sure and just.

The third point is, *the warning which Judas received, and the way in which he persevered*. Just think — the night before he sold his Master what do you think the Master did? Why, he washed his feet! And yet he sold him! Such condescension! Such love! Such familiarity! He took a towel, and girded himself, and washed Judas's feet! And yet those very feet brought Judas as a guide to them that took Jesus! And you remember what he said when he had washed his feet — "Now ye are clean, but not all;" and he turned a tearful eye on Judas. What a warning for him! What could be more explicit? Then when the Supper came, and they began to eat and drink together, the Lord said — "One of you shall betray me." That was

plain enough; and a little farther on he said explicitly — “He that dippeth with me in the dish the same is he.” What opportunities for repentance! He cannot say he had not a faithful preacher. What could have been more personal? If he does not repent now, what is to be done? Moreover, Judas saw that which was enough to make a heart of adamant bleed; he saw Christ with agony on his face, for it was just after Christ had said “Now is my soul troubled,” that Judas left the feast and went out to sell his Master. That face, so full of grief, ought to have turned him, must have turned him, if he had not been, given up and left alone, to deliver over his soul unto his own devices. What language could have been more thundering than the words of Jesus Christ, when he said, “Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born.” He had said, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.” Now, if while these thunders rolled over his head, and the lightningflashes pointed at his person, if, then, this man was not aroused, what a hell of infernal pertinacity and guilt must have been within his soul! Oh! but if any of you, if any of you shall sell Christ for the sake of keeping the shop open on Sunday, if you shall sell Christ for the extra wages you may earn for falsehood — oh! if you shall sell Christ for the sake of the hundred pounds that you may lay hold of by a villanous contract — if you do that, you do not perish unwarned. I come into this pulpit to please no man among you. God knoweth if I knew more of your follies you should have them pointed out yet more plainly; if I knew more of the tricks of business, I would not flinch to speak of them! But, O sirs, I do conjure you by the blood of Judas, who hanged himself at last, turn you — if such there be — turn you from this evil, if haply your sin may be blotted out!

Let us for one minute *notice the act itself*. He sought out his own temptation. He did not wait for the devil to come to him; he went after the devil. He went to the chief priests and said, “What will ye give me?” One of the old Puritan divines says, “This is not the way people generally trade; they tell their own price.” Judas says “What will ye give me? Anything you like. The Lord of life and glory sold at the buyer’s own price. What will ye give me?” And another very prettily puts it, “What could they give him?”

What did the man want? He did not want food and raiment; he fared as well as his Master and the other disciples; he had enough; he had all that his needs could crave, and yet he said, What will ye give me? What will ye give me? What will ye give ne?” Alas! some people’s religion is grounded on that one question — “What will you give me?” Yes, they

would go to

church if there are any charities given away there, but if there were more to be got by not going they would do that. "What will you give me?" Some of these people are not even so wise as Judas. Ah! there is a man over yonder who would sell the Lord for a crown, much more for ten pounds, as Judas did! Why, there are some who will sell Christ for the smallest piece of silver in our currency. They are tempted to deny their Lord, tempted to act in an unhallowed way, though the gains are so paltry that a year's worth of them would not come to much. No subject could be more dreadful than this, if we really would but look at it carefully. This temptation happeneth to each of us. Do not deny it. We all like to gain; it is but natural that we should; the propensity to acquire is in every mind, and under lawful restrictions it is not an improper propensity; but when it comes into conflict with our allegiance to our Master, and in a world like this it often will, we must overcome it or perish. There will arise occasions with some of you many times in a week in which it is "God — or gain;" "Christ, or the thirty pieces of silver;" and therefore I am the more urgent in pressing this on you. Do not, though the world should bid its highest, though it should heap its comforts upon one another, and add fame, and honou^r, and respect, do not, I pray you, forsake your Master. There have been such cases; cases of persons who used to come here, but they found they did not get on, because Sunday was the best day's trade in the week; they had some good feelings, some good impressions once, but they have lost them now. We have known others who have said, "Well, you see, I did once think I loved the Lord, but my business went so badly when I came up to the house of God, that I left it; I renounced my profession." Ah, Judas! ah, Judas! ah, Judas! let me call thee by thy name, for such thou art! This is the sin of the apostate over again; God help thee to repent of it, and go, not to any priest, but to Christ and make confession, if haply thou mayest be saved. You perceive that in the act of selling Christ, Judas was faithful to his master. "Faithful to his master?" you say. Yes, his master was the devil, and having made an agreement with him he carried it out honestly. Some people are always very honest with the devil. If they say they will do a wrong thing they say they ought to do it because *they said* they would; as if any oath could be binding on a man if it be an oath to do wrong? "I will never go into that house again," some have said, and they have said afterwards, "Well, I wish I had not said it." Was it a wrong thing? What is your oath then? It was an oath given to the devil. What was that foolish promise but a promise to Satan, and will you be faithful to him? Ah! would

God that you were faithful to Christ! Would that any of us were as true to Christ as Satan's servants are to their master!

Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss. That is how most apostates do it; it is always with a kiss. Did you ever read an infidel book in your life which did not begin with profound respect for truth? I never have. Even modern ones, when bishops write them, always begin like that. They betray the Son of man with a kiss. Did you ever read a bank of bitter controversy which did not begin with such a sickly lot of humility, such sugar, such butter, such treacle, such everything sweet and soft, that you said, "Ah! there is sure to be something bad here, for when people begin so softly and sweetly, so humbly and so smoothly, depend upon it they have rank hatred in their hearts." The most devout looking people are often the most hypocritical in the world.

We conclude with the repentance of Judas. He did repent; he did repent, but it was the repentance that worketh death. He did make a confession, but there was no respect to the deed itself, but only to its consequences. He was very sorry that Christ was condemned. Some latent love that he had once had to a kind Master, came up when he saw that he was condemned. He did not think, perhaps, it would come to that; he may have had a hope that he would escape out of their hands, and then he would keep his thirty pieces of silver and perhaps sell him over again. Perhaps he thought that he would rid himself from their hands by some miraculous display of power, or would proclaim the kingdom, and so he himself would only be hastening on that very blessed consummation. Friends, the man who repents of consequences does not repent. The ruffian repents of the gallows but not of the murder, and that is no repentance at all. Human law of course must measure sin by consequences, but God's law does not.

There is a pointsman on a railway who neglects his duty; there is a collision on the line, and people are killed; well, it is manslaughter to this man through his carelessness. But that pointsman, perhaps, many times before had neglected his duty, but no accident came of it, and then he walked home and said, "Well, I have done no wrong." Now the wrong, mark you, is never to be measured by the accident, but by the thing itself, and if you have committed an offense and you have escaped undetected it is just as vile in God's eye; if you have done wrong and Providence has prevented the natural result of the wrong, the honor of that is with God, but you are as guilty as if your sin had been carried out to its fullest consequences, and

the whole world set ablaze. Never measure sin by consequences, but repent of them as they are in themselves.

Though being sorry for consequences, since these are unalterable, this man was led to remorse. He sought a tree, adjusted the rope, and hanged himself, but in his haste he hanged himself so badly that the rope broke, he fell over a precipice, and there we read his bowels gushed out; he lay a mangled mass at the bottom of the cliff, the horror of every one who passed. Now you that make a gain of godliness — if there be such here — you may not come to a suicide's end, but take the lesson home. Mr. Keach, my venerable predecessor, gives at the end of one of his volumes of sermons, the death of a Mr. John Child. John Child had been a Dissenting minister, and for the sake of gain, to get a living, he joined the Episcopalians against his conscience; he sprinkled infants; and practiced all the other paraphernalia of the Church against his conscience. At last, at last, he was arrested with such terrors for having done what he had, that he renounced his living, took to a sick bed, and his dying oaths, and blasphemies, and curses, were something so dreadful, that his case was the wonder of that age. Mr. Keach wrote a full account of it, and many went to try what they could do to comfort the man, but he would say, "Get ye hence; get ye hence; it is of no use; I have sold Christ." You know, also, the wonderful death of Francis Spira. In all literature, there is nothing so awful as the death of Spira. The man had known the truth; he stood well among reformers; he was an honored, and to a certain extent apparently a faithful man; but he went back to the Church of Rome; he apostatized; and then when conscience was aroused he did not fly to Christ, but he looked at the consequences instead of at the sin, and so, feeling that the consequences could not be altered, he forget that the sin might be pardoned, and perished in agonies extreme. May it never be the unhappy lot of any of us to stand by such a death-bed; but the Lord have mercy upon us now, and make us search our hearts. Those of you who say, "We do not want that sermon," are probably the persons who need it most. He who shall say, "Well, we have no Judas amongst us," is probably a Judas himself. Oh! search yourselves; turn out every cranny; look in every corner of your soul, to see whether your religion be for Christ's sake, and for truth's sake, and for God's sake, or whether it be a profession which you take up because it is a respectable thing, a profession which you keep up because it keeps you up. The Lord search us and try us, and bring us to know our ways.

And now, in conclusion — there is a Savior, and that Savior is willing to receive us now. If I am not a saint, yet I am a sinner. Would it not be best for all of us to go again to the fountain, and wash and be clean. Let each of us go anew, and say, “Master, thou knowest what I am; I know not myself; but, if I be wrong, make me right; if I be right, keep me so. My trust is in thee. Keep me now, for thine own sake, Jesus.” Amen.

THE GREATEST TRIAL ON RECORD.

NO. 495

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY
22ND, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord, and against his anointed.” — Psalm 2:2.*

AFTER our Lord had been betrayed by the false-hearted Judas, he was bound by the officers who had come to take him; no doubt the cords were drawn as tight, and twisted as mercilessly as possible. If we believe the traditions of the fathers, these cords cut through the flesh even to the very bones, so that all the way from the garden to the house of Annas, his blood left a crimson trail. Our Redeemer was hurried along the road which crosses the brook Kedron. A second time he was made like unto David, who passed over that brook, weeping as he went; and perhaps it was on this occasion that he drank of that foul brook by the way. The brook Redron, you know, was that into which all the filth of the sacrifices of the temple was cast, and Christ, as though he were a foul and filthy thing, must be led to the black stream. He was led into Jerusalem by the sheep-gate, the gate through which the lambs of the Passover and the sheep for sacrifice were always driven. Little did they understand, that in so doing they were again following out to the very letter the significant types which God had ordained in the law of Moses. They led, I say, this Lamb of God through the sheep-gate, and they hastened him on to the house of Annas, the ex-high priest, who, either from his relationship to Caiaphas, from his natural ability, or his prominence in opposing the Savior, stood high in the opinion of the rulers. Here they made a temporary call, to gratify the bloodthirsty Annas with the sight of his victim; and then, hastening on, they

brought him to the house of Caiaphas, some little distance off; where, though it was but a little past the dead of night, many members of the Sanhedrim were assembled. In a very short time, no doubt informed by some speedy messenger, all the rest of the elders came together, and sat down with great delight to the malicious work. Let us follow our Lord Jesus Christ, not, like Peter, afar off, but, like John, let us go in with Jesus into the high priest's house, and when we have tarried awhile there, and have seen our Savior despitefully used, let us traverse the streets with him, till we come to the hall of Pilate, and then to the palace of Herod, and then afterwards to the place called "the pavement," where Christ is subjected to an ignominious competition with Barabbas, the murderer, and where we hear the howling of the people, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Brethren, as the Lord gave commandment concerning even the ashes and offal of the sacrifices, we ought to think no matter trivial which stands in connection with our great burnt offering. My admonition is, "Gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost." As goldsmiths sweep their shops, to save even the filings of the gold, so every word of Jesus should be treasured up as very precious. But, indeed, the narrative to which I invite you is not unimportant. Things which were purposed of old, prophesied by seers, witnessed by apostles, written by evangelists, and published by the ambassadors of God, are not matters of secondary interest, but deserve our solemn and devout attention. Let all our hearts be awed as we follow the King of kings in his pathway of shame and suffering.

I. Come we, then, to the hall of Caiaphas. After the mob had dragged our Lord from the house of Annas, they reached the palace of Caiaphas, and there *a brief interval* occurred before the High Priest came forth to question the prisoner. How were those sad minutes spent? Was the poor victim allowed a little pause to collect his thoughts, that he might face his accusers calmly? Far from it; Luke shall tell the pitiful story: "And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." The officers were pausing until the chairman of the court should please to have an interview with the prisoner, and instead of suffering the accused to take a little rest before a trial so important, upon which his life and character depended, they spend all the time in venting their bitter malice upon him. Observe how they insult his claim to the Messiahship! In effect, they mock him thus: "Thou claimest to be a

prophet like unto Moses; thou knowest things to come; if thou be sent of God, prove it by discovering thy foes; we will put thee on thy trial, and test thee, O thou man of Nazareth." They bind his eyes, and then, smiting him one after another, they bid him exercise his prophetic gift, for their amusement, and prophesy who it was that smote him. Oh, shameful question! How gracious was the silence, for an answer might have withered them for ever. The day *shall* come when all that smite Christ, shall find that he *has* seen them, though they thought his eyes were blinded. The day shall come, blasphemer, worldling, careless man, when everything that you have done against Christ's cause and Christ's people, shall be published before the eyes of men and angels, and Christ shall *answer* your question, and shall tell you who it is that smote him. I speak to some this morning who have forgotten that Christ sees them; and they have ill-treated his people; they have spoken ill of his holy cause, saying, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" I tell you, the Judge of men shall ere long, point you out, and make you, to your shame and confusion of face, confess that you smote the Savior when you smote his Church.

This preliminary mockery being over, *Caiaphas, the high priest came in*; he began at once to interrogate the Lord before the public trial doubtless with the view of catching him in his speech. The high priest asked him first of his *disciples*. We do not know what questions he asked; perhaps they were something like these: "What meanest thou, to allow a rabble to follow thee wherever thou goest? Who art thou, that thou shouldst have twelve persons always attending thee and calling thee Master? Dost thou intend to make these the leaders of a band of men? Are these to be thy lieutenants, to raise a host on thy behalf? Or dost thou pretend to be a prophet, and are these the sons of the prophets who follow thee, as Elisha did Elias Moreover, where are they? Where are thy gallant followers? If thou art a good man, why are they not here to bear witness to thee? Where are they gone? Are they not ashamed of their folly, now that thy promises of honor all end in shame?" The high priest "asked him of his disciples." Our Lord Jesus on this point said not a syllable. Why this silence? Because it is not for our Advocate to accuse his disciples. He might have answered, "Well dost thou ask, 'Where are they?' the cowards forsook me; when one proved a traitor, the rest took to their heels. Thou sayest, 'Where are my disciples?' *there is one yonder*, sitting by the fire, warming his hands, the same who just now denied me with an oath." But no, he would not utter a

word of accusation; he whose lips are mighty to intercede for his people, will never speak against them. Let Satan slander, but Christ pleads. The accuser of the brethren is the prince of this world: the Prince of peace is ever our Advocate before the eternal throne.

The high priest next shifted his ground, and asked him concerning *his doctrine* — what it was that he taught — whether what he taught was not in contradiction to the original teachings of their great law-giver Moses — and whether he had not railed at the Pharisees, reviled the Scribes, and exposed the rulers. The Master gave a noble answer. Truth is never shamefaced; he boldly points to his public life as his best answer. “I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold they know what I said.” No sophistries — no attempt at evasion — the best armor for truth is her own naked breast. He had preached in the market-places, on the mountain’s brow, and in the temple courts; nothing had been done in a corner. Happy is the man who can make so noble a defense. Where is the joint in such harness? Where can the arrow pierce the man arrayed in so complete a panoply? Little did that arch-knave Caiaphas gain by his crafty questioning. For the rest of the questioning, our Lord Jesus said not a word in self-defense; he knew that it availed not for a lamb to plead with wolves; he was well aware that whatever he said would be misconstrued and made a fresh source of accusation, and he willed, moreover, to fulfill the prophecy, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” But what power he exerted in thus remaining silent! Perhaps nothing displays more fully the omnipotence of Christ, than this power of self-control. Control the Deity? What power less than divine can attempt the task? Behold, my brethren, the Son of God does more than rule the winds and commend the waves, he restrains *himself*. And when a word, a whisper, would have refuted his foes, and swept them to their eternal destruction, he “openeth not his mouth.” He who opened his mouth for his enemies, will not utter a word for himself. If ever silence were more than golden, it is this deep silence under infinite provocation.

During this preliminary examination, our Lord suffered an outrage which needs a passing notice. When he had said, “Ask them that hear me,” some over-officious person in the crowd struck him in the face. The margin in John 18:22, very properly corrects our version, and renders the passage,

“with a rod.” Now, considering that our blessed Lord suffered so much, this one little particular might seem unimportant, only it happens to be the subject of prophecy in the book of Micah 5:1, “They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.” This smiting while under trial is peculiarly atrocious. To strike a man while he is pleading in his own defense, would surely be a violation of the laws even of barbarians. It brought Paul’s blood into his face, and made him lose his balance when the high priest ordered them to smite him on the mouth. I think I hear his words of burning indignation: “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?” How soon the servant loses his temper: how far more glorious the meekness of the Master. What a contrast do these gentle words afford us — “If I have spoken evil bear witness to the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?” This was such a concentrated infamy, to strike a man while pleading for his life, that it well deserved the notice both of evangelist and prophet.

But now *the Court are all sitting*; the members of the great Sanhedrim are all in their various places, and Christ is brought forth for the public trial before the highest ecclesiastical court; though it is, mark you, a foregone conclusion, that by hook or by crook they will find him guilty. They scour the neighborhood for witnesses. There were fellows to be found in Jerusalem, like those who in the olden times frequented the Old Bailey, “straw witnesses,” who were ready to be bought on either side; and, provided they were well paid, would swear to anything. But for all this, though the witnesses were ready to perjure themselves, they could not agree one with another; being heard separately, their tales did not tally. At last two came, with some degree of similarity in their witness; they were both liars, but for once the two liars had struck the same note. They declared that he said “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands,” Mark 14:58. Now here was, first, misquotation. He never said, “I will destroy the temple,” his words were, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” See how they add to his words and twist them to their own ends. Then again, they not only misquoted the words, but they misrepresented the sense, wilfully, because he spake concerning the temple of his body, and not the literal temple in which they worshipped; and this they must have known. He said, “Destroy *this* temple” — and the accompanying action might have showed them that he meant his own body, which was

raised by his glorious resurrection after destruction upon the cross. Let us add, that even when thus misrepresented, the witness was not sufficient as the foundation of a capital charge. Surely there could be nothing worthy of death in a man's saying, "Destroy this temple, and I will build it in three days." A person might make use of those words a thousand times over — he might be very foolish, but he would not be guilty of death for such an offense. But where men have made up their minds to hate Christ, they will hate him without a cause. Oh! ye that are adversaries of Christ — and there are some such here to-day — I know ye try to invent some excuse for your opposition to his holy religion; ye forge a hundred falsehoods; but ye know that your witness is not true, and your trial in conscience through which you pass the Savior, is but a mock one. Oh that ye were wise, and would understand him to be what he is, and submit yourselves to him now.

Finding that their witness, even when tortured to the highest degree, was not strong enough, *the high priest*, to get matter of accusation, *adjured him* by the Most High God to answer whether he was the Christ, "the Son of the Blessed." Being thus adjured, our Master would not set us an example of cowardice; he spake to purpose; he said, "*I am*," Mark 14:62, and then, to show how fully he knew this to be true, he added, "ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." I cannot understand what Unitarians do with this incident. Christ was put to death on a charge of blasphemy, for having declared himself to be the Son of God. Was not that the time when any sensible person would have denied the accusation? If he had not really claimed to be the Son of God, would he not *now* have spoken? Would he not now, once for all, have delivered our minds from the mistake under which we are laboring, if, indeed, it be a mistake, that he is the Son of God? But no, he seals it with his blood; he bears open testimony before the herd of his accusers. "*I am*." *I am* the Son of God, and *I am* the sent-one of the Most High. Now, now the thing is done. They want no further evidence. The judge, forgetting the impartiality which becomes his station, pretends to be wonderfully struck with horror, rends his garments, turns round to ask his co-assessors whether they need any further witness, and they, all too ready, hold up their hands in token of unanimity, and he is at once condemned to die. Ah! brethren, and no sooner condemned, than the high priest, stepping down from his divan, spits in his face, and then the Sanhedrim follow, and smite him on his cheek; and then they turn him down to the rabble that had gathered in the court, and they buffet him from

one to the other, and spit upon his blessed cheeks, and smite him, and then they play the old game again, which they had learned so well before the trial came on; they blindfold him for a second time, place him in the chair, and as they smite him with their fists they cry. "Prophet! Prophet! Prophet! who is it that smote thee? Prophecy unto us!" And thus the Savior passed a second time through that most brutal and ignominious treatment. If we had tears, if we had sympathies, if we had hearts, we should prepare to shed those tears, to awake those sympathies, and break those hearts, *now*. O thou Lord of life and glory! how shamefully wast thou illtreated by those who pretended to be the curators of holy truth, the conservators of integrity, and the teachers of the law!

Having thus sketched the trial as briefly as I could, let me just say, that, throughout the whole of this trial before the ecclesiastical tribunal, it is manifest that they did all they could to pour contempt upon his two claims — to Deity and to Messiahship. Now, friends, this morning — this morning, as truly as on that eventful occasion — you and I must range ourselves on one of two sides. Either this day we must cheerfully acknowledge his Godhead, and accept him also as the Messias, the Savior promised of old to us; or else we must take our post with those who are the adversaries of God and of his Christ. Will you ask yourself the question, on which side will you now stand? I pray you, do not think that Christ's Deity needs any further proof than that which this one court gives. My dear friends, there is no religion under heaven, no false religion, which would have dared to hazard such a statement, as that yonder man who was spit upon and buffeted was none other than incarnate God. No false religion would venture to draw upon the credulity of its followers to that extent. What! that man there who speaks not a word, who is mocked, despised, rejected, made nothing of — what! he "very God of very God?" You do not find Mohammed, nor any false prophet, asking any person to believe a doctrine so extraordinary. They know too well that there is a limit even to human faith; and they have not ventured upon such a marvellous assertion as this, that yonder despised man is none other than the upholder of all things. No false religion would have taught a truth so humbling to him who is its founder and Lord. Besides, it is not in the power of any man-made religion to have conceived such a thought. That Deity should willingly submit to be spit upon to redeem those whose mouths vented the spittle! In what book do you read such a wonder as this? We have pictures drawn from imagination; we have been enchanted along romantic pages,

and we have marvelled at the creative flights of human genius; but where did you ever read such a thought as this? "God was made flesh and dwelt among us" — he was despised, scourged, mocked, treated as though he were the offscouring of all things, brutally treated, worse than a dog, and all out of pure love to his enemies. Why, the thought is such a great one, so God-like, the compassion in it is so divine, that it *must* be true. None but God could have thought of such a thing as this stoop from the highest throne in glory to the cross of deepest shame and woe. And do you think that if the doctrine of the cross were not true, such effects would follow from it? Would those South Sea Islands, once red with the blood of cannibalism, be now the abode of sacred song and peace? Would this island, once itself the place of naked savages, be what it is, through the influence of the benign gospel of God, if that gospel were a lie? Ah! hallowed mistake, indeed, to produce such peaceful, such blessed, such lasting, such divine results! Ah! he *is* God. The thing is not false. And that he is Messiah, who shall doubt? If God *should* send a prophet, what better prophet could you desire? What character would you seek to have exhibited more completely human and divine? What sort of a Savior would you wish for? What could better satisfy the cravings of conscience? Who could commend himself more fully to the affections of the heart? He must be, we feel at once, as we see him, one alone by himself, with no competitor; he *must* be the Messiah of God.

Come, now, sirs, on which side will you range yourselves? Will you smite him? I put the question — "Who is it that will smite him this day? Who is it that will spit upon him this day?" "I will not," says one, "but I do not accept nor believe in him." In *that* you smite him. "I do not hate him," says another, "but I am not saved by him." In refusing his love you smite him.

Whoever among you will not trust him with your soul — in *that* you smite him, smite him in the tenderest part: since you impugn his love and power to save. Oh! "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." That suffering man stands in the room, and place, and stead of every one that will believe on him. Trust him! trust him! — you have then accepted him as your God, as your Messiah. Refuse to trust him! — you have smitten him; and you may think it little to do this to-day; but when he rides upon the clouds of heaven you will see your sin in its true light, and you will shudder to think that ever you could have refused *him* who now reigns "King of kings and Lord of lords." God help you to accept him, as your God and

Christ, to-day!

II. But our time flies too rapidly, and we must hasten with it, and accompany our Savior to another place.

The Romans had taken away from the Jews the power to put a person to death, they sometimes did it still, but they did it, as in the case of Stephen, by popular tumult. Now, in our Savior's case they could not do this, because there was still a strong feeling in favor of Christ among the people, a feeling so strong, that had they not been bribed by the rulers, they would never have said, "Crucify him! crucify him!" You will remember that the priests and rulers did not arrest him on the feast day, "lest" said they "there be a tumult among the people." Besides, the Jewish way of putting a person to death, was by stoning: hence, unless there was a sufficient number of persons who hated him, a person would never get put to death at all. That is why the method of putting to death by stoning was chosen, because if a person was generally thought to be innocent, very few persons would stone him; and although he would be somewhat maimed, his life might possibly be spared. They thought, therefore, the Savior might escape as he did at other times, when they took up stones to stone him. Moreover they desired to put him to the death of the accursed; they would confound him with slaves and criminals, and hang him like the Canaanitish kings of old; therefore they hound him away to Pilate. The distance was about a mile. He was bound in the same cruel manner, and was doubtless cut by the cords. He had already suffered most dreadfully; please to remember the bloody sweat of last Sabbath week; then remember that he has already twice been beaten; and he is now hurried along, without any rest or refreshment, just as the morning is breaking, along the streets to the place where Pilate lived, perhaps the tower of Antonia, close to the temple itself; we are not quite sure. He is bound and they hurry him along the road; and here the Romish writers supply a great number of particulars of anguish out of their very fertile imaginations. After they had brought him there a difficulty occurred. These holy people, these very righteous elders, could not come into the company of Pilate, because Pilate, being a Gentile, would defile them; and there was a broad space outside the palace, like a raised platform, this was called "the pavement," where Pilate was wont to sit on those high days, that he might not touch these blessed Jews. So he came out on the pavement, and they themselves went not into the hall, but remained before "the pavement." Always notice, that sinners who can swallow camels will strain at gnats, crowds of men who will do great sins are very much afraid of committing some little things which they they think

will affect their religion. Notice, that many a man who is a big thief during the week, will ease his conscience by rigid Sabbatarianism when the day comes round. In fact, most hypocrites run for shelter to some close observance of days, ceremonies, and observations, when they have slighted the weightier matters of the law.

Well, Pilate receives him bound. The charge brought against him was not, of course, blasphemy; Pilate would have laughed at that, and declined all interference. They accused him of stirring up sedition, pretending to be a king, and teaching that it was not right to pay tribute to Caesar. This last charge was a clear and manifest lie. *He* refuse to pay tribute? Did not he send to the fish's mouth to get the money? *He* say that Caesar must not have his due? Did he not tell the Herodians — "Render unto Caesar the things that are Cesar's?" *He* stir up a sedition? — the man that had "not where to lay his head?" *He* pretend to snatch the diadem from Caesar? — *he*, the man who hid himself, when the people would have taken him by force and made him a king? Nothing can be more atrociously false. Pilate examines him, and discovers at once, both from his silence and from his answer, that he is a most extraordinary person; he perceives that the kingdom which he claims is something supernatural; he cannot understand it. He asks him what he came into the world for, the reply puzzles and amazes him, "To bear witness to the truth," says he. Now, that was a thing no Roman understood; for a hundred years before Pilate came, Jugurtha said of the city of Rome, "a city for sale;" bribery, corruption, falsehood, treachery, villany, these were the gods of Rome, and truth had fled the seven hills, the very meaning of the word was scarcely known. So Pilate turned on his heel, and said, "What is truth?" As much as to say, "I am the procurator of this part of the country; all I care for is money." "What's truth?" I do not think he asked the question, "What *is* truth?" as some preach from it, as if he seriously desired to know what it really was, for surely he would have paused for the divine reply and not have gone away from Christ the moment afterwards. He said, "Pshaw; What's truth?" Yet there was something so awful about the prisoner, that his wife's dream, and her message — "See that thou have nothing to do with this just person," all worked upon the superstitious fears of this very weak-minded ruler; so he went back and told the Jews a second time, "I find no fault in him;" and when they said, "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning at Galilee to this place," he caught at that word "Galilee." "Now," he thought, "I will be rid of this man; the people shall

have their way, and yet I will not be guilty.” “Galilee?” said he; “why, Herod is ruler there; you had better take him to Herod at once.” He thus gained two or three points; he made Herod his friend; he hoped to exonerate himself of his crime, and yet please the mob. Away they go to Herod. Oh! I think I see that blessed Lamb of God again hounded through the streets. Did you ever read such a tale? No martyr, even in bloody Mary’s time, was ever harried thus as the Savior was. We must not think that his agonies were all confined to the cross; they were endured in those streets — in those innumerable blows, and kicks, and strikings with the fist, that he had to bear. They took him before Herod, and Herod having heard of his miracles, thought to see some wonderful thing, some piece of jugglery, done in his presence; and when Christ refused to speak, and would not plead before “that fox” at all, then Herod treated him with a sneer. “They made nothing of him.” Can you picture the scene? Herod, his captains, his lieutenants, all, down to the meanest soldiers, treat the Savior with a broad grin! “A pretty king,” they seem to say; “a miserable beggar better! Look at his cheeks, all bruised where they have been smiting him: is that the color of royalty’s complexion?” “Look,” say they, “he is emaciated, he is covered with blood, as though he had been sweating drops of blood all night. Is *that* the imperial purple?” And so they “made nothing of him,” and despised his kingship. And Herod said, “Bring out that costly white robe, you know, if he be a king, let us dress him so,” and so the white robe is put on him — not a purple one — that Pilate put on afterwards. He has two robes put on him — the one put on by the Jews, the other by the Gentiles; seeming to be a fit comment on that passage in Solomon’s song, where the spouse says, “My beloved is white and ruddy” — white with the gorgeous robe which marked him King of the Jews, and then red with the purple robe which Pilate afterwards cast upon his shoulders, which proved him King of nations too. And so Herod and his men of war, after treating him as shamefully as they could, looking at him as some madman more fit for Bedlam than elsewhere, sent him back again to Pilate. Oh! can you not follow him? You want no great imagination — as you see them dragging him back again! It is another journey along those streets; another scene of shameful tumult, bitter scorn, and cruel smittings. Why, he dies a hundred deaths, my brethren, it is not one — it is death on death the Savior bears, as he is dragged from tribunal to tribunal.

See, they bring him to Pilate a second time. Pilate again is anxious to save him. He says, “I have found no fault in this man touching those things

whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod; I will therefore release him!" "No, no," they say; and they clamor greatly. He proposes a cruel alternative, which yet he meant for tender mercy "I will therefore chastise him, and let him go." He gave him over to his lictors to be scourged. The Roman scourge was, as I have explained before, a most dreadful instrument. It was made of the sinews of oxen, and little sharp pieces of bone, which, you know, cause the most frightful lacerations, if by accident you even run them into your hand; little sharp pieces, splinters of bone, were intertwined every here and there among the sinews; so that every time the lash came down some of these pieces of bone went right into the flesh, and tore off heavy thonglulls, and not only the blood but the very flesh would be rent away. The Savior was tied to the column, and thus beaten. He had been beaten before; but this of the Roman lictor was probably the most severe of his flagellations. After Pilate had beaten him, he gave him up to the soldiers for a short time, that they might complete the mockery, and so be able to witness that Pilate had no idea of the royalty of Jesus, and no complicity in any supposed treason. The soldiers put a crown of thorns on his head, and bowed before him, and spat on him, and put a reed in his hands; they smote the crown of thorns into his temple, they covered him with a purple robe; and then Pilate brought him out, saying, "Behold the man!" I believe he did it out of pity. He thought, "Now I have wounded him and cut him to pieces thus, I will not kill him; that sight will move their hearts." Oh! that *Ecce Homo* ought to have melted their hearts, if Satan had not made them harder than flints and sterner than steel. But no, they cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" So Pilate listens to them again, and they change their note, "He hath spoken blasphemy." This was a wrong charge to bring; for Pilate, having his superstition again aroused, is the more afraid to put him to death; and he comes out again, and says, "I find no fault in him." What a strong contest between good and evil in that man's heart! But they cried out again, "If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend." They hit the mark this time, and he yields to their clamor. He brings forth a basin of water, and he washes his hands before them all, and he says, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." A poor way of escaping! That water could not wash the blood from his hands, though *their* cry did bring the blood on their heads — "His blood be on us and on our children." When that is done, Pilate takes the last desperate step of sitting down on the pavement in royal state; he condemns Jesus, and bids them take him away. But ere he is taken to execution, the dogs of war shall snap at him again. The Jews no doubt

having bribed the soldiers to excessive zeal of scorn, they a second time — (oh! mark this; perhaps ye thought this happened only once. This is the fifth time he has thus been treated) — the soldiers took him back again, and once more they mocked him, once more they spat upon him, and treated him shamefully. So, you see, there was once when he first went to the house of Caiaphas; then after he was condemned there; then Herod and his men of war; then Pilate after the scourging; and then the soldiers, after the ultimate condemnation. See ye not how manifestly “he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” I do not know when I ever more heartily wished to be eloquent than I do now. I am talking to my own lips, and saying, “Oh! that these lips had language worthy of the occasion!” I do but faintly sketch the scene. I cannot lay on the glowing colors. Oh, that I could set forth thy grief, thou Man of Sorrows! God the Holy Ghost impress it on your memories and on your souls, and help you pitifully to consider the griefs of your blessed Lord.

I will now leave this point, when I have made this practical application of it. Remember, dear friends, that this day, as truly as on that early morning, a division must be made among us. Either you must this day accept Christ as your King, or else his blood will be on you. I bring my Master out before your eyes, and say to you, “Behold your King.” Are you willing to yield obedience to him? He claims first your implicit faith in his merit: will you yield to that? He claims, next, that you will take him to be Lord of your heart, and that, as he shall be Lord within, so he shall be Lord without. Which shall it be? Will you choose him *now*? Does the Holy Spirit in your soul — for without that you never will — does the Holy Spirit say, “Bow the knee, and take him as your king?” Thank God, then. But if not, his blood is on you, to condemn you. *You* crucified him. Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, the Jews and Romans, all meet in you. *You* scourged him; *you* said, “Let him be crucified.” Do not say it was not so. In effect you join their clamours when you refuse him; when you go your way to your farm and to your merchandise, and despise his love and his blood, *you* do spiritually what *they* did literally — you despise the King of kings. Come to the fountain of his blood, and wash and be clean.

III. But we must close with a third remark. Christ really underwent yet a third trial. He was not only tried before the ecclesiastical and civil tribunals,

but, he was really tried before the great democratical tribunal, that is, the assembly of the people in the street.

You will say, "How?" Well, the trial was somewhat singular, but yet it was really a trial. Barabbas — a thief, a felon, a murderer, a traitor, had been captured; he was probably one of a band of murderers who were accustomed to come up to Jerusalem at the time of the feast, carrying daggers under their cloaks to stab persons in the crowd, and rob them, and then he would be gone again; besides that, he had tried to stir up sedition, setting himself up possibly as a leader of banditti. Christ was put into competition with this villain; the two were presented before the popular eye, and to the shame of manhood, to the disgrace of Adam's race, let it be remembered that the perfect, loving, tender, sympathizing, disinterested Savior was met with the word, "Crucify him!" and Barabbas, the thief, was preferred. "Well," says one, "that was atrocious." The same thing is put before *you* this morning — the very same thing; and every unregenerate man will make the same choice that the Jews did, and only men renewed by grace will act upon the contrary principle. I say, friend, this day I put before you Christ Jesus, or your sins. The reason why many come not to Christ is because they cannot give up their lusts, their pleasures, their profits. Sin is Barabbas; sin is a thief; it will rob your soul of its life; it will rob God of his glory. Sin is a murderer; it stabbed our father Adam; it slew our purity. Sin is a traitor; it rebels against the king of heaven and earth. If you prefer sin to Christ, Christ has stood at your tribunal, and you have given in your verdict that sin is better than Christ. Where is that man? He comes here every Sunday; and yet he is a drunkard? Where *is* he? You prefer that reeling demon Bacchus to Christ. Where is that man? He comes here. Yes; and where are his midnight haunts? The harlot and the prostitute can tell! You have preferred your own foul, filthy lust to Christ. I know some here that have their consciences open pricked, and yet there is no change in them. You prefer Sunday trading to Christ; you prefer cheating to Christ; you prefer the theater to Christ; you prefer the harlot to Christ; you prefer the devil himself to Christ, for he it is that is the father and author of these things. "No," says one, "I don't, I don't." Then I do again put this question, and I put it very pointedly to you — "If you do not prefer your sins to Christ, how is it that you are not a Christian?" I believe this is the main stumbling-stone, that "Men love darkness rather than light, *because* their deeds are evil." We come not to Christ because of the viciousness of our nature, and depravity of our heart; and this *is* the

depravity of your heart, that you prefer darkness to light, put bitter for sweet, and choose evil as your good. Well, I think I hear one saying, "Oh! I *would* be on Jesus Christ's side, but I did not look at it in that light; I thought the question was. "Would *he* be on my side? I am such a poor guilty sinner that I would fain stand anywhere, if Jesu's blood would wash me." Sinner! sinner! if thou talkest like that, then I will meet thee right joyously. Never was a man one with Christ till Christ was one with him. If you feel that you can now stand with Christ, and say, "Yes, despised and rejected, he is nevertheless my God, my Savior, my king. Will he accept me? Why, soul, he has accepted you; he has renewed you, or else you would not talk so. You speak like a saved man. You may not have the comfort of salvation, but surely there is a work of grace in your heart, God's divine election has fallen upon you, and Christ's precious redemption has been made for you, or else you would not talk so. You cannot be willing to come to Christ, and yet Christ reject you. God forbid we should suppose the possibility of any sinner crying after the Savior, and the Savior saying, "No, I will not have you." Blessed be his name, "Him that cometh to me," he says, "I will in no wise cast out." "Well," says one, "then I would have him to-day. How can I do it?" There is nothing asked of thee but this. Trust him! trust him! Believe that God put him in the stead of men; believe that what he suffered was accepted by God instead of their punishment; believe that this great equivalent for punishment can save *you*. Trust him; throw yourself on *him*; as a man commits himself to the waters, so do you; sink or swim! You will never sink, you will never sink; for "he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation."

May these faint words upon so thrilling a subject bless your souls, and unto God be glory, for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

THE NEW SONG.

NO. 496

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER
28TH, 1862,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.” — Psalm 98:1.

THERE must be new songs on new occasions of triumph. It would have been absurd for Miriam with her timbrel to conduct the music of the daughters of Israel to some old sonnet that they had learned in Egypt. Nay, an old song could not have spoken out the feelings of that generation, much less could it have served to utter a voice, the jubilant notes of which distant posterity should echo. They must have a new song while they cry the one unto the other, “Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” The like had never been known before, but henceforth father to son must show forth its fame. In after times, when Deborah and Barak had routed the hosts of Sisera, they did not borrow Miriam’s song; but they had a new psalm for the new event. They said, “Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.” In after years, at the building of the temple, or on the solemn feast days, it was ever the wont of the inspired poets of the age to cry, “O come, let us sing unto the Lord a new song.” Thus the grateful notes of praise have gathered volume and augmented their compass as the ages have rolled onwards; and these as it were only the rehearsals for a grand oratorio. What then, shall be the marvellous novelty and the matchless glory of that song which shall be sung at the last upon Mount Zion, when ten thousand times ten thousand of the warriors of God shall surround Jesus the conqueror, when we shall hear a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and like great thunders, when shall be heard the voice of

harpers, harping with their harps; what shall be, I say, the strange novelty of that new song which they shall sing before the throne, when the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures shall fall before God upon their faces, and worship him for ever and ever? Would that our ears could anticipate that tremendous burst of "Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

I want to carry your minds, if I can, to-night, for a little season to that last and grandest, because the decisive victory, which shall tell out the name and fame of Jehovah in all his mighty attributes, and in all his majestic deeds, when the battle shall be over for ever, and the banner shall be furled and the sword shall be sheathed, because the last foe shall be destroyed, and placed beneath the feet of the Almighty victor; "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath him the victory." My text seems, however suitable it may be to other occasions, to be most fitting to that last and most splendid triumph.

Three things there are in it: *victory transcendent; Deity conspicuous; holiness glorified.*

I. First in our text we perceive very clearly VICTORY TRANSCENDENT.

What shall we say of that victory? The shouts thereof already greet our ears, and the anthem that celebrates it is already prepared, when all the principalities and powers of this world shall be laid low, the pride of earth shall burst like a bubble, the great globe itself shall dissolve, and the things that are seen shall be folded up like a vesture, worn out, and crumbled with decay, that victory will be transcendent; there shall be none comparable to it; it shall stand matchless and unrivalled in all the wars of God, of angels, or men.

Well, we must say of that victory, *there shall be none to dispute the claim of God the Most High.* The most splendid victories of one army have frequently been claimed by the opposite partisans. If you stand beneath the triumphal arch in Paris, you will see the names of some battles which you simple-minded Englishmen always thought had been won by British soldiers; but you discover that our history was all a mistake, and that the Frenchmen really retired victorious from the plain. I suppose in America it is always difficult to ascertain who has been the conqueror; and where there are no generals, and the whole affair seems to be which shall kill the most and wade through the most blood, there naturally must be difficulty in

ascertaining who has won the day. But in this case there shall be no dispute whatever. The dragon's head shall be so completely broken, that he can do nothing but bite his iron bonds and growl out his confession that God is stronger than he. The hosts of hell shall have been so utterly routed, that the deep groans of dismay and shrieks of terror shall be the confession that Omnipotence rules their terrible doom. As for Death, when he shall see his captives all loosed before his eyes; as for the grave, when the key shall be rent from her grip, and all her treasures plucked from her grasp — death and the grave shall both acknowledge that their victory is gone for ever; Christ has been the conqueror, the Son of God who in our nature has already taken away the sting. There may be to-day some who write their names down as Atheists; there may be others who openly avow that they are the adversaries of God; and throughout the universe there are never wanting those who are hopeful that the issue will turn out as they wish — they are hopeful that wrong will master right; that evil shall drive out good, and darkness extinguish light. But there shall not be one such being left on that great day of victory; it shall be acknowledged even by the lip of despair that the Lord God, “with his own right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.” Blazoned across the sky in lightnings such as the eye of terror has never beheld before; thundered out with trumpet louder than even that which startled the sleeping dead, every tongue in earth and hell shall confess, because every ear hath heard, that the Lord reigneth, and is king for ever and ever.

But further, as this victory will be certainly beyond all dispute, let me remind you it will be transcendent, because *there shall be nothing that can occur to mar it*. When the last shock of the dread artillery shall have been endured by the hosts of God's elect; when the last charge shall have driven the foes before them as thin clouds fly before a Biscay gale; then, as the heroes sit down to read the story of the war, they shall discover that there is nothing to mar the splendor of that glory, for it has been a victory throughout. Of all other victories we read, at one time the balance trembled — sometimes the host on this side wavered; perhaps for the first half day it seemed not only doubtful which would win, but it appeared as though the adversary at length defeated would certainly be the conqueror. But, beloved, when we shall read history in the light of heaven, we shall discover that God was never conquered — that never did the ranks reel; we shall see that even the most disastrous strokes of Providence, even the most dire calamities that ever occurred to the Church, were only the on-

march, the tramp of victories yet to come. I am certain that those things we most deplore to-day will even become the subjects of the most marvellous gratitude to-morrow. We look to-day upon the black side of the question, and say, "Ah! here, indeed, goodness was foiled;" but when we look at the whole matter through, we shall see that every dark and bending line meets in the center of the divine plan, and that which seemed the most incongruous and out of place with its fellow, was the most fitting and the most necessary of the whole programme. Satan at the last shall not be able to put his finger upon any spot of the battle-field and say, "Here my hosts routed the troops of Emmanuel." Everywhere it shall be seen that, from the dawning day, when first he struck the blow at Eve and made her sin, to the very last, when Christ shall drag him up the everlasting hills, led captive at his chariot wheels, from the first to the last, the Lord's "right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

Remember, too, that *this is a victory all along the line*. The general's cautious eye marks that there the left wing has driven the adversary back, but for that right wing bring up the reserves, let not the ranks be broken. Stern liners, let your chivalry be seen yonder for that wing reels. Generally in the battle some part must fail, while in this portion or the other there shall be success. Ah! but at the last when Christ shall stand, and bare his brow in heaven's sunlight, and all his angels shall be with him, it shall be seen that they were everywhere triumphant. The blood on Madagascar's rocks shall not defeat the on-march of God's armies. Saints may be burned, may be sawn in sunder, may wander about in sheep skins and goat skins, but they shall be victorious everywhere. Spain may shut her gates against the gospel, and the inquisition may make that place its stronghold, but as sure as there is a God in heaven, Christ shall be conqueror there. Tyrants may pass edicts to exterminate Christians, conclaves may make decrees to drive out the religion of Jesus, but in every place, in every land, where ever foot of man has trodden this green earth, shall there be victory; from the north to the south, from the east to the west, everywhere shall be triumph

— China and Japan, Brazil and Chili, the islands of the south, the frozen regions of the north, even Africa with her sable sons, the dwellers in the wilderness shall bow before him and lick the dust at his feet. There shall be victory all along the line. Not from one place merely, but from all, shall be heard the tune — "His own right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

And it shall be *a victory Sustained by the news of the morrow*. Not so among the embattled hosts of men. How hard to brook the morrow! Then the general's brow is dark, and his eye is heavy, for the list of the dead and wounded is brought in for inspection. "Another victory like this," says one, "and I am defeated for ever. It is dearly purchased," saith he, "with the blood of these mothers' sons. My comrades and companions in arms must bite the ground to let the country live." But in that last great battle of God the muster-roll shall be found without one missing in it; as they call their names they shall all answer, there shall not be one left dead upon the field. "How so? How so?" saith unbelief, "are they not dead and buried now? Have not their bodies lain to bleach upon the side of the Alps? Have they not been burned in the fire and scattered as ashes to the four winds? Do not the saints sleep to-day in our cemeteries, and in our grave-yards, and doth not the deep engulf full many a body that was a temple of the Holy Ghost?" I answer, yes, but they shall come again. Refrain thine eyes from weeping, O daughter of Jerusalem; refrain thine heart from sorrow, for they shall come again from the land of their captivity. We that are alive and remain shall not have the preference beyond them that sleep, "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

And sometimes, on the morrow, the general feels the glory of the victory is marred, for there are many prisoners; they are not dead, their corpses lie not on the field, but they have been taken off by the opposite parties, and they are a prey; and who knoweth what may become of them; what dungeons may contain them; to what tortures they may be put. But in this last victory of God, *there shall be no prisoners*, no prisoners left in the hand of his enemy. I know there are some who say that we may be children of God, and yet fall from grace and perish. My brethren, it is a foul slander upon the faithfulness and power of the Redeemer. I know that all he undertakes to save he will save, and he will bring the troops off from the battle field, every brow crowned with laurel, not one slain, not one a prisoner; the gates of hell shall never enclose the ransomed of the Lord; amongst the groans of the lost there shall never be heard a sigh from one that was once a saint before God. There are no prisoners. March out your prisoners, Prince of Hell, bring forth, if you can, one soul that Jesus bought

with blood, one soul that the Spirit quickened, one soul that the Eternal Father gave to the hands of the Great Surety to keep for ever — bring him forth. Ah! ye have none. “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?” Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, “My ransomed shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads;” then shall it be said, “His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.”

But, beloved, after the battle is over, the conqueror wipes his brow and says, “Ah, but the scattered hosts may rally, and they who were driven to-day like chaff before the wind, may rise again, and long may be the campaign, and fierce the struggle, before we have stamped out the sparks of war. “Sleep on your arms,” saith he, “you may be attacked to-morrow, be ready for the cry of ‘boot and saddle,’ for there may be a charge again ere many hours are spent.” But not so in this case: the victory is crushing, total, final; it is once for ever with evil, with darkness, with hell; they shall never again be able to tempt the righteous, or to cast them down, or to pale their cheeks with fear; they shall never be able again to win the world to their dominion, they are routed, routed, routed for ever. Hosts of evil, it is not your heel that is bruised — your head is broken; the Lord hath used his people as his battle-axe and his weapons of war, and he hath cleft ye and left ye without might or strength for ever and for ever. So, dear friends, this is our joy and comfort, that once the battle over, the whole campaign is ended; there shall be no further onslaughts; we rest eternally; we triumph everlastingly; no more fights to risk, no more conflicts in which to tug and strive. This shall be the note that shall ring throughout the arches of eternity — “The Lord’s right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory for ever and for ever.”

I think these are two good reasons why I should say this victory is transcendent — there is none to dispute it, and there is nothing to mar it.

But yet further we will venture to enlarge upon this victory by shewing its particulars. The ultimate triumph and victory of God in all his purposes will lie in several things. How glorious the fact that *all whom he ordained to save are saved!* Calling was the first work which he wrought in them; they were called every one of them, but like the rest of mankind they would not come; their wills were so desperate that they resisted long; the minister preached at them; their mother wept over them; their father entreated them; providence came and hewed them; afflictions broke them in pieces,

and they were unsaved still; but not in one case where God ordains to call has the calling failed. In every case where his electing love hath set its purpose, the will is turned round, the affections yield, the judgment gives way, the man is subdued — he is called, he is quickened. There may be some such here to-night, who think, “Well, I never would be saved upon such terms as acknowledging the sovereign grace of God, even if he wills to do it.” Thy will must give way before the crushing force of the will of God. He hath mysterious ways of finding an entrance into the most reluctant heart, and taking up his throne there for ever.

How clearly is this victory seen *in the subjugation of the lusts and passions of the called sinner!* He may have been a drunkard, he thought he could not give it up, but the rod of iron “dashes in pieces the potter’s vessel.” He may have loved the pleasures of the flesh, they were dear to him as his right eye, but grace overcame the most darling lust, and threw to the earth the most pampered sin.

Not less conspicuously will it appear in the perseverance of every saint. Not a stone will have been left unturned by the adversary to prevent the saints holding on; the caverns of hell will be emptied against God’s redeemed; Satan and his myrmidons will do their utmost to cast them down to destruction, but they shall hold on their way, they shall wax stronger and stronger, and when at last the gates of heaven shall be fast closed, because there are no more to enter, it shall be proclaimed, while devils bite their iron bands in shame, that not a soul who was written in the Book of Life was lost, not one whom Jesus bought with blood has been unredeemed, not one quickened by grace suffered to die, not one who truly began the heavenly race turned aside from it, not one concerning whom it was said, “These are mine, and in the day when I make up my jewels they shall be mine;” not one of these is lost, but all saved, saved eternally. Oh! that will be a splendid victory! What can be greater? You that know the conflict through which the child of God has to pass will bear me witness that if you get to heaven, you will sing with all your might the conqueror’s hymn. And I think we all should do the same. I remember saying once that if ever I got to heaven I would sing the loudest there, for I owed the most to sovereign grace. But when I came down stairs, one said to me, “You made a mistake, I shall sing more loudly than you, for I owe more than you do.” And I found that was the general opinion, that each brother and each sister thought that he owed most to divine grace. Now, if we are all to sing

loudest what a shout of triumph there will be! And I suppose the verse in our hymn is quite true to the apprehension of each of us —

*“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.”*

What a transcendent triumph!

Not a few shall there be to share the triumph, but *a multitude that no man can number*; for the glory shall be enhanced by *the salvation of so many*. Heaven is none of your narrow places for narrow-hearted bigots. No, brethren, our largest imagination never yet could grasp heaven, but it will hold multitudes of multitudes. Nor will the praise be any the less, when we consider that there were so many of such varied clans and climes, some of all kindreds on the face of the earth, swarthy or white. There shall be found in heaven the vilest sinner that lived, there shall be brought thither the proudest rebel, and the stoutest hearted, and the most obstinate of sinners; there shall be such in heaven as would have made a wonder in hell, some, I say, who would have been such great sinners, had they been suffered to go to hell, that their dreadful fall would even hell itself appal, but they are in heaven, saved by sovereign grace. And, O beloved! as there are such persons, this will help to make the victory grand, that they were saved by such means, such simple means, by the simple preaching of the gospel; not by wisdom, not by science, not by eloquence, but by the simple telling out of the story of the cross. How this will tend to make the triumph brighter than it could have been in any other way.

And, O beloved, this victory will excel all others in *the routing of such foes, such cruel, such crafty, such mighty, such numerous foes*. Sin, sin, it is a name of horror — sin o’erthrown. Death — what glooms are concentrated in that word! — death destroyed. Satan — what craft, what cruelties, what malice linger there — Satan bound hand and foot, and led captive. Such a victory over such foes. I find no words in any tongue by which I can describe its magnitude. And oh! the results of that victory, how bright! Souls knit to Christ by such love, tongues tuned to such music, hearts burning with such fire, heaven filled with such devout, such holy inhabitants, the ears of Deity regaled with such grateful music, heaven filled with such myriads of happy spirits. The peaceful results, setting aside the overthrow, will be enough to make this victory grander than all the triumphs of men or angels put together.

Say now, and gather up all your enthusiasm to say it — What a victory shall that be, when *there shall not be a single trophy in the hands of the adversary*. The victory shall be unparalleled in this, that all the success which the enemy thought he had achieved shall only tend to make his defeat the more galling, and add lustre to the victorious King of kings. You see sometimes hanging up in old minsters tattered flags, that were taken from the adversary; sometimes when the report of battle comes in, we are told the battle was won, that so many cannon and so many flags were left with the enemy. But, O Lord God! thou hast not left a single trophy in the hands of thy foe. I said he had no prisoners, but he shall not even have a flag, not one truth rent in pieces, not one doctrine of revelation hung up to rot in the minsters of hell; not one single attribute of God that shall be trailed in the mire, not one single truth of Christianity to be laughed at, and despised by fiends, not a trophy; there shall not a hair of your head perish, not so much as that shall Satan gain, not a bone, not a fragment of the saint, either of his body or his spirit — no trophies left. And all this will make hell angry, to think that God gave him vantage-ground, let him contend with poor feeble men; but God was in man, and fought with Satan — man, a poor feeble worm, fought with Satan, and, like David, he threw the stone of faith at the giant's head, and destroyed him with his own weapons. God hath destroyed death by the death of Christ, destroyed sin by the great sin-bearer, yea he has destroyed the dragon by the seed of a woman, who bruised his head with that very seed whose heel the serpent once did bite. Glory be unto thee, O Lord! This is thy victory. The more we muse upon it, the higher doth our rapture rise, and the more prepared do our hearts grow to peal forth the words of the Psalmist, “His right hand, and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.”

II. Secondly; observe that DEITY IS CONSPICUOUS HERE.

Man is not made mention of. There is no name of Moses, or of the prophets, or of the apostles here; I read not the names of Chrysostom and Augustine, nor of those modern fathers of the Church, such as Calvin, and Zwingli — the stars are lost in the blaze of the sun. O God! how glorious is thy right arm, and how do thy disciples, thy children, hide their heads and say, “Not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory!” But mark, beloved, as they are not mentioned it is not because the mention need to be avoided, for the more we talk of instrumentalities, or rather think about them — (I do not say the more we think *of* them, but the more we think *about* them) — the more persuaded we shall be that it only adds to God's glory to use

men, for men are such poor tools to work with. You have heard of the celebrated painter who gained renown by painting with poor brushes, when the good ones were stolen; and Quintin Matsys, who made a cover for the well without tools, when all the proper tools were taken away; he wrought the ironwork with such poor implements as he could get. So was the skill of the painter or artisan admired in that he could produce such effects under such disadvantageous conditions. Ah! then what an artist must he be! they exclaim concerning the one. And they look upon this piece of ironwork, and say of the other, "What! no graving tools, no casting, how could he do it?" So when we shall come to look at men, when we look at them in the light which eternity shall reveal, we shall say of the best of them, "How can the Lord have won such victories with such poor things as these!" So that you may mention the instruments every one of them, from righteous Abel down to the last preacher of the Word, and yet it shall be true, that the victory shall speak the sole praise of the General. No doubt, dear friends, this will be a part of the splendor of the triumph to think that he did win by man. It was in man that Satan conquered: Adam and Eve were led astray by the crafty wiles of Satan. It is by man that death came, and by man comes the resurrection of the dead. This will be gall and wormwood in the cup of the lost, when they shall see the *Man* Christ Jesus, the seed of the woman, sitting at the right hand of God. This is judgment's greatest terror, "Hide us from the Lamb;" and this shall be hell's greatest horror, "Hide us from the Lamb; let us not behold his face." But glory be unto thee, most gracious God, for thou hast lifted man up above all the works of thy hands, and given him dominion above all creatures, so that principalities and powers are put beneath his feet in the person of Christ. And all this only proves that "His own right-hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

I wish I might enlarge here and speak of the conspicuous glory of God in this respect, that all the persons of the Trinity will be glorified, the Father, the Son, the Spirit. All the attributes of God, his unsearchable greatness, and his unrivalled majesty, his grace, his power, his truth, his justice, his holiness, his immutability, these shall shine forth with resplendent lustre. His wondrous works and his terrible acts shall declare his praise; they shall be the theme of every tongue, and the topic of every conversation. "Men shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." All his decrees shall be seen in their final accomplishment, every one of them fulfilled, the counsel answering to the providence. Of all that the Father

willed, of all that the Son performed, of all that the Spirit revealed, not one thing is frustrated. How shall I gather up these things? O for the voice of a mighty angel! O for a seraph's lip of fire, to speak now of the splendor of that last day, when not only the great but the little, not only the abundance of God's providence, and the great deeps of his counsel, but even the small deeds of his lovingkindness shall be made to sing forth his praise, when not only the leviathian deeds of God shall make the deep to praise the Lord, but even the little fish that move therein, shall leap up to join the chorus, and everywhere from everything, for everything, there shall be heard the tune — "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

III. We have in our text a third thought, which we can only hint at. In all this — HOLINESS WILL BE GLORIFIED.

Note the adjective, — "His *holy* arm." When we contemplate any actions of God, you will notice that the name which cherubs utter, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," is always brought out. Where Christ bears sin, and overcomes it, I hear the cry of "Holy, holy, holy," from the cross. Where Jesus breaks the tomb, and conquers death, I seem to hear the note of "Holy, holy, holy," for it makes the day holy on which the deed was done. And when he ascends to glory, and the Father says, "Well done," we seem to hear still the note, "Holy, holy, holy." In everything, from the manger to the cross, and from the cross onward to the crown, holiness becometh God's house, and all God's acts for ever. Is it not, dear friends, after all the hinge of the struggle? Is not this the point, just as you know in great battles, there is some one mountain or hill, which is the object of struggle, not for the value of that particular hill, but because on that the battle will depend, so holiness is just the point, the rallying point between God and Satan. Here are the two war-cries. The hosts of evil cry, "Sin, sin, sin;" but the cry of the armies of the Lord of hosts is this, "Holiness, holiness, holiness." Every time we strike a blow it is "Holiness;" and every time they attack us it is "Sin." Sin is the real object of their aim. When Satan attacks, it is to stab at holiness, and when we resist, it is to guard holiness, or to drive back his sin. Mark you, this, I say, is the point of the battle, and by that ye shall be able to judge on which side you are. What is your war-cry? What is your war-cry? When Cromwell fought with the soldiers of the covenant at Dunbar, you will remember they were distinguished by their cries, on the one side, "The Covenant, the Covenant;" and on the other side, "The Lord of hosts, the Lord of hosts." And so to-night there is the cry on either side, "Sin and the pleasures

thereof." Is that your war-cry, friend? You say "No," — how is it then you were at the theater the other night? You say "No," — how is it then you frequent the tavern? You say "No," — how is it then you have got so many misgotten gains about you now? You say, "No," — how is it you make appointments for deeds of sin, and perhaps to-night, or to-morrow night, intend to fulfill them? I tell you, sirs, there are many of you whose war-cry to-night is "Sin, and the pleasures thereof." On the other hand, I trust there are not a few in this vast throng, who can say, "Oh! sir, feebly though I speak it, yet my war" cry is 'Holiness, and the cross'" — that goeth with it, "Holiness, and the cross." Ah! beloved you are just now on the side that is laughed at, the world points at you and says, "There are your saints." Yes, here they are, sir, what dare you say against them? Abide your time, man, and have your jeering out; ye shall change that laugh for everlasting howlings by-and-bye. "There are your Methodists; there are your hypocritical professors." What, sir, dare you say it? The servants of the living God will know how to answer you in that day, when their king shall be revealed in the clouds of heaven, and his glory shall be manifest, and they shall share his triumph, and all flesh shall see it, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Come, we will pass that question again to-night, "What is your war-cry?" There has been a good deal of wickedness these last few days in London. I love to see holy mirth; I delight to see men well feasted. I like Christmas; I wish it came six times a-year. I like the generosity of those who give to the poor. Let it be extended. I would not stop a smile. God forbid me! But cannot men be happy without drunkenness? cannot they be mirthful without blasphemy? Is there no possibility of being happy without lasciviousness? Are there no other ways of finding true pleasure besides selling your soul to the devil? O sirs! I say there have been thousands in this huge city who have been going about the streets, and whose cry has been, "Sin, and the pleasures thereof! Where is the music-hall? Where is the Casino? Where is the Coal Hole? Where is the tavern? Where is the ball-room? Sin, and the pleasures thereof." O Satan! thou hast many soldiers, and right brave soldiers they are, and never are they afraid of thy cause, nor ashamed of thy name nor of thy unholy work. Ay, thou art well served, O prince of hell! and rich will be thy wages when thy drudges earn the fire for which they have labored. But I hope and trust there are some to-night who will change their watch-note. Ye have not nailed your colors to the mast, have you? Even if you have, by

God's grace I would pull the nails out. Are ye determined to die? Will you serve the black prince for ever, and perish with him? Jesus Emmanuel, the captain of our salvation, bids me cry to you, "Enlist beneath my banner." Believe in him, trust in him, and live. Oh! trust the merit of the cross, the virtue of the blood, the tears, and the dying groans. This it is to be a Christian, and ever afterwards this shall be your war-note — "Holiness, and the cross thereof!" O take this, all! Fear not. The cross with holiness will bring the mortifying of the flesh, the shame of the world, and the reproach of men. Take both, for now the battle is raging. But, O my brethren, another crush, and another, and another, and another, and we shall gain the top of the hill, and the shout of "Holiness and the cross!" shall be answered by the echoes all round the world, for everywhere holiness shall be victorious, and men shall know the Lord. Ay, and the echoes of heaven shall answer, too, and the spirits of the sanctified shall cry, "Holiness, and the crown thereof!" Then we will change one word of our watch-note; and as our enemies have broken before us and are utterly destroyed; as they melt away like the fat of rams; as unto smoke they consume away, we will sing for ever, "Holiness, and the crown thereof! holiness, and the crown thereof!" But that shall be only one note: this shall be the song — "His own right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

I would that some soul would believe in Jesus to-night, that it might share in the victory. I would that young man's heart would be given to Christ to-night, or yours yonder. He deserves it of you: if it were only his mercy in having spared you, he deserves it. And thou greyheaded sinner there, does he not deserve thy heart for sparing thee so long? Yield, I pray thee; his love meets thee. Yield; his terrors threaten thee. Yield; lay down thy weapons, and be for ever forgiven. May God help thee to do it. The Lord prove his sovereignty and his power to-night in the conversion of many of his chosen; and unto him shall be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PROCESSION OF SORROW.

NO. 497

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 1ST,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And they took Jesus, and led him away.” — John 19:16.

NEXT Saturday all eyes will be fixed on a great Prince who shall ride through our streets with his Royal Bride. To-day I invite your attention to another Prince, marching in another fashion through his metropolis. London shall see the glory of the one: Jerusalem beheld the shame of the other. Come hither, ye lovers of Immanuel, and I will show you this great sight — the King of sorrow marching to his throne of grief, the cross. I claim for the procession of my Lord an interest superior to the pageant you are now so anxiously expecting. Will your Prince be sumptuously arrayed? Mine is adorned with garments crimsoned with his own blood. Will your Prince be decorated with honors? Behold, my King is not without his crown — alas, a crown of thorns set with ruby drops of blood! Will your thoroughfares be thronged? So were the streets of Jerusalem; for great multitudes followed him. Will ye raise a clamor of tumultuous shouting? Such a greeting had the Lord of glory, but alas, it was not the shout of welcome, but the yell of “Away with him! away with him.” High in the air ye bid your banners wave about the heir of England’s throne, but how shall ye rival the banner of the sacred cross, that day for the first time borne among the sons of men. For the thousands of eyes which shall gaze upon the youthful Prince, I offer the gaze of men and angels. All nations gathered about my Lord, both great and mean men clustered around his person. From the sky the angels viewed him with wonder and amazement; the spirits of the just looked from the windows of heaven upon the scene, yea, the great God and Father watched each movement of his suffering Son. But ye ask me where is the spouse, the king’s daughter fair and

beautiful? My Lord is not altogether without his espoused one. The Church, the bride of Christ, was there conformed to the image of her Lord; she was there, I say, in Simon, bearing the cross, and in the women weeping and lamenting. Say not that the comparison is strained, for in a moment I will withdraw it and present the contrast. Grant me only thus much of likeness: we have here a Prince with his bride, bearing his banner, and wearing his royal robes, traversing the streets of his own city, surrounded by a throng who shout aloud, and a multitude who gaze with interest profound. But how vast was the disparity! The most careless eye discerns it. Yonder young Prince is ruddy with the bloom of early youth and health; my Master's visage is more marred than that of any man. See, it has been blackened with bruises, and stained with the shameful spittle of them that derided him. Your heir of royalty is magnificently drawn along the streets in his stately chariot, sitting at his ease: my princely sufferer walks with weary feet, marking the road with crimson drops; not borne, but bearing; not carried, but carrying his cross. Your Prince is surrounded by a multitude of friends; hark how they joyously welcome him! And well they may; the son of such noble parents deserves a nation's love. But my Prince is hated without a cause. Hark how their loud voices demand that he should be hastened to execution! How harshly grate the cruel syllables, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Your noble Prince is preparing for his marriage: mine is hastening to his doom. Oh, shame that men should find so much applause for Princes and none for the King of kings. Yet, dear friends, to some eyes there will be more attraction in the procession of sorrow, of shame, and of blood, than in your display of grandeur and joy. Oh! I pray you, lend your ears to such faint words as I can utter on a subject all too high for me, the march of the world's Maker along the way of his great sorrow; your Redeemer traversing the rugged path of suffering, along which he went with heaving heart and heavy footsteps, that he might pave a royal road of mercy for his enemies.

I. After our Lord Jesus Christ had been formally condemned by Pilate, our text tells us he was led away. I invite your attention to CHRIST AS LED FORTH.

Pilate, as we reminded you, scourged our Savior according to the common custom of Roman courts. The lictors executed their cruel office upon his shoulders with their rods and scourges, until the stripes had reached the full number. Jesus is formally condemned to crucifixion, but before he is led away he is given over to the Praetorian guards that those rough legionaries

may insult him. It is said that a German regiment was at that time stationed in Judea, and I should not wonder if they were the lineal ancestors of those German theologians of modern times who have mocked the Savior, tampered with revelation, and cast the vile spittle of their philosophy into the face of truth. The soldiery mocked and insulted him in every way that cruelty and scorn could devise. The platted crown of thorns, the purple robe, the reed with which they smote him, and the spittle with which they disfigured him, all these marked the contempt in which they held the King of the Jews. The reed was no mere rush from the brook, it was of a stouter kind, of which easterns often make walkingstaves, the blows were cruel as well as insulting; and the crown was not of straw but thorn, hence it produced pain as well as pictured scorn. When they had mocked him they pulled off the purple garment he had worn, this rough operation would cause much pain. His wounds unstaunched and raw, fresh bleeding from beneath the lash, would make this scarlet robe adhere to him, and when it was dragged off; his gashes would bleed anew. We do not read that they removed the crown of thorns, and therefore it is most probable, though not absolutely certain, that our Savior wore it along the *Via Dolorosa*, and also bore it upon his head when he was fastened to the cross. Those pictures which represent our Lord as wearing the crown of thorns upon the tree have therefore at least *some* scriptural warrant. They put his own clothes upon him, because they were the perquisites of the executioner, as modern hangmen take the garments of those whom they execute, so did the four soldiers claim a right to his raiment. They put on him his own clothes that the multitudes might discern him to be the same man, the very man who had professed to be the Messiah. We all know that a different dress will often raise a doubt about the identity of an individual; but lo! the people saw him in the street, not arrayed in the purple robe, but wearing his garment without seam, woven from the top throughout, the common smock-frock, in fact, of the countrymen of Palestine, and they said at once, "Yes, 'tis he, the man who healed the sick, and raised the dead; the mighty teacher who was wont to sit upon the mountain-top, or stand in the temple courts and preach with authority, and not as the Scribes." There can be no shadow of doubt but that our Lord was really crucified, and no one substituted for him. How they led him forth we do not know. Romish expositors, who draw upon their prolific fancy for their facts, tell us that he had a rope about his neck with which they roughly dragged him to the tree; this is one of the most probable of their surmises, since it was not unusual for the Romans thus to conduct criminals to the gallows. We care,

however, far more for the fact that he went forth carrying his cross upon his shoulders. This was intended at once to proclaim his guilt and intimate his doom. Usually the crier went before with an announcement such as this, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, who for making himself a King, and stirring up the people, has been condemned to die." This cross was a ponderous machine; not so heavy, perhaps, as some pictures would represent it, but still no light burden to a man whose shoulders were raw with the lashes of the Roman scourge. He had been all night in agony, he had spent the early morning at the hall of Caiaphas, he had been hurried, as I described to you last Sunday, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back again to Pilate; he had, therefore, but little strength left, and you will not wonder that by-and-bye we find him staggering beneath his load, and that another is called to bear it with him. He goes forth, then, bearing his cross.

What learn we here as we see Christ led forth? Do we not see here the truth of that which was set forth in shadow by *the scape-goat*? Did not the high-priest bring the scape-goat, and put both his hands upon its head, confessing the sins of the people, that thus those sins might be laid upon the goat? Then the goat was led away by a fit man into the wilderness, and it carried away the sins of the people, so that if they were sought for, they could not be found. Now we see Jesus brought before the priests and rulers, who pronounce him guilty; God himself imputes our sins *to him*; he was made sin for us; and, as the substitute for our guilt, bearing our sin upon his shoulders — for that cross was a sort of representation in wood of our guilt and doom — we see the great Scape-goat led away by the appointed officers of justice. Bearing upon his back the sin of all his people, the offering goes without the camp. Beloved, can you say he carried *your* sin? As you look at the cross upon his shoulders does it represent *your* sin? Oh I raise the question, and be not satisfied unless you can answer it most positively in the affirmative. There is one way by which you can tell whether he carried your sin or not. Hast thou laid thy hand upon his head, confessed thy sin, and trusted in him? Then thy sin lies not on thee; not one single ounce or drachma of it lies on thee; it has all been transferred by blessed imputation to Christ, and he bears it on his shoulder in the form of yonder heavy cross. What joy, what satisfaction this will give if we can sing —

*“My soul looks back to see
 The burden thou didst bear,
 When hastening to the accursed tree,
 And knows her guilt was there!”*

Do not let the picture vanish till you have satisfied yourselves once for all that Christ was here the substitute for you.

Let us muse upon the fact that Jesus was conducted without the gates of the city. It was *the common place of death*. That little rising ground, which perhaps was called Golgotha, the place of a skull, from its somewhat resembling the crown of a man's skull, was the common place of execution. It was one of Death's castles; here he stored his gloomiest trophies; he was the grim lord of that stronghold. Our great hero, the destroyer of Death, bearded the lion in his den, slew the monster in his own castle, and dragged the dragon captive from his own den. Methinks Death thought it a splendid triumph when he saw the Master impaled and bleeding in the dominions of destruction; little did he know that the grave was to be rifled, and himself destroyed, by that crucified Son of man.

Was not the Redeemer led thither *to aggravate his shame*? Calvary was like our Old Bailey; it was the usual place of execution for the district. Christ must die a felon's death, and it must be upon the felon's gallows, in the place where horrid crimes had met their due reward. This added to his shame; but, methinks, in this, too, he draws the nearer to us, “He was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

But further, my brethren; this, I think, is the great lesson from Christ's being slaughtered without the gate of the city — *let us go forth, therefore, without the camp, bearing his reproach*. You see there the multitude *are leading him forth from the temple*. He is not allowed to worship with them. The ceremonial of the Jewish religion denies him any participation in its pomps; the priests condemn him never again to tread the hallowed floors, never again to look upon the consecrated altars in the place of his people's worship. He is exiled from *their friendship*, too. No man dare call him friend now, or whisper a word of comfort to him. Nay more; he is banished from their *society*, as if he were a leper whose breath would be infectious whose presence would scatter plague. They force him without the walls, and are not satisfied till they have rid themselves of his obnoxious presence. For him they have no tolerance. Barrabas may go free;

the thief and the murderer may be spared; but for Christ there is no word, but "Away with such a fellow from the earth! It is not fit that he should live." Jesus is therefore hunted out of the city, beyond the gate, with the will and force of his own nation, but he journeys not against his own will; even as the lamb goeth as willingly to the shambles as to the meadow, so doth Christ cheerfully take up his cross and go without the camp. See, brethren, here is a picture of what we may expect from men if we are faithful to our Master. It is not likely that we shall be able to worship with their worship. They prefer a ceremonial pompous and gaudy; the swell of music, the glitter of costly garments, the parade of learning all these must minister grandeur to the world's religion, and thus shut out the simple followers of the Lamb. The high places of earth's worship and honor are not for us. If we be true to our Master we shall soon lose the friendship of the world. The sinful find our conversation distasteful; in our pursuits the carnal have no interest; things dear to us are dross to worldlings, while things precious to them are contemptible to us. There have been times, and the days may come again, when faithfulness to Christ has entailed exclusion from what is called "society." Even now to a large extent the true Christian is like a Pariah, lower than the lowest caste, in the judgment of some. The world has in former days counted it God's service to kill the saints. We are to reckon upon all this, and should the worst befall us, it is to be no strange thing to us. These are silken days, and religion fights not so stern a battle. I will not say it is because we are unfaithful to our Master that the world is more kind to us, but I half suspect it is, and it is very possible that if we were more thoroughly Christians the world would more heartily detest us, and if we would cleave more closely to Christ we might expect to receive more slander, more abuse, less tolerance, and less favor from men. You young believers, who have lately followed Christ, should father and mother forsake you, remember you were bidden to reckon upon it; should brothers and sisters deride, you must put this down as part of the cost of being a Christian. Godly working-men, should your employers or your fellow-workers frown upon you; wives, should your husbands threaten to cast you out, remember, without the camp was Jesus' place, and without the camp is yours. Oh! ye Christian men, who dream of trimming your sails to the wind, who seek to win the world's favor, I do beseech you cease from a course so perilous. We are in the world, but we must never be of it; we are not to be secluded like monks in the cloister, but we are to be separated like Jews among Gentiles; men, but not of men; helping, aiding, befriending, teaching, comforting, instructing, but not sinning either to

escape a frown or to win a smile. The more manifestly there shall be a great gulf between the Church and the world, the better shall it be for both; the better for the world, for it shall be thereby warned; the better for the Church, for it shall be thereby preserved. Go ye, then, like the Master, expecting to be abused, to wear an ill-name, and to earn reproach; go ye, like him, without the camp.

II. Let us now gaze for awhile upon CHRIST CARRYING HIS CROSS.

I have shown you, believer, your position; let me now show you your *service*. Christ comes forth from Pilate's hall with the cumbrous wood upon his shoulder, but through weariness he travels slowly, and his enemies urgent for his death, and half afraid, from his emaciated appearance, that he may die before he reaches the place of execution, allow another to carry his burden. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, they cannot spare him the agonies of dying on the cross, they will therefore remit the labor of carrying it. They place the cross upon Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country. We do not know what may have been the color of alimony face, but it was most likely black. Simon was an African; he came from Cyrene. Alas poor African, thou hast been compelled to carry the cross even until now. Hail, ye despised children of the sun, ye follow first after the King in the march of woe. We are not sure that Simon was a disciple of Christ; he may have been a friendly spectator; yet one would think the Jews would naturally select a disciple if they could. Coming fresh from the country, not knowing what was going on, he joined with the mob, and they made him carry the cross. Whether a disciple then or not, we have every reason to believe that he became so afterwards; he was the father, we read, of Alexander and Rufus, two persons who appear to have been well known in the early Church; let us hope that salvation came to his house when he was compelled to bear the Savior's cross.

Dear friends, we must remember that, although no one died on the cross with Christ, for atonement must be executed by a solitary Savior, yet another person did carry the cross for Christ; for this world, while redeemed by price by Christ, and by Christ alone, is to be redeemed by divine power manifested in the sufferings and labors of the saints as well as those of Christ. Mark you, the *ransom* of men was all paid by Christ; that was redemption *by price*. But power is wanted to dash down those idols, to overcome the hosts of error; where is it to be found? In the Lord of Hosts, who shows his power in the sufferings of Christ and of his Church.

The Church must suffer, that the gospel may be spread by her means. This is what the Apostle meant when he said, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church." There was nothing behind in the price, but there is something behind in the manifested power, and we must continue to fill up that measure of revealed power, carrying each one of us the cross with Christ, till the last shame shall have been poured upon his cause, and he shall reign for ever and ever. We see in Simon's carrying the cross a picture of what the Church is to do throughout all generations. Mark then, Christian, Jesus does not suffer so as to exclude your suffering. He bears a cross, not that you may escape it, but that you may endure it. Christ does exempt you from sin, but not from sorrow; he does take the curse of the cross, but he does not take the cross of the curse away from you. Remember that, and expect to suffer.

Beloved, let us comfort ourselves with this thought, that in our case, as in Simon's, *it is not our cross, but Christ's cross which we carry*. When you are molested for your piety; when your religion brings the trial of cruel mockings upon you; then remember, it is not your cross, it is *Christ's* cross; and how delightful is it to carry the cross of our Lord Jesus?

You carry the cross after him. You have blessed company; your path is marked with footprints of your Lord. If you will look, there is the mark of his blood-red shoulder upon that heavy cross. 'Tis *his* cross, and he goes before you as a shepherd goes before his sheep. Take up your cross daily and follow him.

Do not forget, also, *that you bear this cross in partnership*. It is the opinion of some commentators that Simon only carried one end of the cross, and not the whole of it. That is very possible; Christ may have carried the heavier end, against the transverse beam, and Simon may have borne the lighter end. Certainly it is so with you; you do but carry the light end of the cross; Christ bore the heavier end.

***"His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"***

Rutherford says, "Whenever Christ gives us a cross, he cries, 'Halves, my love.'" Others think that Simon carried the whole of the cross. If he carried all the cross, yet he only carried the wood of it; he did not bear the sin which made it such a load. Christ did but transfer to Simon the outward

frame, the mere tree; but the curse of the tree, which was our sin and its punishment, rested on Jesus' shoulders still. Dear friend, if you think that you suffer all that a Christian can suffer; if all God's billows roll over you, yet, remember, there is not one drop of wrath in all your sea of sorrow. Jesus took the wrath; Jesus carried the sin; and now all that you endure is but for his sake, that you may be conformed unto his image, and may aid in gathering his people into his family.

Although Simon carried Christ's cross, *he did not volunteer to do it, but they compelled him*. I fear me, beloved, I fear me that the most of us if we ever do carry it, carry it by compulsion, at least when it first comes on to our shoulders we do not like it, and would fain run from it, but the world compels us to bear Christ's cross. Cheerfully accept this burden, ye servants of the Lord. I do not think we should seek after needless persecution. That man is a fool and deserves no pity, who purposely excites the disgust of other people. No, no; we must not make a cross of our own. Let there be nothing but your religion to object to, and then if that offends them let them be offended, it is a cross which you must carry joyfully.

Though Simon had to bear the cross for a very little while, it gave him lasting honor. I do not know how far it was from Pilate's house to the Mount of Doom. Romanists pretend to know; in fact they know the very spot where Veronica wiped the blessed face with her handkerchief, and found his likeness impressed upon it; we also know very well where that was *not* done; in fact they know the very spot where Jesus fainted, and if you go to Jerusalem you can see all these different places if you only carry enough credulity with you; but the fact is the city has been so razed, and burned, and ploughed, that there is little chance of distinguishing any of these positions, with the exception, it may be, of Mount Calvary, which being outside the walls may possibly still remain. The *Via Dolorosa*, as the Romanists call it, is a long street at the present time, but it may have been but a few yards. Simon had to carry the cross but for a very little time, yet his name is in this Book for ever, and we may envy him his honor. Well, beloved, the cross we have to carry is only for a little while at most. A few times the sun will go up and down the hill; a few more moons will wax and wane, and then we shall receive the glory. "I reckon that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." We should love the cross, and count it very dear, because it works out for us a far more exceeding

and eternal weight of glory. Christians, will you refuse to be cross-bearers for Christ? I am ashamed of some professed Christians, heartily ashamed of them! Some of them have no objection to worship with a poor congregation till they grow rich, and then, forsooth, they must go with the world's church, to mingle with fashion and gentility. There are some who in company hold their tongues, and never say a good word for Christ. They take matters very gently; they think it unnecessary to be soldiers of the cross. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth not after me," says Christ, "is not worthy of me." Some of you will not be baptized because you think people will say, "He is a professor; how holy he ought to be." I am glad the world expects much from us, and watches us narrowly. All this is a blessed clog upon us, and a means of keeping us more near the Lord.

Oh! you that are ashamed of Christ, how can you read that text, "He that is ashamed of me, and of my words, of him will I be ashamed when I come in the glory of my Father, and all my holy angels with me." Conceal your religion? Cover it with a cloak? God forbid! Our religion is our glory; the Cross of Christ is our honor, and, while not ostentatiously parading it, as the Pharisees do, we ought never to be so cowardly as to conceal it. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Take up your cross, and go without the camp, following your Lord, even until death.

III. I have now a third picture to present to you — CHRIST AND HIS MOURNERS.

As Christ went through the streets, a great multitude looked on. In the multitude there was a sparse sprinkling of tender-hearted women, probably those who had been healed, or whose children had been blessed by him.

Some of these were persons of considerable rank; many of them had ministered to him of their substance; amidst the din and howling of the crowd, and the noise of the soldiery, they raised an exceeding loud and bitter cry, like Rachel weeping for her children, who would not be comforted, because they were not. The voice of sympathy prevailed over the voice of scorn. Jesus paused, and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children." The sorrow of these good women was a very proper sorrow; Jesus did not by any means forbid it, he only recommended another sorrow as being better; not finding fault with this, but still commending that. Let me show what I think he meant. Last Sunday the remark was made to me — "If the story of the sufferings of Christ had been told of any other man, all the congregation

would have been in tears.” Some of us, indeed, confess that, if we had read this narrative of suffering in a romance, we should have wept copiously, but the story of *Christ’s* sufferings does not cause the excitement and emotion one would expect. Now, I am not sure that we ought to blame ourselves for this. If we weep for the sufferings of Christ in the same way as we lament the sufferings of another man, our emotions will be only natural, and may work no good. They would be very proper, very proper; God forbid that we should stay them, except with the gentle words of Christ, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me.” The most Scriptural way to describe the sufferings of Christ is not by laboring to excite sympathy through highly-coloured descriptions of his blood and wounds. Romanists of all ages have wrought upon the feelings of the people in this manner, and to a degree the attempt is commendable, but if it shall all end in tears of pity, no good is done. I have heard sermons, and studied works by Romish writers upon the passion and agony, which have moved me to copious tears, but I am not clear that all the emotion was profitable. I show unto you a more excellent way.

What, then, dear friends, should be the sorrows excited by a view of Christ’s sufferings? They are these — *Weep not because the Savior bled, but because your sins made him bleed.*

**“*Twere you my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my grimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.*”**

When a brother makes confession of his transgressions, when on his knees before God he humbles himself with many tears, I am sure the Lord thinks far more of the tears of repentance than he would do of the mere drops of human sympathy. “Weep for yourselves,” says Christ, “rather than for me.”

The sufferings of Christ *should make us weep over those who have brought that blood upon their heads.* We ought not to forget the Jews. Those once highly favored people of God who cursed themselves with, “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” ought to make us mourn when we think of their present degradation. There are no passages in all the public ministry of Jesus so tender as those which have regard to Jerusalem. It is not sorrow over Rome, but Jerusalem. I believe there was a tenderness in Christ’s heart to the Jew of a special character. He loved the Gentile, but still Jerusalem was the city of the Great King. It was, “O Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" He saw its streets flowing like bloody rivers; he saw the temple naming up to heaven; he marked the walls loaded with Jewish captives crucified by command of Titus; he saw the city razed to the ground and sown with salt, and he said, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children, for the day shall come when ye shall say to the rocks, Hide us, and to the mountains, Fall upon us."

Let me add, that when we look at the sufferings of Christ, *we ought to sorrow deeply for the souls of all unregenerate men and women.*

Remember, dear friends, that what Christ suffered for us, these unregenerate ones must suffer for themselves, except they put their trust in Christ. The woes which broke the Savior's heart must crush theirs. Either Christ must die for me, or else I must die for myself the second death; if he did not carry the curse for me, then on me must it rest for ever and ever.

Think, dear friends, there are some in this congregation who as yet have no interest in Jesu's blood, some sitting next to you, your nearest friends who, if they were now to close their eyes in death, would open them in hell!

Think of that! Weep not for him, but for these. Perhaps they are your children, the objects of your fondest love, with no interest in Christ, without God and without hope in the world! Save your tears for them; Christ asks them not in sympathy for himself. Think of the millions in this dark world! It is calculated that one soul passes from time into eternity every time the clock ticks! So numerous has the family of man now become, that there is a death every second; and when we know how very small a proportion of the human race have even nominally received the cross — and there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved — oh! what a black thought crosses our mind! What a cataract of immortal souls dashes downwards to the pit every hour! Well might the Master say, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves." You have, then, no true sympathy for Christ if you have not an earnest sympathy with those who would win souls for Christ. You may sit under a sermon, and feel a great deal, but your feeling is worthless unless it leads you to weep for yourselves and for your children. How has it been with you? Have you repented of sin? Have you prayed for your fellow men? If not, may that picture of Christ fainting in the streets lead you to do so this morning.

IV. In the fourth place, one or two words upon CHRIST'S FELLOW- SUFFERERS.

There were two other cross-bearers in the throng; they were malefactors; their crosses were just as heavy as the Lord's, and yet, at least, one of them had no sympathy with him, and his bearing the cross only led to his death, and not to his salvation. This hint only. I have sometimes met with persons who have suffered much; they have lost money, they have worked hard all their lives, or they have laid for years upon a bed of sickness, and they therefore suppose that because they have suffered so much in this life, they shall thus escape the punishment of sin hereafter. I tell you, sirs, that yonder malefactor carried his cross and died on it; and you will carry your sorrows, and be damned with them, except you repent. That impenitent thief went from the cross of his great agony — and it was agony indeed to die on a cross — he went to that place, to the flames of hell; and you, too, may go from the bed of sickness, and from the abode of poverty, to perdition, quite as readily as from the home of ease and the house of plenty. No sufferings of ours have anything to do with the atonement of sin. No blood but that which *He* has spilt, no groans but those which came from *His* heart, no suffering but that which was endured by *Him*, can ever make a recompense for sin. Shake off the thought, any of you who suppose that God will have pity on you because you have endured affliction. You must consider Jesus, and not yourself; turn your eye to Christ, the great substitute for sinners, but never dream of trusting in yourselves. You may think that this remark is not needed; but I have met with one or two cases where it was required; and I have often said I would preach a sermon for even one person, and, therefore, I make this remark, even though it should rebuke but one.

V. I close with THE SAVIOR'S WARNING QUESTION — “*If they do these things in the green tree, what will they do in the dry?*” Among other things methinks he meant this — “If I, the innocent substitute for sinners, suffer thus, what will be done when the sinner himself — the dry tree — whose sins are his own, and not merely imputed to him, shall fall into the hands of an angry God.” Oh! ye unregenerate men and women, and there are not a few such here now, remember that when God saw Christ in the sinner's place he did not spare him, and when he finds you without Christ, he will not spare *you*. You have seen Jesus led away by his enemies; so shall you be dragged away by fiends to the place appointed for you. “Deliver him to

the tormentors," was the word of the king in the parable; it shall be fulfilled to you — "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Jesus was deserted of God; and if he, who was only imputedly a sinner, was deserted, how much more shall you be? "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,*" — what an awful shriek! But what shall be your cry when you shall say, "Good God! good God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and the answer shall come back, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." These are awful words, but they are not mine; they are the very words of God in Scripture. Oh! sinner, if God hides his face from Christ, how much less will he spare you! He did not spare his Son the stripes. Did I not describe last Sabbath the knotted scourges which fell upon the Saviours back? What whips of steel for you, what knots of burning wire for you, when conscience shall smite you, when the law shall scourge you with its ten-thonged whip! Oh! who would stand in your place, ye richest, ye merriest, ye most self-righteous sinners — who would stand in your place when God shall say, "Awake O sword against the rebel, against the man that rejected me; smite him, and let him feel the smart for ever!" Christ was spit upon with shame; sinner, what shame will be yours! The whole universe shall hiss you; angels shall be ashamed of you; your own friends, yes, your sainted mother, shall say "Amen" to your condemnation; and those who loved you best shall sit as assessors with Christ to judge you and condemn you! I cannot roll up into one word all the mass of sorrows which met upon the head of Christ who died for us, therefore it is impossible for me to tell you what streams, what oceans of grief must roll over *your* spirit if you die as you now are. You may die so, you may die now. There are more unlikely things than that you will be dead before next Sunday. Some of you will! It does not often happen that five or six thousand people meet together twice; it never does, I suppose; the scythe of death must cut some of you down before my voice shall warn you again! Oh! souls, I do beseech you, by the agonies of Christ, by his wounds and by his blood, do not bring upon yourselves the curse; do not bear in your own persons the awful wrath to come! May God deliver you! Trust in the Son of God and you shall never die.

The Lord bless you, for Jesu's own sake. Amen.

THE GLADNESS OF THE MAN OF SORROWS.

NO. 498

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 8TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.” —
Psalm 45:7, 8.

DURING the last few Sabbath-days we have been considering the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. We followed him through the agony of the garden, the sorrows of the betrayal, the weariness and slander of his various trials, the shame and mockery of the soldiery, and the sorrows of his cross-bearing progress along the streets of the city. It seems fit this morning to make a pause that we may take breath awhile in this our pilgrimage of sorrow, and be comforted by a view of the glory-land to which the thorny pathway leads. A festive occasion like the present may have unfitted your minds for deep contemplations upon the Passion, and it may be more congenial with our present mood of gladness to meditate upon the glory which followed the shame. The same person will be before our eye, but we shall view him in a brighter light, we shall see the silver lining of the black cloud of anguish, the rich pearls hidden in the stormy deep of his sufferings, and the days of heaven which were conceived in the womb of the black night of his agony. The Man of Sorrows is the fountain of all joy to others, and is the possessor of all the joys of heaven and earth, by virtue of his triumphs. He has experienced joys in proportion to his sorrows; as he once waded through deep waters of grief he has now

climbed to the highest mountains of happiness. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross despising the shame, and now having sat down at his Father's right-hand he enjoys pleasures for evermore. We have seen our David crossing the brook Kedron weeping as he went; shall we not gaze upon him as he dances before the ark for joy? We saw him crowned with thorns, shall we not go forth to meet him and behold him with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart? Oh that while we muse upon these things our heavenly Father may hear the prayer of our great Advocate who once cried on our behalf — "And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves."

Our text describes the joy poured forth upon our glorious King in a twofold manner. Our Lord is first made joyous by his Father — "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." But there is another joy, which he getteth not from one person, but from many. Read the next verse — "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby *they* have made thee glad." Here both saints and angels unite to swell the ever-deepening, and widening river of the Savior's gladness. When we shall have walked by these still waters and trodden these green pastures, perhaps we shall be prepared to say with the apostle, "And not only so, but *we also* joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," and we shall be qualified to sing with the spouse, "We will rejoice and be glad in thee; Ye will remember thy love more than wine; the upright love thee."

I. Come, my brethren, let us ponder that part of OUR SAVIOR'S JOY WHICH IS GIVEN HIM BY HIS FATHER.

To a degree the Redeemer possessed this joy *even while he was here on earth*. We are not sure that the early life of the Savior was full of sorrow. As he grew in wisdom and in stature, he also grew in favor both with God and man; and favor with God and man would probably give the youthful Jesus an unusual degree of holy happiness. When he entered upon his public ministry, sorrows in troops beset him, so that the countenance once fairer than the children of men, became more marred than that of any man, and at the age of thirty-two or thirty-three he was taken to be near fifty, from the effect of labor, hardship and woe. Yet, even in the days of his

affliction, the Great Mourner was not utterly wretched, even amid the wormwood and the gall there were drops of joy. When, in his baptism, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended, did that divine Dove bring no peace, no comfort upon his wings? When the Father bare witness, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," did those approving words from the opening heavens afford no satisfaction to the mind of the obedient Son? Brethren, the perfect nature of our Redeemer could not but rejoice exceedingly in the smile of the Father and the descent of the Holy Ghost.

When in the wilderness, after the forty days of fasting and of temptation, the angels ministered unto him, did they bring him no celestial joys, no consolations of God? Did he know no secret joys upon the mountain-tops, where he communed with God at midnight? Was it no delight to him to utter sweet invitations and loving words of mercy? Surely those lips were blessed which poured forth benedictions, and there must have been some comfort in the hands which bound up the broken-hearted and opened the prisons of the captives. We read that Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, "Father, I thank thee, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." The doctrine of electing love stirred the deeps of his great soul, and made the floods clap their hands. "The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice."

Do you think, brethren, our Savior lived in this world, *doing so much good*, without receiving some joy in his acts of mercy? To teach, to labor, and to make men holy, must give joy to a benevolent mind. It could not be otherwise than pleasant to a good man to do good. If God delighteth in mercy, surely his express image must do the same. To restore the dead to their sorrowing relations, was this no satisfaction? Did the widow's grateful eye in the gates of Nain kindle no joy-flashes in his heart? Bid the thankfulness of Mary and Martha inspire no comfort in the Life-giver?

Think you that it was not gladsome work to feed the famishing multitudes? Who could look upon the feasting thousands without rejoicing? To heal the leper, to restore the lame, to give eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf, who could do all this and not be happy in distributing the boons? Surely, brethren, there were some hosannas in Jesu's ears, and though he could always bear the cry of "Crucify him! Crucify him!" yet he must have felt the wondrous joy of doing good, which is one of the delights entailed on all self-sacrificing lovers of others.

Bethink you, beloved, of his character, and surely he must have known the *joy of being good*; for there is a deep gladness in holiness, a blessed peacefulness in righteousness. The holiness of angels is their happiness, and although to a large degree the Savior laid his peace aside, yet there is a rest of soul from which virtue cannot separate. Distractions of conscience he never knew, disturbance of mind, on account of sin he did not feel on his own account, although as our substitute he was made sin for us. He suffered. Mark, I am not for a moment detracting from his sufferings, high mountains of grief I see; the eagle's wing cannot reach their summit, nor foot of angel climb their brows; but lo, I see leaping streams of pleasure running adown the rugged steeps, and amid the hollows of the desolate hills I gaze upon deep lakes of joy unfathomable by mortal line.

Brethren, we have every reason to believe that our Savior permanently found a solace while on earth, in the consideration *that he was doing his Father's will*. He said, "It is my meat and my drink, to do the will of him that sent me." "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" On several occasions the voice from heaven proclaimed the Father's good pleasure in his only begotten: once the glory of heaven enwraps him on the holy mount; and during his whole life he had the presence of God until the moment of necessary desertion, when we find him, for the first and only time, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" To do a work which he had contemplated from all eternity, to engage in an occupation which had always been most delightful in prospect, could not have been altogether and only sorrowful. It was a Passover with many bitter herbs, but with desire had he desired to eat of it. It was a baptism, and a baptism of blood, but he was straitened until it was accomplished. Of old, in expectation his delights were with the sons of men. Were there none in the work? Brethren, let your Lord speak for himself — "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

In the glorious prospect which this great work opened to him when it should be completed, I am absolutely sure our Savior found comfort. Think not I speak too strongly; I have scriptural warrant. Turn to the twenty-second Psalm, which is the soliloquy of Christ upon the cross, and you find him, after he bemoaned his desolate condition, comforting himself thus, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto he Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall

bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.” He saw with prescient eye through the thick darkness which enveloped the cross, the rising of the bright sun of heaven’s eternal noon. He saw, when he hung upon the cross, not only the mocking eyes of multitudes of enemies, but the loving eyes of millions of souls whom he should redeem from hell; he heard not only the shouts of the ribald mob, but the songs of blood-redeemed spirits. When he saw the lions and heard them roar, was it not a comfort to the shepherd that he had kept the sheep, and none of them had perished. Indeed, my brethren, there is more than enough of evidence to prove that a rich anointing of gladness rested on the head of the Man of Sorrows.

Still, dear friends, this may be viewed by some as a moot point; we allow that there is room for difference of opinion; but not so as to the great joy which Christ obtained *after he had endured the cross, despising the shame*. Let us enter into the secret joys of our Beloved. Consider, my brethren, the work accomplished; Chiist has borne the wrath of God; God is reconciled to his people; death has been destroyed; Christ as risen from the dead; the dragon’s head has been broken, the powers of sin have been subdued; our Lord ascends to heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel; the glorified spirits accord him a triumphal entry. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!” He sits down upon his throne at his Father’s right hand, and then it is that he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

I should not have failed to remark that, as God, our Redeemer always possessed fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore, We are speaking of him in his complex person as man and God, and in his official character as Mediator, it is his delight in this capacity which we now consider.

The joy of the risen Mediator laid, first of all, in this, *that he had now accomplished a work which he had meditated upon from all eternity*. Before the day-star marked the dawn; before the calm of space had ever been stirred by wing of angel, or the solemnity of silence had been startled with song of seraph, Christ had purposed to redeem his people, It was in the eternal purpose of the great Second Person in the Divine Unity, from before all worlds, to redeem unto himself a people by price. What joy must

it give him now that he can say, "I have finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness."

His heart had not only meditated, *but had been mightily set upon his work*. He had bound his people's names upon his breast; he had graven them upon the pylons of his hands. His ears were bored, for he intended to serve even until death. What if I say that, from before all worlds, he thirsted and panted that he might do the Father's will, and redeem his people from their ruin! Now, brethren, that desire which had been in him like coals of juniper, unquenchable, is now fulfilled to the uttermost; how can he be otherwise than anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, since none other ever purposed so firmly or succeeded so perfectly.

Consider, too, *how great the pains which he endured, and we must believe the joy to be commensurate with the pain*. In the accomplishing of his great life-purpose, he descended to the cross of deepest woe. Have I not tried to paint in my poor way the mysterious agonies of our blessed Savior? but I feel that I have failed. Now when all this had been suffered, what joy to look back upon it! Never day so bright as that which follows black darkness; never calm so sweet as that which succeeds hurricane and tempest; never native place so delightful as to the long exiled pilgrim. So deep the sorrow, so high the joy; so unspeakable the grief, so unutterable the bliss.

Remember, beloved brethren, *the enemies he had overcome*, and you will not marvel that his joy was matchless. Had he not worsted Death — grim tyrant — vanquisher of all mankind? Had he not broken the head of the old serpent, who in his crushing coils had bound and pressed a universe of souls? Did he not defeat in battle all the fiends in hell? Was not evil for ever dethroned? Did not goodness sit upon a glorious high throne? Was not virtue exalted to the highest heaven, and sin cast down to the lowest hell in that day of the judgment of this world, when the Prince of Darkness was cast out? "Behold," he might have said, "I see Satan falling like lightning from heaven; the dragon bound with a great chain. Lo, hell's gates are shut upon the saints, the grave is rifled of its spoils, heaven is crowded with the saved, and earth purified from sin." O Jesus, thou mighty conqueror, thy glorious victories must surely give to thee, as they do to us, a blessed anointing with the oil of gladness!

Our Lord possesses in heaven now, as perfect man, the joy of looking back upon a life without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; the satisfaction of

seeing this perfect obedience covering all his people, till they stand lovely in his loveliness; the equal delight of observing the efficacy of his blood to wash the foulest, and make them whiter than snow, while his intercession scatters mercy in one everlasting shower upon the sons of men. Since his heart was love his joy must be in deeds of love, and as he has become a fountain always welling up with loving gifts towards the chosen sons of men, his delight must be unchanging like his nature, and unbounded like his divinity. "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

We pause a moment, having tried to dwell upon the joy, to notice the cause of it. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness, therefore God hath anointed thee." It seems, then, that the first cause why Jesus Christ has received fullness of joy lies in *his having loved righteousness*. This he did necessarily because of the spotless purity of his nature; this he did practically in *the hallowed sincerity and integrity of his life*. Of whom could it be said so truly as of our Lord, that the law of God was in his heart. How abundantly did he prove his love to righteousness, by vindicating it in his death, fulfilling in his own person all the sentence of divine wrath taking upon himself all the curses which fell upon offenders. You cannot suppose righteousness to be more clearly manifested than in the living works of Jesus, nor more completely avenged than in the dying throes. How sovereign is that righteousness to which even the Son of God bowed his head and gave up the ghost. The world deluged with water, the plains of Sodom smoking with brimstone, the land of Egypt vexed with plagues, all these terrible things in righteousness manifest the justice of God, but none of them so solemnly as the voluntary sacrifice of Jesus. Our Beloved loved righteousness indeed when he emptied out all his heart-floods that he might make us righteous. Moreover, as in his life and death we see that he loved righteousness, we discern it too *in the constant effect of his work*. His gospel makes men righteous. Does it not give them a legal righteousness by imputation, a real righteousness by infusion, a righteousness which covers them with fine linen without and makes them all glorious within. The spirit of the gospel which we preach is to magnify that which is pure and lovely and of good repute. Wherever the Lord Jesus displays his gracious power, sins yields the throne, purity wins the scepter, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through the perfect sacrifice, the living power of Jesus.

The text adds, "*Thou hatest wickedness.*" A man's character is not complete without a perfect hatred of sin. "Be ye angry, and sin not." There can hardly be goodness in a man if he be not angry at sin; he who loves truth must hate every false way. How our Lord Jesus hated it when the temptation came! Thrice it assailed him in different forms, but ever it was, "Get thee behind me, Satan." How he hated it when he saw it in others; none the less fervently because he showed his hate oftener in tears of pity than in words of rebuke; yet what language could be more stern, more Elijah-like, than the words, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer." He hated wickedness so much that he bled that he might wound it to the heart; he died that it might die; he was buried that he might bury in his tomb; and he rose that he might for ever trample it beneath his feet.

Christ is in the Gospel, my brethren, and you all know how utterly that Gospel is opposed to wickedness in every shape. No matter how wickedness may array itself in fair garments, and imitate the language of holiness, the precepts of Jesus, like his famous scourge of small cords, chase wickedness out of the temple, and will not let it have peaceful lodging in the Church. So too, in the heart where Jesus reigns, what war there is between Christ and Belial? And when our Redeemer shall come to be our judge, in those thundering words, "Depart, ye cursed," which are, indeed, but a prolongation of his life-teaching concerning sin, then shall it be seen, I say, that he hated wickedness. As warm as is his love to sinners, so hot is his hatred of sin; as perfect as is the righteousness which he completed, so perfect shall be the destruction of every form of wickedness. Oh thou glorious champion of right, and destroyer of wrong, for this cause hath God, even thy God, anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

But, beloved, we must dwell for one moment upon another thought supplied by the text. The *character of this joy* is hinted at by way of comparison — "God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." And who are his fellows? Suppose his fellows to be the kings and princes of this world, for the psalm is descriptive of Christ in his royalty. Well, is he not anointed with gladness above them all? Kings rejoice in their dominions, their extent and population: our King looks from shore to shore, and from the river even to the ends of the earth, and of his dominion there is no end. Princes delight in the fame and honor which their office and deeds may bring them; but before the Lord Jesus

Christ the fame of monarchs dwindles into nothing. His name shall endure for ever; throughout all generations the people shall praise him. Monarchs delight in the riches and treasure which their dominions yield; Christ receiveth a wealth of love and homage from his people, before which the riches of Croesus become poverty itself. "The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor." Kings are wont to rejoice in the victories they have achieved. He that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of his strength, hath more joy than they. They boast the sureness of their throne; but "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The inward thought of some kings may be that they are invincible in power, and that their will is law; but at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and his enemies shall become as the fat of rams; into smoke shall they consume, yea, into smoke shall they consume away. Good kings rejoice in the beneficence of their rule, and the happiness of their subjects; our King may surely glory in the favors which he has scattered from his scepter. But time would hail us if we were to complete the contrast here. Kings of the earth, ye may take off your crowns, and remain uncrowned in the presence of lying Jesus, for on his head are many crowns. O ye lords and mighty men, ye may lay down your dignities and honors, for ye are unhonoured and undignified in the presence of him who is above his fellows!

My brethren, where shall his fellows be found? Search ye among the wise, and who shall match the gladness of incarnate wisdom, for man's wisdom bringeth sorrow. Go ye, and travel among the famous, and who shall be compared with his illustrious name, where else is there a name so full of joy? Search out the mighty, who hath an arm like his? Go ye, and search among the good and excellent, who have blessed their kind by philanthropy; who among them is so anointed as the Man of Nazareth? As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. Standing as high above all the rest of men as the heavens are above the earth; he is, indeed, anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. I find that some interpreters read it — "The oil of gladness for his fellows." The rendering is probably incorrect, but it bears a very truthful, sweet, and comfortable thought in it. If the saints are his fellows, and he is not ashamed to call them brethren, then the oil of gladness was first poured on his head, that it might descend even to the skirts of his garments, and that all the saints might be made partakers of his joy.

We have said enough, we think, on this first point; here is the material for much meditation. Search, my brethren, and learn how the Lord, even our God, has glorified his Son Jesus.

II. Turn we now to THE GLADNESS AFFORDED BY THE CHURCH. “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and cassia, and aloes, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.” His garments have been saturated with very precious and fragrant odours; this is the work of his Church. In the phrase, “ivory palaces” the allusion is to certain costly structures which some Oriental kings erected, plated within and without with ivory. We read of Ahab that he built an ivory house; and it was a solemn threat from the lip of Amos, “the houses of ivory shall perish.” These ivory houses relate, I suppose, either to the courts of glory, or, more consistently with our interpretation this morning, to the hearts of believers; or, better still, to the churches, which are like palaces of ivory, both for glory and majesty, for richness, and for purity. The saints’ graces, their love, their praise, their prayers, their faith, are like myrrh, cassia, and aloes, and the Savior’s garments are so perfumed therewith, that when he rides in his triumphal chariot he scatters sweet odours all around. It is a great and certain truth, that Christ finds an intense satisfaction in his Church. “He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.” In his people, *as the objects of his choice*, he finds satisfaction; ‘tis true there is nothing in them naturally; they are by nature heirs of wrath, even as others; but having set his love upon them, having determined to make them his people, he takes a delight in the objects of his choice because of that choice. Nothing in us could have been the origin of the Saviour’s first delight in us. Now, doubtless, that we are his workmanship, he takes a delight in the works of his own hands; but when we were like broken potsherds, thrown away upon the dunghill of the fall, if he saw anything in us it must have been in his own eyes.

But, dear friends, as men always take a deep interest in that which has *cost them dearly*, so since that triumphant day when Jesus stretched out his hands upon the tree and paid the price for his people, he has found an infinite solace and delight in them. He sees in every believer’s face a memento of his groans; he looks into the eye of every penitent, and sees his own tears there; he hears the cry of every mourner, and there hears his own groans over again; he beholds the reward of his soul’s travail in every regenerate heart, and hence, as the purchase of his blood, we make him glad.

Again, *as his workmanship*, as he sees us day by day more conformed to his image, he rejoices in us. Just as you see the sculptor with his chisel fetching out the statue which lies hidden in the block of marble, taking off a corner here, and a chip there, and a piece here — see how he smiles when he brings out the features of the form divine — so our Savior, as he proceeds with his graving tool, working through the operation of the Spirit, and making us like unto himself, finds much delight in us. The painter makes rough drafts at first, and lays on the colors roughly; some do not understand what he is doing, and for three or four sittings the portrait is much unlike the man it aims at representing; but the painter can discern the features in the canvass; he sees it looming through that mist and haze of color; he knows that beauty will yet beam forth from yonder daubs and blotches. So Jesus, though we are yet but mere outlines of his image, can discover his own perfection in us where no eye but his own, as the Mighty Artist, can perceive it. Dear friends, it is for this reason, because we are the work of his hands, that he taketh delight in us.

Know ye not that we are his brethren — and brothers should delight in brothers. Nay, we are his spouse — and where should the husband find his comfort but in his bride? We are his body — shall not the head be content with the members? We are one with him, vitally, personally, everlastingly one; and it is little marvel, therefore, if we have a mutual joy in each other, so that his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces of his Church, wherein he hath been made glad.

Let us think *how we can make him glad*. Brethren, *our love* to Christ — oh! we think it so cold, so little, and so, indeed, we must sorrowfully confess it to be, but it is very sweet to Christ. We can never compare our love to Christ with his love to us, and yet he does not despise it. Hear his own eulogy of his Church in the Song, “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!” “Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirza, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.” See, see, my brethren, his delight in you. When you lean your head on his bosom, you not only receive, but you give him joy; when you gaze with love upon his beauteous face, you not only receive comfort, but give delight. Our *praise*, too, gives him joy, when from our hearts we sing his name, and when gratefully, though silently, we breathe a

song up to his throne. As princes are delighted with incense, so is Christ delighted with the praise of his people. And our *gifts*, too, delight him. As the son of our good Queen accepts rich tokens of kindness from the people of his land, so our Lord Jesus is charmed with the offerings of his people. He loves to see us lay our time, our talents, our substance upon his altar, not for the value of what we give, but for the sake of the motive from which the gift springs. He takes far more delight in what we do for him than our Queen's son could take in splendid arches, or in the glorious pageantry of yesterday. To Christ the shouts of his people are better than the cheers of the most enthusiastic populace, and to him the lowly offerings of his saints are more acceptable than thousands of gold and silver. Forgive your enemy, and you make Christ glad; distribute of your substance to the poor, and he rejoices; be the means of saving souls, and you give him to see of the travail of his soul; preach his gospel, and you are a sweet savor unto him; go among the ignorant and among the hopeless, and try to lift them up, and you have given him satisfaction. I tell you, brother, it is in your power this very day to break the alabaster box and pour the precious ointment on his head, as did the woman of old, whose memorial is to this day set forth. You can anoint him above all his fellows with the oil of gladness.

I think I see a great procession. It is Jesus Christ riding alone through the tens of thousands of souls whom he has redeemed with his own blood. I think I see him looking to the right hand and to the left as he rides along the centuries. See how every windows of every age are crowded! Glorified spirits look down from the housetops of heaven: the Church militant looks up from the streets of earth, multitudes upon multitudes of souls that love him, and call him King, salute him as their Redeemer. I notice that, as he goes along in this great procession, his eyes are bright with joy. We liked to see the Prince and Princess happy yesterday but their joy could be nothing compared with that of Christ as he rides along in triumph. How the multitudes delight him; the ten thousand times ten thousand — who shall tell how many Christ has redeemed? Their number is beyond all human count; so many are they that, as they clap their hands and shout to his name, I hear a voice like many waters, or like great thunders, while they cry "Hallelujah, Sweet Prince! ride on triumphantly! and reign for ever and ever!" There is one thing Christ feels as he looks upon the crowd around him, which our Prince could not feel yesterday. He knows that everyone of these would lay down their lives for him. Of all those whom Jesus bought

with blood; among those who are renewed in heart; there is not one who would not bleed for him. To the stake they walk, and sing amidst the flames. To the dungeon they go, and praise him while they rot in darkness. They are dragged at the heels of horses, they are stoned, they are sawn in sunder, they wander about in sheep-skins and in goat-skins, and they glory in all these things that they may show their love to Christ. Every eye in the vast throng which gathers about the triumphal chariot of Christ beams with intense love to him; and when they shout, each one shouts louder than his fellow; each one in the whole throng feels he owes more to the great King than anyone else; there is something special about each face the King looks on, and as he remembers the special circumstances, he perceives the reason for that special love. Either it is much forgiven, or else it is much trial averted, or much strength conferred by which to perform labor. I am sure that when you and I are in that throng looking upon him, we may truly say

*“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.”*

Ye did well to applaud your Prince yesterday, but what had he ever done for you? What debt did you owe to him? Owed he not far more to you? But our King as he rides along in the midst of the joyful hosts of the blood-bought, has this upon his mind — “I bought all these souls with my blood.” He recollects, as he looks upon them, where they would have been but for his grace, and the very pangs of hell must add joy to his soul, when he remembers that he saved them from passing into the pit. He recollects, too, what they once were — how full of sin, what enemies to God, how they crucified him, how they trampled on his precious blood, and now he sees them bowing, before him, too glad to catch but a glimpse of him as he rides by, too happy to be as the dust of his feet if he will but honor them by treading upon them that he might be lifted the higher. O my brethren, we love the Lord Jesus Christ, and our hearts give him a reception such as never was accorded to earthly Prince. Pile the arches! pile the arches! Let hearts pour forth their life-blood, if in no other way the banners can be dyed red! Strew the streets; strip off your garments if in no other way the pageant can be made illustrious! bring forth the royal diadem, and let every saint renounce wealth and comfort if by no other means Jesus can be crowned! Empty heaven, if by no other way Jesus can be attended with guards of honor. Come, all ye sons and daughters of his great family, and

offer yourselves a living sacrifice, if there can be no other incense! We are all prepared — I speak for the sacramental host of God's elect — we are all prepared by his grace to follow him through floods and through flames! We are prepared to give him all the honor that heart can conceive. We are prepared to kiss his feet as well as to crown his head. Bring forth the royal diadem to-day and crown him Lord of all; and each day as he rides along, till he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, let him be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords.

III. Now for another text, but not another sermon. It is in the fourth verse of the first chapter of the Song of Solomon: — “WE WILL BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN THEE.”

God has made the king glad, and his saints make him glad; let us be glad too. But let us mind that our gladness is of the right sort. “We will rejoice and be glad *in thee*.” That man is glad in his farm; that other in his merchandise; that one yonder in his wealth; that woman in her jewels; that other in her beauty; “*We* will rejoice and be glad *in thee*.” But in what? We will rejoice, more especially, *in his love to us*. You remember Jesus Christ said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” Interpreters read that two ways. Some think he meant, “Lovest thou me more that thou lovest these nets, and this fishery, and this thine earthly calling and these thy friends?” I think I hear Jesus Christ speaking this morning, and he says, “My people, I love you more than these.” He points to spirits that once stood around his throne, angels that have sinned; they fell like lightning from heaven, and there they lie in flames, and Christ says, “I loved you more than these; I let these perish, but I saved you.” Pointing to the kings and princes of this world, the great, the mighty, and the learned men, and to all the nations that sit in darkness, he says, “I love you more than these; I gave Ethiopia and Seba for you.” Then taking a higher range he joints to heaven. There sit the angels before the throne, and he says, “I loved you more than these; I left their company for yours.” He bids you listen to their harps and to their songs, and he says, “I loved you more than these; I left all these melodies that I might be able to meet your groans.” Yea, he points to his own throne, so bright with glory that mortal eyes scarce dare to rest upon it, and he says, “I loved you more than these, for I left the glory of my throne that I might redeem you with my blood.” Saint, will you not join with me? Shall we not both say, “Savior, blessed be thine unexampled love! We will rejoice and be glad in thee!”

But some interpreters read the text — “Lovest thou me more than these?” — “Lovest thou me more than these others love me?” Jesus speaks to-day to us, “I have loved thee more than these; thy mother loved thee; strong were her pangs when thou wast born, and anxious her cares when she nursed thee at her bosom; but I have loved thee more than these, and thy brethren loved thee, and thy sisters; born of the same parents they watched over thee with delight, and they have been ready to help thee in thy time of need, but I have loved thee more than these: and thy husband loved thee, loved thee as his own soul, he has cherished thee, and has been ready to lay down his life to give thee back health when thou hast been sick; but I have loved thee more than these: thy children, too, have loved thee; they have climbed thy knee and smiled upon thee for all thy kindness to them, and they have strengthened thine old age, and thou hast leaned upon them, as upon a staff, when thou hast been tottering with weakness; but I have loved thee more than these: and thou hast had a joyous companion, a dear friend who has been with thee from thy youth up, and has never lifted his heel against thee; and thou hast had thine intimates and thy familiars who went up to the house of God with thee, and talked cheerfully by the way, but I have loved thee more than these,” I think I hear him say to me — “There are some in this congregation who would pluck out their own eyes to give them to thee; they love thee, for thou art their spiritual father, but I have loved thee more than these.” And he points to all the good men that have ever tried to teach you, to all the comforters who have given you joy, to all the helpers that have aided you on the road to immortality; and he says, “I have loved you more than these.” Well, if his love be matchless like this, we will rejoice and be glad *in him*. I have nothing, else to rejoice in, the Lord knoweth. I cannot rejoice in myself, there are so many sins and so many doubts; but I will rejoice and be glad in him if he loves me like this.

He has finished the work for me, given me a perfect righteousness, washed me in his blood, taken off his robe to clothe me, given his life that he may make me live, entered the grave to bring me out of it, and said that I shall shortly be enthroned with him above the sky. I will rejoice and be glad in him. When King Solomon was crowned, all the people rejoiced; and shall we be mourners when Christ sits upon his throne? Let the heaviest heart begin to leap; and if you have to bear your burdens to-morrow, yet do throw them off to-day. “We will rejoice and be glad in thee.” I should not like one Christian to go down these aisles this morning without some light of heaven’s brightness on his cheek — without some note of heaven’s music in his ear. “Oh!” says the Christian, “Yes. I will; the cross is heavy,

but I will hope beneath it; the furnace is hot, but I will sing in it; the way is rough, but I will tread it with light footsteps, for I will rejoice and be glad in him who has loved me and given himself for me.” Well, you see, there is a glad Christ in heaven, and here is a glad Church on earth; there is Christ anointed by his Father, here are his people sharing that anointing; here is Christ giving you joy, and you giving Christ joy. Belt the world with happiness; fire zodiac with joy. Lift up the ladder of your songs; while the bottom rests on earth, let the top reach to heaven; and ye angels of God, hold fellowship to-day with God and with us through the joy and peace which God the Father gives us, while we rejoice and are glad in him.

I would you all understood this subject, but some of you are strangers to it altogether! Remember, there is no joy anywhere but in Christ. It is all poor mockery which you get elsewhere. Jesus Christ is to be had, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

The Lord give you his benediction, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

THE CLEAN AND THE UNCLEAN.

NO. 499

A SERMON

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.

Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.” — Leviticus 11:2, 3.

THE Mosaic law attached great importance to meats and drinks: the Christian religion attaches none. The apostle Peter was shown by the vision of a sheet let down from heaven, not only that all nations were now to receive the gospel message, but that all kinds of food were now clean, and that all the prohibitions which had formerly been laid upon them for legal purposes were now once for all withdrawn. A Christian may, if he pleases, put himself under restrictions as to these matters. You will remember that the apostle Paul says, “I know and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” I wot our apostle was tender of weak consciences; but he could expostulate with the brethren somewhat thus, “If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye *dogmatize* — touch not this, taste not that, handle not the other — and all about things which perish with the using?” The doctrine of the New Testament is expressly laid down, “Every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.” And as for the practice enjoined upon believers, “All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient.” In the example of Paul we have full liberty; he would put no embargo upon the conscience. But in his example we have also fervent charity; he would put no stumbling-block in

his brother's way. "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth." The levitical law enjoined many precepts as to meats and drinks; but those carnal ordinances were imposed until the time of reformation. Since then, this Mosaic institution was not designed to be perpetual, we feel certain that it must have had some use at the time when it was first established, and during the time in which it was sustained. As that was peculiarly a typical dispensation, we feel persuaded that we shall not exaggerate the uses of the text if we show that there was something instructive to us and something typical of the better covenant in the command that the people were to eat no creatures but those which divided the hoof and those which chewed the cud.

I. It is our firm belief that these distinctions of meats were laid down on purpose TO KEEP THE JEWS AS A DISTINCT PEOPLE, and that herein they might be a type of the people of God, who are also, throughout all ages, to be a distinct and separate people — not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world.

You that are conversant with the old Levitical rule, well know that it was quite impossible for the Hebrews to mix with any other nation, without violating the statutes they were commanded to keep. Their food was so restricted that they could not possibly enter into social intercourse with any of the neighboring peoples. The Canaanites, for instance, ate everything, even the flesh that had been torn by dogs, and the dogs themselves. Now, a Jew could never sit at a Canaanites table, because he could never be sure that there would not be the flesh of some unclean and accursed thing upon it. The Jews could not even eat with the Arabs, who were near akin to them, for they frequently partook of the flesh of the camels, the hare, and the coney, all which, as we shall see presently, were forbidden to the Jew. The Arabs on the south, and the Canaanitish nations all round Palestine, were the most likely people with whom the Jews would associate, and this command about what they should and should not eat prevented them for ever from mingling with these people, and made them a distinct and isolated republic so long as they were obedient to the law. We are told by Eastern travelers that the Mohammedan regulations, which are far less strict than those of the Jew, prevent their becoming socially intermingled either with the idolaters or with Christians. It is a well-known fact that no people that have prescriptions about meats and drinks have ever changed their religion to that of another people, because the familiarity which seems necessary in order to proselyte is quite prevented by the barrier that

precludes from intercourse at the table. It is at the social table men enjoy the most genial intercourse; it is there they pour out their souls with the least reserve, and mix their thoughts one with another in the greatest freedom of conversation. Check them there; prevent their sitting at the same board, and there is no likelihood that they will ever blend or intermingle in any kind of affinity, the races must be distinct. I believe, dear friends, though I have been somewhat prosy in explaining myself, that it was God's real intention, to keep the children of Israel, until the coming of Christ, separate from all the nations that were upon the face of the earth.

They could not join in the worship of other nations, for other nations sacrificed to their gods the very animals which to the Jew were unclean. They could not join in social intercourse, as we have already seen; and hence marriage with any other nation would be, not only, as it was, prohibited by the law, but would be actually prevented by the possibilities of the case. It must in each instance put the transgressor beyond the pale of his own tribe. They would remain as much a distinct people, as if a great wall of brass had been built all around them, or as if they had been transported to some island, and an impassable gulf had been put between them and any other kindred upon earth. They were separated for ever.

Now friends, you will say, "What is the use of this to us?" I answer, it is the earthly type of a heavenly mystery. When the Jews were put away as the people of God for a time, then the Gentiles were grafted into their olive, and though we did not inherit the ceremonies, we did inherit all the privileges to which those ceremonies point. Thus all of you who name the name of Christ and are truly what you profess to be, are solemnly bound to be for ever separated from the world. Not that you are to leave off your daily intercourse with men. Our Savior did not do so. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Yet, you know, he was always in the company of sinners, sitting at their table, seeking their good, and hunting after their souls. He was with them, but he was never of them; he was among them, but always distinct and separate from them; not conforming himself to them, but transforming them to himself. He hath set us an example. It is not the seclusion of a hermit, nor the exclusion of yourselves in a monastery, where you would be of no service to your fellow-men, but it is a higher and more spiritual separation which I claim of Christians to-night. You are to be in the world, and among the world, you are to mingle with all sorts and conditions of men, but still to maintain the dignity of your newborn character, and to let men see that you are among them as a speckled bird, as a light in the midst of darkness, as salt scattered

over putridity, as heavenly angels in the midst of fallen men. So are ye to be a distinct people, a chosen generation.

But you will ask of me *in what respects are you to be distinguished?* In a pure consistency always, in a vain eccentricity never. This shall be my first reply. Not in your garments, my brethren. All those inventions of broad-brimmed hats, and coats without collars, perish in the using. Let your dress be, nevertheless, so distinguished from that of some other men, that there shall be none of the pride and foppery in which they delight. The Apostle Peter has well laid down the regulations by which our sisters in Christ are to adorn themselves, but I need not mention what you know so well and practice so little — that chaste and becoming neatness which is always right in the sight of God, and beautiful in the assembly of Christians. Not by my peculiar Jargon in your speech are you to be known. For my part I abhor in any man that sanctimonious tone and sacred whine which many affect; even in the pulpit I despise it. I believe that the reason why the pulpit has lost so much of its former power is because men must needs mouth our blessed Saxon tongue, and talk as if everything natural were to be eschewed there, and men, metamorphosed into ministers, were to be as unnatural and grotesque in their modes of speech as possible. No, not these, not these; all such artificial separations we leave to the people whose vanity feeds on its own conceit. Nor need you make any straining effort to be distinguished by any stiff buckram of your own; do not try to make yourself look like a Christian. True Christians can do a great many things that sham Christians must not do. As for me, I am never afraid to laugh, for I shall never crack the paint on my face, laugh as I may. A sincere man may do a great many things that a hypocrite dare not do, for he will spht the garments of his hypocrisy if he ventures to run as a Christian may.

Heavenly realities within do not always need to be plastered up and labelled outside, so that everybody may see and recognize you, and say, "There goes a saint." There are other modes of being distinguished from the world than any of these.

What are they then? Well, brethren, we ought ever to be distinguished from the world *in the great object of our life*. As for worldly men, some of them are seeking wealth, others of them fame; some seek after comfort, others after pleasure. Subordinately you may seek after any of these, but your main and principal motive as a Christian should always be to live for Christ. To live for glory? Yes, but for his glory. To live for comfort? Yes, but be all your consolation in him. To live for pleasure? Yes, but when you are

merry, sing psalms, and make melody in your hearts to the Lord. To live for wealth? Yes, but to be rich in faith. You may lay up treasure; but lay it up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, where thieves break not through nor steal. It is thought, you know, that ministers do live for God; merchants should do the same. I would, my brethren, that you would trade, and do your merchandise for his service; or do ye plough, and sow, and reap, and mow, do it for Christ! Would God you could do this quite as much in his service, as we do ours, when we preach for Christ!

You can make the commonest calling become really sacred. You may take the highest orders by dedicating your daily life wholly to the service of Jesus. There is such a thing — and let those that deny the possibility stand self-convicted that they obey not the precept — “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

By *your spirit* as well as your aim you should likewise be distinguished. The spirit of this world is often selfish; it is always a spirit that forgets God, that ignores the existence of a Creator in his own world, the land which he makes fat by his own bounty. Men with God’s breath in their nostrils forget him who makes them live. Now, your spirit should be one of unselfish devotion, a spirit always conscious of his presence, bowed down with the weight, or raised up with the cheer of Hagar’s exclamation — “Thou God seeest me;” a spirit which watcheth humbly before God, and seeketh to know his will and to do it through the grace of God given to you. Such a spirit as this, without the drab of one sect, or the phylacteries of another, will soon make you quite as distinct from your fellow men as ever meats and drinks could make the Jews a separate people.

Your maxims too, and the rules which regulate you, should be very different from those of others. The world says “Well, it is usual in the trade; there is no use in being over scrupulous; we must not be too Puritanic, or too severe; we shall never get on if we are picking at this and frowning at that.” A Christian never considers what is usual, but what is right; he does not estimate a wrong by its commonness; he counts that a fraud, and a falsehood will be as much fraud and falsehood, though all the world shall agree to practice it, as though but one man should do it in the dark. The believer reads things, not in man’s light, in the obscurity of which so many blind bats are willing to fly, but he reads things in the sunlight of heaven. If a thing be right though he lose by it, it is done; if it be wrong, though he should become as rich as Croesus by allowing it, he scorns the sin for his Master’s sake. We want our merchants on the

Exchange, our traders in their shops, and our artisans in their factories; yea, and we want all masters, employers, and overseers too, to be distinguished, as the clean from the unclean, in the maxims that govern their daily life, and thus manifestly separate from the world.

This will naturally lead to the next point — the Christian should be separate *in his actions*. I would not give much for your religion unless it can be seen. I know some people's religion is heard of, but give me the man whose religion is seen. Lamps do not talk, but shine; a lighthouse sounds no drum, it beats no gong, and yet far over the waters its friendly spark is seen by the mariner. So let your actions shine out your religion. Let your conduct talk out your soul. Let the main sermon of your life be illustrated by all your conduct, and it shall not fail to be illustrious. Have I not told you before that the only bit of ecclesiastical history we have in the whole New Testament is — what? The sermons of the Apostles? No, no, the “Acts of the Apostles.” So let your history be written, so that it may have this title — “The acts of such-and-such a man.” This will furnish the best proof that you have been with Jesus.

A Christian is distinguished *by his conversation*. He will often trim a sentence where others would have made it far more luxuriant by a jest which was not altogether clean. Following Herbert's advice — “He pares his apple — he would cleanly feed.” If he would have a jest, he picks the mirth but leaves the sin; his conversation is not used to levity; it is not mere froth, but it ministereth grace unto the hearers. He has learned where the salt-box is kept in God's great house, and so his speech is always seasoned with it, so that it may do no hurt but much good. Oh! commend me to the man who talks like Jesus, who will not for the world suffer corrupt communications to come out of his mouth. I know what people will say of you if you are like this: they will say you are straight-laced, and that you will not throw much life into company. Others will call you mean-spirited. Oh, my brethren! bold-hearted men are always called mean-spirited by cowards. They will admonish you not to be singular, but you can tell them that it is no folly to be singular, when to be singular is to be right. I know they will say you deny yourselves a great deal, but you will remind them that it is no denial to you. Sheep do not eat carrion, but I do not know that sheep think it a hardship to turn away from the foul feast. Eagles do not prefer to float on the sea, but I do not read that eagles think it a denial when they can soar in higher atmosphere. Do not talk of self-denial. You have other ends and other aims; you have welds of comfort that such men

know not of. It would be a shame for you to be eating husks with swine, when your Father's table is loaded with dainties. I trust, my dear brethren, that you know the value of the gold of heaven too well to pawn it away for the counterfeits of earth. "Come ye out from among them; be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." By a holiness which merely moral men cannot equal, stand as on a pedestal aloft above the world. Thus men may know you to be of the seed of Jesus, even as they knew the Jew to be the seed of Israel.

How shall I urge you to give more earnest heed to this holy separation? Let me add the voice of warning to that of entreaty. If we do not see to this matter we shall bring sorrow on our own souls; we shall lose all hope of honoring Christ, and we shall sooner or later bring a great disaster on the world. You know the world is always trying to nationalize the Church.

What a mercy it is that there are some who will not have it! If you could once make the Church and the nation one, what would follow? It must be destroyed; it must fall. It was when the church and the world became one in Noah's day that the Lord sent the flood to destroy all people. No, the proper position of a Christian is not with the world, even in its best state and its most exalted condition. We are to be separated from this present evil world according to the will of God. Our position to-day is as much as in Christ's day, outside the camp, not in it; we are still to be protesters, still to be testifiers against the world. "Ye are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Scripture never supposes that the world will get better till the coming of Christ. It does not propose to lift the world up and marry it with the Church. It always supposes the Church to be as an alien and a stranger here until Christ, her husband shall come. On which side will you rank? Truce there cannot be, links between the two there must not be. God and mammon cannot go together. For which will you be — for God — for truth — for right? Or for Satan — for the he — for the wrong? Which shall it be? May the Spirit of God whisper in your heart to-night, and say, "Believe thou in Christ Jesus; take up thy cross and follow him, and be enlisted on his side henceforth and for ever."

II. We have now a second and an important matter to bring forward. The distinction drawn between clean and unclean animals was, we think, intended by God TO KEEP HIS PEOPLE ALWAYS CONSCIOUS THAT THEY WERE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF SIN.

Just let me picture it. I have caught the idea from Mr. Bonar, though I fear I cannot paint it in words so well as he has done. An oriental Jew, sensible and intelligent, walks out in the fields. He walks along close by the side of the high-road, and what should he see but a string of camels going along? "Ah!" he says to himself "those are unclean animals." Sin, you see, is brought at once before his mind's eye. He turns away from the road and walks down one of his own fields, and as he goes along a hare starts across his path. "Ah!" says he, "an unclean animal again; there is sin in my path." He gets into a more retired place, he walks on the mountains; surely he shall be alone there. But he sees a coney burrowing among the rocks; "Ah!" says he, "unclean; there is sin there!" He lifts his eye up to heaven; he sees the osprey, the bald eagle, flying along through the air, and he says, "Ah! there is an emblem of sin there!" A dragon-fly has just flitted by him — there is sin there. There are insects among the flowers; now every creeping thing, and every insect, except the locust, was unclean to the Jew. Everywhere he would come in contact with some creature that would render him ceremonially unclean, and it were impossible for him, unless he were brutish, to remain even for ten minutes abroad without being reminded that this world, however beautiful it is, still has sin in it. Even the fish, in sea, or river, or inland lake, had their divisions; those that had no scales or fins were unclean to the Jew, so the little Hebrew boys could not even fish for minnows in the brook but they would know that the minnow was unclean, and so their young hearts were made to dread little wrongs and little sins, for there were little sins in the little pools even as there were leviathan sins floating in the deep and nude sea. Ah! friends, we want to have this more before our minds. Look at the fairest landscape that your eye has ever beheld; see the towering Alp, the green valley, and the silver stream

*"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty,"*

but the slime of the serpent is on them all,

*"Keep me, O, keep me King of kings,
Beneath the shadow of thy wings."*

When I walk abroad in this temple of nature, and seek to behold nature's God, I may not light upon a spot in the universe where the curse of sin has never inflicted a blight, or where the hope of redemption should not inspire a prayer. Sometimes, brethren you get all alone and quiet, but do not

imagine that you are even there free from sin. As the most beautiful landscape, so the sweetest retirement cannot shut out uncleanness. As the fly or the insect would intrude into the arbour where the Jew would worship, so sin will haunt and molest us even in the closet of devotion. Get up Christians, and be upon your watch-towers. You may sleep, but your enemies never will; you may suppose yourselves safe, but then are you most in danger. See that you put on the whole panoply of God, and are armed from head to foot, and having done all, watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation. Every morning we ought to ask the Lord to keep us from unknown sins, to preserve us from temptations that we cannot foresee, to check us in every part of life if we are about to go wrong, and to hold us up every hour that we sin not. You will say it must have been an unpleasant thing for the Jew always to have sin before his eye, nor would you wish every aspect of life to be thus fouled before your eye; but it will not be so unpleasant for you, my brother, because you know there is a redemption, and your faith can realize the end of the curse by sin being put away. Shut not your eyes to sin, but keep Christ always before you, and you will walk aright. I wish that some of my hearers had sin before their eyes now. Oh! you that trifle with it, you do not know what it is! Fools make a mock of sin. You laugh at it now; you do not understand what a fire it is that you have kindled to consume your soul! Oh! you that think it is such a little thing, its deadly poison will soon envenom all your blood, and then you will discover that he that plays with sin plays with damnation. May the Lord set sin straight before your eyes, and then set the cross of Christ there too, and so you will be saved. Two prayers I ask all my hearers to pray — they are very brief — “Lord show me myself.” If there is any man here who says he would pray but he does not know what to pray, for; pray that every night and morning — “Lord show me myself;” and if God hear you, you will soon be in such a wretched state that you will want another prayer, and then I give you this — “Lord show me thyself;” and then if he shall show you himself hanging on the tree, the expiation for guilt, the Great God become man that he might put away sin, your salvation will be accomplished. ‘Tis all the prayer that is wanted — “Lord show me myself; Lord show me thyself; reveal sin and reveal a Savior.” Lord, do this for all of us for thy name’s sake.

III. And now, I come to show you a third teaching of my text. As this injunction was meant to separate the Jews from other nations, and to keep the pious Israelite in constant remembrance of his danger of falling into sin,

so it was also intended to be A RULE OF DISCRIMINATION BY WHICH WE MAY JUDGE WHO ARE CLEAN AND WHO ARE UNCLEAN, THAT IS, WHO ARE SAINTS AND WHO ARE NOT.

There are two tests, but they must both be united. The beast that was clean was to chew the cud: here is the inner-life; every truehearted man must know how to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the sacred Word. The man who does not feed upon Gospel truth, and so feed upon it, too, that he knows the sweetness and relish of it, and seeks out its marrow and fatness, that man is no heir of heaven. You must know a Christian by his inwards, by that which supports his life and sustains his frame. But then the clean creatures were also known by their walk. The Jew at once discovered the unclean animal by its having an undivided hoof; but if the hoof was thoroughly divided, then it was clean, provided that it also chewed the cud. So there must be in the true Christian a peculiar walk such as God requires. You cannot tell a man by either of these tests alone; you must have them both. But while you use them upon others apply them to yourselves. What do you feed on? What is your habit of life? Do you chew the cud by meditation? When your soul feeds on the flesh and blood of Christ have you learned that his flesh is meat indeed, and that his blood is drink indeed? If so 'tis well. What about your life? Are your conversation and your daily walk according to the description which is given in the Word of believers in Christ? If not, the first test will not stand alone. You may profess the faith within, but if you do not walk aright without, you belong to the unclean. On the other hand, you may walk aright without but unless there is the chewing of the cud within, unless there is a real feeding upon precious truth in the heart, all the right walking in the world will not prove you to be a Christian. That holiness which is only outward in moral not spiritual; it does not save the soul. That religion, on the other hand, which is only inward is but fancy; it cannot save the soul either. But the two together; the inward parts made capable of knowing the lusciousness, the sweetness, the fatness of Christ's truth; and the outward parts conformed to Christ's image and character: these conjoined point out the true and clean Christian with whom it is blessed to associate here, and for whom a better portion is prepared hereafter.

If you read the chapter through you will find there were some two or three animals about which the Jew would have some little difficulty. There was the camel that did chew the cud, but did not exactly divide the hoof. Now this animal seems to me fitly to represent — though it may not have been

so intended — those men who seem really to feed on the truth and yet their walk and conversation are not aright. Their feet have been formed rather for the sandy desert of sin than for the sacred soil of godliness. Oh! I know some of you — come, let us be personal — there are some of you if I would always preach the doctrine of predestination, or some other doctrine of that kind, how sweet it would be to you! But your lives are not what they should be. Thank God there are not many of that sort who come here. They get angry with me very soon, and go off to other places where they can get sweet and savoury morsels, which exactly suit their taste, and hear no admonitions about their lives whatever. May the Lord deliver my ministry from ever being comfortable and flattering to souls that live in sin. I hope you will sometimes have to say, “I must either give up that sin or else give up my seat there.” I know one who said, “Well! it has come to this: I cannot go there on Sunday evening and keep my shop open in the morning; it will not do for me to go and sit there, and hear the Word, and sing with those people on Sunday evening, and then hear songs and join in revelries on week-nights.” I hope the Word of God here will be such a searching Word to some of you that you will even gnash your teeth at the preacher. He would sooner for you to do that than for you to say; “Peace, peace, where there is no peace,” sucking in sweet doctrine, and yet living in sin. God deliver us from Antinomianism! We do preach against Arminianism, but that is a white devil compared with the black devil of Antinomianism. God save us from that! If there is any religion that will drug conscience, stimulate crime, crowd jails, and turn this world into an Aeldema, it is the religion of the man who preaches divine sovereignty but neglects human responsibility. I believe it is a vicious, immoral, and corrupt manner of setting forth doctrine, and cannot be of God. It would undermine morality, and put the very life of society in peril if it were largely believed, or if it were preached by men of any great weight who should have any great numbers to follow them. Oh, dear friends! be not as the animal which cheweth the cud but yet divideth not the hoof. Seek not merely to get precious doctrine, comforting to yourselves, but see that your walk is such as it should be.

Then there was another animal. It did not chew the cud, still the Jews thought it did. This was *the coney* — the nearest approach to it is the rabbit of our land — “The coney, because he cheweth the cud but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean.” The coney was a very timid creature, which burrowed in the rocks. “The coney be a feeble folk, but they make their

dwelling in the rocks," says Solomon. Now, there are some people who seem as if they like the gospel truth, and they may be put down in the class in which Moses puts the coney, which appeared to chew the cud, though it did not really do so. There are hundreds of this sort we know. They like the gospel, but it must be very cheap. They like to hear it preached, but as to doing anything to extend it, unless it were to lend their tongues an hour, they would not dream of it. The coney, you know, lived in the earth. These people are always scraping. John Bunyan's muck-rake is always in their hands. Neither to dig nor to beg are they ashamed. They are as true misers, and as coyetous, as if they had no religion at all. And many of these people get into our Churches, and are received when thee ought not to be.

Coyetousness ought to exclude a man from Church fellowship as well as fornication, for Paul says, "Coyetousness, which is idolatry." He puts the brand right on its forehead, and marks what it is. We would not admit an idolater to the Lord's table; nor ought we to admit a coyetous man; only we cannot always know him. St. Francis Sales, who had a great many people come to him to confession, makes this note, that he had many men and women come to him who confessed all sorts of most outrageous crimes, but he never had one who confessed coyetousness. It is a kind of sin that always comes in at the back-door, and it is always entertained at the back-part of the house. People do not suspect it as an inmate of their own hearts. Mr. Coyetousness has changed his name to Mr. Prudent-Thrifty; and it is quite an insult to call him other than by his adopted name. Old vices, like streets notorious for vice, get new names given them.

Avaricious grasping, they call that only "the laws of social economy;" screwing down the poor is "the natural result of competition;" withholding corn until the people curse oh! that is "just the usual regulation of the market." People name the thing prettily, and then they think they have rescued it from the taint. These people, who are all for earth, are like the coney, who, though they chew the cud, burrow in the ground. They love precious truth, and yet they are all for this earth. If there are any such here, despite their fine experience, we pronounce them unclean — they are not heirs of heaven.

The next creature mentioned in the chapter is *the hare* — "The hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean." See how he fhes with bounding step over the ground! A clapping of the hands, and how he starts and is away! The hare is such a timid creature; she leayeth her food, and fleeth before the passer-by. I would not say a hard

thing, but there are some people who appear to chew the cud, they love to hear the gospel preached; their eyes will sparkle sometimes when we are talking of Christ, but they do not divide the hoof: Like the hare, they are too timid to be domesticated among the creatures whom the Lord has pronounced clean. They do not come out from the world, enter into the Church, and manifest themselves wholly on the Lord's side. Their conscience tells them they should be baptized as believers — but they dare not; they should be united with the people of God, and confess Christ before men — but they are ashamed, ashamed, ashamed! One fears lest his wife should know it, and she might ridicule. Some start abashed lest their friends should know it, for the finger of scorn or the breath of raillery could frighten them out of their senses. Others of them are alarmed because the world might, perchance, give them an ill name. Do you know where the fearful go? Not the fearing, not the doubting — for there are many poor, humble doubters and fearers that are saved — but do you know where the *fearful* go? The fearful that are afraid of being persecuted, mocked, or even laughed at for Christ — do you know where they go? You will find it in the Book of the Revelation — “But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Have you never read that sentence which says, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels?” There you are, young men! you are ashamed of Christ. You have just come up from the country, and you did not pray to God the other night because there was another young man in the room, and you were ashamed of him! In the name of God I do entreat you, nay, I command you, be not ashamed of your Master, Christ, and of the religion which you learned at your father's knee. There are others of you who work in a large shop, and you do not want to be jeered at, as the other young fellow is who works with you, because he is a Christian. You keep your love as a secret do you, and will not let it out? What! if Christ had only loved you in secret, and had never dared to come here on earth to be despised and rejected of men, where would you have been? “No man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel.” Do you think that Christ has lit a candle in your hearts that you may hide it? Oh! I pray you, be not like the hare. Let your hoof be so divided from the rest of mankind that they may say, “There is a man — he is not as bold as a hon, mayhap, but he is not ashamed to be a follower of Jesus; he does bear the sneer and gibe for him, and counts it his honor to be thought evil of for Jesus' sake.” Oh!

be not, I pray you, like the timid hare, lest you be found among the unclean!

There is one other creature mentioned — “*The swine*, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.” Now, the swine is the emblem of those who do act rightly. They make a profession; before men they are the most upright and the most devout; but then the inner part is not right; they do not chew the cud. The foot is right, but not the inward part. There is no chewing, no masticating, no digesting the Word of Life. “But,” says one, “why pick out a swine, because that does not seem to be a fair comparison.” Yes it is, for there are no people in the world more like swine than those Pharisees who make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; whose hoof is divided enough, but whose inward part is very wickedness. I do not know an animal that might more filly picture out those vile, unclean Pharisees. You may say you think it is too hard a picture for you. You are put down thus in the catalogue, and I have no other place in which to put you. You are like swine, unless the grace of God be in you. What good does the swine do?

Of what concern is life to him but to feed grossly and slumber heavily? And so your life, since the inward part is wrong, you bring no glory to God, you bring no good to your fellow-men. Oh! that the Lord would show you that dead morality, unattended by the love of God in the soul, will most certainly be of no avail! “You must be born again.” “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

My text seems to be a dividing one; it divides the house in two. Remember, dear friends, the day is coming when a greater division than that which description can give will occur to all of us. But the same rule will be enforced. We shall be assembled in one crowd, a mightier crowd than language can picture, or imagination grasp. The books shall be opened — books more terrible than this Book of Mercy. The Book of Life shall be unfolded and read, in which those washed in Jesu’s blood, and so made clean, shall find their names recorded. They are borne to heaven. Listen to the music of the angels as they bear them up to God’s right hand! Where will you be? Will you be with those who mount to heaven, or with yonder trembling, shrieking, screaming souls, who, as hell opens her mouth, descend alive into the pit? God help you if you are not on the righthand side! It is not too late. Jesus Christ is still preached to you. The way of salvation is very plain. It is this — Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and

thou shalt be saved. Believe thou in Jesus. Then make a profession of thy faith in God's own ordained way and method, and you have his promise for it that you will be saved. God help you to believe, and you shall be saved through Jesus, and unto him shall be the glory for ever and ever. Amen

EBENEZER!

NO. 500

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 15TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” — 1 Samuel 7:12.

IT is certainly a very delightful thing to mark the hand of God in the lives of ancient saints. How profitable an occupation to observe God’s goodness in delivering David out of the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear; his mercy in passing by the transgression, iniquity, and sin of Manasseh; his faithfulness in keeping the covenant made with Abraham; or his interposition on the behalf of the dying Hezekiah. But, beloved, would it not be even more interesting and profitable for us to remark the hand of God in our own lives? Ought we not to look upon our own history as being at least as full of God, as full of his goodness and of his truth, as much a proof of his faithfulness and veracity as the lives of any of the saints who have gone before? I think we do our Lord an injustice when we suppose that he wrought all his mighty acts in days of yore, and showed himself strong for those in the early time, but doth not perform wonders or lay bare his arm for the saints that are now upon the earth. Let us review, I say, our own diaries. Surely in these modern pages we may discover some happy incidents, refreshing to ourselves and glorifying to our God. Have *you* had no *deliverances*? Have you passed through no rivers, supported by the Divine presence? Have you walked through no fires unharmed? Have you not been saved in six troubles? yea, in seven hath not Jehovah helped you? Have you had no *manifestations*? The God that spoke to Abraham at Mamre, hath he never spoken to you? The angel that wrestled with Jacob at Peniel, hath he never wrestled with you? He that stood in the

fiery furnace with the three holy children, hath he never trodden the coals at your side? O beloved, he has manifested himself unto us as he doth not unto the world. Forget not these manifestations; fail not to rejoice in them. Have you had no *choice favors*? The God that gave Solomon the desire of his heart, hath he never listened to you and answered your requests? That God of lavish bounty, of whom David sang, “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s,” hath he never satiated *you* with fatness? Have you never been made to lie down in green pastures? Have you never been led by the still waters? Surely, beloved, the goodness of God of old has been repeated unto us. The manifestations of his grace to those gone to glory has been renewed to us, and delivering mercies as experienced by them are not unknown even to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

I beg you, therefore, dear friends, for a little time this morning, to fix your thoughts upon your God in connection with yourselves; and, while we think of Samuel piling the stones and saying, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us,” let us lay the emphasis upon the last word and say, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped US,” and if you can put it in the singular, and say, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped ME,” so much the better.

Again, it is a very delightful exercise to remember the various ways in which the grateful saints recorded their thankfulness. Who can look without pleasure upon the altar which Noah reared after his preservation from the universal deluge? Have not our eyes often sparkled as we have thought of Abraham building the altar and calling it “Jehovah-jireh, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen?” Have we not read with intense satisfaction, of Jacob setting up the stone which had been his pillow, and pouring oil upon it, and calling upon the name of the Lord, naming the place Bethel, though the name thereof was Luz at the first? Who has failed to rejoice in the martial music of Miriam’s timbrel, and the glorious notes of Moses’ song at the Red Sea? And have we not paused and looked at the twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan by good old Joshua when Jordan was driven back, that the hosts of Israel might go through dryshod? Surely, brethren, we have rejoiced in this stone which Samuel set up and called Ebenezer? And, in looking upon all the various ways in which the saints of God have recorded his lovingkindness of old, we have felt a satisfaction in beholding the perpetuity of God’s glory, since one generation showeth forth to another all his mighty acts. Oh, would it not be quite as pleasant, and more profitable *for us* to record the mighty acts of

the Lord as we have seen them? Should not we set up the altar unto his name, or weave his mercies into a song? Should we not take the pure gold of thankfulness, and the jewels of praise, and make them into another crown for the head of Jesus? Ought not our souls to give forth musics as sweet and exhilarating as ever came from David's harp? Ought not the feet of our gratitude to trip as lightly as Miriam's when she led the daughters of Israel? Have we not some means of praising God? Are there no methods by which we may set forth the gratitude we feel within? I trust we can make an offering unto our Lord. We can entertain our beloved with the spiced wine of our pomegranate, and the choice drops of our honeycomb. I hope that this day our souls may suggest unto themselves some way in which we may record the Lord's mighty deeds, and hand down to coming generations our testimony of his faithfulness and of his truth.

In the spirit of these two observations then, looking at God's hand in our own life, and acknowledging that hand with some record of thankfulness, I, your minister, brought by divine grace to preach this morning the five hundredth of my printed sermons, consecutively published week by week, set up my stone of Ebenezer to God. I thank Him, thank Him humbly, but yet most joyfully for all the help and assistance given in studying and preaching the word to these mighty congregations by the voice, and afterwards to so many nations through the press. I set up my pillar in the form of this sermon. My motto this day shall be the same as Samuel's, "Hitherto, the Lord hath helped me." And as the stone of my praise is much too heavy for me to set it upright alone, I ask you, my comrades in the day of battle, my fellow-laborers in the vineyard of Christ, to join with me in expressing gratitude, while together we set up the stone of memorial and say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

This morning there are three things I want to talk about — three yet only one. This stone of help was suggestive as to *the place of its erection*, as to *the occasion of its setting up*, and as to *the inscription which it bore*.

I. First, then, much valuable instruction, much excitement to devout thankfulness may be found in THE SPOT WHERE THE STONE OF EBENEZER WAS SET UP.

Twenty years before on that field Israel was routed. Twenty years before, Hoplini and Phineas, the priests of the Lord, were slain upon that ground, and the ark of the Lord was taken, and the Philistines triumphed. It was well that they should remember the defeat they had sustained, and that

amidst the joyous victory they should recollect that the battle had been turned into a defeat unless the Lord had been upon their side. Brethren, let us remember our defeats. Have we forgotten when we went out in our own strength determined to subdue our corruptions, and found ourselves weak as water? Have you forgotten when you reposed in the ark of the Lord, when you rested in ceremonies and ordinances, and not in the rock of your salvation? Have you forgotten, I say, how you were discomfited before your sins and found no place of refuge from your adversaries? Have we forgotten our pitiful failures in preaching and prayer when we waited not upon God for strength? O those times of groaning, when none have believed our report because the Lord's arm was not revealed. I call to remembrance all my failures as I stand on this hill of joy. I doubt not, that on the field of Ebenezer there were the graves of thousands who had been slain in fight. Let the graves of our past proud notions, the graves of our self-confidence, the graves of our creature-strength and boasting, stir us up to praise the Lord who hath hitherto helped us. Perhaps on that spot there stood a trophy raised by the insulting Philistines. Oh, let the remembrance of the boasting of the adversary, when he said, "Aha! aha!" let that come into our ears to sweeten the shout of triumph while we glorify the God of Israel. Have you done anything for God? You would have done nothing without him. Look to your former defeats. Do you return victorious? You would have returned with your garments trailed in the mire, and your shield dishonored, if God had not been upon your side. Oh, ye that have proven your weakness, perhaps by some terrible fall, or in some sad disappointment, let the recollection of the spot where you were vanquished constrain you the more to praise the Lord who hath helped you even to this day to triumph over your adversaries.

The field between Mizpeh and Shen would also refresh their memories concerning *their sins*, for it was sin that conquered them. Had not their hearts been captured by sin, their land had never been captured by Philistia. Had they not turned their backs upon their God, they would not have turned their backs in the day of conflict. Brethren, let us recollect our sins; they will serve as a black foil on which the mercy of God shall glisten the more brightly. Egypt's fertility is the more wonderful because of its nearness to the Lybian sands, which would cover it altogether if it were not for the Nile. That God should be so good is marvellous, but that he should be so good to you and to me, who are so rebelhous, is a miracle of miracles. I know not a word which can express the surprise and wonder

our souls ought to feel at God's goodness to us. Our hearts playing the harlot; our lives far from perfect; our faith almost blown out; our unbelief often prevailing; our pride lifting up its accursed head; our patience a poor sickly plant, almost nipped by one night's frost; our courage little better than cowardice; our love lukewarmness; our ardor but as ice — oh, my dear brethren, if we will but think any one of us what a mass of sin we are, if we will but reflect that we are after all, as one of the fathers writes, "walking dunghills," we should indeed be surprised that the sun of divine grace should continue so perpetually to shine upon us, and that the abundance of heaven's mercy should be revealed in us. Oh, Lord, when we recollect what we might have been, and what we really have been, we must say, "Glory be unto the gracious and merciful God who hitherto hath helped us."

Again, that spot would remind them of *their sorrows*. What a mournful chapter in Israel's history is that which follows their defeat by the Philistines. Good old Eli, you remember, fell backward and broke his neck; and his daughter-in-law in the pangs of her travail cried, concerning her child, "Call him Ichabod, for the glory has departed, because the ark of the Lord is taken." Their harvests were snatched away by the robbers; their vintage was gleaned for them by alien hands. Israel had twenty years of deep and bitter sorrow. They might have said with David, "We went through fire and through water; men did ride over our heads." Well, friends, let the remembrance of *our sorrows* also inspire *us* with a profounder thankfulness while we erect the stone of Ebenezer. We have had our sorrows as a Church. Shall I remind you of our black and dark day? Never erased from our memory can be the time of our affliction and trial. Death came into our windows, and dismay into our hearts. Did not all men speak ill of us? Who would give us a good word? The Lord himself afflicted us, and broke us as in the day of his anger — so it seemed to us, then. Ah, God thou knowest how great have been the results which flowed from that terrible calamity, but from our souls the memory never can be taken, not even in heaven itself. In the recollection of that night of confusion, and those long weeks of slander and abuse, let us roll a great stone before the Lord, and let us write thereon, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." Little I ween did the devil get by that master-stroke; small was the triumph which he earned by that piece of malice. Greater multitudes than ever flocked to listen to the word, and some here who otherwise might never have attended the preaching of the gospel, remain as living

monuments of God's power to save. Of all evil things out of which good has arisen, we can always point to the Surrey Hall catastrophe as one of the greatest goods which ever befel this neighborhood, notwithstanding the sorrows which it brought. This one fact is but a sample of others; for it is the Lord's rule to bring good out of evil, and so to prove his wisdom and magnify his grace. O ye that have come from beds of languishing, ye that have been bowed down with doubt and fear, and ye that have been poverty-stricken, or slandered, or apparently deserted by your God, if this day the glory of God's grace resteth upon you, pile the stone, and anoint the pillar, and write thereon, "Ebenezer, hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

While dwelling upon the peculiarity of the locality, we must remark, that, as it had been the spot of their defeat, their sin, their sorrow, so now before the victory, it was the place of *their repentance*. You see, beloved, they came together to repent, to confess their sins, to put away their false gods, to cast Ashtaroth from their houses and from their hearts. It was there that they saw God's hand and were led to say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." When you and I are most diligent in hunting sin, then God will be most vahant in routing our foes. You look to the work within and overcome sin, and God will look to the work without and overcome your troubles and your trials for you. Ah, dear friends, as we pile that stone thinking how God has helped us, let us shed tears of sorrow to think how ungrateful we have been. On earth penitence and praise must always sing together. Just as in some of our tunes there are two or three parts, we shall always need repentance to take the bass notes while we are here, while faith in praise can mount up to the very highest notes of the divine gamut of gratitude.

Yes, with our joy for pardoned guilt we mourn that we pierced the Lord, and with our joy for strengthened graces and ripening experience, we must mourn over ingratitude and unbelief. Hitherto the Lord hath helped thee, and yet thou didst once say, "My God has forgotten me." Hitherto the Lord hath helped thee, and yet thou didst murmur and complain against him. Hitherto the Lord hath helped thee, and yet thou didst deny him like Peter. Hitherto the Lord hath helped thee, and yet thine eye hath gone astray after vanity, and thy hand hath touched sin, and thy heart hath played the wanton. Let us repent, my brethren, for it is through our tears, that we shall best perceive the beauty of these grateful words, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

You must remember, too, that Ebenezer was the place of *lamentation after the Lord*. They came together to pray God to return to them. We shall

surely see God when we long after him. How delightful it is to see a Church earnest after revivals, crying, pleading for God to come into her midst. When you know, brethren, that without God your ordinances are nothing, when you cannot rest satisfied with the dead, dry letter, but really want to have the power and the presence of God, then it will not be long before you have it. So while you and I express gratitude for the past, let us breathe another prayer to God for renewed grace. If you personally have lost the light of his face, pray this morning —

*“Return, O holy Dove! return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.”*

And if it be the entire Church, and in any measure our love has grown cold, and the converting and sanctifying spirit has departed, let us pray also the same prayer.

*“Savior, visit thy plantation;
Grant us, Lord, a gracious
rain!
All will come to
desolation, Unless thou
return again; Lord, revive
us,
All our help must come from thee!”*

The place of revival should be the place of gracious thankfulness.

On that day, too, Mizpeh was the place of *renewed covenant*, and its name signifies the *watch-tower*. These people, I say, came together to renew their covenant with God, and wait for him as upon a watch-tower.

Whenever God’s people look back upon the past they should renew their covenant with God. Put your hand into the hand of Christ anew, thou saint of the Most High, and give thyself to him again. Climb thy watch-tower and watch for the coming of thy Lord. See whether there be sin within thee, temptation without thee, — duty neglected or lethargy creeping over thee. Come to Mizpeh, the watch-tower; come to Mizpeh the place of the renewal of the covenant, and then set up your stone and say, “Hitherto, the Lord hath helped us.”

It seems to me that the spot where Samuel said “Ebenezer,” was exceedingly similar in many respects to the position occupied by us this

day. I do not think the children of Israel could with heartier joy say

“Ebenezer!” than we can. We have had many sins, a share of sorrows, and some defeats by reason of our own folly. I hope we have humbled ourselves before God, and lament after him, and desire to behold him, and to dwell very near him, and that our soul doth bless his name while we renew the covenant again this day, and while we come to the watch-tower and wait to hear what God the Lord will speak unto us. Come, then, in this great house which the Lord’s favor has builded for us, let us sing together, “Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.”

II. We now change the subject to look at the OCCASION OF THE ERECTION OF THIS MEMORIAL.

The tribes had assembled unarmed to worship. The Philistines, hearing of their gathering, suspected a revolt. A rising was not at that time contemplated, though no doubt there was lurking in the hearts of the people a hope that they would somehow or other be delivered. The Philistines being as a nation far inferior in numbers to the children of Israel, they had the natural suspiciousness of weak oppressors. If we must have tyrants let them be strong ones, for they are never so jealous or cruel as those little despots who are always afraid of rebelhon. Hearing that the people had come together, the Philistines determined to attack them; to attack an unarmed company, mark you, who had come together for worship. The people were alarmed; naturally they might be. Samuel, however, the prophet of God, was equal to the occasion. He bade them bring a lamb. I do not know that the lamb was offered according to the Levitical rites, yet prophets in all ages had a right to dispense with ordinary laws. This was to show that the legal dispensation was not permanent, that there was something higher than the Aaronic priesthood, so that Samuel and Elijah, men in whom God expressly dwelt, were mightier than the ordinary officiating priests of the sanctuary. He takes the lamb, puts it on the altar, offers it, and as it smokes to heaven he offers prayer. The voice of man is answered by the voice of God; a great thunder dismays the Philistines, and they are put to rout.

We, I think, have been in similar circumstances. Hear the parallel. The victory obtained was *by the lamb*. As soon as the lamb was slaughtered, and the smoke went up to heaven, the blessing began to descend upon the Israelites, and the curse upon the foes. “They smote them” — note the words — they “smote them until they came under Betlicar,” which, being interpreted, signifies “the house of the Lamb.” At the offering of the lamb

the Israelites began to fight the Philistines, and slew them even to the house of the lamb. Brethren, if we have done anything for Christ, if we have achieved any victories, if in this house any souls have been converted, any hearts sanctified, any drooping spirits comforted, bear witness that it has been all through the Lamb. When we have pictured Christ slaughtered, have described the agonies which he endured upon the cross, when we have tried to preach fully though feebly the great doctrine of his substitutionary sacrifice, have set him forth as the propitiation for sins, then it is that the victories have begun. And when we have preached Christ ascending up on high, leading captivity captive, and when we have glorified in the fact that he ever liveth to make intercession for us, and that he shall come to judge the quick and dead, if any good has been accomplished it has been through the Lamb — the Lamb slain, or else the Lamb exalted.

Hark you, dear friends, as we pile our Ebenezer this morning, we do it honoring him. “Unto the Lamb once slain be glory for ever and ever.” You have overcome your foes, you have slaughtered your sins, you have mastered your troubles. How has it been? From the altar of that bleeding lamb, onward to the throne of him who is to reign for ever and ever, the whole road has been stained with the crimson blood of your enemies: you have overcome through the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb shall overcome thee. He that rides on the white horse goeth before us; his name is the Lamb. And all the saints shall follow him on the white horses, going forth conquering and to conquer. “Ebenezer; hitherto the Lord hath helped us.” But the help has always been through the Lamb, the bleeding, the living, the reigning Lamb.

As in this occurrence the sacrifice was exalted, so also was the *power of prayer acknowledged*. The Philistines were not routed except by prayer. Samuel prayed unto the Lord. They said, “Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us.” Brethren, let us bear our witness this morning that, if aught of good has been accomplished here, it has been the result of prayer. Often have I solaced my heart by the recollection of the prayers offered in our former house of meeting at New Park-street. What supplications have I heard there; what groans of wrestling spirits; times we have known when the minister has not had the heart to say a word, because your prayers to God have melted him — stopped his utterance, and he has been fain to pronounce a benediction and send you away, because the Spirit of God has been so present that it was hardly the time to speak to man, but only to speak to God. I do not think we always have the same spirit of prayer here,

and yet in this I must and will rejoice — I know not where the spirit of prayer is to be found more in exercise than in this place. I know you hold up my hands, you that are like Aaron and Hur upon the mountains. I know that you intercede with God for the conversion of this neighborhood, and the evangelization of this great city. Young and old, you do strive together that the kingdom may come, and the Lord's will may be done. But, oh, we must not forget as we look upon this vast Church — two thousand and more members walking in the fear of God — we must not forget that this increase came as the result of prayer, and that it is in prayer still that our strength must be. I charge you before the Most High, never depend upon my ministry. What am I? What is there in me? I speak, and when God speaks through me I speak with a power unknown to men in whom the Spirit dwells not; but if He leave me, I am not only as weak as other men, but less than they, for I have no wisdom of years, I have no human learning, I have taken no degree in the university, and wear no titles of learned honor. If God speak by me, he must have all the glory; if he saves souls by such a frail being, he must have all the glory. Give unto the Lord glory and strength; lay every particle of the honor at his feet. But do continue to pray, do plead with God for me that his power may still be seen, his arm still put mightily to his work. Prayer honored must be recollected when we set up the Ebenezer and say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

Again, as there was prayer and sacrifice, you must remember that in answer to the sweet savor of the lamb and the sweet perfume of Samuel's intercession, *Jehovah came forth* to rout his foes. I read not that Israel shouted a war-cry. No, their shouts would not have been heard amid those great thunders. I find that they dashed to battle; but it was not their bow, their spear, their sword, that gained the victory. Hearken, my brethren, the voice of God is heard! Crash — crash! Where are you now, ye sons of Anak! The heavens shake, the earth rocks, the everlasting hills do bow, the birds of the air fly to the coverts of the forest to hide themselves, the timid goats upon the mountains seek the clefts of the rocks. Peal on peal the thunders roll till mountain answers mountain in loud uproar of affright. From crag to crag leaps the live lightning, and the Philistines are all but blinded by it, and stand aghast, and then take to their heels and fly. Quit yourselves like men, O Philistines, that ye be not servants to the Hebrews. Quit yourselves like men, but unless ye be gods ye must tremble now. Where are your bucklers and the bosses thereof? Where are your spears

and the sheen thereof? Now let your swords flash from their scabbards; now send out your giants and their armor-bearers! Now let your Gohaths defy the Lord God of hosts! Aha! Aha! Ye become like women, ye quake! ye faint! See, see! they turn their backs and fly before the men of Israel, whom they counted but as slaves. They flee. The warrior fhes and the stout heart quails, and the mighty man fhes like a timid dove to his hiding-place. “Glory be unto the Lord God of Israel: his own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.”

Beloved, if aught of good has been accomplished, or if you and I have routed sin, how hath it been? Not by *our* strength, not by *our* power, but by the glorious voice of God. When the gospel is truly preached it is God thundering. It may sound as feebly as a child’s voice when we tell of Jesus crucified, but it is God thundering, and I tell you, sirs, the thunders of God never so smote the heart of the Philistines as the gospel of Christ does the heart of convinced sinners. When we preach and God blesses it, it is God’s lightnings, it is God’s flashes of divine fire, the glittering of his spear; for never were Philistines so smitten with the blaze of lightning in their faces as sinners are when God’s law and gospel flash into their dark eyes. But to God be the glory — to God — to God — to God alone! Not a word for man, not a syllable for the son of man. “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory.” This is the song of perfect saints above; shall it not be the song of imperfect ones below? “Not unto us — not unto us,” the seraphs cry as they veil their faces with their wings, and cast their crowns at Jehovah’s feet. “Not unto us, not unto us,” must we say while we exult in his power and magnify the God of our salvation.

III. This was the occasion then. I need not tarry longer, but turn at once to THE INSCRIPTION UPON THE MEMORIAL, “Ebenezer, hitherto the Lord hath helped us.” The inscription may be read in three ways.

You must read first of all its central word, the word on which all the sense depends, where the fullness of it gathers. “Hitherto the LORD hath helped us.” Note, beloved, that they did not stand still and refuse to use their weapons, but while God was thundering they were fighting, and while the lightnings were dashing in the foeman’s eyes they were making them feel the potency of their steel. So that while we glorify God we are not to deny or to discard human agency. *We* must fight because God fighteth for us. We must strike, but the power to strike and the result of striking must all

come from him. You see they did not say, "Hitherto our sword hath helped us, hitherto Samuel has encouraged us." No, no — "hitherto the Lord has helped us." Now you must admit that everything truly great must be of the Lord. You cannot suppose a thing so great as the conversion of sinners, the revival of a Church can ever be man's work. You see the Thames when the tide is ebbing what a long reach of foul, putrid mud, but the tide returns. Poor unbeliever, you who thought the river would run out till it was all dry and the ships be left aground, see, the flood comes back again, joyfully filling up the stream once more. But you are quite certain that so large a river as the Thames is not to be flooded except by ocean's tides. So you cannot see great results and ascribe them to man. Where there is little work done men often take the credit themselves, but where there is great work done, they dare not. If Simon Peter had been angling over the side of his ship and had caught a fine fish, he might have said, "Well done fisherman!" But when the boat was full of fish, so that it began to sink, he could not think of himself then. No, down he goes with "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The greatness of our work compels us to confess that it must be of God, it must be of the Lord alone. And, dear friends, it must be so if we consider the little with which we began. Jacob said as he came over Jordan, "With my staff I crossed this Jordan, but now am I become two bands." Surely his becoming two bands must be of God, for he had nothing but his staff. And do you not remember some few of you here present one morning when we crossed this Jordan with a staff? Were we a hundred when first I addressed you? What hosts of empty pews, what a miserable handful of hearers. With the staff we crossed that Jordan. But God has multiplied the people and multiplied the joy, till we have become not only two bands but many bands; and many this day are gathering to hear the gospel preached by the sons of this church, begotten of us, and sent forth by us to minister the word of life in many towns and villages throughout these three kingdoms. Glory be unto God, this cannot be man's work. What effort made by the unaided strength of man will equal this which has been accomplished by God. Let the name of the Lord, therefore, be inscribed upon the pillar of the memorial. I am always very jealous about this matter. If we do not as a Church and a congregation, if we do not as individuals, always give God the glory, it is utterly impossible that God should work by us. Many wonders I have seen, but I never saw yet a man who arrogated the honor of his work to himself, whom God did not leave sooner or later. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Behold this great Babylon that I have builded." Behold that poor lunatic whose hair has grown like

eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws — that is Nebuchadnezzar. And that must be you, and that must be me, each in our own way, unless we are content always to give all the glory unto God. Surely, brethren, we shall be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High, an offense, even like carrion, before the Lord of Hosts, if we arrogate to ourselves any honor. What doth God send his saints for? That they may be demigods? Did God make men strong that they may exalt themselves into his throne? What, doth the King of kings crown you with mercies that you may pretend to lord it over him? What, doth he dignify you that you may usurp the prerogatives of his throne? No; you must come with all the favors and honors that God has put upon you, and creep to the foot of his throne and say, What am I, and what is my father's house that thou hast remembered me. "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

I said this text might be read three ways. We have read it once by laying stress upon the center word. Now it ought to be read *looking backward*. The word "hitherto" seems like a hand pointing in that direction. Look back, look back. Twenty years — thirty — forty — fifty — sixty — seventy — eighty — "hitherto!" say *that* each of you. Through poverty — through wealth — through sickness — through health — at home — abroad — on the land — on the sea — in honor — in dishonor — in perplexity — in joy — in trial — in triumph — in prayer — in temptation — hitherto. Put the whole together. I like sometimes to look down a long avenue of trees. It is very delightful to gaze from end to end of the long vista, a sort of leafy temple with its branching pillars and its arches of leaves. Cannot you look down the long aisles of your years, look at the green boughs of mercy overhead, and the strong pillars of lovingkindness and faithfulness which bear your joys? Are there no birds in yonder branches singing? Surely, there must be many. And the bright sunshine and the blue sky are yonder; and if you turn round in the far distance, you may see heaven's brightness and a throne of gold. "Hitherto! hitherto!"

Then the text may be read a third way, — *looking forward*. For when a man gets up to a certain mark and writes "hitherto," he looks back upon much that is past, but "hitherto" is not the end, there is yet a distance to be traversed. More trials, more joys; more temptations, more triumphs; more prayers, more answers; more toils, more strength; more fights, more victories; more slanders, more comforts; more honors and bears to be fought, more tearings of the hon for God's Davids, more deep waters, more high mountains; more troops of devils, more hosts of angels yet. And then come

sickness, old age, disease, death. Is it over now? No, no, no! We will raise one stone more when we get into the river, we will shout Ebenezer there: "hitherto the Lord hath helped us," for there is more to come. An awakening in his likeness, climbing of starry spheres, harps, songs, palms, white raiment, the face of Jesus, the society of saints, the glory of God, the fullness of eternity, the infinity of bliss. Yes, as sure as God has helped so far as to-day, he will help us to the close. "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee; I have been with thee, and I will be with thee to the end." Courage, brethren, then; and as we pile the stones, saying, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us," let us just gird up the loins of our mind, and be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be revealed in us, for as it has been, so it shall be world without end.

I want some oil to pour on this pillar — I want some oil. Jacob poured oil upon it and called upon the name of the Lord. Where shall I get my oil. Grateful hearts, have ye any oil? Prayerful spirits, have ye any? Companions of Jesus, have ye any? Ye that commune with him day and night, have ye any? Pour it out, then. Break your alabaster boxes, oh ye Mary's. Pour out your prayers this morning with mine. Offer your thanksgivings with my grateful expressions of thanks. Come each of you, pour this oil upon the top of this Ebenezer to-day. I want some oil, I wonder whether I shall get it from yonder heart. Oh, says one, my heart is as a flinty rock. I read in scripture that the Lord brought oil out of the flinty rock. Oh, if there should be a soul led to believe in Christ this morning, if some heart would give itself up to Christ to-day! Why not so? why not? The Holy Ghost can melt flint and move mountains. Young man, how long are we to preach to you, how long to invite you, how long to pain you, how long to entreat you, to implore you? Shall this be the day that you will yield? Dost thou say, "I am nothing?" Then Christ is everything. Take him, trust him. I know not a better way of celebrating this day of Ebenezer and thanksgiving, than by some hearts this day accepting the marriage ring of Christ's love, and being affianced unto the Son of God for ever and ever. God grant it may be so. It shall be so if you pray for it, O true hearts.

And unto God be glory for ever. Amen.

*“Great God, we sing that mighty
hand, By which supported still we
stand: The opening year thy mercy
shows; Let mercy crown it till it close.
By day, by night, at home, abroad,
Still we are guarded by our God:
By his incessant bounty fed,
By his unerring counsel led.
With grateful hearts the past we own;
The future, all to us unknown,
We to thy guardian care commit,
And peaceful leave before thy feet.
In scenes exalted or depress’d,
Be thou our joy, and thou our rest;
Thy goodness all our hopes shall raise,
Adored through all our changing days.
When death shall interrupt these songs,
And seal in silence mortal tongues,
Our helper God, in whom we trust,
In better worlds our souls shall boast.”*

GRACE ABOUNDING.

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A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 22ND,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will love them freely.” — Hosea 14:4.

THIS sentence is a body of divinity in miniature. He who understands its meaning is a theologian, and he who can dive into its fullness is a true Master in divinity. “I will love them freely,” is a condensation of the glorious message of salvation which was delivered to us in Christ Jesus our Redeemer. The sense hinges upon the word “freely.” “I will love them *freely.*” Here is the glorious, the suitable, the divine way by which love streams from heaven to earth. It is, indeed, the only way in which God can love such as we are. It may be that he can love angels because of their goodness; but he could not love *us* for that reason; the only manner in which love can come from God to fallen creatures is expressed in the word “freely.” Here we have spontaneous love flowing forth to those who neither deserved it, purchased it, nor sought after it.

Since the word “freely” is the very key-note of the text, we must observe its common meaning among men. We use the word “freely” for that which is given without money and without price. It is opposed to all idea of bargaining, to all acceptance of an equivalent, or that which might be construed into an equivalent. A man is said to give freely when he bestows his charity on applicants simply on the ground of their poverty, hoping for nothing again. A man distributes freely when, without asking any compensation, he finds it more blessed to give than to receive. Now God’s love comes to men all free and unbought; without our having merit to deserve, or money to procure it. I know it is written, “Come, *buy* wine and milk,” but is it not added “Without money and without price?” “I will love

them freely;” that is “I will not accept their works in barter for my love; I will not receive *their* love as a recompense for mine; I will love them, all unworthy and sinful though they be.”

Men give “*freely*” when there is no *inducement*. A great many presents of late have been given to the Princess of Wales, and ‘tis well and good; but the position of the Princess is such that we do not view it as any great liberality to subscribe to a diamond necklace, since those who give are honored by her acceptance. Now the freeness of God’s love is shown in this, that the objects of it are utterly unworthy, can confer no honor, and have no position to be an inducement to bless them. The Lord loves them freely. Some persons are very generous to their own relations, but here, again, they can hardly be said to be free, because the tie of blood constrains them. Their own children, their own brother, their own sister — if men will not be generous here, they must be mean through and through. But the generosity of our God is commended to us in that he loved his enemies, and while we were yet sinners in due time Christ died for us. The word “freely” is “exceeding broad” when used in reference to God’s love to men. He selects those who have not the shadow of a claim upon him, and sets them among the children of his heart.

We use the word “freely,” when a favor is conferred *without its being sought*. It can hardly be said that our King in the old histories pardoned the citizens of Calais freely when his Queen had first to prostrate herself before him, and with many tears to induce him to be merciful. He was gracious, but he was not free in his grace. When a person has been long dogged by a beggar in the streets, though he may turn round and give liberally to be rid of the clamorous applicant, he does not give “freely.” Remember, with regard to God, that his grace to man was utterly unsought. He does give grace to those who seek it, but none would ever seek that grace unless unsought grace had first been bestowed. Sovereign grace waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men. The love of God goes forth to men when they have no thought after him; when they are hastening after all manner of sin and wantonness. He loves them freely, and as the effect of that love, they then begin to seek his face. But it is not our seeking, our prayers, our tears, which incline the Lord to love us. God loves us at first most freely, without any entreaties or beseechings, and then we come both to entreat and to beseech his favor.

That *which comes without any exertion on our part* comes to us “freely.” The rulers digged the well, and as they digged it they sang “Spring up, O well!” In such a case, where a well must be digged with much labor, the water can hardly be described as rising freely. But yonder, in the laughing valley, the spring gushes from the hill-side, and lavishes its crystal torrent among the shining pebbles. Man pierced not the fountain, he bored not the channel, for, long ere he was born, or ever the weary pilgrim bowed himself to its cooling stream, it had leaped on its joyous way right *freely*, and it will do so, as long as the moon endureth, *freely, freely, freely*. Such is the grace of God. No labor of man procures it; no effort of man can add to it. God is good from the simple necessity of his nature; God is love, simply because it is his essence to be so, and he pours forth his love in plenteous streams to undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving objects, simply because he “will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom will have compassion,” for it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

If you ask an illustration of the word “freely,” *I point to yonder sun*. How freely he scattereth his life-giving beams. Precious as gold are his rays, but he scattereth them like the dust; he sows the earth with orient pearl, and bejewels it with emerald and ruby and sapphire, and all most *freely*. You and I forget to pray for the sun’s light, but it comes at its appointed season; yea, on that blasphemer who curses God, the day ariseth, and the sunlight warms him as much as the most obedient child of the heavenly Father. That sunbeam falls upon the farm of the miser, and upon the field of the churl, and bids the grain of the wicked expand in its genial warmth and produce its harvest. That sun shines into the house of the adulterer, into the face of the murderer, and the cell of the thief. No matter how sinful man may be, yet the light of day descends upon him unasked for and unsought. Such is the grace of God; where it comes it comes not because sought, or deserved, but simply from the goodness of the heart of God, which, like the sun, blesseth as it wills. Mark you the gentle winds of heaven, the breath of God to revive the languishing, *the soft breezes*. See the sick man at the sea-side, drinking in health from the breezes of the salt sea. Those lungs may heave to utter the lascivious song, but the healing wind is not restrained, and whether it be breast of saint or sinner, yet that wind ceaseth not from any. So in gracious visitations, God waiteth not till man is good before he sends the heavenly wind, with healing beneath its wings; even as he pleaseth so it bloweth, and to the most undeserving it cometh. Observe

the rain which drops from heaven. It falls upon the desert as well as upon the fertile field; it drops upon the rock that will refuse its fertilizing moisture as well as upon the soil that opens its gaping mouth to drink it in with gratitude. See, it falls upon the hard-trodden streets of the populous city, where it is not required, and where men will even curse it for coming, and it falls not more freely where the sweet flowers have been panting for it, and the withering leaves have been rustling forth their prayers. Such is the grace of God. It does not visit us because we ask it, much less, because we deserve it; but as God wills it, and the bottles of heaven are unstopped, so God wills it, and grace descends. No matter how vile, and black, and foul, and godless, men may be, he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and that free, rich, overflowing goodness of his can make the very worst and least deserving the objects of his best and choicest love.

Do understand me. Let me not leave this point till I have well defined its meaning. I mean this, dear friends: when God says, "I will love them freely," he means that no prayers, no tears, no good works, no almsgivings are an inducement to him to love men, nay, that not only nothing, in themselves, but nothing anywhere else was the cause of his love to them; not even the blood of Christ; not even the groans and tears of his beloved Son. These are the fruits of his love, not the cause of it. He does not love because Christ died, but Christ died because the Father loved. Do remember that this fountain of love has its spring in itself, not in you, nor in me, but only in the Father's own gracious, infinite heart of goodness. "I will love them freely," spontaneously, without any motive *ab extra*, but entirely because I choose to do it.

In the text we have *two great doctrines*. I will *announce the first one; establish it*; and then *endeavor to apply it*.

I. The first great doctrine is this, that THERE IS NOTHING IN MAN TO ATTRACT THE LOVE OF GOD TO HIM.

We have to *establish this doctrine*, and our first argument is found in *the origin of that love*. The love of God to man existed before there was any man. He loved his chosen people before any one of them had been created; nay, before the world had been made upon which man dwells he had set his heart upon his beloved and ordained them unto eternal life. The love of God therefore existed before there was any good thing in man, and if you tell me that God loved men because of the foresight of some good thing in them, I again reply to that, that the same thing cannot be both cause and

effect. Now it is quite certain that any virtue which there may be in any man is the result of God's grace. Now if it be the result of grace it cannot be the cause of grace. It is utterly impossible that an effect should have existed before a cause; but God's love existed before man's goodness, therefore that goodness cannot be a cause. Brethren, the doctrine of the antiquity of divine love is graven as with the point of a diamond upon the very forehead of revelation; when the children were not yet born, neither having done good nor evil, the purpose of election still stood; while we were yet like clay in the mass of creatureship, and God had power to make of the same lump a vessel to honor or a vessel to dishonor, he chose to make his people vessels unto honor; this could not possibly have been because of any good thing in them, for they themselves were not, much less their goodness. Our Savior's words — "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," reveal not only the sovereignty but the freeness of divine affection.

Do you not know, dear friends, in the second place, that *the whole plan of divine goodness is entirely opposed to the old covenant of works*. Paul is very strong on this point, where he expressly tells us that if it be of grace it cannot be of works, and if it be of works it cannot be of grace, the two having no possibility of commingling. Our God, speaking by the prophet, says, "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them." The covenant of grace is as wide as the poles asunder from the covenant of works. Now the tenour of the covenant of works is this — "This do and thou shalt live;" if, then, we do the thing which the covenant of works requires of us we live, and we live as the result of our own doing. But the very opposite must be the case in the covenant of grace. It can never be as the result of anything we do that we are saved under that covenant, or else the two are the same, or at least similar, whereas, the whole Bible through they are set in contradistinction the one against the other, as arranged upon opposite principles, and acting from different springs. Oh! you who think that anything in you can make God love you, stand at the foot of Sinai and learn the only thing that can lead God to accept man on the ground of law, and that is perfect obedience. Read the ten commandments through and see if you can keep one of them in the fullness of its spirit; and I am sure you will be compelled to cry out — "Thy commandment is exceeding broad. Great God, I have sinned." And yet if you would stand on the footing of

what you are, you must take the whole ten, and you must keep them throughout an entire life, and never fail in the slightest point, or else abhorred of God you must certainly be. The covenant of grace does not speak on that wise at all. It views man as guilty, and having nothing to merit; and it says, "I will, I will, I will;" it says not "If they will," but "I will and they shall. I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean, and from all their iniquities I will cleanse them." That covenant does not look upon man as innocent, but as guilty. "When I passed by I saw them in their blood, and I said live; yea, when I saw them in their blood I said, live." The first covenant was a contract: "Do this and I will do that;" but the next has not the shadow of a bargain in it; it is — "I will bless you, and I will continue to bless you; though you abound in transgressions, yet I will continue to bless till I make you perfect and bring you to my glory at the last." It cannot be, then, that there is anything in man that makes God love him, because the whole plan of the covenant is opposed to that of works.

Thirdly, *the substance of Gods love* — the substance of the covenant which springs from God's love — clearly proves that it cannot be man's goodness which makes God love him. If you should tell me that there was something so good in man that therefore God gave him bread to eat and raiment to put on, I might believe you. If you tell me that man's excellence constrained the Lord to put the breath into his nostrils, and to give him the comforts of this life, I might yield to you. But I see yonder, God himself made man; I see that God, that man, at last fastened to the tree; I see him on the tree expiring in agonies unknown, I hear his awful sliviek, — "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani; "I see the dreadful sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son, who was not spared but freely delivered up for us all, and I feel certain that it would be nothing short of blasphemy if I should admit that man could ever deserve such a gift as the death of Christ. The very angels in heaven with an eternity of obedience, could never have deserved so great a gift as Christ in the flesh dying for them; and oh! shall we who are all over foul and defiled, shall we look to that dear cross, and say, "I deserved that Savior?" Brethren, this were the height of infernal arrogance; let it be far from us; let us rather feel that we could not deserve such love as this, and that if God loves us so as to give his Son for us, it must be from some hidden motive in his own will, it cannot be because of any good thing in us.

Further, if you will remember *the objects of God's love* as well as the substance of it, you will soon see that it could not be anything in them

which constrains God to love them. Who are the objects of God's love? Are they Pharisees, the men who fast twice in the week and pay tithes of all they possess? No, no, no. Are they the moralists who touching the law are blameless, and who walk in all the observances of their religion without a slip? No; the publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before them. Who are they who are the chosen of God? Let the whole tribe now in heaven speak for themselves, and they will say, "We have washed our roses; (they needed it; they were black,) and we have made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Appeal to any of the saints on earth, and they will tell you that they never could perceive any good thing in themselves. I have searched my own heart I hope with some degree of earnestness, and so far from finding any reason in myself why God should love me, I can find a thousand reasons why he should destroy me, and drive me for ever from his presence. The best thoughts we have are defiled with sin, our very faith is mixed with unbelief; the noblest devotion which we ever paid to God is far inferior to his deserts, and is marred with infirmity and fault. Remember that many of those who are the true servants of God were once the very worst servants of Satan. Does it not surprise you that men who were the companions of the harlot are now saints of the Most high? The drunkard, the blasphemer, the man who defied man's laws as well as God's — such were some of us, but we are washed, but we are cleansed, but we are sanctified. I never did meet, and I never expect to meet with any saved soul that would ever for a moment tolerate the thought of there being any goodness in itself to merit God's esteem. No; vile and full of sin I am, and if thou hast mercy on me, O God, it is because thou wilt, for I merit none.

Further, constantly are we informed in Scripture that *the love of God and the fruit of the love of God are a gift*. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Now, if the Lord stands bargaining with you and with me, and says, "I will give you this if — if — if — " then he does not love freely; but if, on the other hand, it is simply, and purely, and only a gift bestowed as such, not for any recompence afterwards to be given, then the gift is a pure and true gift, and so the text is warranted in saying, "I will love them freely." Now, the *gift* of God is eternal life, and dear friends, if you and I ever get it, we must obtain it as a free gift from God, but by no means as wages which we have earned, for our poor earnings will bring us death; only God's gift can yield us life.

Everywhere throughout the Word *the Lord's love is greatly and wonderfully commended*. We are told that as high as the heavens are above

the earth so high are his ways above our ways. Now, if the Lord loved men for some loveliness in them, there would be nothing wonderful in it; you and I can do the same. I hope I can love a man who possesses moral excellence. You feel, each of you, that if a man's conduct towards you is grateful and good, you cannot but love him, or if you do not, it becomes a fault on your part. With reverence let me say it, if there be something good in man it is no wonder that God should love him; it would be unjust if he did not. If naturally in man there be any virtue, if there be any praise, if there be any commendable repentance, or any acceptable faith, man ought to be loved; this is not a thing to amaze the ages, nor to set the angels singing, nor to move the mountains and hills in astonishment; but for God to love a man who is bad all over; to love him when there is every reason for hating him, when there is not a trace of goodness in him, oh! this is enough to make the rocks break their silence and the hills burst forth into music.

This is the first doctrine. I cannot preach upon it as I would this morning, for my voice is very weak, and the pain of speaking distracts my mind; but it matters not how I preach upon it, for the subject itself is so exceedingly full of comfort to a really awakened soul, that it needs no garnishing of mine: choice dainties need no skill in the carver — their own lusciousness secures them rich acceptance.

But *what is the practical use of it?* To you who are going about to establish your own righteousness, here is a death-blow to your works, and carnal trustings. God will not love you meritoriously. God will love you freely. Wherefore go ye about, then, spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not. You may boast as you will, but you will have to come to God on a par with the worst of the worst; when you do come you will have to be accepted, you that are the best of men, just on the same terms as if you had been the foulest of the foul. Therefore go not about, busy not yourselves with all this fancied righteousness, but come to Jesus as you are, come now, without any works of yours, for you must so come or not at all. God has said, "I will love them freely," and depend upon it he will never love you in any other way. You may think you are toiling to heaven, when you shall be only tunnelling your way through mountains of self-righteousness down to the depths of hell.

This doctrine offers *comfort to those who do not feel fit to come to Christ*. Do you not perceive that the text is a death-blow to all sorts of fitness? “I will love them freely.” Now if there be any fitness necessary in you before God will love you then he does not love you freely, at least this would be a mitigation and a drawback to the freeness of it. But it is “I will love you *freely*.” You say “Lord, but my heart is so hard.” “I will love you freely.” “But I do not feel my need of Christ as I could wish.” “I will not love you because you feel your need; I will love you freely.” “But I do not feel that softening of spirit that I could desire.” Remember, the softening of spirit is not a condition, for there are no conditions; the covenant of grace has no conditionality whatever. These are the unconditional, sure mercies of David; so that you without any fitness may come and venture upon the promise of God which was made to you in Christ Jesus, when he said, “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” No fitness is wanted; “I will love them freely.” Sweep all that lumber and rubbish out of the way! Oh! for grace in your hearts to know that the grace of God is free, is free to you, without preparation, without fitness, without money, and without price!

Nor does the practical use of our doctrine end here. There are some of you who say, “I feel this morning that I am so unworthy; I can well believe that God will bless my mother; that Christ will pity my sister; I can understand how yonder souls can be saved, but I cannot understand how *I* can be; *I* am so unworthy.” “I will love them freely.” Oh! does not that meet your case? If you were the most unworthy of all created beings, if you had aggravated your sin till you had become the foulest and most vile of all sinners, yet “I will love them freely,” puts the worst on an equality with the best, sets you that are the devil’s cast-aways, on a par with the most hopeful. There is no reason for God’s love in any man, if there is none in you, you are not worse off than the best of men, for there is none in them; the grace and love of God can come as freely to you as they can to those that have long been seeking them, for “I am found of them that sought me not.”

Yet once more here. I think this subject *invites backsliders to return*; indeed, the text was specially written for such — “I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely.” Here is a son who ran away from home. He enlisted for a soldier. He behaved so badly in his regiment that he had to be drummed out of it. He has been living in a foreign country in so vicious a way that he has reduced his body by disease. His back is covered with rags; his character is that of the vagrant and felon. When he went away he did it on purpose to vex his father’s heart, and he has

brought his mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. One day the young lad receives a letter full of love. His father writes — "Return to me, my child; I will forgive you all; I will love you freely." Now if this letter had said — "If you will humble yourself so much, I will love you; if you will come back and make me such-and-such promises, I will love you;" if it had said, "If you will behave yourself for the future, I will love you," — I can suppose the young man's proud nature rising; but surely this kindness will melt him. Methinks the generosity of the invitation will at once break his heart, and he will say, "I will offend no longer, I will return at once." Backslider! without any condition you are invited to return. "I am married unto you," saith the Lord. If Jesus ever did love you he has never left off loving you. You may have left off attending to the means of grace; you may have been very slack at private prayer, but if you ever were a child of God you are a child of God still, and he cries "How can I give thee up? How can I set thee as Admah? How can I make thee as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled together; I am God, and not man; I will return unto him in mercy. Return, backslider, and seek thine injured Father's face. I think I hear a murmur somewhere — "Well, this is very, very, very Antinomian doctrine." Ay, objector, it is such doctrine as you will want one day; it is the only doctrine which can meet the case of really awakened sinners. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly."

II. Since it is written. "I will love them freely," we believe that **NOTHING IN MAN CAN BE AN EFFECTUAL BAR TO GOD'S LOVE.**

This is the same doctrine put in another shape. Nothing in man can be the cause of God's love, so nothing in man can be an effectual hindrance to God's love — I mean such an effectual hindrance as to prevent God from loving man. How shall I prove it? If there be anything in any man which can be a bar to God's grace, then this would have been an effectual hindrance to its coming to any of the human race. All men were in the loins of Adam, and if there were a bar in you to God's love, that would have been in Adam; consequently, being in Adam, it would have been a block to God's love to the race altogether. If there be some sin in you, I say, which can effectually prevent God from showing grace to you, then that was in Adam, seeing you were in the loins of Adam, and it would therefore have been an effectual hindrance to God's grace from the race in any one of its members. Seeing God's grace found no barriers over which it could not leap, no floodgates which it could not burst, no mountains it could not

overtop, I am persuaded there is nothing in you why God should not show his grace to you.

Besides, one would think that if there be a bar in any *it would have prevented the salvation of those who are undoubtedly saved*. Mention any sin you like, and I will assure you upon divine authority that men have committed such sins and have yet been saved. Talk of a deed that has blackened the man's character for ever, that deed of foul adultery and murder; yet that did not stop God's love from flowing to David; and even if you have gone that length, and I suppose there is no person here who has gone farther, even that cannot prevent divine love from lighting upon you. As God does not love because there is excellence, so he does not refuse to love because there is sin. Let me select the case of Manasseh; he shed innocent blood very much; he bowed before idols; what was worse, he made his children to pass through the fire to the son of Hinnom, put his own child to death as a sacrifice to the false god, and yet for all that God's love laid hold upon him, and Manasseh became a bright star in heaven, though once as vile as the lost in hell. If there be anything in you, then, that makes you think God cannot love you, I reply, Impossible, for surely your sins do not exceed those of the chief of sinners. Paul says he was the chief of sinners, and he meant it; he spoke by inspiration, and there is no doubt he was. Now if the biggest of sinners has passed through the strait gate, there must be room for the next biggest; if the greatest sinner in the world has been saved, then there is a possibility for you and for me, for we cannot be such great sinners as the very chief of sinners. But I will dare to say that even if we were, even if we could exceed Paul, yet even that could be no barrier; for man's sin, to say the most of it, is but the act of a finite creature, but God's grace is the act of infinite goodness. God forbid that I should depreciate your offenses, they are loathsome, they are hellish in themselves; still they are only a creature's deeds, the deeds of a worm that to-day is and to-morrow is crushed; but the grace, the love, and the pity of God, oh! these are infinite, eternal, everlasting, boundless, matchless, quenchless, unconquerable, and therefore the grace of God can overcome and prove itself mightier than your guilt and sin. There is no bar, then, or else there would have been a bar in the case of others.

Would it not mar the sovereignty of God if there should be a man in whom there was something that would effectually prevent God's love from flowing to him? Then it would not be, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy;" no, it would be "I will have mercy on those I *can* have mercy

on; but there is such-and-such a man, I cannot have mercy on him, for he is gone too far." No, glory be to God for that sentence — "I will have mercy upon whom *I will* have mercy." The devil may say, "What, on that man, on that man! He has gone too far." "Ah!" but says God, "if I will it, he has not gone too far; I will have mercy on him." I do not know that I ever felt more the boundless sovereignty of the grace of God than when I looked that text in the face and saw it — not "I will have mercy on those that are vialing to have it;" or, "I will have mercy on penitents," no — "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." And so, if God wills to save you, there can be no bar to it, or else that would be a marring and a limiting of the sovereignty of God.

Would not this *be a great slur cast upon the grace of God?* Suppose I could find out a sinner so vile that Jesus Christ could not reach him; why then the devils in hell would take him through their streets as a trophy; they would say, "This man was more than a match for God; his sin was too great for God's grace." What says the Apostle? "Where sin abounded" — that is you, poor sinner; — "where sin abounded" — what sins you plunged into last night, and on other black occasions, — "where sin abounded" — what? Condemnation? Hopeless despair? No, "Where sin abounded *grace did much more abound.*" I think I see the conflict in the great arena of the universe. Man piles a mountain of sin, but God will match it, and he upheaves a loftier mountain of grace; man heaps up a still huger hill of sin, but the Lord overtops it with ten times more grace; and so the contest continues till at last the mighty God plucks up the mountains by the roots and buries man's sin beneath them as a fly might be buried beneath an Alp. Abundant sin is no barrier to the superabundant grace of God.

And then, dear friends, *would it not detract glory from the gospel,* if it could be proved that there was some man in whom the gospel could not work its way? Suppose that the gospel which is "worthy of all acceptance" could not meet certain cases. Suppose I picked out twelve men who were so diseased that the gospel remedy could not meet their case; oh! then I think I should stop my mouth from all glorying in the cross. I could no more say with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," for then it would not be the power of God unto salvation to every one that beheyeth. No, it would be the power of God to all except that dozen. But oh! as often as I come into this pulpit, it gives me joy to know that I have a gospel to preach which is suitable to every

case. A friend told me the other day that many notorious characters stole in at times. Thank God for that. "Ah!" said some, "but they come only to laugh." Never mind; thank God if they come. "Oh! but they will make mockery of it." Nay, the Lord knows how to turn mockers into weepers. Let us hope for the worst, and labor for the most hopeless.

The love of God has provided means to meet the extremest case. They are twofold; the power of Christ, and the power of the Spirit. Do you tell me that sin is a barrier? I answer, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin." The atonement of Christ is capable of removing from men, all sorts, sizes, and dyes of iniquity. "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." "Ah," cries one, "man's hard-heartedness stands in the way of God's love." Beloved, the Holy Spirit is ready to meet the case of the hard heart. "Limit not the Holy One of Israel." Is anything too hard for the Lord? You tell me that unbelief is a bar. I answer "No," for cannot the Holy Spirit make the unbelieving believe, yea, if the Holy Spirit once comes into effectual contact with the most unbelieving and obstinate spirit it must believe at once. Look at the jailer, a few minutes ago he had been putting Paul in the stocks. What, what, what, what is this that comes over him? "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe," says the Apostle, and he does believe, and becomes as phant as a child. Out on the men who think that man is master over God! If he willed to stop at this moment the most bloody persecutor, the most filthy and licentious man, if he willed to turn the blackest-hearted atheist into one of the most brilliant of saints, there is nothing in his way to stop him; in a moment omnipotent love can do it; the means are provided, both in the blood of Christ for cleansing, and in the power of the Spirit for renewing the inner man. Therefore, I say it is established beyond doubt, that there is nothing in man which can conquer divine love.

"What is the practical use of this," says one. The practical use of this is to set the gate of mercy wide open. I like always to preach sermons which leave the door of mercy on the jar for the worst of sinners, but this morning I set it wide open. A man has dropped in here who has been thinking for years, "I gave myself up to sin in my youth, and I have gone astray ever since — there is no hope for me." I tell you, soul, all that you have ever done is no bar to God's love to you, for he does not love you because of anything good in you, and that which is black in you cannot prevent his loving you if he so wills it. I tell thee what I would have thee

do. I have seen those like unto thee come to the foot of the cross, and they have said —

*“Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.”*

If thou in thy soul canst now trust the love of God in Christ, thou art saved; no matter whosoever thou mayest be, thou art saved this morning, and thou shalt go out of this house a regenerate soul, for thou hast believed in Jesus, therefore the love of God is come to thee, all thy past life is forgotten and forgiven; all thy past ingratitude, and blasphemy, and sin are cast into the depths of the sea; and, as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed thy transgressions from thee. I have known the time when, if I had heard the sermon of this morning, faint and feeble though it be, I should have danced for joy. I feel an intense inward satisfaction and delight while preaching it, for I believe it is the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Christ died not for the righteous but for sinners. He gave himself for our sins and not for our righteousness; this old Lutheran doctrine — this grand doctrine which shook old Rome to her very foundations, methinks must give poor sinners comfort and peace. I know that many will see nothing in it. Of course, none but the sick see any value in the healing medicine. I know there are some here who will think the sermon is not for them. Oh! may the Spirit of God make some accept of this comfort; but they will not unless the Spirit of God makes them. Too many of us are like foolish patients, who will not take the physician’s medicine, and he has need to hold us, and thrust it down before we will take it. This is how the Lord dealeth with many, not against their will, but yet against their will as it used to be, he giveth them the medicine of his grace, and maketh them whole.

To sum up all in one, what I mean is this: there have straggled in here this morning the poor working man, the struggling mechanic, the gay young fop, the man who leads a fast life, the wretch who leads a coarse life, the woman, perhaps, who has gone far astray; I mean to say to such, you are lost, but the Son of man is come to seek and to save you. I mean to say to you, sons and daughters of moral parents, who are not converted, but perhaps feel yourselves even worse than the immoral, I mean to say to you that you are not past hope yet. God will love you freely, and this is how his love is preached to you — “Whosoever beheyeth on the Lord Jesus Christ

shall be saved.” Come as you are; God will accept you as you are. Come as you are, without any preparation or fitness; come as you are, and where the cross is lifted high with the bleeding Son of God upon it, fall flat on your face, accepting the love manifested there, willingly receiving this day the grace which God willingly and freely gives.

As sinners, without any qualification, as sinners, as undeserving sinners, my Lord will receive you graciously and love you freely.

A JEALOUS GOD.

NO. 502

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 29TH,
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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God.” — Exodus 34:14.

THE passion of jealousy in man is usually exercised in an evil manner, but it is not in itself necessarily sinful. A man may be zealously cautious of his honor, and suspiciously vigilant over another, without deserving blame. All thoughtful persons will agree that there is such a thing as virtuous jealousy. Self-love is, no doubt, the usual foundation of human jealousy, and it may be that Shenstone is right in his definition of it as “the apprehension of superiority,” the fear lest another should by any means supplant us; yet the word “*jealous*” is so near akin to that noble word “*zealous*,” that I am persuaded it must have something good in it. Certainly we learn from Scripture that there is such a thing as a godly jealousy. We find the Apostle Paul declaring to the Corinthian Church, “I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” He had an earnest, cautious, anxious concern for their holiness, that the Lord Jesus might be honored in their lives. Let it be remembered then, that jealousy, like anger, is not evil in itself, or it could never be ascribed to God; his jealousy is ever a pure and holy flame. The passion of jealousy possesses an intense force, it fires the whole nature, its coals are juniper, which have a most vehement flame; it resides in the lowest depths of the heart, and takes so firm a hold that it remains most deeply rooted until the exciting cause is removed; it wells up from the inmost recesses of the nature, and like a torrent irresistibly sweeps all before it; it stops at nothing, for it is cruel as the grave (Cant. 8:6), it provokes wrath to the utmost, for it is the rage of a man, therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance (Proverbs 6:34), and it over throws

everything in the pursuit of its enemy, for “wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before jealousy?” For all these reasons jealousy is selected as some faint picture of that tender regard which God has for His own Deity, honor, and supremacy, and the holy indignation which he feels towards those who violate his laws, offend his majesty, or impeach his character. Not that God is jealous so as to bring him down to the likeness of men, but that this is the nearest idea we can form of what the Divine Being feels — if it be right to use even that word toward him — when he beholds his throne occupied by false gods, his dignity insulted, and his glory usurped by others. We cannot speak of God except by using figures drawn from his works, or our own emotions; we ought, however, when we use the images, to caution ourselves and those who listen to us, against the idea that the Infinite mind is really to be compassed and described by any metaphors however lofty, or language however weighty. We might not have ventured to use the word, “jealousy” in connection with the Most High, but as we find it so many times in Scripture, let us with solemn awe survey this mysterious display of the Divine mind. Methinks I hear the thundering words of Nahum, “God is jealous and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious, the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reseriyeth wrath for his enemies.” My soul be thou humbled before the Lord and tremble at his name!

I. Reverently, let us remember that the LORD IS EXCEEDINGLY JEALOUS OF HIS DEITY.

Our text is coupled with the command — “Thou shalt worship no other God.” When the law was thundered from Sinai, the second commandment received force from the divine jealousy — “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.” Since he is the only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, he cannot endure that any creature of his own hands, or fiction of a creature’s imagination should be thrust into his throne, and be made to wear his crown. In Ezekiel we find the false god described as “the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy,” and the doom on Jerusalem for thus turning from Jehovah runs thus, “Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.” False gods patiently endure the existence of other false gods. Dagon can stand with Bel, and Bel with Ashtaroth; how should stone, and wood, and silver, be

moved to indignation; but because God is the only living and true God, Dagon must fall before his ark; Bel must be broken, and Ashtaroth must be consumed with fire. Thus saith the Lord, “Ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves;” the idols he shall utterly abolish. My brethren, do you marvel at this? I felt in my own soul while meditating upon this matter an intense sympathy with God. Can you put yourselves in God’s place for a moment? Suppose that you had made the heavens and the earth, and all the creatures that inhabit this round globe; how would you feel if those creatures should set up an image of wood, or brass, or gold, and cry, “These are the gods that made us; these things give us life.” What — a dead piece of earth set up in rivalry with real Deity!

What must be the Lord’s indignation against infatuated rebels when they so far despise him as to set up a leek, or an onion, or a beetle, or a frog, preferring to worship the fruit of their own gardens, or the vermin of their muddy rivers, rather than acknowledge the God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways! Oh! it is a marvel that God hath not dashed the world to pieces with thunderbolts, when we recollect that even to this day millions of men have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. With what unutterable contempt must the living God look down upon those idols which are the work of man’s hands — “They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.” God hath longsuffering toward men, and he patiently endureth this madness of rebelhon; but, oh! what patience must it be which can restrain the fury of his jealousy, for he is a jealous God, and brooks no rival. It was divine jealousy which moved the Lord to bring all his plagues on Egypt. Careful reading will show you that those wonders were all aimed at the gods of Egypt. The people were tormented by the very things which they had made to be their deities, or else, as in the case of the murrain, their sacred animals were themselves smitten, even as the Lord had threatened — “Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Jehovah.” Was it not the same with ancient Israel? Why were they routed before their enemies? Why was their land so often invaded? Why did famine follow pestilence, and war succeed to famine? Only because “they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was Froth, and greatly abhorred Israel.” (Psalm lxxviii. 58, 59.)

How

was it that at the last the Lord gave up Jerusalem to the flames, and bade the Chaldeans carry into captivity the remnant of his people? How was it that he abhorred his heritage, and gave up Mount Zion to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles? Did not Jeremiah tell them plainly that because they had walked after other gods and forsaken Jehovah, therefore he would cast them out into a land which they knew not?

Brethren, the whole history of the human race is a record of the wars of the Lord against idolatry. The right hand of the Lord hath dashed in pieces the enemy and cast the ancient idols to the ground. Behold the heaps of Nineveh! Search for the desolations of Babylon! Look upon the broken temples of Greece! See the ruins of Pagan Rome! Journey where you will, you behold the dilapidated temples of the gods and the ruined empires of their foolish votaries. The moles and the bats have covered with forgetfulness the once famous deities of Chaldea and Assyria. The Lord hath made bare his arm and eased him of his adversaries, for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

With what indignation, then, must the Lord look down upon that apostate harlot, called *the Romish Church*, when, in all her sanctuaries, there are pictures and images, relics and slivines, and poor infatuated beings are even taught to bow before a piece of bread. In this country, Popish idolatry is not so barefaced and naked as it is in other lands; but I have seen it, and my soul has been moved with indignation like that of Paul on Mars' Hill, when he saw the city wholly to idolatry; I have seen thousands adore the wafer, hundreds bow before the image of the Virgin, scores at prayer before a crucifix, and companies of men and women adoring a rotten bone or a rusty nail, because said to be the relic of a saint. It is vain for the Romanist to assert that he worships not the things themselves, but only the Lord through them, for this the second commandment expressly forbids, and it is upon this point that the Lord calls himself a jealous God. How full is that cup which Babylon must drink; the day is hastening when the Lord shall avenge himself upon her, because her iniquities have reached unto heaven, and she hath blasphemously exalted her Pope into the throne of the Host High, and thrust her priests into the office of the Lamb. Purge yourselves, purge yourselves of this leaven. I charge you before God, the Judge of quick and dead, if ye would not be partakers of her plagues, come out from her more and more, and let your protest be increasingly vehement against this which exalteth itself above all that is called God. Let our Protestant Churches, which have too great a savour of Popery in them, cleanse

themselves of her fornications, lest the Lord visit them with fire and pour the plagues of Babylon upon them. Renounce, my brethren, every ceremony which has not Scripture for its warrant, and every doctrine which is not established by the plain testimony of the Word of God. Let us, above all, never by any sign, or word, or deed, have any complicity with this communion of devils, this gathering together of the sons of Behal: and since our God is a jealous God, let us not provoke him by any affinity, gentleness, fellowship, or amity with this Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth.

With what jealousy must the Lord regard the *great mass of the people of this country*, who have another God beside himself! With what indignation doth he look upon many of you who are subject to the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world! To you Jehovah is nothing. God is not in all your thoughts; you have no fear of Him before your eyes. Like the men of Israel, you have set up your idols *in your heart*. Your god is custom, fashion, business, pleasure, ambition, honor. You have made unto yourselves gods of these things; you have said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Ye follow after the things which perish, the things of this world, which are vanity. O ye sons of men, think not that God is blind. He can perceive the idols in your hearts; he understandeth what be the secret things that your souls lust after; he searcheth your heart, he trieth your reins; beware lest he find you sacrificing to strange gods, for his anger will smoke against you, and his jealousy will be stirred. O ye that worship not God, the God of Israel, who give him not dominion over your whole soul, and live not to his honor, repent ye of your idolatry, seek mercy through the blood of Jesus, and provoke not the Lord to jealousy any more.

Even *believers* may be reproved on this subject. God is very jealous of his deity in the hearts of his own people. Mother, what will he say of you, if that darling child occupies a more prominent place in your love than your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Husband, what shall he say to you, and with what stripes shall he smite you, when your wife reigns as a goddess in your spirit? And wife, thou shouldest love thy husband — thou doest well in so doing; but if thou exaltest him above God, if thou makest him to have dominion over thy conscience, and art willing to forsake thy Lord to please him, then thou hast made to thyself another god, and God is jealous with thee. Ay, and we may thus provoke him with the dead as well as with the living. A grief carried to excess, a grief nurtured until it prevents our attention to duty, a grief which makes us murmur and repine against the

will of Providence is sheer rebelhon; it hath in it the very spirit of idolatry; it will provoke the Lord to anger, and he will surely chasten yet again, until our spirit becomes resigned to his rod. “Hast thou not forgiven God yet?” was the language of an old Quaker when he saw a widow who for years had worn her weeds, and was inconsolable in her grief — “Hast thou not forgiven God yet?” We may weep under bereavements, for Jesus wept; but we must not sorrow so as to provoke the Lord to anger, we must not act as if our friends were more precious to us than our God. We are permitted to take solace in each other, but when we carry love to idolatry, and put the creature into the Creator’s place, and rebel, and fret, and bitterly repine, then the Lord hath a rod in his hand, and he will make us feel its weight, for he is a jealous God. I fear there are some professors who put their house, their garden, their business, their skill, I know not what, at seasons into the place of God. It were not consistent with the life of godliness for a man to be perpetually an idolater, but even true believers will sometimes be overcome with this sin, and will have to mourn over it. Brethren, set up no images of jealousy, but like Jacob of old cry to yourselves and to your families, “Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean.” Let me warn those of you who neglect this that if you be the Lord’s people you shall soon smart for it, and the sooner the better for your own salvation; while, on the other hand, to those ungodly persons who continue to live for objects other than divine, let me say, you not only smart in this life by bitter disappointments, but you shall also suffer eternal wrath in the life to come.

Come, let me push this matter home upon your consciences; let me carry this as at point of bayonet. Why, my hearers, there are some of you who never worship God. I know you go up to his house, but then it is only to be seen, or to quiet your conscience by having done your duty. How many of you merchants aim only to accumulate a fortune! How many of you tradesmen are living only for your families! How many young men breathe only for pleasure! How many young women exist only for amusement and vanity. I fear that some among you make your belly your god, and bow down to your own personal charms or comforts. Talk of idolaters! They are here to-day! If we desire to preach to those who break the first and second commandments we have no need to go to Hindostan, or traverse the plains of Africa. They are here. Unto you who bow not before the Lord let these words be given, and let them ring in your ears — “The Lord whose name is jealous, is a jealous God.” Who shall stand before him when

once he is angry? When his jealousy burneth like fire and smoketh like a furnace, who shall endure the day of his wrath. Beware, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Dreadful shall it be for you, if at the last you shall behold an angry God sitting in judgment. Pause now and meditate upon your doom, and think you see the Almighty robed in tempest and whirlwind.

*“His throne a seat of dreadful wrath,
Girt with devouring flame;
The Lord appears consuming fire,
And Jealous is his name.”*

God save you for Jesus’ sake.

II. The Lord IS JEALOUS OF HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

He that made heaven and earth has a right to rule his creatures as he wills. The potter hath power over the clay to fashion it according to his own good pleasure, and the creatures being made are bound to be obedient to their Lord. He has a right to issue commands, he has done so — they are holy, and just, and wise; men are bound to obey, but, alas, they continually revolt against his sovereignty, and will not obey him; nay, there be men who deny altogether that he is lying of kings, and others who take counsel together saying, “Let us break his bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from us.” He that sitteth in the heavens is moved to jealousy by these sins, and will defend the rights of his crown against all comers, for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

This reminds us of *the Lord’s hatred of sin*. Every time we sin, we do as much as say, “I do not acknowledge God to be my sovereign; I will do as I please.” Each time we speak an ill-word we really say, “My tongue is my own, he is not Lord over my lips.” Yea, and everytime the human heart wandereth after evil, and lusteth for that which is forbidden, it attempts to dethrone God, and to set up the Evil One in his place. The language of sin is “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice; I will not have God to reign over me.” Sin is a deliberate treason against the majesty of God, an assault upon his crown, an insult offered to his throne. Some sins, especially, have rebelhon written on their forehead — presumptuous sins, when a man’s conscience has been enlightened, and he knows better, and yet still forsakes the good and follows after evil; when a man’s conscience has been aroused through some judgment, or sickness, or under a faithful

ministry; if that man returns, like a dog to his vomit, he has, indeed, insulted the sovereignty of God. But have we not all done this, and are there not some here in particular of whom we once had good hope, but who have turned back again to crooked ways? Are there not some of you who, Sabbath after Sabbath, get your consciences so quickened that you cannot be easy in sin as others are and though you may, perhaps, indulge in sin, yet it costs you very dearly, for you know better? Did I not hear of one who sits in these seats often, but is as often on the ale bench? Did I not hear of another who can sing with us the hymns of Zion, but is equally at home with the lascivious music of the drunkard? Do we not know of some who in their business are anything but what they should be, yet for a show can come up to the house of God? Oh, sirs, oh, sirs, ye do provoke the Lord to jealousy! Take heed, for when he cometh out of his resting-place, and taketh to himself his sword and buckler, who are you that you should stand before the dread majesty of His presence! Tremble and be still! Humble yourselves, and repent of this your sin.

Surely, if sin attacks the sovereignty of God, *self-righteousness is equally guilty of treason*: for as sin boasts, "I will not keep God's law," self-righteousness exclaims, "I will not be saved in God's way; I will make a new road to heaven; I will not bow before God's grace; I will not accept the atonement which God has wrought out in the person of Jesus; I will be my own redeemer; I will enter heaven by my own strength, and glorify my own merits." The Lord is very wroth against self-righteousness. I do not know of anything against which his fury burneth more than against this, because this touches him in a very tender point, it insults the glory and honor of his Son Jesus Christ. Joshua said to the children of Israel when they promised to keep the law — "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; and he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." So I may well say to every self-righteous person, "You cannot keep the law, for God is a jealous God," carefully marking every fault, and just to mark your iniquities; nor will he forgive your iniquities so long as you attempt to win his favor by works of law. Throw away thy self-righteousness, thou proud one; cast it with all other idols to the moles and to the bats, for there is no hope for thee so long as thou dost cling to it. Self-righteousness is in itself the very height and crowning-point of rebelhon against God. For a man to say, "Lord, I have not sinned," is the gathering-up, the emphasis, the climax of iniquity, and God's jealousy is hot against it.

Let me add, dear friends, I feel persuaded that *false doctrine*, inasmuch as it touches God's sovereignty, is always an object of divine jealousy. Let me indicate especially the doctrines of free-will. I know there are some good men who hold and preach them, but I am persuaded that the Lord must be grieved with their doctrine though he forgives them their sin of ignorance. Free-will doctrine — what does it? It magnifies man into God; it declares God's purposes a nullity, since they cannot be carried out unless men are willing. It makes God's will a waiting servant to the will of man, and the whole covenant of grace dependent upon human action. Denying election on the ground of injustice it holds God to be a debtor to sinners, so that if he gives grace to one he is bound to do so to all. It teaches that the blood of Christ was shed equally for all men and since some are lost, this doctrine ascribes the difference to man's own will, thus making the atonement itself a powerless thing until the will of man gives it efficacy. Those sentiments dilute the scriptural description of man's depravity, and by imputing strength to fallen humanity, rob the Spirit of the glory of his effectual grace: this theory says in effect that *it is* of him that willeth, and of him that runneth, and not of God that showeth mercy. Any doctrine, my brethren, which stands in opposition to this truth — "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," provokes God's jealousy. I often tremble in this pulpit lest I should utter anything which should oppose the sovereignty of my God; and though you know I am not ashamed to preach the responsibility of man to God — if God be a sovereign, man must be bound to obey him — on the other hand, I am equally bold to preach that God has a right to do what he wills with his own, that he giveth no account of his matters and none may stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" I believe that the free-will heresy assails the sovereignty of God, and mars the glory of his dominion. In all faithfulness, mingled with sorrow, I persuade you who have been deluded by it, to see well to your ways and receive the truth which sets God on high, and lays the creature in the dust. "The Lord reigneth," be this our joy. The Lord is our King, let us obey him and defend to the death the crown rights of the lying of kings, for he is a jealous God.

While tarrying upon this subject, I ought also to remark that *all the boastings of ungodly men*, whenever they exalt themselves, seeing that they are a sort of claim of sovereignty, must be very vexatious to God, the Judge of all. When you glory in your own power, you forget that power belongeth only unto God, and you provoke his jealousy. When kings, parhaments, or synods, trespass upon the sacred domains of conscience,

and say to men, “Bow down, that we may go over you” — when we make attempts to lord over another man’s judgment, and to make our own opinions supreme, the Lord is moved to jealousy, for he retains the court of conscience for himself alone to reign in. Let us humbly bow before the dignity of the Most High, and pay our homage at his feet.

*“Glory to th’ eternal King,
Clad in majesty supreme!
Let all heaven his praises sing,
Let all worlds his power
proclaim.
O let my transported soul
Ever on his glories gaze!
Ever yield to his control,
Ever sound his lofty praise!”*

Let us crown him every day! Let our holy obedience, let our devout lives, let our hearty acquiescence in all his will, let our reverent adoration before the greatness of his majesty, all prove that we acknowledge him to be King of kings, and Lord of lords, lest we provoke a jealous God to anger.

III. THE LORD IS JEALOUS OF HIS GLORY.

God’s glory is the result of his nature and acts. He is glorious in his character, for there is such a store of everything that is holy, and good, and lovely in God, that he must be glorious. The actions which flow from his character, the deeds which are the outgoings of his inner nature, these are glorious too; and the Lord is very careful that all flesh should see that he is a good, and gracious, and just God; and he is mindfull, too, that his great and mighty acts should not give glory to others, but only to himself.

How, careful, then, should we be when we do anything for God, and God is pleased to accept of our doings, that we never congratulate ourselves. The minister of Christ should unrobe himself of every rag of praise. “You preached well,” said a friend to Jolin Bunyan one morning. “You are too late,” said honest Jolin, “the devil told me that before I left the pulpit.” The devil often tells God’s servants a great many things which they should be sorry to hear. Why, you can hardly be useful in a Sunday School but he will say to you — “How well you have done it!” You can scarcely resist a temptation, or set a good example, but he will be whispering to you — “What an excellent person you must be!” It is, perhaps, one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence — “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory.” Now God is so jealous on this point

that, while he will forgive his own servants a thousand things, this is an offense for which he is sure to chasten us. Let a believer once say, "I am," and God will soon make him say "I am not." Let a Christian begin to boast, "I can do all things," without adding "through Christ which strengtheneth me," and before long he will have to groan, "I can do nothing," and bemoan himself in the dust. Many of the sins of true Christians, I do not doubt, have been the result of their glorifying themselves. Many a man has been permitted by God to stain a noble character and to ruin an admirable reputation, because the character and the reputation had come to be the man's own, instead of being laid, as all our crowns must be laid, at the feet of Christ. Thou mayest build the city, but if thou sayest with Nebuchadnezzar, "Behold this great Babylon which I have builded!" thou shalt be smitten to the earth. The worms which ate Herod when he gave not God the glory are ready for another meal; beware of vain glory!

How careful ought we to be *to walk humbly before the Lord*. The moment we glorify ourselves, since there is room for one glory only in the universe, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High. Penitent souls are always accepted, because they are not in God's way; proud souls are always rejected, because they are in God's way. Shall the insect of an hour glorify itself against the Sun which warmed it into life? Shall the potsherd exalt itself above the man that fashioned it upon the wheel? Shall the dust of the desert strive with the whirlwind? Or the drops of the ocean struggle with the tempest? O thou nothingness and vanity, thou puny mortal called man, humble thyself and reverence thy Great Creator.

Let us see to it *that we never misrepresent God, so as to rob him of his hour*. If any minister shall preach of God so as to dishonor him, God will be jealous against that man. I fear that the Lord hath heavy wrath against those who lay the damnation of man at God's door, for they dishonor God, and he is very jealous of his name. And those, on the other hand, who ascribe salvation to man must also be heavily beneath God's displeasure, for they take from him his glory. Ah, thieves! ah, thieves! will ye dare to steal the crown-jewels of the universe! Whither go ye, whither bear ye the bright pearls which ought to shine upon the brow of Christ? To put them on the brow of man? Stop! stop! for the Lord will not give his glory to another! Give unto the Lord, all ye righteous, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto him the honor that is due unto his name! Any doctrine which does not give all the honor to God must provoke him to jealousy.

Be careful, dear friends, that you do not misrepresent God *yourselves*. You who murmur; you who say that God deals hardly with you, you give God an ill character; when you look so melancholy, worldlings say, “The religion of Jesus is intolerable;” and so you stain the honor of God. Oh, do not do this, for he is a jealous God, and he will surely use the rod upon you if you do.

A flash of holy pleasure crosses my mind. I am glad that he is a jealous God. It is enough to make us walk very carefully, but, at the same time, it should make us very joyful to think that the Lord is very jealous of his own honor. Then, brethren, if we believe in Christ, you and I are safe, because it would dishonor him if we were not; for his own name’s sake and for his faithfulness’ sake, he will never leave one of his people; since “His honor is engaged to save the meanest of his sheep.” Now, if Christ could trifle with his own honor, if he had no jealousy, you and I might be afraid that he would suffer us to perish; but it never shall be. It shall be said on earth and sung in heaven at the last, that God has suffered no dishonorable defeats from the hands of either men or devils. “I chose my people,” saith the Eternal Father, “and they are mine now that I make up my jewels.” “I bought my people,” saith the eternal Son, “I became a surety for them before the Most High, and the infernal hon could not rend the meanest of the sheep.” “I quickened my people,” saith the Holy Spirit; the temptations of hell could not throw them down; their own corruptions could not overpower them; I have gotten the victory in every one of them, not one of them is lost; they are all brought safely to my right hand.” Hide yourselves, then, under the banner of Jehovah’s jealousy. It is bloody red, I know; its ensign bears a thunderbolt and a flame of fire; but hide yourselves, hide yourselves under it, for what enemy shall reach you there? If it be to God’s glory to save me, I am entrenched behind munitions of stupendous rock. If it would render God inglorious to let me, a poor sinner, descend into hell; if it would open the mouths of devils and make men say that God is not faithful to his promise, then am I secure, for God’s glory is wrapped up with my salvation, and the one cannot fail because the other cannot be tarnished. Beloved, let us mind that we be very jealous of God’s glory ourselves since he is jealous of it. Let us say with Elijah — “I am very jealous for the Lord God of hosts.” May our lives, and conduct, and conversation prove that we are jealous of our hearts lest they should once depart from him; and may we smite with stern and unrelenting hand every

sin and every thought of pride that might touch the glory of our gracious God; living to him as living before a jealous God.

IV. In the highest sense, THE LORD IS JEALOUS OVER HIS OWN PEOPLE.

Let me only hint, that human jealousy, although it will exercise itself over man's reputation, rights, and honor, hath one particularly tender place: jealousy guardeth, like an armed man, *the marriage-covenant*. A suspicion here is horrible. Even good old Jacob, when he came to die, could not look upon his son Reuben without remembering his offense. "He went up to my couch," said the old man — and, as if the remembrance was too painful for him, he hurried on from Reuben to the next. The Lord has been graciously pleased to say of his people, "I am married unto you." The covenant of grace is a marriage-covenant, and Christ's Church has become his spouse. It is here that God's jealousy is peculiarly liable to take fire. Men cannot be God's favourites without being the subjects of his watchfulness and jealousy: that which might be looked over in another will be chastened in a member of Christ. As a husband is jealous of his honor, so is the Lord Jesus much concerned for the purity of his Church.

The Lord Jesus Christ, of whom I now speak, *is very jealous of your love*, O believer. Did he not choose you? He cannot hear that you should choose another. Did he not buy you with his own blood? He cannot endure that you should think you are your own, or that you belong to this world. He loved you with such a love that he could not stop in heaven without you; he would sooner die than that you should perish; he stripped himself to nakedness that he might clothe you with beauty; he bowed his face to shame and spitting that he might lift you up to honor and glory, and he cannot endure that you should love the world, and the things of the world. His love is strong as death towards you, and therefore will be cruel as the grave. He will be as a cruel one towards you if you do not love him with a perfect heart. He will take away that husband; he will smite that child; he will bring you from riches to poverty, from health to sickness, even to the gates of the grave, because he loves you so much that he cannot endure that anything should stand between your heart's love and him. Be careful Christians, you that are married to Christ; remember, you are married to a jealous husband.

He is very jealous *of your trust*. He will not permit you to trust in an arm of flesh. He will not endure that you should hew out broken cisterns, when the overflowing fountain is always free to you. When we come up from the

wilderness leaning upon our Beloved, then is our Beloved glad, but when we go down to the wilderness leaning on some other arm; when we trust in our own wisdom or the wisdom of a friend — worst of all, when we trust in any works of our own, he is angry, and will smite us with heavy blows that he may bring us to himself.

He is also very jealous *of our company*. It were well if a Christian could see nothing but Christ. When the wife of a Persian noble had been invited to the coronation of Darius, the question was asked of her by her husband — “Did you not think the king a most beautiful man?” and her answer was — “I cared not to look at the king; my eyes are for my husband only, for my heart is his.” The Christian should say the same. There is nothing beneath the spacious arch of heaven comparable to Christ: there should be no one with whom we converse so much as with Jesus. To abide in him only, this is true love; but to commune with the world, to find solace in our comforts, to be loving this evil world, this is vexing to our jealous Lord. Do you not believe that nine out of ten of the troubles and pains of believers are the result of their love to some other person than Christ? Nail me to thy cross, thou bleeding Savior! Put thy thorn-crown upon my head to be a hedge to keep my thoughts within its bound! O for a fire to burn up all my wandering loves. O for a seal to stamp the name of my Beloved indelibly upon my heart! O love divine expel from me all carnal worldly loves, and fill me with thyself!

Dear friends, let this jealousy which should keep us near to Christ *be also a comfort to us*, for if we be married to Christ, and he be jealous of us, depend upon it this jealous husband will let none touch his spouse. Joel tells us that the Lord is jealous for his land, and Zechariah utters the word of the Lord, “I am jealous for Jerusalem, and for Zion with a great jealousy;” and then he declares that he will punish the heathen. And will he not avenge his own elect who cry unto him day and night? There is not a hard word spoken but the Lord shall avenge it! There is not a single deed done against us, but the strong hand of him who once died but now lives for us, shall take terrible vengeance upon all his adversaries. I am not afraid for the Church of God! I tremble not for the cause of God! Our jealous Husband will never let his Church be in danger, and if any smite her he will give them double for every blow. The gates of hell shall not prevail against his Church, but she shall prevail against the gates of hell. Her jealous Husband shall roll away her shame; her reproach shall be forgotten; her glory shall be fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army

with banners, for he that is jealous of himself is jealous for her fair fame. The subject is large and deep; let us prove that we understand it, by henceforth walking very carefully; and if any say “Why are you so precise?” let this be our answer — “I serve a jealous God.”

DEATH AND LIFE IN CHRIST.

NO. 503

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 5TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” — Romans 6:8-11.

THE apostles never traveled far from the simple facts of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and second advent. These things, of which they were the witnesses, constituted the staple of all their discourses. Newton has very properly said that the two pillars of our religion are, the work of Christ for us, and his work in us by the Holy Spirit. If you want to find the apostles, you will surely discover them standing between these two pillars; they are either discoursing upon the effect of the passion in our justification, or its equally delightful consequence in our death to the world and our newness of life. What a rebuke this should be to those in modern times who are ever straining after novelties. There may be much of the Athenian spirit among congregations, but that should be no excuse for its being tolerated among ministers; we, of all men, should be the last to spend our time in seeking something new.

Our business, my brethren, is the old labor of apostolic tongues, to declare that Jesus, who is the same yesterday to-day and for ever. We are mirrors reflecting the transactions of Calvary, telescopes manifesting the distant glories of an exalted Redeemer. The nearer we keep to the cross, the nearer, I think, we keep to our true vocation. When the Lord shall be pleased to restore to his Church once more a fervent love to Christ, and

when once again we shall have a ministry that is not only flavoured with Christ, but of which Jesus constitutes the sum and substance, then shall the Churches revive — then shall the set time to favor Zion come. The goodly cedar which was planted by the rivers of old, and stretched out her branches far and wide, has become in these modern days like a tree dwarfed by Chinese art; it is planted by the rivers as aforetime, but it does not flourish, only let God the Holy Spirit give to us once again the bold and clear preaching of Christ crucified in all simplicity and earnestness, and the dwarf shall swell into a forest giant, each expanding bud shall burst into foliage, and the cedar shall tower aloft again, until the birds of the air shall lodge in the branches thereof. I need offer you no apology, then, for preaching on those matters which engrossed all the time of the apostles, and which shall shower unnumbered blessings on generations yet to come.

I. THE FACTS REFERRED TO IN THESE FOUR VERSES CONSTITUTE THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL WHICH WE PREACH.

1. The first fact here very clearly indicated is *that Jesus died*. He who was divine, and therefore immortal, bowed his head to death. He whose human nature was allied to the omnipotence of his divine nature, was pleased voluntarily to submit himself to the sword of death. He who was pure and perfect, and therefore deserved not death, which is the wages of sin, nevertheless condescended for our sake to yield himself up to die. This is the second note in the Gospel scale. The first note is incarnation, Jesus Christ became a man; angels thought this worthy of their songs, and made the heavens ring with midnight melodies. The second note is this, I say, that, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He died as *a sacrifice*. Methinks, after many lambs from the flocks of men had poured out their blood at the foot of the altar, it was a strange spectacle-to see God's Lamb brought to that same altar to be sacrificed. He is without spot or blemish, or any such thing. He is the firstling of the flock; he is the only one of the Great Master; a right royal, heavenly lamb. Such a Lamb had never been seen before. He is the Lamb who is worshipped in heaven, and who is to be adored world without end. Will that sacred head condescend to feel the axe? Will that glorious victim really be slain? Is it possible that God's Lamb will actually submit to die? He does so without a struggle; he is dumb in the shambles before the slaughterers; he gives up the warm blood of his heart to the hand of the executioner, that he might expiate the wrath of God. Tell it. Let heaven ring with music, and let hell be filled with

confusion! Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, the Lamb of Jehovah's Passover, died. His hands were pierced; and his heart was broken; to prove how surely the spear had struck the mark, the vital fluid flowed in a double flood, even to the ground: — Jesus died. If there were any doubt about this, there were doubt about your salvation and mine. If there were any reason to question this fact, then we might question the possibility of salvation. But Jesus died, and sin is put away. The sacrifice smokes to heaven; Jehovah smelleth a sweet savor, and is pleased through Christ the victim to accept the prayers, the offerings, and the persons of his people. Nor did he die as a victim only. He died as *a substitute*. We were drawn as soldiers for the great warfare, and we could not go, for we were feeble, and should have fallen in the battle, and have left our bones to be devoured of the dogs of hell. But he, the mighty Son of God, became the substitute for us; entered the battle-field; sustained the first charge of the adversary in the wilderness; three times he repulsed the grim fiend and all his host, smiting his assailants with the sword of the Spirit, until the enemy fled, and angels waited upon the weary Victor. The conflict was not over, the enemy had but retired to forge fresh artillery and recruit his scattered forces for a yet more terrible affray. For three years the great Substitute kept the field against continual onslaughts from the advance guard of the enemy, remaining conqueror in every skirmish. No adversary dared to show his face, or if he shot an arrow at him from a distance, our substitute caught the arrow on his shield, and laughed his foes to scorn. Devils were cast out of many that were possessed; whole legions of them were compelled to find refuge in a herd of swine; and Lucifer himself fell like lightning from the heaven of his power. At last the time came when hell had gathered up all its forces, and now was also come the hour when Christ, as our substitute, must carry his obedience to the utmost length; he must be obedient unto death. He has been a substitute up till now; will he now throw down his vicarious character? Will he now renounce our responsibilities, and declare that we may stand for ourselves? Not he. He undertook, and must go through. Sweating great drops of blood, he nevertheless flinches not from the dread assault. Wounded in hands and in feet he still maintained his ground, and though, for obedience sake, he bowed his head to die, yet in that dying he slew death, put his foot upon the dragons' neck, crushed the head of the old serpent, and beat our adversaries as small as the dust of the threshing-floor. Yes, the blessed Substitute has died. I say if there were a question about this, then *we* might have to die, but inasmuch as he died for us, the believer shall not die. The

debt is discharged to the utmost farthing; the account is cleared; the balance is struck; the scales of justice turn in our favor; God's sword is sheathed for ever, and the blood of Christ has sealed it in its scabbard. We are free, for Christ was bound; we live, for Jesus died. Dying thus as a sacrifice and as a substitute, it is a comfort to us to know that he also died as *Mediator between God and man*. There was a great gulf fixed, so that if we would pass to God we could not, neither could he pass to us if he would condescend to do so. There was no way of filling up this gulf, unless there should be found one who, like the old Roman, Curtius, would leap into it. Jesus comes, arrayed in his pontifical garments, wearing the breast-plate, bearing the ephod, a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec: his kingly character is not forgotten, for his head is adorned with a glittering crown, and o'er his shoulders he bears the prophet's mantle.

How shall I describe the matchless glories of the prophet-king, the royal priest? Will he throw himself into the chasm? He will. Into the grave he plunges, the abyss is closed! The gulf is bridged, and God can have communion with man! I see before me the heavy veil which shields from mortal eyes the place where God's glory shineth. No man may touch that veil or he must die. Is there any man found who can rend it? — that man may approach the mercy-seat. O that the veil which parts our souls from him that dwelleth between the cherubims could be torn throughout its utmost length! Strong archangel, wouldest thou dare to rend it? Shouldest thou attempt the work, thine immortality were forfeited, and thou must expire. But Jesus comes, the King Immortal, Invisible, with his strong hands he rends the veil from top to bottom, and now men draw nigh with confidence, for when Jesus died a living way was opened. Sing, O heavens, and rejoice O earth! There is now no wall of partition, for Christ has dashed it down! Christ has taken away the gates of death, posts and bars, and all, and like another Samson carried them upon his shoulders far away. This, then, is one of the great notes of the Gospel, the fact that Jesus died. Oh! ye who would be save'd, believe that Jesus died; believe that the Son of God expired; trust that death to save you, and you are saved. 'Tis no great mystery; it needs no learned words, no polished plivases; Jesus died; the sacrifice smokes; the substitute bleeds; the Mediator fills up the gap; Jesus dies; believe and live.

2. But *Jesus rises*: this is no mean part of the Gospel. He dies; they lay him in the new sepulchre; they embalm his body in spices; his adversaries are careful that his body shall not be stolen away; the stone, the seal, the

watch, all prove their vigilance. Aha! Aha! What do ye, men? Can ye imprison immortality in the tomb! The fiends of hell, too, I doubt not, watched the sepulchre, wondering what it all could mean. But the third day comes, and with it the messenger from heaven. He touches the stone; it rolls away; he sits upon it, as if he would defy the whole universe to roll that stone back again. Jesus awakes, as a mighty man from his slumber; unwraps the napkin from his head and lays it by itself; unwinds the cerements in which love had wrapped him, and puts them by themselves; for he had abundant leisure; he was in no haste; he was not about to escape like a felon who bursts the prison, but like one whose time of jail-deliverance has come, and lawfully and leisurely leaves his cell; he steps to the upper air, bright, shining, glorious, and fair. He lives. He died once, *but he rose again from the dead*. There is no need for us to enlarge here. We only pause to remark that this is one of the most jubilant notes in the whole gospel scale; for see, brethren, the rich mysteries, which, like the many seeds of the pomegranate, are all enclosed in the golden apple of resurrection. Death is overcome. There is found a man who by his own power was able to struggle with death, and hurl him down. The grave is opened; there is found a man able to dash back its bolts and to rifle its treasures; and thus, brethren, having delivered himself, he is able also to deliver others. Sin, too, was manifestly forgiven. Christ was in prison as a hostage, kept there as a surety; now that he is suffered to go free, it is a declaration on God's behalf that he has nothing against us; our substitute is discharged; *we* are discharged. He who undertook to pay our debt is suffered to go free; *we* go free in him. "He rose again for our justification." Nay more, inasmuch as he rises from the dead, he gives us a pledge that hell is conquered. This was the great aim of hell to keep Christ beneath its heel. "Thou shalt bruise his heel." They had gotten the heel of Christ, his mortal flesh beneath their power, but that bruised heel came forth unwounded; Christ sustained no injury by his dying; he was as glorious, even in his human nature, as he was before he expired. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption." Beloved, in this will we triumph, that hell is worsted; Satan is put to confusion, and all his hosts are fallen before Immanuel. Sinner, believe this; it is the Gospel of thy salvation. Believe that Jesus of Nazareth rose again from the dead, and trust him, trust him to save thy soul. Because he burst the gates of the grave, trust him to bear thy sins, to justify thy person, to quicken thy spirit, and to raise thy dead body, and verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt be saved.

3. We now strike a third note, without which the gospel were not complete. Inasmuch as Jesus died, *he is now living*. He does not, after forty days, return to the grave; he departs from earth, but it is by another way. From the top of Olivet he ascends until a cloud receives him out of their sight. And now at this very day he lives. There at his Father's right hand he sits, bright like a sun; clothed in majesty; the joy of all the glorified spirits; his Father's intense delight. There he sits, Lord of Providence; at his girdle swing the keys of heaven, and earth, and hell. There he sits, expecting the hour when his enemies shall be made his footstool. Methinks I see him, too, as he lives to intercede. He stretches his wounded hands, points to his breastplate bearing the names of his people, and for Zion's sake he doth not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake he doth not rest day nor night, but ever pleadeth — "Oh God! bless thy heritage; gather together thy scattered ones; I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Believer, this it a cluster of camphire to thee, a bundle of myrrh — be thou comforted exceedingly.

***"He lives! the great Redeemer lives!
What joy the blest assurance gives!"***

Trembling penitent, let a living Savior cheer thee. Exercise faith in him who only hath immortality. He lives to hear thy prayer; cry to him, he lives to present that prayer before his Father's face. Put yourself in his hands; he lives to gather together those whom he bought with his blood, to make those the people of his flock who were once the people of his purchase. Sinner, dost thou believe this as a matter of fact? If so, rest thy soul on it, and make it shine as a matter of confidence, and then thou art saved.

4. One more note, and our gospel-song need not rise higher. Jesus died; he rose; he lives; and *he lives for ever*. He lives for ever. He shall not die again. "Death hath no more dominion over him." Ages shall follow ages, but his raven locks shall never be blanched with years. "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Disease may visit the world and fill the graves, but no disease or plague can touch the immortal Savior. The shock of the last catastrophe shall shake both heaven and earth, until the stars shall fall like withered fig-leaves from the tree, but nothing shall move the unchanging Savior. He lives for ever. There is no possibility that he should be overcome by a new death.

*“No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more;
For hell itself shakes at his name,
And all the heavens adore.”*

Would it not be a strange doctrine indeed if any man should dream that the Son of God would again offer his life a sacrifice. He dieth no more. This, too, reveals another part of our precious gospel, for now it is certain, since he lives for ever, that no foes can overcome him. He has so routed his enemies and driven his foes off the battle-field, that they will never venture to attack him again. This proves, too, that his people’s eternal life is sure. Let Jesus die, and his people die. Let Christ leave heaven, and, O ye glorified ones! ye must all vacate your thrones, and leave your crowns without heads to wear them, and your harps untouched by fingers that shall wake them to harmony. He lives for ever. Oh! seed of Abraham, ye are saved with an everlasting salvation by the sure mercies of David. Your standing in earth and heaven has been confirmed eternally. God is honored, saints are comforted, and sinners are cheered, for “he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Now I would to God that on one of these four anchor-holds your faith might be able to get rest. *Jesus died*, poor trembler; if he died and took thy griefs, will not his atonement save thee? Rest here. Millions of souls have rested on nothing but Jesus’ death, and this is a granite foundation; no storms of hell can shake it. Get a good handhold on his cross; hold it, and it will hold you. You cannot depend on his death and be deceived. Try it; taste and see, and you shall find that the Lord is good, and that none can trust a dying Savior without being with him in Paradise. But if this suffice you not, *he rose again*. Fasten upon this. He is proved to be victor over your sin and over your adversary; can you not, therefore, depend upon him? Doubtless there have been thousands of saints who have found the richest consolation from the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead. He rose again for our justification. Sinner, hang on that. Having risen *he lives*. He is not a dead Savior, a dead sacrifice. He must be able to hear our plea and to present his own. Depend on a living Savior; depend on him now. He *lives for ever*, and therefore it is not too late for him to save you. If thou criest to him he will hear thy prayer, even though it be in life’s last moment, for he lives for ever. Though the ends of the earth were come, and you were the last man, yet he ever lives to intercede before his Father’s

face. Oh! gad not about to find any other hope! Here are four great stones for you; build your hope on these; you cannot want surer foundations — he dies, he rises, he lives, he lives for ever. I tell thee, Soul, this is my only hope, and though I lean thereon with all my weight it bends not. This is the hope of all God’s people, and they abide contented in it. Do thou, I pray thee, now come and rest on it. May the Spirit of God bring many of you to Christ. We have no other gospel. You thought it a hard thing, a scholarly thing, a matter that the college must teach you, that the university must give you. It is no such matter for learning and scholarship. Your little child knows it, and your child may be saved by it. You without education, you that can scarce read in the book, you can comprehend this. He dies; there is the cross. He rises; there is the open tomb. He lives; there is the pleading Savior. He lives for ever; there is the perpetual merit. Depend on him! Put your soul in his hand and you are saved.

If I have brought you under the first head of my discourse to a sufficient height; you can now take another step, and mount to something higher; I do not mean higher as to real value, but higher as a matter of knowledge, because it follows upon the fact as a matter of experience.

II. The great facts mentioned in our text represent THE GLORIOUS WORK WHICH EVERY BELIEVER FEELS WITHIN HIM.

In the text we see death, resurrection, life, and life eternal. You observe that the Apostle only mentions these to show our share in them. I will read the text again — “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Well, then, it seems that as Christ was, so we also are *dead*. We are dead to sin because sin can *no more condemn* us. All the sins which God’s people have ever committed dare not accuse, much less can they condemn those for whom Jesus died. Sin can curse an unbeliever, but it has no power so much as to mutter half a curse against a man in Christ. I cannot claim a debt of a dead debtor, and although I be a debtor to the law, yet since I am dead, the law cannot claim anything of me, nor can sin inflict any punishment upon me. He that is dead, as says the preceding verse, is freed from sin; being dead to sin we are free from all its jurisdiction; we

fear not its curse; we defy *its power*. The true believer in the day when he first came to Christ died to sin as to its power. Sin had been sitting on a high throne in his heart, but faith pulled the tyrant down and rolled him in the dust, and though it still survives to vex us, yet its reigning power is destroyed. From the day of our new birth, if we be indeed true Christians, we have been dead to all sin's pleasures. Madame Bubble can no longer bewitch us. The varnish and gilt have been worn off from the palaces of sin. We defy sin's most skillful enchantments; it might warble sweetest music, but the dead ear is not to be moved by melodies. Keep thy bitter sweets, O earth, for those who know no better delicacies; our mouths find no flavour in your dainties. We are dead to sin's bribes. We curse the gold that would have bought us to be untruthful, and abhor the comforts which might have been the reward of iniquity. We are dead to its threatenings, too. When sin curses us, we are as little moved by its curses as by its promises. A believer is mortified and dead to the world. He can sing with Cowper —

*“I thirst, but not as once I did
 The vain delights of earth to share;
 Thy wounds, Emmanuel all forbid
 That I should seek my pleasures there.
 It was the sight of thy dear cross
 First wean'd my soul from earthly things;
 And taught me to esteem as dross
 The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.”*

I am compelled, however, to say that this mortification is not complete. We are not so dead to the world as we should be. Instead of saying here what the Christian is, I think I may rather say what he should be, for where am I to look for men that are dead to the world now-a-days? I see professing Christians quite as fond of riches; I see them almost as fond of gaiety and vanity. Do I not see those who wear the name of Jesus whose dress is as full of vanity as that of the worldling; whose conversation has no more savor of Christ in it than that of the open sinner? I find many who are conformed to this world, and who show but little renewing of their minds. Oh! how slight is the difference now-a-days between the Church and the world! We ought to be, in a spiritual sense, evermore Dissenters — dissenting from the world, standing out and protesting against it. We must be to the world's final day Nonconformists, not conforming to its ways and vanities, but walking without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach. Do

some of you recollect the day when you died to the world? Your friends thought you were mad. They said you knew nothing of life, so your ungodly friends put you in the sepulchre, and others of them rolled a great stone against you. They from that day put a ban upon you. You are not asked out now where you once were everybody. The seal is put upon you; they call you by some opprobrious epithet, and so far as the world is concerned, you are like the dead Christ; you are put into your grave, and shut out from the world's life. They do not want you any more at their merry-makings, you would spoil the party; you have now become such a Methodist, such a mean hypocrite, as they put it, that they have buried you out of sight, and rolled back the stone, and sealed it, and set watchers at the door to keep you there. Well, and what a blessed thing that is, for if you be dead with Christ you shall also live with him.

If we be thus dead with Christ, let us see that we *live with him*. It is a poor thing to be dead to the world unless we are alive unto God. Death is a negative, and a negative in the world is of no great use by itself. A Protestant is less than a nobody if he only protests against a wrong; we want a proclaimer, one who proclaims the truth as well as protests against error. And so, if we be dead to sin we must have, also, the life of Christ, and I trust, beloved, we know, and it is not a matter of theory to us — I trust we know that in us there is a new life to which we were strangers once. To our body and our soul there has been superadded a spirit, a spark of spiritual life. Just as Jesus had a new life after death, so have we a new life after death, wherewith I trust we rise from the grave. But we must prove it. Jesus proved his resurrection by infallible signs. You and I, too, must prove to all men that we have risen out of the grave of sin. Perhaps our friends did not know us when we first rose from the dead. Like Mary, they mistook us for somebody else. They said, "What! Is this Wilham who used to be such a hectoring, proud, ill-humoured, domineering fellow? Can he put up with our jokes and jeers so patiently?" They supposed us to be somebody else, and they were not far from the mark, for we were new creatures in Christ Jesus. We talked with some of our friends, and they found our conversation so different from what it used to be that it made their hearts burn within them, just as Jesus Christ's disciples when they went to Emmaus. But they did not know our secret; they were strangers to our new life. Do you recollect, Christians, how you first revealed yourselves unto your brethren, the Church? In the breaking of bread they first knew you. That night when the right-hand of fellowship was given to

you the new life was openly recognized, and they said — “Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?” I trust, in resurrection-life you desire to prove to all men that this is not the common life you lived before, a life which made you serve the flesh and the lusts thereof; but that you are living now with higher aims, and purer intentions, by a more heavenly rule, and with the prospect of a diviner result. As we have been dead with Christ, dear brethren, I hope we have also, in our measure, learned to live with him.

But now, remember, *Christ lives for ever, and so do we*. Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. The fourteenth verse is wonderfully similar — “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Sin made us die once in Adam, but we are not to be slain by it again. If Christ could die now, we could die, but since Christ can never die again, so the believer can never again go back to his old sin. He dies to sin no more; he lives, and sin hath no more dominion over him. Oh! this is a delightful theme! I know not how to express the joy my own heart feels at the sense of security arising from the fact that Christ dies no more. Death hath no more dominion over him; and sin hath no more dominion over me, if I be in Christ. Suppose, my brethren, suppose for a moment that Christ could die again. Bring out your funeral music! Let the muffled drums beat the Dead march! Let the heavens be clothed in sackcloth, and let the verdant earth be robed in blackness, for the atonement, earth’s great hope, is incomplete! Christ must die again. The adversaries we thought were routed have gathered their strength again. Death is not dead; the grave is not open; there will be no resurrection! The saints tremble; even in heaven they fear and quake; the crowns upon glorified heads are trembling; the hearts that have been overflowing with eternal bliss are filled with anxiety, for the throne of Christ is empty; angels suspend their songs; the howlings of hell have silenced the shouts of heaven: the fiends are holding high holiday, and they sliviek for very joy — “Jesus dies again! Jesus dies again! Prepare your arrows! Empty your Quivers! Come up, Ye legions of hell! The famous conqueror must fight, and bleed, and die again, and we shall overcome him yet!” God is dishonored, the foundations of heaven are removed, and the eternal throne quivers with the shock of Christ subjected to a second death! Is it blasphemy to suppose the case? Yet, my brethren, it were equal blasphemy to suppose a true believer going back again to his old lusts and dying again by sin, for that were to suppose that the

atonement were incomplete. I can prove that it involves the very same things; it supposes an unfinished sacrifice, for if the sacrifice be finished, then those for whom it was offered must be saved. It supposes hell triumphant — Christ had bought the soul, and the spirit had renewed it, but the devil wipes away the blood of Christ, expels the spirit of the living God, and gets to himself the victory. A saint perish! Then God's promise is not true, and Christ's word is false — "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish;" then the foundations are removed; eternal justice is a name, and the divine honesty is suspected; the purposes of God are frustrated, and the crown of sovereignty rolls in the mire. Weep angels! Be astonished, O heavens! Rock, O ye hills with earthquake! and hell come up and hold riot! for God himself has ceased to be God, since his people perish! "Because I live ye shall live also" is a divine necessity, and if dominion can ever be had by sin over a believer again, then, mark you, death can again have dominion over Christ; but that is impossible; therefore rejoice and be glad, ye servants of God.

You will notice, that as they live, so, like Jesus Christ, *they live unto God*. This completes the parallel. "In that he liveth he liveth unto God." So do we. The forty days which Christ spent on earth he lived unto God, comforting his saints, manifesting his person, giving forth gospel precepts. For the few days we have to live here on earth we must live to comfort the saints, to set forth Christ, and to preach the gospel to every creature. And now that Christ has ascended he lives unto God; what does that mean? He lives, my brethren, to manifest the divine character. Christ is the permanent revelation of an invisible God. We look at Christ and we see justice, truth, power, love; we see the whole of the divine attributes in him. Christian, you are to live unto God; God is to be seen in you; you are to show forth the divine bowels of compassion, longsuffering, tenderness, kindness, patience; you are to manifest God; living unto God. Christ lives unto God, for he completes the divine purpose by pleading for his people, by carrying on his people's work above. You are to live for the same, by preaching, that sinners may hear and that the elect may live; by teaching that the chosen may be saved; teaching by your life, by your actions, that God's glory may be known, and that his decrees may be fulfilled. Jesus lives unto God, delighting himself in God. The immeasurable joy of Christ in his Father no tongue can tell. Live in the same way, Christian. Delight thyself in the Lord! Be blessed; be happy; rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. Our Redeemer lives unto God, that is he lives in constant

fellowship with God. Cannot you do so too by the Holy Spirit? You are dead to sin; see to it that you live for ever in fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Now I have been talking riddles to some of you. How many of you understand these things? If any are troubled because they understood the first part and they do trust in Christ's death, but they do not understand the second part — ah! beloved, you shall comprehend one of these days; if you are resting on Christ's death, that death shall yet be made mighty in you.

But you that have known something of this, I pray you struggle after more. Ask the Lord to mortify you altogether, to fill you with the divine life, and to help you to persevere unto the end. Pray that you may live unto God and unto God alone.

III. Having brought you thus far, there is only one other step to take, and then we have done; let us notice that the facts of which we have spoken are PLEDGES OF THE GLORY WHICH IS TO BE REVEALED IN US.

Christ died. Possibly we shall die. Perhaps we shall not; we may be alive and remain at the coming of the Son of man; but it may be we shall die. I do not think we should be so certain of death as some Christians are, because the Lord's coming is much more certain than our dying. Our dying is not certain, for he may come before we die. However, suppose we shall die: Christ rose, and so shall we.

*“What though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Savior rose,
So all his followers must.”*

Do not, my brethren, think of the cemetery with tears, nor meditate upon the coffin and the slivoud with gloomy thoughts. You only sojourn there for a little season, and to you it will not appear a moment. Your body will sleep, and if men sleep all through a long night it only seems an hour to them, a very short moment. The sleeping-time is forgotten, and to your sleeping-body it will seem no time at all, while to your glorified soul it will not seem long because you will be so full of joy that a whole eternity of that joy would not be too long. But you shall rise again. I do not think we get enough joy out of our resurrection. It will probably be our happiest moment, or rather the beginning of the happiest life that we shall ever know. Heaven is not the happiest place. Heaven at present is happy, but it

is not the perfection of happiness, because there is only the soul there, though the soul is full of pleasure; but the heaven that is to be when body and soul will both be there surpasses all thought. Resurrection will be our marriage-day. Body and soul have been separated, and they shall meet again to be re-married with a golden ring, no more to be divorced, but as one indissolubly united body to go up to the great altar of immortality, and there to be espoused unto Christ for ever and ever. I shall come again to this flesh, no longer flesh that can decay, no longer bones that ache — I shall come back to these eyes and these ears, all made channels of new delight. Say not this is a materialistic view of the matter. We are at least one-half material, and so long as there is material about us we must always expect joy that shall not only give spiritual but even material delight to us. This body shall rise again. “Can these dry bones live?” is the question of the unbeliever. “They must live,” is the answer of faith. Oh! let us expect our end with joy, and our resurrection with transport. Jesus was not detained a prisoner, and therefore no worm can keep us back, no grave, no tomb can destroy our hope. Having he lives, and we shall rise to live for ever. Anticipate, my brethren, that happy day. No sin, no sorrow, no care, no decay, no approaching dissolution! Be lives for ever in God: so shall you and I; close to the Eternal; swallowed up in his brightness, glorified in his glory, overflowing with his love! I think at the very prospect we may well say —

*“Oh! long-expected day begin,
Dawn on these realms of woe and sin.”*

We may well cry to him to bid his chariots hasten and bring the joyous season! He comes, he comes, believer! Rejoice with joy unspeakable! Thou hast but a little time to wait, and when thou hast fallen asleep thou shalt leap

*“From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day;”*

and thou,

*“Far from a world of grief and sin
With God eternally shut in,
Shalt be for ever blest!”*

May the Lord add his blessing, for Jesu’s sake. Amen.

I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH.

NO. 504

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 12TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though any reins be consumed within me.” — Job 19:25-27.

THE hand of God has been upon us heavily this week. An aged deacon, who has been for more than fifty years a member of this Church, has been removed from our midst; and a sister, the beloved wife of another of our Church-officers, a member for nearly the same term of years, has fallen asleep. It is not often that a Church is called to sorrow over the departure of two such venerable members — let not our ears be deaf to such a double admonition to prepare to meet our God. That they were preserved so long, and upheld so mercifully for so many years, was not only a reason of gratitude to them, but to us also. I am, however, so averse to the preaching of what are called *funeral sermons*, that I forbear, lest I appear to eulogise the creature, when my only aim should be to magnify the grace of God.

Our text deserves our profound attention; its preface would hardly have been written had not the matter been of the utmost importance in the judgment of the patriarch who uttered it. Listen to Job’s remarkable desire: “Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!”

Perhaps, hardly aware of the full meaning of the words he was uttering, yet his holy soul was impressed with a sense of some weighty revelation concealed within his words; he therefore desired that it might be recorded in a book; he has had his desire; the Book of books embalms the words of Job. He wished to have them graven on a rock; cut deep into it with an iron pen, and then the lines inlaid with lead; or he would have them engraven, according to the custom of the ancients, upon a sheet of metal, so that time might not be able to eat out the inscription. He has not had his desire in that respect, save only that upon many and many a sepulchre those words of Job stand recorded, "I know that my redeemer liveth." It is the opinion of some commentators that Job, in speaking of the rock here, intended his own rock-hewn sepulchre, and desired that this might be his epitaph; that it might be cut deep, so that ages should not wear it out; that when any asked, "Where does Job sleep?" as soon as they saw the sepulchre of the patriarch of Uz, they might learn that he died in hope of resurrection, resting upon a living Redeemer. Whether such a sentence adorned the portals of Job's last sleeping-place we know not; but certainly no words could have been more fitly chosen. Should not the man of patience, the mirror of endurance, the pattern of trust, bear as his memorial this golden line, which is as full of all the patience of hope, and hope of patience, as mortal language can be? Who among us could select a more glorious motto for his last escutcheon? I am sorry to say that a few of those who have written upon this passage cannot see Christ or the resurrection in it at all. Albert Barnes, among the rest, expresses his intense sorrow that he cannot find the resurrection here, and for my part I am sorry for him. If it had been Job's desire to foretell the advent of Christ and his own sure resurrection, I cannot see what better words he could have used; and if those truths are not here taught, then language must have lost its original object, and must have been employed to mystify and not to explain; to conceal and not to reveal. What I ask, does the patriarch mean, if not that he shall rise again when the Redeemer stands upon the earth? Brethren, no unsophisticated mind can fail to find here what almost all believers have here discovered. I feel safe in keeping to the old sense, and we shall this morning seek no new interpretation, but adhere to the common one, with or without the consent of our critics.

In discoursing upon them I shall speak upon three things. First, *let us, with the patriarch, descend into the grave and behold the ravages of death.*

Then, with him, *let us look up on high for present consolation*. And, still in his admirable company, let us, in the third place, *anticipate future delights*.

I. First of all then, with the patriarch of Uz, LET US DESCEND INTO THE SEPULCLIVE.

The body has just been divorced from the soul. Friends who loved most tenderly have said — “Bury my dead out of my sight.” The body is borne upon the bier and consigned to the silent earth; it is surrounded by the earthworks of death. Death has a host of troops. If the locusts and the caterpillars be God’s army, the worms are the army of death. These hungry warriors begin to attack the city of man. They commence with the outworks; they storm the munition, and overturn the walls. The skin, the city wall of manhood, is utterly broken down, and the towers of its glory covered with confusion. How speedily the cruel invaders deface all beauty. The face gathers blackness; the countenance is defiled with corruption. Those cheeks once fair with youth, and ruddy with health, have fallen in, even as a bowing wall and a tottering fence; those eyes, the windows of the mind whence joy and sorrow looked forth by turns, are now filled up with the dust of death; those lips, the doors of the soul, the gates of Mansoul, are carried away, and the bars thereof are broken. Alas, ye windows of agates and gates of carbuncle, where are ye now? How shall I mourn for thee, O thou captive city, for the mighty men have utterly spoiled thee! Thy neck, once like a tower of ivory, has become as a fallen column; thy nose, so lately comparable to “the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus,” is as a ruined hovel; and thy head, which towered like Carmel, lies low as the clods of the valley. Where is beauty now? The most lovely cannot be known from the most deformed. The vessel so daintily wrought upon the potter’s wheel, is cast away upon the dunghill with the vilest potsherds. Cruel have ye been, ye warriors of death, for though ye wield no axes and bear no hammers, yet have ye broken down the carved work; and though ye speak not with tongues, yet have ye said in your hearts, “We have swallowed her up, certainly this is the day that we have looked for; we have found, we have seen it.” The skin is gone. The troops have entered into the town of Mansoul. And now they pursue their work of devastation; the pitiless marauders fall upon the body itself. There are those noble aqueducts, the veins through which the streams of life were wont to flow, these, instead of being rivers of life, have become blocked up with the soil and wastes of death, and now they must be pulled to pieces; not a single relic of them shall be spared. Mark the muscles and sinews, like

great highways that penetrating the metropolis, carry the strength and wealth of manhood along — their curious pavement must be pulled up, and they that do traffic thereon must be consumed, each tunnelled bone, and curious arch, and knotted bond must be snapped and broken. Fair fabrics, glorious storehouses, costly engines, wonderful machines — all, all must be pulled down, and not one stone left upon another. Those nerves, which like telegraphic wires connected all parts of the city together, to carry thought and feeling and intelligence — these are cut. No matter how artistic the work might be, — and certainly we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and the anatomist stands still and marvels to see the skill which the eternal God has manifested in the formation of the body — but these ruthless worms pull everything to pieces, till like a city sacked and spoiled that has been given up for days to pillage and to flame, everything lies in a heap of ruin — ashes to ashes, dust to dust. But these invaders stop not here. Job says that next they consume his reins. We are wont to speak of the heart as the great citadel of life, the inner keep and donjolin, where the captain of the guard holdeth out to the last. The Hebrews do not regard the heart, but the lower viscera, the reins, as the seat of the passions and of mental power. The worms spare not; they enter the secret places of the tabernacle of life, and the standard is plucked from the tower. Having died, the heart cannot preserve itself, and falls like the rest of the frame — a prey to worms. It is gone, it is all gone! The skin, the body, the vitals, all, all has departed. There is nought left. In a few years ye shall burn up the sod and say, “Here slept so-and-so, and where is he now? and ye may search and hunt and dig, but ye shall find no relic. Mother Earth has devoured her own offspring.

Dear friends, why should we wish to have it otherwise? Why should we desire to preserve the body when the soul has gone? What vain attempts men have made with coffins of lead, and wrappings of myrrh and frankincense. The embalming of the Egyptians, those master robbers of the worm, what has it done? It has served to keep some poor slivivelled lumps of mortality above ground to be sold for curiosities, to be dragged away to foreign chimes, and stared upon by thoughtless eyes. No, let the dust go, the sooner it dissolves the better. And what matters it how it goes! If it be devoured of beasts, if it be swallowed up in the sea and become food for fishes! What, if plants with their roots suck up the particles! What, if the fabric passes into the animal, and from the animal into the earth, and from the earth into the plants, and from the plant into the animal again! What, if

the winds blow it along the highway! What, if the rivers carry it to the waves of ocean! It is ordained that somehow or other it must be all separated — “dust to dust, ashes to ashes.” It is part of the decree that it should all perish. The worms or some other agents of destruction must destroy this body. Do not seek to avoid what God has purposed; do not look upon it as a gloomy thing. Regard it as a necessity; nay more, view it as the platform of a miracle, the lofty stage of resurrection, since Jesus shall surely raise again from the dead the particles of this body, however divided from one another. We have heard of miracles, but what a miracle is the resurrection! All the miracles of Scripture, yea even those wrought by Christ, are small compared with this. The philosopher says, “How is it possible that God shall hunt out every particle of the human frame?” He can do it: he has but to speak the word, and every single atom, though it may have traveled thousands of leagues, though it may have been blown as dust across the desert, and anon have fallen upon the bosom of the sea, and then have descended into the depths thereof to be cast up on a desolate shore, sucked up by plants, fed on again by beasts, or passed into the fabric of another man, — I say that individual atom shall find its fellows, and the whole company of particles at the trump of the archangel shall travel to their appointed place, and the body, the very body which was laid in the ground, shall rise again.

I am afraid I have been somewhat uninteresting while tarrying upon the exposition of the words of Job, but I think very much of the pith of Job’s faith lay in this, that he had a clear view that the worms would after his skin destroy his body, and yet that in his flesh he should see God. You know we might regard it as a small miracle if we could preserve the bodies of the departed. If, by some process, with spices and gums we could preserve the particles, for the Lord to make those dry bones live, and to quicken that skin and flesh, were a miracle certainly, but not palpably and plainly so great a marvel as when the worms have destroyed the body.

When the fabric has been absolutely broken up, the tenement all pulled down, ground to pieces, and flung in handfuls to the wind, so that no relic of it is left, and yet when Christ stands in the latter days upon the earth, all the structure shall be brought together, bone to his bone — then shall the might of Omnipotence be seen. This the doctrine of the resurrection, and happy is he who finds no difficulty here, who looks at it as being an impossibility with man but a possibility with God, and lays hold upon the omnipotence of the Most High and says, “Thou sayest it, and it shall be

done!" I comprehend thee not great God; I marvel at thy purpose to raise my mouldering bones; but I know that thou doest great wonders! and I am not surprised that thou shouldst conclude the great drama of thy creating works here on earth by re-creating the human frame by the same power by which thou didst bring from the dead the body of thy Son Jesus Christ, and by that same divine energy which has regenerated human souls in thine own image.

II. Now, having thus descended into the grave, and seen nothing there but what is loathsome, LET US LOOK UP WITH THE PATRIARCH AND BEHOLD A SUN SHINING WITH PRESENT COMFORT.

"I know," said he, "that my Redeemer liveth." The word "Redeemer" here used, is in the original "goel" — kinsman. The duty of the king, man, or goel, was this: suppose an Israelite had alienated his estate, as in the case of Naomi and Ruth; suppose a patrimony which had belonged to a family, had passed away through poverty, it was the goel's business, the redeemer's business to pay the price as the next of kin, and to buy back the heritage. Boaz stood in that relation to Ruth. Now, the body may be looked upon as the heritage of the soul — the soul's small farm, that little plot of earth in which the soul has been wont to walk and delight, as a man walketh in his garden or dwelleth in his house. Now, that becomes alienated. Death, like Ahab, takes away the vineyard from us who are as Naboth; we lose our patrimonial estate; Death sends his troops to take our vineyard and to spoil the vines thereof and ruin it. But we turn round to Death and say, "I know that my Goel liveth, and he will redeem this heritage; I have lost it; thou takest it from me lawfully, O Death, because my sin hath forfeited my right; I have lost my heritage through my own offense and through that of my first parent Adam; but there lives one who will buy this back." Brethren, Job could say this of Christ long before he had descended upon earth, "I know that he liveth," and now that he has ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, surely we may with double emphasis say, "I know that my Goel, my Kinsman liveth, and that he hath paid the price, that I should have back my patrimony, so that in my flesh I shall see God." Yes, my hands, ye are redeemed with blood; bought not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Yes, heaving lungs and palpitating heart, ye have been redeemed! He that redeemed the soul to be his altar has also redeemed the body, that it may be a temple for the Holy Ghost. Not even the bones of Joseph can

remain in the house of bondage. No smell of the fire of death may pass upon the garments which his holy children have worn in the furnace.

Remember, too, that it was always considered to be the duty of the goel, not merely to redeem by price, but where that failed, to redeem by power. Hence, when Lot was carried away captive by the four kings, Abraham summoned his own hired servants, and the servants of all his friends, and went out against the kings of the East, and brought back Lot and the captives of Sodom. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, who once has played the kinsman's part by paying the price for us, liveth, and he will redeem us by power. O Death, thou tremblest at this name! Thou knowest the might of our Kinsman! Against his arm thou canst not stand! Thou didst once meet him foot to foot in stern battle, and O Death, thou didst indeed tread upon his heel. He voluntarily submitted to this, or else, O Death, thou hadst no power against him. But he slew thee, Death, he slew thee! He rifled all thy caskets, took from thee the key of thy castle, burst open the door of thy dungeon; and now, thou knowest, Death, thou hast no power to hold my body; thou mayst set thy slaves to devour it, but thou shalt give it up, and all their spoil must be restored. Insatiable Death, from thy greedy maw yet shall return the multitudes whom thou hast devoured. Thou shalt be compelled by the Savior to restore thy captives to the light of day. I think I see Jesus coming with his Father's servants. The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. Blow ye the trumpet! blow ye the trumpet! Immanuel rides to battle! The Most Mighty in majesty girds on his sword. He comes! He comes to snatch by power, his people's lands from those who have invaded their portion. Oh, how glorious the victory! No battle shall there be. He comes, he sees, he conquers. The sound of the trumpet shall be enough; Death shall fly affrighted; and at once from beds of dust and silent clay, to realms of everlasting day the righteous shall arise.

To linger here a moment, there was yet, very conspicuously in the Old Testament, we are informed, a third duty of the goel, which was to avenge the death of his friend. If a person had been slain, the Goel was the avenger of blood; snatching up his sword, he at once pursued the person who had been guilty of bloodshed. So now, let us picture ourselves as being smitten by Death. His arrow has just pierced us to the heart, but in the act of expiring, our lips are able to boast of vengeance, and in the face of the monster we cry, "I know that my Goel liveth." Thou mayst fly, O Death, as rapidly as thou wilt, but no city of refuge can hide thee from him; he will overtake thee; he will lay hold upon thee, O thou skeleton monarch, and he

will avenge my blood on thee. I would that I had powers of eloquence to work out this magnificent thought. Chrysostom, or Christmas Evans could picture the flight of the King of Terrors, the pursuit by the Redeemer, the overtaking of the foe, and the slaying of the destroyer. Christ shall certainly avenge himself on Death for all the injury which Death hath done to his beloved kinsmen. Comfort thyself then, O Christian; thou hast ever living, even when thou diest, one who avenges thee, one who has paid the price for thee, and one whose strong arms shall yet set thee free.

Passing on in our text to notice the next word, it seems that Job found consolation not only in the fact that he had a Goel, a Redeemer, but that this Redeemer liveth. He does not say, "I know that my Goel *shall live*, but that he *lives*," — having a clear view of the self-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And you and I looking back do not say, "I know that he *did live*, but he *lives* to-day." This very day you that mourn and sorrow for venerated friends, your prop and pillar in years gone by, you may go to Christ with confidence, because he not only lives, but he is the source of life; and you therefore believe that he can give forth out of himself life to those whom you have committed to the tomb. He is the Lord and giver of life originally, and he shall be specially declared to be the resurrection and the life, when the legions of his redeemed shall be glorified with him. If I saw no fountain from which life could stream to the dead, I would yet believe the promise when God said that the dead shall live; but when I see the fountain provided, and know that it is full to the brim and that it runneth over, I can rejoice without trembling. Since there is one who can say, "I am the resurrection and the life," it is a blessed thing to see the means already before us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look up to our Goel then who liveth at this very time.

Still the marrow of Job's comfort it seems to me lay in that little word "My." "I know that MY Redeemer liveth." Oh, to get hold of Christ! I know that in his offices he is precious. But, dear friends, we must get a property in him before we can really enjoy him. What is honey in the wood to me, if like the fainting Israelites, I dare not eat. It is honey in my hand, honey on my lip, which enlightens mine eyes like those of Jonathan. What is gold in the mine to me? Men are beggars in Peru, and beg their bread in California. It is gold in my purse which will satisfy my necessities, purchasing the bread I need. So, what is a kinsman if he be not a kinsman to me. A Redeemer that does not redeem me, an avenger who will never

stand up for my blood, of what avail were such? But Job's faith was strong and firm in the conviction that the Redeemer was his. Dear friends, dear friends, can all of you say, "I know that *my* Redeemer liveth." The question is simple and simply put, but oh, what solemn things hang upon your answer, "Is it *MY* Redeemer?" I charge you rest not, be not content until by faith you can say, "Yes, I cast myself upon him; I am his, and therefore he is mine." I know that full many of you, while you look upon all else that you have as not being yours, yet can say, "*My* Redeemer is mine." He is the only piece of property which is really ours. We borrow all else, the house, the children; nay, our very body we must return to the Great Lender. But Jesus, we can never leave, for even when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord, and I know that even death cannot separate us from him, so that body and soul are with Jesus truly even in the dark hours of death, in the long night of the sepulcher, and in the separate state of spiritual existence. Beloved, have you Christ? It may be you hold him with a feeble hand, you half think it is presumption to say, "He is my Redeemer;" yet remember, if you have but faith as a grain of mustard seed, that little faith entitles you to say, and say now, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

There is another word in this consoling sentence which no doubt served to give a zest to the comfort of Job. It was that he could say, "I KNOW" — "I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth." To say, "I hope so, I trust so," is comfortable; and there are thousands in the fold of Jesus who hardly ever get much further. But to reach the marrow of consolation you *must* say, "I KNOW." Ifs, buts, and perhapses, are sure murderers of peace and comfort. Doubts are dreary things in times of sorrow. Like wasps they sting the soul! If I have any suspicion that Christ is not mine, then there is vinegar mingled with the gall of death. But if I know that Jesus is mine, then darkness is not dark; even the night is light about me. Out of the lion cometh honey; out of the eater cometh forth sweetness. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." This is a brightly-burning lamp cheering the damp of the sepulchral vault, but a feeble hope is like a flickering smoking flax, just making darkness visible, but nothing more. I would not like to die with a mere hope mingled with suspicion. I might be safe with this but hardly happy; but oh, to go down into the river knowing that all is well, confident that as a guilty, weak, and helpless worm I have fallen into the arms of Jesus, and believing that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him. I would have you, dear Christian friends, never look upon the full

assurance of faith as a thing impossible to you. Say not "It is too high; I cannot attain unto it." I have known one or two saints of God who have rarely doubted their interest at all. There are many of us who do not often enjoy any ravishing ecstasies, but on the other hand we generally maintain the even tenour of our way, simply hanging upon Christ, feeling that his promise is true, that his merits are sufficient, and that we are safe.

Assurance is a jewel for worth but not for rarity. It is the common privilege of all the saints if they have but the grace to attain unto it, and this grace the Holy Spirit gives freely. Surely if Job in Arabia, in those dark misty ages when there was only the morning star and not the sun, when they saw but little, when life and immortality had not been brought to light, — if Job before the coming and advent still could say, "*I know*," you and I should not speak less positively. God forbid that our positiveness should be presumption. Let us try ourselves, and see that our marks and evidences are right, lest we form an ungrounded hope; for nothing can be more destructive than to say, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." But oh, let us build for eternity, and build solidly. Let us not be satisfied with the mere foundation, for it is from the upper rooms that we get the widest prospect. Let us pray the Lord to help us to pile stone on stone, until we are able to say as we look at it, "Yes, I *know*, I **KNOW** that my Redeemer liveth." This, then, for present comfort to-day in the prospect of departure.

III. And now, in the third and last place, as THE ANTICIPATION OF FUTURE DELIGHT, let me call to your remembrance the other part of the text. Job not only knew that the Redeemer lived, but he anticipated the time when he should *stand in the latter day upon the earth*. No doubt Job referred here to our Savior's first advent, to the time when Jesus Christ, "the goel," the kinsman, should stand upon the earth to pay in the blood of his veins the ransom price, which had, indeed, in bond and stipulation been paid before the foundation of the world in promise. But I cannot think that Job's vision stayed there; he was looking forward to the second advent of Christ as being the period of the resurrection. We cannot endorse the theory that Job arose from the dead when our Lord died, although certain Jewish believers held this idea very firmly at one time. We are persuaded that "the latter day" refers to the advent of glory rather than to that of shame. Our hope is that the Lord shall come to reign in glory where he once died in agony. The bright and hallowed doctrine of the second advent has been greatly revived in our churches in these latter days, and I look for the best results in consequence. There is always a danger lest it be

perverted and turned by fanatical minds, by prophetic speculations, into an abuse; but the doctrine in itself is one of the most consoling, and, at the same time, one of the most practical, tending to keep the Christian awake, because the bridegroom cometh at such an hour as we think not. Beloved, we believe that the same Jesus who ascended from Olivet shall so come in like manner as he ascended up into heaven. We believe in his personal advent and reign. We believe and expect that when both wise and foolish virgins shall slumber; in the night when sleep is heavy upon the saints; when men shall be eating and drinking as in the days of Noah, that suddenly as the lightning flasheth from heaven, so Christ shall descend with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise and reign with him. We are looking forward to the literal, personal, and actual standing of Christ upon earth as the time when creation's groans shall be silenced for ever, and the earnest expectation of the creature shall be fulfilled.

Mark, that Job describes Christ as *standing*. Some interpreters have read the passage, "he shall stand in the latter days against the earth;" that as the earth has covered up the slain, as the earth has become the charnel-house of the dead, Jesus shall arise to the contest and say, "Earth, I am against thee; give up thy dead! Ye clods of the valley cease to be custodians of my people's bodies! Silent deeps, and you, ye caverns of the earth, deliver, once for all, those whom ye have imprisoned!" Macphelah shall give up its precious treasure, cemeteries and graveyards shall release their captives, and all the deep places of the earth shall resign the bodies of the faithful.

Well, whether that be so or no, the posture of Christ, in standing upon the earth, is significant. It shows his triumph. He has triumphed over sin, which once like a serpent in its coils had bound the earth. He has defeated Satan. On the very spot where Satan gained his power Christ has gained the victory. Earth, which was a scene of defeated goodness, whence mercy once was all but driven, where virtue died, where everything heavenly and pure, like flowers blasted by pestilential winds, hung down their heads, withered and blighted — on this very earth everything that is glorious shall blow and blossom in perfection; and Christ himself, once despised and rejected of men, fairest of all the sons of men, shall come in the midst of a crowd of courtiers, while kings and princes shall do him homage, and all the nations shall call him blessed. "He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth."

Then, at that auspicious hour, says Job, "In my flesh I shall see God." Oh, blessed anticipation — "I shall see God." He does not say, "I shall see the

saints” — doubtless we shall see them all in heaven — but, “I shall see *God*.” Note he does not say, “I shall see the pearly gates, I shall see the walls of jasper, I shall see the crowns of gold and the harps of harmony,” but “I shall see *God*,” as if that were the sum and substance of heaven. “In my flesh shall I see *God*.” The pure in heart shall see God. It was their delight to see in the ordinances by faith. They delighted to behold him in communion and in prayer. There in heaven they shall have a vision of another sort. We shall see God in heaven, and be made completely like him; the divine character shall be stamped upon us; and being made like to him we shall be perfectly satisfied and content. Likeness to God, what can we wish for more? And a sight of God, what can we desire better? We shall see God, and so there shall be perfect contentment to the soul and a satisfaction of all the faculties. Some read the passage, “Yet, I shall see God in my flesh,” and hence think that there is here an allusion to Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the word made flesh. Well, be it so, or be it not so, it is certain that we shall see Christ, and He, as the divine Redeemer, shall be the subject of our eternal vision. Nor shall we ever want any joy beyond simply that of seeing him. Think not, dear friend, that this will be a narrow sphere for your mind to dwell in. It is but one source of delight, “I shall see God,” but that source is infinite. His wisdom, his love, his power, all his attributes shall be subjects for your eternal contemplation, and as he is infinite under each aspect, there is no fear of exhaustion. His works, his purposes, his gifts, his love to you, and his glory in all his purposes, and in all his deeds of love — why, these shall make a theme that never can be exhausted. You may with divine delight anticipate the time when in your flesh you shall see God.

But I must have you observe how Job has expressly made us note that it is in the same body. “Yet, *in my flesh* shall I see God;” and then he says again, “whom I shall see for myself, and mine eye shall behold and not another.” Yes, it is true that I, the very man standing here, though I must go down to die, yet I shall as the same man most certainly arise and shall behold my God. Not part of myself, though the soul alone shall have some view of God, but the whole of myself, my flesh, my soul, my body, my spirit shall gaze on God. We shall not enter heaven, dear friends, as a dismasted vessel is tugged into harbour; we shall not get to glory some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, but the whole ship shall be floated safely into the haven, body and soul both being safe. Christ shall be able to say, “*All* that the father giveth to me shall come to me,” not only all

the persons, but all of the persons — each man in his perfection. There shall not be found in heaven one imperfect saint. There shall not be a saint without an eye, much less a saint without a body. No member of the body shall have perished; nor shall the body have lost any of its natural beauty. All the saints shall be all there, and all of all; the same persons precisely, only that they shall have risen from a state of grace to a state of glory. They shall be ripened; they shall be no more the green blades, but the full corn in the ear; no more buds but flowers; not babes but men.

Please to notice, and then I shall conclude, how the patriarch puts it as being a real personal enjoyment. “Whom mine eye shall behold, and not another.” They shall not bring me a report as they did the Queen of Sheba, but I shall see Solomon the King for myself. I shall be able to say, as they did who spake to the woman of Samaria, “Now I believe, not because of thy word who did bring me a report, but I have seen him for myself.” There shall be personal intercourse with God; not through the Book, which is but as a glass; not through the ordinances; but directly, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be able to commune with the Deity as a man talketh with his friend. “Not another.” If I could be a changeling and could be altered, that would mar my comfort. Or if my heaven must be enjoyed by proxy, if draughts of bliss must be drunk for me, where were the hope? Oh, no; for myself, and not through another; shall I see God. Have we not told you a hundred times that nothing but personal religion will do, and is not this another argument for it, because resurrection and glory are personal things? “Not another.” If you could have sponsors to repent for you, then, depend upon it, you would have sponsors to be glorified for you. But as there is not another to see God for you, so you must yourself see and yourself find an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In closing let me observe how foolish have you and I been when we have looked forward to death with shudders, with doubts, with loathings. After all, what is it? Worms! Do ye tremble at those base crawling things? Scattered particles! Shall we be alarmed at these? To meet the worms we have the angels; and to gather the scattered particles we have the voice of God. I am sure the gloom of death is altogether gone now that the lamp of resurrection burns. Disrobing is nothing now that better garments await us. We may long for evening to undress, we may rise with God. I am sure my venerable friends now present, in coming so near as they do now to the time of the departure, must have some visions of the glory on the other side the stream. Bunyan was not wrong, my dear brethren, when he put the

land Beulah at the close of the pilgrimage. Is not my text a telescope which will enable you to see across the Jordan; may it not be as hands of angels to bring you bundles of myrrh and frankincense? You can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." You cannot want more; you were not satisfied with less in your youth, you will not be content with less now. Those of us who are young, are comforted by the thought that we may soon depart. I say comforted, not alarmed by it; and we almost envy those whose race is nearly run, because we fear — and yet we must not speak thus, for the Lord's will be done — I was about to say, we fear that our battle may last long, and that mayhap our feet may slip; only he that keepeth Israel does not slumber nor sleep. So since we know that our Redeemer liveth, this shall be our comfort in life, that though we fall we shall not be utterly cast down; and since our Redeemer liveth, this shall be our comfort in death, that though worms destroy this body, yet in our flesh we shall see God.

May the Lord add his blessing on the feeble words of this morning, and to him be glory for ever. Amen.

*"Grave, the guardian of our dust!
 Grave, the treasury of the skiest!
 Every atom of thy trust
 Rests in hope again to rise.
 Hark! the judgment trumpet calls;
 Soul, rebuild thy house of clay,
 Immortality thy walls,
 And Eternity thy day."*

THE ROOT OF THE MATTER.

NO. 505

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 12TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The root of the matter is found in me.” — Job 19:28.

FOR the last three or four Lord’s-day evenings I have been trying to fish with a net of small meshes. It has been my anxious desire to gather in, and draw to shore the Much-Afrails, the Fearings, the Despondencies and those of Little-Faith who seem to think it scarcely possible that they could belong, to the people of God at all. I hope those sermons which have taken the lowest evidences of Christian life, and have been adapted rather to babes in grace than to those who are strong men in our Israel, will furnish comfort to many who beforetime had been bowed down with distress.

In pursuance of the same purpose this evening, I take up the expressive figure of our text to address myself to those who evidently have the grace of God embedded in their hearts, though they put forth little blossom and bear little fruit; that they may be consoled, if so be there is clear evidence that at least the root of the matter is found in them. Incidentally, however, the same truth may be profitable, not only to the saplings in the garden of the Lord, but to the most goodly trees; for there are times and seasons when their branches do not put out much luxuriant foliage, and the hidden life furnishes the only true argument of their vitality.

I. Our first aim then will be TO SPEAK OF THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO TRUE GODLINESS IN CONTRAST, OR, I might better say, IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER THINGS WHICH ARE TO BE REGARDED AS SHOOTS RATHER THAN AS ROOT AND GROUNDWORK.

The tree can do without some of its branches, though the loss of them might be an injury; but it cannot live at all without its roots: the roots are essential; take those away, and the plant must wither. And thus my dear friends, there are things essential in the Christian religion. There are essential *doctrines*, essential *experiences*, and there is essential *practice*.

With regard to essential *doctrines*. It is very desirable for us to be established in the faith. A very happy thing it is to have been taught from one's youth up the sound and solid doctrines which comforted the Puritans, which made blessed the heart of Luther and of Calvin, fired the zeal of Chrysostom and Augustine, and flashed like lightning from the lips of Paul. By such judicious training we are no doubt delivered from many doubts and difficulties which an evil system of theology would be sure to encourage. The man who is sound in the faith, and who understands the higher and sublimer doctrines of divine revelation, will have wells of consolation which the less instructed cannot know. But we always believe, and are ever ready to confess, that there are many doctrines which, though exceedingly precious, are not so essential but that a person may be in a state of grace and yet not receive them. For instance — God forbid that we should regard a belief in the doctrine of *election* as an absolute test of a man's salvation, for no doubt there are many precious sons of God who have not been able to receive that precious truth; of course the doctrine is essential to the great scheme of grace, as the foundation of God's eternal purpose, but it is not, therefore, necessarily the root of faith in the sinner's reception of the gospel. And, perhaps, too, I may put down the doctrine of *the final perseverance of the saints* in the same list. There be many who, no doubt, will persevere to the end, but who yet cannot accept the possibility of being assured thereof; they are so occupied with the thoughts of their probation that they come not to the mature knowledge of their full salvation. They are securely kept while they credit not their security, just as there are thousands of the elect who cannot believe in election. Though Calvinistic doctrine is so dear to us, we feel ready to die in its defense, yet we would by no means set it up as being a test of a man's spiritual state.

We wish all our brethren saw with us, but a man may be almost blind, and yet he may live. A man with weak eye-sight and imperfect vision may be able to enter into the kingdom of heaven; indeed, it is better to enter there having but one eye, than, having two eyes and being orthodox in doctrine, to be cast into hell fire. But there are some distinct truths of revelation that are essential in such sense, that those who have not accepted them cannot

be called Christians, and those who wilfully reject them are exposed to the fearful anathemas which are hurled against apostacy. I shall not go into a detailed list. Let it suffice, that I give you a few striking illustrations. *The doctrine of the Trinity we must ever look upon as being one of the roots of the matter.* When men go unsound here, we suspect that, ere long, they will be wrong everywhere. The moment you get any suspicion of a man's wavering about the Divinity of Christ you have not long to wait before you discover that on all other points he has gone wrong. Well did John Newton express it —

***“What think you of Christ is the test
To try both your state, and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of him.”***

Almost all the forms of error that have sprung up since the days of Dr. Doddridge, when sundry gentlemen began to talk against the proper Deity of the Son of God — all the forms of error, I say, whatever departs ment of the Christian system they may have been supposed to attack, — have really stabbed at the Deity of our Redeemer. That is the one thing that they are angry at, as if their mother-wit taught them it was the true line of demarcation between natural and revealed religion. They cannot bear that the glorious Lord should be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, and so they fly to do without him; but their tacklings are loosed, they cannot well strengthen their mast, they cannot spread the sail. A gospel without belief in the living, and true God — Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity — is a rope of sand. As well hope to make a pyramid stand upon its apex as to make a substantial gospel when the real and personal Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is left as a moot or disputed point. But I ought to mention the strange incoherency of that discourse, which sets forth the influences of the Spirit without a due regard to his Personal Agency. Oh! how little is the Holy Spirit known! We get beyond the mere exercise of opinions, when we believe in Christ, know the Father, and receive the Holy Ghost. This is to have a knowledge of the true God and eternal life. Likewise essential is the doctrine of *the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Any bell that does not ring sound on that point had better be melted down directly. I do not think we have many in our denomination — we have some who are not very clear — still I think we have but few that are unsound in the doctrine of the real substitution of Christ. But there are plenty elsewhere; perhaps I need not indicate the

locality, for in the denomination where they seem to be tolerably prolific they have one earnest tongue and one ready pen that is always willing at all times to expose the miscreants who thus do damage to the cause of Christ, by giving up the precious blood of Jesus as the sole cause of the remission of sins and the only means of access to God. Why, my brethren, we have nothing else left after we have given up this choice seal of the everlasting covenant, on which all our hopes depend. Renounce the doctrine of Jesus dying in our place, room, and stead! Better for us all to be offered as one great hecatomb, one mighty sacrifice to God on one fire, than to tolerate for a moment any doubts about that which is the world's hope, heaven's joy, hell's terror, and eternity's song. I marvel how men are permitted to stand in the pulpit and preach at all who dare to say anything against the atonement of Christ. I find in the Dutch Church, in the French Church, and in the German Churches, that men are accepted as Christian ministers who will yet speak hard things against the atonement itself, and even against the Deity of Him by whom the atonement was made. There is no other religion in the world that has been false to its own doctrines in the way that Christianity has been. Imagine a Mahometan allowed to come forward in the pulpit and preach against Mahomet! Would it be tolerated for a single moment? Suppose a Brahmin fed and paid to stand up in a temple and speak against Brahma! Would it be allowed? No surely; nor is there an infidel lecturer in this country but would find his pay stopped at once, if, while pretending to be in the service of Atheism, he declaimed the sentiments he was deputed to advocate. How is it? Why is it? In the name of everything that is reasonable and instinctively consistent, whence can it be, that men can be called Christian ministers after the last vestige of Christianity has been treacherously repudiated by them? How is it that they can be tolerated to minister in holy things to people who profess and call themselves sincere followers of Jesus, when they tread under foot the precious blood of Christ, "reduce the mystery of godliness to a system of ethics." (to use the words of a divine of the last century) "degrade the Christian Church into a school of philosophy; deny the expiation made by our Redeemer's sacrifice; obscure the brightest manifestation of divine mercy; undermine the principal pillar of practical religion; and to make a desperate shipwreck of *our* everlasting interests, they dash *themselves* to death on the very rock of salvation." No; we must have the atonement, and that not tacitly acknowledged, but openly set forth. Charity can go a good way, but charity cannot remove the altar from the door of the Tabernacle, or admit the worshipper into the most Holy Place without the blood of

propitiation. So, again, the doctrine of *justification by faith* is one of the roots of the matter. You know Luther's saying; I need not repeat it; it is the article of a standing or falling Church, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast." Do you preach that doctrine? My hand and my heart are stretched out to you! Do you deny it? Do you stutter over it? Are you half-afraid of it? My back must be turned against you; I know nothing of you; you are none of the Lord's! What saith the Apostle Paul to you?

Would he have communed with you? He lifts his hand to heaven and he says — "If any man preach any other gospel than that ye have received let him be accursed!" That is Paul's saintly greeting; that is Paul's Apostolic malediction — an "Anathema Maranatha" upon the man that preaches not the Lord Jesus, and who does not vindicate the great doctrine of salvation by grace and not by works. Well now, friend, you may have come in here to listen to our doctrine, and to judge whether you can hold fellowship with us. We have been talking about the root of the matter. Permit me to say that if you are sound on these three points, the One God in Trinity, the glorious doctrine of the substitution of Christ in the place of sinners, and the plan of salvation by simple faith in Jesus, then inasmuch as these roots of the matter are in you, God forbid that we should exclude you as heretical. If you are in other points unenlightened, and groping about in uncertainty, doubtless the Lord will teach you, but we believe the root of the matter is in you so far as doctrine is concerned.

Turning to another department of my subject; *there are certain root matters in reference to experience*. It is a very happy thing to have a deep experience of *one's own depravity*. It may seem strange, but so it is, a man will scarcely ever have high views of the preciousness of the Savior who has not also had deep views of the evil of his own heart. High houses, you know, need deep foundations; and when God digs deep and throws out the mire of self-sufficiency, then he puts in the great stone of Christ's all-sufficiency, and builds us up high in union and fellowship with him. To read the guilt of sin in the lurid glare of Mount Sinai, to hear the thunderings, and shrink back in wild dismay at the utter hopelessness of approach to God by the law, is a most profitable lesson. Ay, and to see the guilt of sin in the mellow light of Mount Calvary, and to feel that contrition, which a view of Christ crucified alone can produce — this is to prepare the heart for such an ecstasy of joy in God, through whom we have now received the atonement, as surpasses, I verily believe, the common experience of

Christians. Still I dare not make a criterion of the profound depths of anguish with which some of us have had the sentence of death in ourselves. But it is absolutely essential that you should be brought to the end of all perfection in the flesh — that all your hopes of legal righteousness should expire — that you should be dead to the law, in order that you may live unto God. This death may be with painful struggles, or it may be tranquil as a sleep; you may be smitten suddenly, as though an arrow from the Almighty were transfixed in your heart; or you may pine away by a slow and tedious consumption. Yet die you must, before you can be made partaker of resurrection. This much, however, I will venture to say, you may be really a child of God, and yet the plague of your own heart may be but very little understood. You must know something of it, for no man ever did or ever will come to Christ unless he has first learned to loathe himself, and to see that in him, that is in his flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. You may not be able to talk, as some do, of conflicts within, and of the fountain of the great deep of your natural sin, and yet you may be, for all that, a true child of God. It is a happy thing, too, to have an experience which *keeps close to Christ Jesus*; to know what the word “communion” means, without needing to take down another man’s biography; to understand Solomon’s Song without a commentary; to read it through and through, and say “Precious Book! thou didst express just what I have felt, but what I never could have expressed.” But, dear friends, though all this be well, remember it is not essential. It is not a sign that you are not converted because you cannot understand what it is to sit under his shadow with great delight. You may have been converted, and yet hardly have come so far as that. Always distinguish between the branches of the matter and the root of the matter. It is well to have branches like the cedars, and to send up your shoots towards heaven, but it is the root that is the all-important thing — the root of the matter. Now what is the root of the matter experimentally? Well, I think the real root of it is what Job has been talking about in the verses preceding the text — “I know,” saith he, “that my Redeemer liveth.” We talked of that this morning. The root of the matter in Christian experience is to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, and to know this by a personal appropriation of his power to save *by a simple act of faith*. In fine, dear friend, thou hast the root of the matter in thee if thy soul can say —

*“My hope is built on nothing less
 Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
 I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
 But wholly lean on Jesus’ name:
 On Christ the solid rock I stand,
 All other ground is sinking sand.”*

There must be in connection with this the *repentance of sin*, but this repentance may be far from perfect, and thy faith in Christ may be far from strong; but, oh! if thou hatest sin, if thou desirest to be rid of it, if it be thy plague, thy burden, thy grief; if Christ Jesus be thine only comfort, thy help, thy hope, thy trust, then understand, this is the root of the matter. I wish there were more than the root, but inasmuch as that is there, it is enough — thou art accepted before God, for the root of the matter is in thee. A living faith in a living Savior, and a real death to all creature-merit and to all hope in creature-strength; this I take it is that which is the root of the matter in spiritual experience.

Did I not say that there was a root of the matter *practically*? Yes, and I would to God that we all practically had the branches and the fruits. These will come in their season, and they must come, if we are Christ’s disciples; but nobody expects to see fruit on a tree a week after it has been planted. You know there are some trees that do not bring forth any great fruit till they have been in the ground some two or three years, and then at last, when the favorable season comes, they are white with blossoms, and by-and-bye are bowed to the earth with luscious fruit. It is very desirable that all Christians should be full of zeal should be vehemently earnest, should go about doing good, should minister to the poor, should teach the ignorant, and comfort the distressed, yet these things cannot be called the real root of the matter. The real root of the matter practically is this — “One thing I know; whereas I was blind now I see; the things I once loved I now hate; the things I once hated I love; now it is no more the world, but God; no more the flesh, but Christ; no more pleasure, but obedience; no more what I will, but what Jesus wills.” If any of you can from your souls say that you desire the tenour of your life to be, “Lord, not as I will, but as thou wilt,” you have got the root of the matter practically.

Let me guard this part of my subject with one further remark. There are those who do certain duties with a conscientious motive, in order to make themselves Christians — such as observing the Sabbath, holding daily worship of God in their families, and attending the public services of the

Lord's house with regularity. But they do not distinguish between these external acts — which may be but the ornaments that clothe a graceless life, and those fruits of good living that grow out of a holy constitution, which is the root of genuine obedience. Some habits and practises of godly men may be easily counterfeited. Yet I think that there are certain virtues of God's children which are perfectly inimitable. "To bear reproach for Christ, and to suffer wrong patiently," is, to my mind very much like the root in practical godliness. Perhaps there is a timid girl now present who has braved for many a month the persecution of her father and mother, to serve that Savior whom her parents never knew. Nobody knows what rough words and hard treatment she has had to encounter — all because she will come to chapel, and she will steal away into her own room sometimes, and she always has the bible in her hand when she goes in, and she generally looks as if she had been crying when comes out. Ah, poor soul! I doubt not the root of the matter is in thee. Or, see there a young man who has risked losing his situation, because he will not conceal his attachment to Christ. Such as these are sometimes brought into great straits. They do not see any precept that plainly says "Thou shalt do this," or "Thou shalt not do that." But they find they must be one thing or the other. They make their choice, and it is against their worldly interests, but it is done for the love they bear to a Savior's name. Their gentle courage I admire. Their little faith takes a strong grip. Oh! I cannot doubt the root of the matter is found in them. There is practical evidence of it.

Let me pause here for a moment before leaving this first point to notice that you may generally ascertain whether you have got the root of the matter by its characteristic properties. You know a root is a *fixing thing*. Plants without roots may be thrown over the wall; they may be passed from hand to hand; but a root is a fixed thing. How firmly the oaks are rooted in the ground! You may think of those old oaks in the Earth; ever so far off you have seen the roots coming out of the ground, and then they go in again, and you have said, "Why! what do these thick fibres belong to?" Surely they belong to one of those old oaks ever so far away. They had sent that root there to act a good holdfast, so that when the March wind comes through the forest, and other trees are torn up — fir trees, perhaps; trees that have outgrown their strength at the top, while they have too little hold at bottom, — the old oaks bow to the tempest, curtsy to the storm, and anon they lift up their branches again in calm dignity; they cannot be blown down. Well now; if you have got the root of the matter

you are fixed; you are fixed to God, fixed to Christ, fixed to things divine. If you are tempted, you are not soon carried away. Oh! how many professors there are that have no roots! Get them into godly company, and they are such saints; but get them with other company, and what if I say that they are devils! There you have them. Their mother is come up from the country, and she asked them to come to-night to hear Spurgeon. Here they are. Mother will not know but what John is one of the best lads anywhere while she is in town. Ah! but if it happens to be uncle William that comes up to London in a month's time, and he should ask them to go to a theater! O yes, they will go there too, and he will never know that they have any religion, for they will put that by until he is gone again. They have no roots. Give me the man that is bound hard and fast to Christ; lashed to the cross by cords that even the knives of hell cannot sever; lashed to the cross for ever! You have no roots unless you can say, "O God! my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed; by stern resolve and by firm covenant thine I am; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

Again, a root is not only a fixing thing, but a *quicken*ing thing. What is it that first sets the sap a flowing in the spring? Why, it is the root. Down below beneath the earth it begins to feel the genial influence of the coming spring, and it talks to the trunk and says, "It is time to set the sap flowing;" so the sap begins to flow, and the buds begin to burst. Ah! and you must have a vital principle; you must have a living principle. Some Christians are like those toys they import from France, which have sand in them; the sand runs down, and some little invention turns and works them as long as the sand is running, but when the sand is all out it stops. So on Sunday morning these people are just turned right, and the sand runs, and they work all the Sunday; but the sand runs down by Sunday night, and then they stand still, or else go on with the world's work just as they did before. Oh! this will never do! There must be a living principle; something that shall be a mainspring within; a wheel that cannot help running on, and that does not depend upon external resources.

A root, too, is a *receiving* thing. The botanists tell us a great many things about the ends of the roots, which can penetrate into the soil hunting after the particular food upon which the tree is fed. Ah! and if you have got the root of the matter in you, when you come to hear a sermon you will be sending out your root to look after the particular food which your soul wants. You will send those roots into the pages of Scripture, sometimes into a hymn book; often into the sermon; into a brother's experience, and

into God's Providence, seeking that something upon which your soul can feed.

Hence it follows that the root becomes *a supplying thing*, because it is a receiving thing. We must have a religion that lives upon God, and that supplies us with strength to live for God. Oh! how divinely blessed are those men in whom the root of the matter is found!

II. Let me briefly notice in the second place that WHEREVER THERE IS THE ROOT OF THE MATTER THERE IS VERY MUCH GROUND FOR COMFORT.

Sounds there in my ears the sigh, the groan, the sad complaint? — “I do not grow as I could wish; I am not so holy as I want to be; I cannot praise and bless the Lord as I could desire; I am afraid I am not a fruitful bough whose branches run over the wall?” Yes, but is the root of the matter in you? If so, cheer up, you have cause for gratitude. Remember *that in some things you are equal to the greatest and most full-grown Christian*. You are as much bought with blood, O little saints, as are the holy brotherhood. He that bought the sheep bought the lambs too. You are as much an adopted child of God as any other Christian. A babe of a span long is as true a child of its parents as is the full-grown man. You are as truly justified, for your justification is not a thing of degrees. Your little faith has made you clean every whit; it could have done no more had it been the strongest faith in the world. You have as much right to the precious things of the covenant as the most advanced believers, for your right to covenant mercies lies not in your growth, but in the covenant itself; and your faith in Jesus may not assay to measure the extent of your inheritance in him. So then you are as rich as the richest, if not in enjoyment, yet in real possession. You are as dear to your Father's heart as the greatest among them. If there be a weakling in a family the father often loves it the most, or at least indulges it with the most caresses; and when there is a child that has lost one of its senses, be it sight or hearing, you will notice with what assiduous care the parents watch over that one. You are possibly such a tender one, but Christ is very tender over you. You are like the smoking flax; anybody else would say — “Put out that smoking flax; what a smell! How it fills the room with a foul and offensive odour! “But the smoking flax He will not quench. You are just like a bruised reed; there used to be some music in you, but now the reed is broken, and there is no tuneful note at all to be brought out from the poor, bruised, crooked, and broken reed. Any one else but the Chief Musician would pull you out and throw you

away. You might think he would be sure to say — “I do not want a bruised reed; it is of no use at all among the pipes.” But he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Instead of being down-cast by reason of what you are, you should begin to triumph in Christ. Am I but little in Israel? Yet in Christ I am made to sit in heavenly places. Am I poor in faith? Still in Christ I am heir of all things. Do I sometimes wander? Yet Jesus Christ comes after me and brings me back. Though “less than nothing I can boast, and vanity confess,” yet, if the root of the matter be in me I will rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation.

III. This brings me to the third and closing part — WHEREVER THE ROOT OF THE MATTER IS, THERE WE SHOULD TAKE CARE THAT WE WATCH IT WITH TENDERNESS AND WITH LOVE.

Some of you may have the notion that you are advanced in knowledge, that you have much skill in interpreting the word of God, and that you understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. It is highly possible that your notion is correct. Well! You go out into the world, and you meet with people who do not know quite so much as you do, and who have not yet learned all the doctrines of grace, as they are threaded together in the divine plan of salvation. May I persuade you not to get into controversy, not to be continually fighting and quarrelling with people who do not hold just your sentiments. If you discover the root of the matter in any man, say at once — “Why should I persecute you? Why should we fall to quarrelling with each other, seeing that the root of the matter is in us both?” Save your swords for Christ’s real enemies. The way to make men learn the truth is not to abuse them. We shall never make a brother see a doctrine by smiting him in the eye. Hold your lantern up and let him see. I recollect when in my boyhood I sometimes hold a candle to a man who was worldling at night, sawing; he used to say to me — “Now, my lad, hold the candle so that you can see yourself, and you may depend upon it that I can see too.” And I have generally found, that if you hold up the doctrines in such a way that you can see them yourselves, and just tell to others the way in which you have been led to see them, and how you see them now, you will often give a light to other men, if they have the root of the matter in them. Quarrel not; fight not with them, but be friends, and especially this, show thyself friendly.

Then, again, if you meet with young professors who have the root of the matter in them, do not begin condemning them for lack of knowledge. I

have heard of some old believers, ay, and of some not very old too, who had read a great deal, and had, perhaps, more in the head than in the heart; and when young enquirers came to see them, they began to ask them — “Which theory do you hold, sub-lapsarian or supra-lapsarian?” I do not mean that they exactly said those very words, but they suggested some knotty points something of that sort; and the young people have said — “I am sure I do not know, sir.” It has sometimes been the ease that these young enquirers have been dealt very harshly with, and I remember one ease where a certain brother — a good man too, in his way, said — “Well, now, I am sorry to tell you that you are no child of God; if you die as you are you will be lost” — only because the poor soul did not exactly know the difference between two things that are amazingly alike after all. I do not think we ought to do this. It is not policy for us to go about killing all the lambs; for if we do this, where will the sheep come from? If we are always condemning those who have only begun as yet to learn their letters, we shall never have any readers. People must begin to say “Twice two are four, “before they can ever come to be very learned in mathematics. Should we stop them at once, and say — “You are no child of God, because you do not know how to compute the logarithms of grace?” Why, then at once we have put out of the synagogue those who might have been its best ornaments. Remember, my dear friends, that wherever we see the root of the matter, Christ has accepted the person, and therefore we ought to accept him. This is why I love to think that when we break bread at this table we always receive amongst us, as far as we know, all those who have got the root of the matter in them. I have heard a story of the late good Dr. Stedman, when he was tutor of Bradford College. It appears he was a very strict communion Baptist, and carried it out conscientiously. One day he preached for some Independents, and in the afternoon, after the service; there was to be the communion. Now Mr. Stedman prayed most earnestly that the Lord would be pleased graciously to vouchsafe his presence to the dear brethren when they met around his table. After the service was over he was going to the vestry to put on his great-coat, intending to go home. One of the deacons said — “Doctor, you will stop with us, will you not, to the communion?” “Well, my dear brother,” he said — “it is no want of love, but, you see, it would compromise my principles; I am a strict communion Baptist, and I could not well stop and commune with you who have not been baptized; do not think it is any want of love now, but it is only out of respect to my principles.” “Oh!” said the deacon, “but it is not your principles, because what did you pray for, Doctor? You prayed your

Master, the Lord Jesus, to come to our table; and if according to your principles it is wrong for you to go there, you should not ask your Master to come where you must not go yourself; but if you believe that your Lord and Master will come to the table, surely where the Master is, it cannot be wrong for the servant to be." The deacon's reasoning appears to me very sound. And it is in the same spirit I say of any or to any whose sincere faith I have no reason to doubt — if they have got the root of the matter in them, "Come and welcome?" We are sorry that when our friends ought to keep the feast of tabernacles with great branches of trees they only pull small twigs, and so do not get the benefit of the broader shadow. We are sorry that when Christ tells them to be immersed they go and sprinkle, but that is their own business and not ours. To their own Master they must stand or fall, but if the root of the matter be there, why persecute ye them, seeing that the root of the matter is found in them. Let them come. God has received them, and let us do the same.

That matter about encouraging young believers, and not putting stumbling blocks in their path, may seem to some of you decidedly unimportant; but I am persuaded that there are many young Christians who have been made to suffer for years through the roughness of some more advanced believers. Christian! thou that art strong, be thou very tender towards the weak, for the day may come when thou wilt be weaker than he. Never did bullock push with side and shoulder the lean cattle of the herd when they came to drink, but what the Lord took away the glory from the fat bull of Bashan, and made him willing to associate with the very least of the herd. You cannot hector it over a child of God without making his Father angry; and though you be a child of God yourself, yet if you deal harshly with one of your brethren you shall smart for it, for the Master's rod is always ready even for his own beloved children when they are not tender with the sons and daughters of Zion, who are kept as the apple of God's eye. Remember, too, brethren, that the day may come when you will want consolation from the very friend whom you have treated so roughly. I have known some great people — some very great people, that have at last been made to sit at the feet of those whom before they called all sorts of ill names. God has his ways of taking the wind out of men's sails. While their sails were full, and the wind blew they said, "No, no; we do not care about that little port over yonder; we do not care to put in there; it is only a miserable little fishing-village." But when the wind came howling on, and the deep rolled heavily, and it seemed as if the dread artillery of God were all mustering for

the battle; ah! how with the reef-sail they have tried to fly, as best they could, into the little harbour! Do not speak ill of the little harbour. Do not be ashamed of little Christians. Stand up for the weaklings of the flock, and be this your motto, you strong Christians —

***“There’s not a lamb amidst the flock
I would disdain to feed;
There’s not a foe before whose face
I’d fear thy cause to plead.”***

Now I ask you, by way of solemn searching investigation, have you the root of the matter in you? I have spoken for your encouragement, in case you have the root of the matter in you. If you have not, there awaits you nothing but destruction, only that you are not lost hopelessly; the root of the matter is still to be had. The Holy Ghost can yet give you a new heart and a right spirit. Jesus Christ is still able and willing to save. Oh, look there! I see his five wounds; they flow with rivers of blood! Look there, sinner! and as thou lookest thou shalt live. Whoever thou mayest be, though thou art the worst sinner out of hell, yet

***“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”***

Look there, sinner, look, look and live! I think I have closed my sermon each night lately with those words, and I will do so again tonight. There is life in a look at a crucified Savior. There is life at this moment for thee. Oh! look to him, and thou shalt find that life for thyself. God bless you, for Jesu’s sake.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the followship of the Holy Spirit, be with all who love Jesus, now and eternally. Amen.

STRONG MEAT.

NO. 506

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL, 19TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” — Hebrews 5:14.

IN most large houses we shall find humanity in all its stages. We shall see the infant, in its cradle; children laughing in their play, young men working with vigor, and the old man resting in peace. In such a mansion, if a careful Martha be in charge, provision will be made for all the different ages. There will be milk provided for the babes, and the larder will not be without solid meat for the fullgrown men. Now in our Father's great house his family is always so large that you will always find believers in all stages of growth. Perhaps there is never a moment in the year in which there is not a new birth unto God by the Holy Spirit. The sighing of repentance, and the crying of simple faith are always in our heavenly Father's ears, giving him delight. He hath man, babes, and for these he hath abundance of nourishing food. But we bless his name that they are not all babes in the house; some are young men, who are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, and there are a few fathers who have known him, that is from the beginning. For the young men and for the hoary sires there is as plentiful and as fitting a provision as for the infants. He openeth his hand, and supplieth the want of every living thing, and this is true, not only of the temporals which he gives to man and beast alike, but also of the spirituals which he dispenses liberally to all the new creatures in Christ Jesus. Now it were unfitting to give the milk to the man of full age, and equally improper to present the strong meat to those who are but infants; our Lord has,

therefore, been pleased to dictate directions as to the persons for whom the various provisions of his table are intended.

Our text talks of *strong and solid meat*, and it describes *the persons who are to feed thereon*, while the context gives a *mild rebuke to those who, by reason of indolence and sloth, have not attained to years of discernment, and cannot therefore feed on substantial diet.*

I. Let us, first of all, BRING FORTH SOME OF THIS STRONG MEAT AND SET IT UPON THE TABLE BEFORE YOU.

A careful examination of the context will inform you that one form of strong meat which is only fit for full grown Christians is the *allegorical* exposition of Scriptural history. You will mark that the apostle was about to allegorize upon Melchizedec; He had intended to set forth that that venerable and priestly king was, so far as scriptural information goes, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of years nor end of life, and that he was superior to Levi seeing that Levi's progenitor paid tithes to him and received his blessing. The apostle was about to show that Melchizedec was a type of Jesus, who, as a priest, is without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of years, but is a priest for ever according to the power of an endless life. But the apostle paused, for he felt that this allegory of Melchizedec was too strong meat for those who were not fullgrown men. Beyond a doubt, the historical parts of Scriptures are intended to be instructive allegories, setting forth heavenly mysteries. See how the Apostle Paul used several of them. There is the case of Hagar and Sarah. Since the promise was not performed to Sarah, and no offspring had been born to Abraham, Sarah suggests that Abraham should take to himself a concubinary wife, Hagar. He does so, and she brings forth, according to the flesh and by the power of the flesh, Ishmael. Now the apostle goes on to show that Ishmael was not the seed which God had promised, and that, consequently, in after years Isaac was born, not according to the power of the flesh, since his father and mother were past age, but according to the promise fulfilled by the power of God alone. He then goes on to show that this is an allegory; that the children of the flesh, that is those who are the seed of Abraham, by natural birth like Ishmael, are not the true seed, but that those who, like Isaac, are the fruit of God's promise, and having been once as dead are given to Abraham, as Isaac was on the mountain in a figure, that these are the true seed, concerning whom the covenant was

made, and as Sarah said concerning Hagar — “Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac,” so the gospel says — “Cast out the law, for the children of the law, those who hope to be saved by legal works, shall not be heirs with my sons, even with those who are saved by the promise of grace.” Now this allegory is meat for instructed believers. Jacob and Esau — born of the same parents, at the same birth, and yet, separated in destiny by that memorable sentence, “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated” — were a type of the election of divine grace; and with many other instances, these go to prove that Holy Scripture is to be received not only as a literal description of facts which really did occur, but as a picture in which grace-taught souls, illuminated by the Holy Ghost, may see portrayed in express characters the great gospel of the living God. Those of you who are well instructed will have found out by this time that the Book of Genesis is the *History of Dispensations*; that in all its types it sets forth, from Adam to Joseph the various dispensations of primeval innocence, man without law, under law, in covenant, and apart from covenant and many other things of which we cannot now speak particularly. You will have discovered that Exodus is the *Book of Redemptions*. Here is redemption by blood when the paschal lamb was slain; redemption by power when he broke the chivalry of Egypt, smiting Pharaoh in the midst of the Red Sea. The Book of Leviticus is the *Handbook of Communion*, the *Guide to Access*, opening to us the way in which God can come to man, and man can go to God. And I am sure the least observant of you must have discovered that the Book of Numbers is the *Record of Experience*, for all those journeyings of the children of Israel to and fro when they lived in the wilderness, sometimes by Marah’s bitter fountain, and at other times by Elim’s spreading palms, all describe the constant on-marching of the sacred army of God to the Promised Land; while the Books of Joshua and Judges typify the history of the people who have entered into the land of Canaan, who are saved, but who have to fight with their corruptions, who have to fight with the Canaanites that are still in the land, and to drive them out despite their chariots of iron. I believe that every book of Scripture has some special lesson beyond its historical import; and perhaps when the history of the world shall have been fully wrought out, we shall see that the books of the Bible were like a prophetic roll sealed to us, but yet fulfilled to the letter. I sometimes think that we live in the days of the Judges. God raises up one mighty minister after another, some Shamgar, Jephthah, Gideon, or Samson, and when these die the Church relapses into its former state of coldness

and indifference; but the time is coming when David the king shall come, and when Solomon shall reign from the river even to the ends of the earth. The Millennial age shall hasten its glories, and what if it should be succeeded by a time of falling away as under the kings of Israel, and then the winding up of the dispensation the carrying away of the wicked into their long and last captivity, and the setting of the chosen in another and a better land? If these things be so, I am not wrong in the remark, that these allegories are only fit for strong men, who, by reason of use, have had their senses exercised. See, I set the meat before you.

I feel persuaded that the Apostle also more particularly referred to those mysterious truths which have respect to *the relationships of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to his complex person*. The very simplest believer understands that Christ is God and man, that Christ stood as the sinner's surety and paid his debt. But, brethren, when we come to meditate much upon the person of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall soon discover that there are depths of mystery in which an elephant might swim, as well as shallows where a lamb might wade. His complex person suggests a thousand thoughts, all of which are too high for comprehension or even consideration until our senses have been exercised. The doctrine of Christ's ancient covenant; the striking of hands between Jesus — Jehovah, the Surety, and Jehovah of Hosts, who accepted him as the substitute for his people — who but the perfect man can grasp this? Christ's frequent appearances upon earth, too, before his incarnation, when his delights were with the sons of men, when he talked with Abraham, communed with Moses, spoke to Joshua, and trod the coals of fire with the three holy children — what a theme! Christ's eternal Sonship, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son; the conception of Jesus as to his humanity in the womb of the Virgin, and others of a kindred nature, are great mysteries. I do not believe that these are fit topics for babes in grace. These truths are as high above us as the heavens are above the earth. But if ever we do come to consider these sublimities, we must remember that they are only food for full-grown men. I might go on to show that our union to Christ, that wonderful doctrine of our being members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, is also a mystery not to be trifled with by children. I might show, too, that even in Christ's Second Advent there are lofty questions, mighty difficulties, which need the full-grown intellect of the believer to grapple with them, and, therefore, here again you have another dish loaded with solid meat.

The *doctrines of grace* are also generally esteemed to be very strong meat. He that is not full grown in the faith will discover much in the doctrine of predestination that will stagger him. No doubt many young believers have felt God's fore-ordination to be like a stone rolled in their way, over which they can scarcely climb. They have looked upon this glorious truth as a mountain, blocking up their path; they have not understood that though it be a mountain, it is one upon whose summit God communes with man. How many have been distressed with the precious doctrine of election. It is meat; it is hallowed meat — meat fit for the priests of God and for the Lord's mightiest warriors, but many there be who have been so scandalized thereat that they have been fain to write bitter things against themselves on account of it. So with the doctrine of the immutability of God, and the consequent safety of the Lord's people, seeing that because he changeth not, the sons of Jacob cannot be consumed; this, though sweet as honey dropping from the honey-comb, is not a doctrine for every man. Only they who do business upon the great waters, and have learned the need of solid food, can usually feed on these things with satisfaction. Oh! dear brethren, what a mercy it is that there are such things as the grand old truths which men nickname Calvinism, but which are the very marrow of the gospel. I find when the heart aches, and the spirit is heavy, there is nothing like reading the eighth and ninth chapters of the Romans; and when things go amiss with me, and everything is perversely disappointing my hopes, it is very delightful to throw oneself back upon the soft couch of God's eternal purpose, to pillow one's head upon the certainty that what he said he will perform, and that what he has commanded shall stand fast. Here are royal dainties! Costly cheer for fainting pilgrims! If you want the wings of eagles, study these doctrines, and they shall bear you up aloft; if you would creep along the ground, and be full of doubts, and fears, and miseries, and distractions, live on baser food; but if you would walk in the strength of a giant, and fight with the valor of a David, live you on these loaves of heaven's best bread, and your youth shall be renewed. Yet these things are strong meat, and are not for babes, but for men.

Scarcely need I mention that other dish — *the more advanced and inwrought forms of Christian experience*. I believe there are saints, for instance, who hardly comprehend that passage where the apostle speaks of the contest within — “When I would do good, evil is present with me.” You know there are many little saints who do not comprehend the fight within. The conflict is there, but they have not a clear idea of what that

conflict is. They do not understand, with Paul, that “It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” The philosophy of the two natures, and of their constant struggle with each other, is not at their fingers’ ends. Then, again, communion with Christ is a high mystery that is never learned in the dame-school of repentance, not often in the grammar-school of faith, but we must go the university of repentance to learn it, leaning our head on Jesu’s bosom, and having foretastes of the fellowship which makes heaven what it is. This is one of those rare experiences which can only belong in its frequency to the full grown believer. I do not wonder that some people cannot read Solomon’s Song. We do not expect that they should. If I put a book of algebra or a table of logarithms into the hand of a child who has just learned the multiplication table, I do not marvel that he should not understand it. The fact is, that the Song is to the whole Bible what the holy of holies was to the temple. You may walk into the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospels, and say, “Here I am in the outer court of the temple;” you may go to the Psalms and to the Epistles and say, “Here I am in the court of the priests;” but the Canticles are the holy of holies; and he that has not learned to enter with the high priest into that which is within the veil, will never be able to read Solomon’s Song. These experiences, I say, are for men of full age, who have had their senses exercised.

I have thus set before you the various sorts of strong meat. Before we leave the table *let me utter a word of caution*. Milk you may use as you will. You cannot take too much of it; it will not do strong men any very great amount of good, but it will certainly do them no hurt. But the strong meat must always be accompanied by a word of caution when it is placed before the uninstructed and feeble, since such are very apt to do mischief both to themselves and to others with this strong meat.

As for the *allegories*. What a world of nonsense have people talked about the allegories of Scripture, trying to make things run on all fours that were meant to walk erect. Alas, for those silly compounders who without the genius of old Origen, imitated his worst faults. What can I say that would be censure severe enough upon Origen himself, who never could read a chapter but he must needs twist it from its plain sense to make a mystery of it. We have all heard, I dare say, of the divine who was foolish enough to take the three baskets full of sweet meats that were upon the head of Pharaoh’s baker, and to say that they represented the Trinity. I have heard of another who preached from this passage in Ezra — “Nine-and-twenty knives,” and went to show that they were types of the four-and-twenty

elders. What he did with the surplus five I don't know. Was God's Book ever meant to be a toy for the amusement of childish imagination. Surely, no. The strong meat of allegory must be for half-inspired saints like John Bunyan and those masters in Israel who are not to be carried away upon the back of every figure, but who can ride their figures like good horsemen with a bit in the mouth of the allegory, and make it keep in a straight road and bear them safely on to their destination. How many weak men are like boys on unbroken colts; the sooner they are off the better, for they will hurt their steed, and do themselves no good.

So must it be with *the good things concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ*. The mysterious doctrine of the Trinity, and the equally mysterious and sublime doctrine of eternal generation are best let alone by feeble minds. I do not think there are half-a-dozen men alive who ought to meddle with the last. There has been a controversy lately in a magazine, which I sometimes read for amusement rather than for instruction, between certain self-considered great and able divines of modern times, who think they are the men, and that wisdom will die with them. They have been denouncing each other most heartily — and this seems the only thing they can do thoroughly well — they have been denouncing each other heartily, because one believes this, and the other believes that, about a subject which not one of them knows anything at all about. The Sonship of our Lord is a great and marvellous mystery, to be meekly and reverently received, but never to be disputed about, except by those gigantic minds which belong to the past rather than the present. We might like to see two Titanic Puritans enter the field of controversy — two such men, for instance, as Dr. John Owen and Charnock — one might travel a thousand miles to see them grapple one of these lofty subjects; but when the little men of these days meddle with them, it saddens the humble-minded, and affords enlightenment to none.

In a measure it is so with *the doctrines of grace*. The doctrines of grace are to be handled with caution, for there are some folks who are not of full age, and have not, by reason of use, had their senses exercised, so that they cannot discern both good and evil. Many love high doctrine, but then they want it higher than the Bible. Have we not known some who thought themselves very wise, but whose senses, I am certain, have never been well exercised who were so fond of the doctrine of justification by faith that they have denied sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and have taught imputed sanctification, which is a doctrine of men indeed. Some have so

exaggerated free grace that they have denied the practical precepts. This is partly through wickedness, and partly through folly; it is the sure result of little minds losing their way in great truths, and, slipping from the high road, fall to flounder in the ditch of error. Oh! my dear brethren, I would sooner you would leave these doctrines alone than that you should fall into Antinomianism, for among the most damnable things which Satan ever sent is that which shall lead you to deny the practical precepts, and to forget that “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Unholy fatalism is a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein. Those persons, too, who push the doctrines of election and make it into the doctrine of reprobation show that they are foolish; they are not fit to deal with sublime truth, and if some persons who are renowned for preaching the doctrines of grace would only hold their tongues till they understood them their admirers would wait upon a dumb oracle. Oh; ‘tis a grand thing to be able to receive the whole truth, to learn human responsibility as well as divine sovereignty; to see God doing as he wills, but man bound to obey; to see Jehovah exalted on his throne, King of kings and Lord of lords, with man’s will his subject, and bound to do what God bids it, simply and only because God commands it. I am sure if we can couple the two things, free-agency and predestination, together, we shall be saved from Antinomianism on the one hand and from infidelity on the other. It is not holding half the truth that marks the man, that is the attainment of a babe; but to hold all, and to be afraid neither of high doctrines nor of low doctrines, neither of Calvinism nor of Arminianism, nor any other *ism* so long as there is truth in it: to pick the truth out and to hold fast that which is good, this is the conduct of a masculine, well-developed believer. May you have grace, dear friends, as touching these truths, to feed upon them as men who are of full age.

I shall not say anything upon the other point, except that it is just the same *as to advanced experience*. There are some who have run to the extreme of despondency, and others to the verge of levity through not knowing that strong meat is only for men of full age. But I have said enough, and, therefore, I now leave this point to turn to a second.

II. Secondly, let me INVITE THE QUALIFIED PERSONS TO COME TO THE FEAST.

Who are they? They are here described as being persons *of full age*. Understand, dear friends, that there is no reference here at all to the age of

a person as to human life. The Greek word is, "Men that are perfect;" it signifies, therefore, spiritual men who have attained to the highest degree of spiritual development. Now this is not the result of years, for there are some grey heads that have no more wisdom than when they first began; and, on the other hand, there are some youthful believers who are worthy to be called fathers in Israel, through the progress which they have made in grace. Growth in grace does not run side by side with growth in years. As old Master Brooks says, "There are some few believers who seem to be born with beards;" they are ripe Christians at a very early stage of their spiritual existence; and there are some who, if they tarry at Jericho till their beards be grown, will be long in seeing the King's face. They are always babes, needing the spoon and the rocking-chair, even in old-age. The expression in the text, then, has no reference to age, but is used in a spiritual and metaphorical sense.

But what is meant by men that are full grown? Well, you know a babe has the same parts as a man. The babe is perfect in its measure, but it is not perfectly *perfect*. Those limbs must expand; the little hand must get a wider grasp; the trembling feet must become strong pillars for ripening manhood; the man must swell, and grow, and expand, and enlarge, and be consolidated. Now when we are born to God, we have all the parts of the advanced Christian. Faith, hope, love, patience, — they are all there, but they are all little, all in miniature, and they must all grow; and he is of full age whose faith is vigorous, whose love is inflamed, whose patience is constant, whose hope is bright, who has every grace, in full fashion.

Nor is it only development. The full-grown man is *stronger* than the babe. His sinews are knit; his bones have become more full of solid material; they are no longer soft and cartilaginous, there is more solid matter in them. So with the advanced Christian: he is no longer to be bent about and twisted: his bones are as iron, and his muscles as steels; he moveth himself in stately paces, neither needeth he any upon whom to lean. He can plough the soil, or reap the corn; deeds that were impossible to infancy are simplicities to the full-grown man. Now you understand what the full-grown Christian is. He can do, and dare, and suffer, what would have frightened him aforetime; he can fight with dragons though once he would have fled before a grasshopper; he can now endure to pass through deep waters, though once a little brook would have swept him away. There is as much difference, in fact, between the full-grown Christian and the newly-born convert as between the strong, hale, hearty man of forty, and a babe of

three or four. We must, then, before we can venture upon things hard to be understood, labor to arrive at full age.

But then our text tells us *that they have had their senses exercised*. The soul has senses as well as the body. Men who have had their senses exercised know how to choose between good and evil. Now, what are these senses? Well, there are our spiritual *eyes*. When the babe first sees it has little idea of distances. I suppose that to a babe's eyes everything appears as a flat surface. It is the result of after-experience which enables the man to know that such a thing is so many yards off, and that another is so many miles distant. Travellers, who go to Switzerland for the first time, soon discover that they have not had their eyes exercised. You think that you can reach the peak of yonder mountain in half-an-hour. There is the top of yonder rock; you dream that a boy might fly his kite to the summit, but it shall take you hours to climb there, and weary limbs alone can bear you to the dizzy height. At a distance young travelers scarcely know which is mountain and which is cloud. All this is the result of not having the eyes exercised upon such glorious objects. It is just precisely so in spiritual things, unless Christians have their eyes exercised. I hope dear friends, you know what it is to see Christ; your eyes, by faith, have looked upon the King in his beauty. You know what it is, too, to see self; you have looked into the depravity of your own heart and have been amazed. Your eyes have seen the rising and the falling of many deceptions. Your eyes have been tried in waiting for God in many a dark night, or in beholding him in the midst of many a bright Providence. Thus your eyes have been exercised. Now, when a doctrine is put before you, a strong doctrine, you look at it and say — “Ah! yes; my eye of faith tells me from what I have seen before that that is healthy food upon which I may feed.” But if you detect something in it that is too high, or too low, you at once say — “No, that won't do for me,” and you put it by. Hence it is that the man, the eye of whose faith has been tried with bright visions and dark revelations, is qualified to discern between good and evil in those great mysteries which would be too high for unexercised believers. Then there is *the ear*. We hear it said of some that they have no ear for music. We sometimes hear it said of others that they have an ear for music, and they can tell when people are singing half a note amiss. How shocked they would sometimes be with some of you who will persist in running away from our good leader, and getting a whole note amiss! But there are some who cannot tell one note from another. So is it in spiritual things, “Blessed are the people that know

the joyful sound," but many do not know the difference between the joyful sound and that which is half a note lower. Why, dear friends, when a Christian is well taught, he knows when a note goes too high, and he says — "No, no, no; that jars;" or when it goes too low he says — "No, that is out of tune." He wants to have the keynote of the Gospel constantly before him, and any divergence from the grand old tune of orthodoxy, which he has learned from the Word of God, at once makes him feel wretched. He has a fine, keen, discerning ear; he can tell at once any mistake, and is not to be led astray by it. Hence it is that such persons are fit to hear the solid doctrines of the gospel preached, because they have listened to the voice of God. They have heard the charms of evil, and have despised them; they have heard the conversation of educated saints, they have been taught in the ways of the Lord, and knowing, therefore, the difference between this and that, they can discern between good and evil, and are not to be led astray. Now, I know that there is always a tendency in our large congregation for us to lose a driblet every now and then of two sorts of people. One sort when they hear an earnest sermon to sinners; when the wanderers are exhorted to flee to Jesus, and are told that if they perish it will be their own fault, "Oh!" these people say, "that is Arminian doctrine!" and off they go to some place where they can have the hyperism undiluted. And, then, if on another morning God's predestination is proclaimed, and men are told that God has chosen his people, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," then certain people say "Ah! I did not get on this morning; it was too high for me." The fault is not in either of the doctrines, for they are both Scriptural, the evil lies in these people's ears? They do not know the note which is the happy medium between the two systems the note which takes in both, which shows the sinner his own responsibility, and yet shows to both saint and sinner, God's real sovereignty. Happy is he whose ear is well tuned to discern both good and evil. Then, dear friends, comes *the nose*, the intention of which sense is to smell things afar off. True Christians have smelt the fragrance of Christ's fellowship. "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." Advanced Christians know the fragrance of heaven. The angels have brought them bundles of myrrh from the other side the stream; they have had their nostrils exercised, and you know the nostrils are of very essential use in reference to food. The nostrils can soon detect decay or that spiciness which the crafty trader employs to conceal it. There are certain persons whose ministry is putrid, but they lay on thickly very excellent spice about the safety of the believer,

and the joy and peace that there are in Christ, that the putridity is somewhat checked, and some Christian people eat the nauseous morsels, forgetting, or not knowing what they really are, because of the sweet savouriness and flavour in which the whole is wrapped up. But our nostrils are given us on purpose to detect the craft and mischief of designing men; and the spiritual nostril that has been made to perceive the difference between the righteous and the wicked, will soon be able to perceive what is true food and what is carrion. Then, you know, there is *the taste*; and this sense needs educating, too. Some men have no taste; to them flavour is no luxury. There are many who have no taste spiritually. Give them a cup of mingle-mangle — “perhappes,” “ifs,” “buts,” “peradventures,” creature-willings, and creature-doings, and if it is only warm they will drink it down and say, “Oh! how delightful!” If you give them a cup, on the other hand, that is full of divine purposes, precious promises, and sure mercies of David; if you will only flavour it with a good style of oratory, they will drink that sweet potion too and relish it. The two things may contradict each other flatly, but these people have no discernment — they have not had their senses exercised. But those of you who have been made to taste the sweets of covenant grace, you, especially, who have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood, and you, too, who have been made to drink the wormwood and the gall till your mouth knows every flavour, from the bitterness of death up to the glory of immortality, you may taste the strong meat without any fear, for your senses are exercised. Lastly, there is the sense of *touch*, and you know, how in some men, this has been developed to a very high degree; how men who are deficient in sight, for instance, have acquired by touch the knowledge which would, if they had not been blind, have been derived from their eyes. So believers have been made to touch the hem of Jesu’s garment. They have exercised the sense of feeling by joy, by rapture, perhaps by doubt and by fear, and their touch has become so acute, so keen, that, though their eyes were shut, as soon as they touch a doctrine they would know what was of God and what of man.

Now our text says that this comes as the result of use, and that use generally comes to us through affliction. Have you never noticed how men get their senses clear through affliction? I read in the life of good Dr. Brown, that when he first preached he heard two women at the door talking to one another about his sermon, and one of them said to the other — “Ah! ‘twas very well, but ‘twas almost all tinsel.” A short time after, the good preacher lost his wife; his heart was broken, and his whole nature

affected; the roots went deeper down into the solid truth, and when he preached again, the same woman said to her friend — “It is all gold now.” Afflicted Christians come to know the difference between tinsel and gold. I love a people who do not care always to have great garlands of fine flowers handed out to them. Oh! that running after oratory, that seeking after fine flowing sentences, that spread-eagle style which some adopt, why this is all folly! What the child of God wants is matter; he would like to have the matter given him in a good shape, but still it is the matter, the real solid food that he wants, and that ministry will always be the most acceptable to advanced believers which has the most of truth in it. They do not care half so much about the style as about the food that is served up in the sermon; they want something upon which the intellect may ruminate, which the soul can masticate, which the heart can assimilate, and upon which the whole being may be nourished and strengthened. Young Christians very frequently like Arminian doctrines; but as we grow older, as men who were Radicals when they were young grow to be Conservatives when they are old, so we grow to be Calvinistic, for Calvinism is the Conservatism of Christianity; it is just the Conservative principle, the old, solid, stiff, unyielding doctrine. Though I am a long way from being anything like old, and do not intend to be old if I can help it for another thirty years or so, yet still I do find a greater and more intense love to the doctrine of election, the doctrine of eternal union to Christ, final perseverance, and all those great truths where saints in all ages have been wont to find a haven for their spirits.

III. And now we must conclude. I think our Apostle meant the text to be a GENTLE REBUKE TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT FULL-GROWN MEN. The Apostle says that the Hebrew saints ought to have been teachers, but that they still remained infants.

It is very pleasant to see the infant in the house. What joy there is in its tender cry. But suppose that our children were always to remain infants; that would be no happiness to the parent. If you had a son twenty years of age who still needed to be carried, who required still to hang upon the nurse’s breast, would you not consider it one of the most serious of calamities? But you say you would pity the child. Ah! so you would, but suppose it was his own wilful fault; suppose the little one could, by some piece of wilfulness, prevent itself from growing, and would not use the proper means for development; I think you would then wisely use the rod as well as show your pity. Twenty years of age and yet still in long clothes!

Thirty years of age and still uttering a babbling cry! Forty years of age and still needing milk! Ah! you smile, but did any of you smile at yourselves? How long have you been converted to God? How long have you known the Savior? Why, I have known some converts that have been in long clothes for thirty years after they were converted, and are babies still. If you asked them to speak for Christ, they could only say a word or two of mere babble; and as for their confession of faith, it was not a reason; they did declare the hope that was in them, but they did not give a reason for it, for they could not give one. Then there are some who grow so slowly that their faith is just as weak now as it was twenty years ago. They go tottering along, and cannot run alone yet. They will want always to have preached to them just the simple elements, and if you give them a piece of high doctrine they have not cut their wisdom-teeth yet, and therefore they cannot masticate it, much less can they get any comfort out of it. Have I not seen some who ought to have been as patient as Job by this time, as fretful as they can well be. Dear friend, I must just give you a word of rebuke; it must be gently, for you are our brother, and if you be but a babe, yet, if you have life in you, you are saved. But why should you always be a babe, dear brother? Is it not that you have been too worldly? You have made money; oh! I wish you had made an increase of grace! You have been very attentive to those carts and horses, and to that farm, and to that speculation, you have attended very diligently to that saleroom, and to that exchange; oh! if you had been as diligent in prayer, if you had been as diligent for your Bible as for your ledger, and if you had ridden in the chariots of salvation as often as you have been riding your own horse about your farm, how much better a Christian you might have been! Do you not see, brother, you have been stinting yourself of food; you do not read the Scriptures, which are the food of the saints. You have stinted yourself of breath, and if a man is short of breath he will not have much to boast over. If you want to grow, you want to pray more. My dear brother, surely you have attached too little importance to these things; you have not enough considered them. Why not begin to search the Scriptures? Why not try to live nearer to God? Why not pant after a greater conformity to Christ's image? Why, what a Christian you might then be! I do ask my Lord often this one mercy, not only to make this Church, as it is, the largest Church in Christendom, but to be pleased to make us also strong men. Oh! if I can have in this Church a body of strong men and women, who know what they have received and hold it fast, and grow in grace, who shall have their eyes lit up with enthusiasm because albeit hearts are burning with a divine

fervor, why, there is nothing impossible to you! You shall make the Church tell upon its age; you shall move London, which is the heart of the world, until it shall send out deep heart-throbs that shall reach throughout the universe. What, with such multitudes as God adds to us continually might not be done if we had but the baptism of fire? But we must be ready for the fire; we must tarry at Jerusalem, and then, when the Holy Ghost comes down we may speak each in his own tongue as the Spirit shall give us utterance, and who can tell how mightily we may serve the Master? Sunday School Teachers, I would not have you ordinary teachers who merely set children reading; I would have you masters of the art of teaching, who are able to catechise with clearness and with power. You young preachers who stand in the streets, I would not have it said of you that you can talk but that there is nothing in it. You young men in our college; I hope it shall never be said of any of you as you go forth, that you are deficient in spiritual intelligence, and that you are unenlightened. May you be strong men, my brethren, all of you, and then it shall be my happiness to see you like the old guard of Napoleon, marching irresistibly into the battle, and this shall be your war-cry, if bad and evil times shall come — “We can die, but we can never surrender;” for God and for his truth you shall make your last charge over your enemies, and then enter into the victory which He reserveth for all them that diligently serve him.

I have said nothing to those of you who are unconverted. “One word,” says one, “one word; one word.” Well, there it is for thee; — I will give thee more this evening, but I will give thee one word now — “Prepare to meet thy God!” “But how?” saith one. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Taste and see that the Lord is good. He that believeth on him shall never perish, but have everlasting life. To believe is to trust.

Trust Jesus and be saved. Amen.

THE POWER OF PRAYER AND THE PLEASURE OF PRAISE.

NO. 507

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 3RD, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf. For our rejoicing in this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.”
— 2 Corinthians, 1:11,12.

THE apostle Paul had, by singular providences, been delivered from imminent peril in Asia. During the great riot at Ephesus, when Demetrius and his fellow shrine-makers raised a great tumult against him, because they saw that their craft was in danger, Paul’s life was greatly in jeopardy, so that he writes, “We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.” The apostle attributes to God alone his singular preservation; and if he referred also to the occasion when he was stoned and left for dead, there is much appropriateness in his blessing “God which raised the dead.” The apostle, moreover, argues from the fact that God had thus delivered him in the past, and was still his helper in the present, that he would be with him also in the future. Paul is a master at all arithmetic, his faith was always a ready-reckoner, we here find him computing by the believer’s *Rule of Three*; he argues from the past to the present, and from the present to things yet to come. The verse preceding our text is a brilliant example of this arriving at a comfortable conclusion by the *Rule of Three* — “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth

deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.” Because our God is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;” his love in time past is an infallible assurance of his kindness to-day, and an equally certain pledge of his faithfulness on the morrow; whatever our circumstances may be, however perplexed may be our pathway, and however dark our horizon, yet if we argue by the rule of “he hath, he doth, he will,” our comfort can never be destroyed. Courage, then, O ye afflicted seed of Israel; if ye had a changeable God to deal with, your souls might be full of bitterness, but because he is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” every repeated manifestation of his grace should make it more easy for you to rest upon him; every renewed experience of his fidelity should confirm your confidence in his grace. May the most blessed Spirit teach us to grow in holy confidence in our ever-faithful Lord.

Although our apostle thus acknowledged God’s hand, and God’s hand alone, in his deliverance, yet he was not so foolish as to deny or under value the second causes. On the contrary, having first praised the God of all comfort, he now remembers with gratitude the earnest prayers of the many loving intercessors. Gratitude to God must never become an excuse for ingratitude to man. It is true that Jehovah shielded the apostle of the Gentiles, but he did it in answer to prayer: the chosen vessel was not broken by the rod of the wicked, for the out-stretched hand of the God of heaven was his defense, but that hand was out stretched because the people of Corinth and the saints of God everywhere had prevailed at the throne of grace by their united supplications. With gratitude those successful pleadings are mentioned in the text, “Ye also helping together by prayer for us,” and he desires the brethren now to unite their praises with his, “that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf,” for he adds that he has a claim upon their love, since he was not as some who were unfaithful to their trust, but his conscience was clear that he had preached the Word simply and with sincerity.

While speaking upon these topics may the anointing Spirit now descend to make them profitable to us. We shall, first, *acknowledge the power of united prayer*; secondly, *excite you to united praise*; and then, in the third place, *urge our joyful claim upon you — a claim which is not our’s alone, but belongs to all ministers of God who in sincerity labor for souls.*

I. First, then, dear friends, it is my duty and my privilege this morning to ACKNOWLEDGE THE POWER OF UNITED PRAYER.

It has pleased God to make prayer the abounding and rejoicing river through which most of our choice mercies flow to us. It is the golden key which unlocks the well-stored granaries of our heavenly Joseph. It is written upon each of the mercies of the covenant, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." There are mercies which come unsought, for God is found of them that sought not for him; but there are other favors which are only bestowed upon the men who ask, and therefore receive; who seek, and therefore find; who knock, and therefore gain an entrance. Why God has been pleased to command us to pray at all it is not difficult to discover, for prayer *glorifies God*, by putting man in the humblest posture of worship. The creature in prayer acknowledges his Creator with reverence, and confesses him to be the giver of every good and perfect gift; the eye is lifted up to behold the glory of the Lord, while the knee is bent to the earth in the lowliness of acknowledged weakness. Though prayer is not the highest mode of adoration, or otherwise it would be continued by the saints in heaven, yet it is the most humble, and so the most fitting, to set forth the glory of the perfect One as it is beheld by imperfect flesh and blood. From the "Our Father," in which we claim relationship, right on to "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory," which we ascribe to the only true God, every sentence of prayer honors the Most High. The groans and tears of humble petitioners are as truly acceptable as the continual "Holy, holy, holy," of the Cherubim and Seraphim; for in their very essence all truthful confessions of personal fault are but a homage paid to the infinite perfections of the Lord of hosts. More honored is the Lord by our prayers than by the unceasing smoke of the holy incense of the altar which stood before the veil. Moreover, the act of prayer *teaches us our unworthiness*, which is no small blessing to such proud beings as we are. If God gave us favors without constraining us to pray for them we should never know how poor we are, but a true prayer is an inventory of wants, a catalogue of necessities, a suit *in forma pauperis*, an exposure of secret wounds, a revelation of hidden poverty. While it is an application to divine wealth, it is a confession of human emptiness. I believe that the most healthy state of a Christian is to be always empty, and always depending upon the Lord for supplies; to be always poor in self and rich in Jesus; weak as water personally, but mighty through God to do great exploits; and hence the use

of prayer, because while it adores God, it lays the creature where he should be, in the very dust. Prayer is in itself, apart from the answer which it brings, a great benefit to the Christian. As the runner gains strength for the race by daily exercise, so for the great race of life we acquire energy by the hallowed labor of prayer. Prayer plumes the wings of God's young eaglets, that they may learn to mount above the clouds. Prayer girds the loins of God's warriors, and sends them forth to combat with their sinews braced and their muscles firm. An earnest pleader cometh out of his closet, even as the sun ariseth from the chambers of the east, rejoicing like a strong man to run his race. Prayer is that uplifted hand of Moses which routs the Amalekites more than the sword of Joshua; it is the arrow shot from the chamber of the prophet foreboding defeat to the Syrians. What if I say that prayer clothes the believer with the attributes of Deity, girds human weakness with divine strength, turns human folly into heavenly wisdom, and gives to troubled mortals the serenity of the immortal God. I know not what prayer cannot do! I thank thee, great God, for the mercy-seat, a choice gift of thy marvellous lovingkindness. Help us to use it aright!

As many mercies are conveyed from heaven in the ship of prayer, so *there are many choice and special favors which can only be brought to us by the fleets of united prayer*. Many are the good things which God will give to his lonely Elijahs and Daniels, but if two of you agree as touching anything that ye shall ask, there is no limit to God's bountiful answers. Peter might never have been brought out of prison if it had not been that prayer was made without ceasing by *all* the Church for him. Pentecost might never have come if *all* the disciples had not been "with one accord in one place," waiting for the descent of the tongues of fire. God is pleased to give many mercies to one pleader, but at times he seems to say — "Ye shall all appear before me and entreat my favor, for I will not see your face, unless even your younger brethren be with you." Why is this, dear friends? I take it that thus our gracious Lord sets forth his own esteem for the communion of saints. "I believe in the communion of saints" is one article of the great Christian creed, but how few there are who understand it. Oh! there is such a thing as real union among God's people. We may be called by different names —

***"But all the servants of our King
In heaven and earth are one."***

We cannot afford to lose the help and love of our brethren. Augustine says — “The poor are made for the rich and the rich are made for the poor.” I do not doubt but that strong saints are made for weak saints, and that the weak saints bring special benedictions upon the full-grown. There is a fitness in the whole body; each joint owes something, to every other, and the whole body is bound together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth. There are certain glands in the human body which the anatomist hardly understands. He can say of the liver, for instance, that it yields a very valuable fluid of the utmost value in the bodily economy, but there are other secretions whose distinct value he cannot ascertain; yet, doubtless, if that gland were removed, the whole body might suffer to a high degree: and so, beloved friends, there may be some believers of whom we may say — “I do not know the use of them; I cannot tell what good that Christian does; yet were that insignificant and apparently useless member removed, the whole body might be made to suffer, the whole frame might become sick and the whole heart faint.” This is probably the reason why many a weighty gift of heaven’s love is only granted to combined petitioning — that we may perceive the use of the whole body, and so may be compelled to recognize the real vital union which divine grace has made and daily maintains among the people of God. Is it not a happy thought, dear friends, that the very poorest and most obscure Church-member can add something to the body’s strength. We cannot all preach; we cannot all rule; we cannot all give gold and silver, but we can all contribute our prayers. There is no convert, though he but two or three days old in grace, but can pray. There is no bed-ridden sister in Jesus who cannot pray; there is no sick, aged, imbecile, obscure, illiterate, or penniless believer, who cannot add his supplications to the general stock. This is the Church’s riches. We put boxes at the door that we may receive your offerings to God’s cause — remember there is a spiritual chest within the Church, into which we should all drop our loving intercessions, as into the treasury of the Lord. Even the widow without her two mites, can give her offering to this treasury. See, then, dear friends, what union and communion there are among the people of God, since there are certain mercies which are only bestowed wiled the saints unitedly pray. How we ought to feel this bond of union! How we ought to pray for one another! How, as often as the Church meets together for supplication, should we all make it our bounded duty to be there! I would that some of you who are absent from the prayer-meeting upon any little excuse would reflect how much you rob us all. The prayer-meeting is an invaluable institution, ministering strength to all other meetings and

agencies. Are there not many of you who might by a little pinching of your time and pressing of your labors come among us a little oftener? And what if you should lose a customer now and then, do you not think that this loss could be well made up to you by your gains on other days? Or if not so, would not the spiritual profit much more than counterbalance any little temporal loss? “Not forgetting the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is.”

We are now prepared for a further observation. *This united prayer should specially be made for the ministers of God.* It is for them peculiarly that this public prayer is intended. Paul asks for it — “Brethren, pray for us;” and all God’s ministers to the latest time will ever confess that this is the secret source of their strength. The prayers of the people must be the might of the ministers. Shall I try to show you why the minister more than any other man in the Church needs the earnest prayers of the people? Is not *his position the most perilous*? Satan’s orders to the hosts of hell are — “Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the ministers of God.” He knows if he can once smite through the heart one of these, there will be a general confusion, for if the champion be dead, then the people fly. It is around the standard-bearer that the fight is thickest. There the battle-axes ring upon the helmets, there the arrows are bent upon the armor, for the foeman knows that if he can cut down the standard, or cleave the skull of its bearer, he will strike a heavy blow and cause deep discouragement.

Press around us, then, ye men at arms! Knights of the red cross rally for our defense, for the fight grows hot. We beseech you if you elect us to the office of the ministry, stand fast at our side in our hourly conflicts. I noticed on returning from Rotterdam, when we were crossing the bar at the mouth of the Maas, where by reason of a neap tide and a bad wind the navigation was exceedingly dangerous, that orders were issued — “All hands on deck!” So methinks the life of a minister is so perilous, that I may well cry — “All hands on deck;” every man to prayer; let even the weakest saint become instant in supplication. The minister, standing in such a perilous position, has, moreover, *a solemn weight of responsibility resting on him.* Every man should be his brother’s keeper in a measure, but woe to the watchmen of God if they be not faithful, for at their hands shall the blood of souls be required; at their door shall God lay the ruin of men if they preach not the gospel fully and faithfully. There are times when this burden of the Lord weighs upon God’s ministers until they cry out in pain as if their hearts would burst with anguish. I marked the captain as we

crossed that bar throwing the lead himself into the sea; and when one asked why he did not let the sailors do it, he said, "At this point, just now, I dare not trust any man but myself to heave the lead, for we have hardly six inches between our ship and the bottom." And, indeed, we felt the vessel touch once or twice most unpleasantly. So there will come times with every preacher of the gospel, if he be what he should be, when he will be in dread suspense for his hearers, and will not be able to discharge his duty by proxy, but must personally labor for men, not even trusting himself to preach, but calling upon his God for help since he is now overwhelmed with the burden of men's souls. Oh, do pray for us. If God gives us to you and if you accept the gift most cheerfully, do not so despise both God and us as to leave us penniless and poverty-stricken because your prayers are withheld. Moreover, the preservation of the minister *is one of the most important objects to the Church*. You may lose a sailor from the ship, and that is very bad, both for him and for you; but if the pilot should fall over, or the captain should be smitten with sickness, or the helmsman be washed from the wheel, then what is the vessel to do? Therefore, though prayer is to be put up for every other person in the Church, yet for the minister is it to be offered first and foremost, because of the position which he occupies. And then, *how much more is asked of him than of you?* If you are to keep a private table for individual instruction, he is, as it were, to keep a public table, a feast of good things for all comers, and how shall he do this unless his Master give him rich provisions? You are to shine as a candle in a house: the minister has to be as a lighthouse to be seen far across the deep, and how shall he shine the whole night long unless he be trimmed by his Master, and fresh oil be given him from heaven? His influence is wider than yours: if it be for evil, he shall be a deadly upas, with spreading boughs poisoning all beneath his shadow; but if God make him a star in his right hand, his ray of light shall cheer with its genial influence whole nations and whole periods of time. If there be any truth in all this, I implore you yield us generously and constantly the assistance of your prayers.

I find that in the original, the word for "helping together," implies very earnest WORK. Some people's prayers have no work in them; but the only prayer which prevails with God is a real working-man's prayer — where the petitioner, like a Samson, shakes the gates of mercy, and labors to pull them up rather than be denied an entrance. We do not want finger-end prayers, which only touch the burden, we need shoulder-prayers, which bear a load of earnestness and are not to be denied their desire. We do not

want those dainty run-away knocks at the door of mercy, which professors give when they show off at prayer-meetings, but we ask for the knocking of a man who means to have, and means to stop at mercy's gate till it opens and all his need shall be supplied. The energetic, vehement violence of the man who is not to be denied, but intends to carry heaven by storm until he wins his heart's desire — this is the prayer which ministers covet of their people. Melancthon, it is said, derived great comfort from the information that certain poor weavers, women and children, had met together to pray for the Reformation. Yes, Melancthon, there was solid ground for comfort here. Depend on it, it was not Luther only, but the thousands of poor persons who sung psalms at the plough-tail, and the hundreds of serving men and women who offered supplications, that made the Reformation what it was. We are told of Paulus Phagiuis, a celebrated Hebrew scholar, very useful in introducing the Reformation into this country, that one of his frequent requests of his younger scholars, was that they would continue in prayer, so that God might be pleased to pour out a blessing in answer to them. Have I not said a hundred times, that all the blessing that God has given us here, all the increase to our Church, has been due, under God, to your earnest, fervent supplications? There have been heaven-moving seasons both in this house and at New Park Street. We have had times when we have felt we could die sooner than not be heard; when we carried our Church on our bosom as a mother carrieth her child; when we felt a yearning and a travailing in birth for the souls of men. "What hath God wrought?" we may truly say, when we see our Church daily increasing, and the multitudes still hanging upon our lips to listen to the Word. Shall we now cease from our prayers? Shall we now say unto the Great High Priest, "It is enough?" Shall we now pluck the glowing coals from the altar and quench the burning incense? Shall we now refuse to bring the morning and evening lambs of prayer and praise to the sacrifice? O children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, will ye turn your backs in the day of battle? The flood is divided before you; the Jordan is driven back; will you refuse to march through the depths? God, even your God, goeth up before you; the shout of a King is heard in the midst of your hosts; will you now be recreant and refuse to go up and possess the land? Will you now lose your first love? Shall "Ichabod" be written upon the forefront of this tabernacle? Shall it be said that God hath forsaken you? Shall the day come in which the daughters of Philistia shall rejoice and the sons of Syria shall triumph? If not, to your knees again, with all the force of prayer! If not, to your vehement supplications once

more! If not, if you would not see good blighted and evil triumphant, clasp hands again, and in the name of him who ever liveth to intercede, once more be prevalent in prayer that the blessing may again descend. "Ye also helping together by prayer for us."

II. We must now EXCITE YOU TO PRAISE.

Praise should always follow answered prayer; the mist of earth's gratitude should rise as the sun of heaven's love warms the ground. Hath the Lord been gracious to thee, and inclined his ear to the voice of thy supplication? Then praise him as long as thou livest. Deny not a song to him who hath answered thy prayer and given thee the desire of thy heart. To be silent over God's mercies is to incur the guilt of shocking ingratitude, and ingratitude is one of the worst of crimes. I trust, dear friends, you will not act as basely as the nine lepers, who after they had been healed of their leprosy, returned not to give thanks unto the healing Lord. To forget to praise God, is to refuse to benefit ourselves, for praise, like prayer, is exceedingly useful to the spiritual man. It is a high and healthful exercise. To dance, like David, before the Lord, is to quicken the blood in the veins and make the pulse beat at a healthier rate. Praise gives to us a great feast, like that of Solomon, who gave to every man a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine. Praise is the most heavenly of Christian duties. The angels pray not, but they cease not to praise both day and night. To bless God for mercies received is to benefit our fellow-men; "the humble shall hear thereof and be glad." Others who have been in like circumstances, shall take comfort if we can say, "Oh! magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together; this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Tongue-tied Christians are a sad dishonor to the Church. We have some such, some whom the devil has gagged, and the loudest music they ever make is when they are champing the bit of their silence. I would, my brethren, that in all such cases the tongue of the dumb may sing.

To go a step further here. As praise is good and pleasant, blessing man and glorifying, God, *united praise has a very special commendation*. United praise is like music in concert. The sound of one instrument is exceeding sweet, but when hundreds of instruments, both wind and stringed, are all combined, then the orchestra sendeth forth a noble volume of harmony. The praise of one Christian is accepted before God like a grain of incense; but the praise of many is like a censor full of frankincense smoking up

before the Lord. Combined praise is an anticipation of heaven, for in that general assembly they altogether with one heart and voice praise the Lord.

***“Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.”***

Public praise is very agreeable to the Christian himself. How many burdens has it removed, I am sure when I hear the shout of praise in this house it warms my heart. It is at times a little too slow for my taste, and I must urge you to quicken your pace, that the rolling waves of majestic praise may display their full force, yet with all drawbacks, to my heart there is no music like yours. My Dutch friends praise the Lord so very slowly that one might very well go to sleep, lulled by their lengthened strains. Even there, however, the many voices make a grand harmony of praise. I love to hear God’s people sing when they really do sing, not when it is a *drawing* out somewhere between harmony and discord. O for a sacred song, a shout of lofty praise in which every man’s soul beats the time, and every man’s tongue sounds the tune, and each singer feels a high ambition to excel his fellow in gratitude and love. There is something exceedingly delightful in the union of true hearts in the worship of God, and when these hearts are expressed in song, how sweet the charming sounds. I think we ought to have a praise-meeting once a week. We have a prayer meeting every Monday, and a prayer-meeting every Saturday, and a prayer-meeting every morning, but why do we not have a *praise-meeting*? Surely seasons should be set apart for services made up of praise from beginning to end. Let us try the plan at once.

As I said about united prayer, that it should be offered specially for ministers, *so should united praise often take the same aspect*, the whole company should praise and bless God for the mercy rendered to the Church through its pastors. Hear how our apostle puts it again — “That for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.” Brethren, we ought to praise God for good ministers *that they live*, for when they die much of their work dies with them. It is astonishing how a reformation will press on while Luther and Calvin live, and how it will cease directly the reformers die. The spirits of good men are immortal only in a sense. The Churches of God in this age are like the Israelites in the times of the judges, when the judges died they went after graven images again. And it is so now. While God spares the man the Church prospers, but when the man dies the zeal which he blew to

a flame smoulders among the ashes. In nine cases out of ten, if not in ninety-nine out of every hundred, the prosperity of a Church rests on the minister's life. God so ordains it to humble us. There should be gratitude, then, for spared life; but there should be great gratitude for *preserved character*, for oh! when a minister falls, what a disgrace it is! Why, when you read in the police-reports the sad case of the Revelation Mr. — , who chose to call himself a Baptist minister, everybody says, "What a shocking thing! what a bad set the Baptists must be." Now, any fool in the world may call himself a Baptist minister. Our liberty is so complete that no law or order exists. Any man who can get a dozen to hear him, is a minister at least to them; therefore you cannot suppose but what there will be some hypocrites who will take the name in order to get some sort of reputation. If the true minister be kept, and made to hold fast his integrity, there should be constant gratitude to God on his behalf. If the minister be kept *well supplied with goodly matter*; if he be like a springing well; if God give him to bring out of his treasury things both new and old to feed his people, there should be hearty thanks. And if he be kept *sound*, if he go not aside to philosophy on the one hand, nor to a narrowness of doctrine on the other, there should be thanksgiving there. If God give to the masses the will to hear him, and above all, if souls be converted, and saints be edified, there should be never-ceasing honor and praise to God. Ah! I am talking now about what you all know, and you just nod your heads to it, and think there is not much in it, but if you were made to live in Holland for a little time you would soon appreciate these remarks. While travelling there, I stayed in houses with godly men, men of God with whom I could hold sweet communion, who cannot attend what was once their place of worship. Why not? "Sir," they say, "can I go to a place of worship when the most of the ministers deny every word of Scripture; not those of the Reformed Church only, but of every sect in Holland; how can I listen to the traitors who swear to the Calvinistic or Lutheran articles, and then go into the pulpit and deny the reality of the resurrection, or assert that the ascension of Jesus is a mere spiritual parable?" I find that in the Netherlands they are fifty years in advance of us in infidelity. We shall soon catch up with them if gentlemen of a certain school I know of are suffered to multiply. The Dutch divines have taken great strides in Neologianism, till now the people love the truth, and there are multitudes that are willing to hear it, but these are compelled absolutely to refuse to go to church at all, lest by any means they should give countenance to the heretical and false doctrines which are preached to them every Sabbath-day. Ah! if God

were once to take away from England the ministers who preach the gospel boldly and plainly, you would cry to God to give you the candlestick back again. We may indeed say of England —

“With all thy faults I love thee still.”

We have a colonial bishop who avows his unbelief; we have a few men of all denominations who are quietly sliding from the truth; but thank God they are nothing as yet; they are but as a drop in a bucket compared to the Churches of Christ, and those among us who are not quite as Calvinistic as we might wish, I thank God, never dispute the inspiration of Scripture, nor doubt the great truth of justification by faith. We have still preserved amongst us men that are faithful to God, and preach the whole truth as it is in Jesus. Be thankful for your ministers, I say again, for if you were placed where some believers are, you would cry out to your God — “Lord, send us back thy prophets; send us a famine of bread or a famine of water, but send us not a famine of the Word of God!”

I ask for myself this morning, as your minister, your thanksgivings to be mingled with mine in praising God for the help which he has vouchsafed to me in the very arduous work of the last fortnight. Praise be to God for the acceptance which he gave me in that country among all ranks of the people. I speak to his praise, and not to mine, for this has been a vow with me, that if God will give me a harvest, I will not have an ear of corn of it, but he shall have it all. I found in all the places where I went great multitudes of people, crowds who could not understand the preacher, but who wanted to see his face, because God had blessed his translated sermons to their souls; multitudes who gave me the grip of brotherly kindness, and, with tears in their eyes, invoked, in the Dutch language, every blessing upon my head I hoped to preach to some fifties and hundreds, and instead of that there were so many that the great cathedrals were not too large. This surprised me and made me glad, and caused me to rejoice in God, and I ask you to rejoice with me. I thank God for the acceptance which he gave me among all ranks of the people. While the poor crowded to shake hands, till they almost pulled me in pieces, it pleased God to move the heart of the Queen of Holland to send for me, and for an hour and a quarter I was privileged to talk with her concerning the things which make for our peace. I sought no interview with fuel; but it was her own wish; and then I lifted up my soul to God that I might talk of nothing but Christ, and might preach to her of nothing but Jesus; and so it

pleased the Master to help me, and I left that very amiable lady, not having shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Gratified was I, indeed, to find myself received cordially by all denominations, so that on the Saturday at Amsterdam I preached in the Mennonite Church in the morning, and at the Old Dutch Reformed Church in the evening; the next Sunday morning in the English Presbyterian Church, and then again in the evening in the Dutch Free Church; sometimes in the great cathedrals, as in the Dom Kirk, at Utrecht, and in Peter's Kirk, at Leyden, not having the poor only, but the nobility and the gentry of the land, who of course could understand English better than most of the poor, who have had no opportunity of learning it. I felt while going from town to town the Master helping me continually to preach. I never knew such elasticity of spirit, such bounding of heart in my life before; and I come back, not wearied and tired, though preaching twice every day, but fuller of strength and vigor than when I first set out. I give God the glory for the many souls I have heard of who have been converted through the reading of the printed sermons, and for the loving blessings of those who followed us to the water's edge with many tears, saying to us — "Do thy diligence to come again before winter," and urging us once more to preach the word in that land. There may be mingled with this some touch of egotism; the Lord knoweth whether it be so or not, but I am not conscious of it. I do praise and bless his name, that in a land where there is so much philosophy, he has helped me to preach the truth so simply, that I never uttered a word as a mere doctrinalist, but I preached Christ, and nothing but Christ. Rejoice with me, my dear brethren. I must have you rejoice in it, or if you will not, I must rejoice alone, but my loaf of praise is too great for me to eat it all.

III. And we come to a close. I have to urge THE JOYFUL CLAIMS which the apostle gives in the twelfth verse, as a reason WHY THERE SHOULD BE PRAYER AND PRAISE.

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." Ah! after all, a man's comfort must come, next to the finished salvation of God, from the testimony of his own conscience, and to a minister what a testimony it is that he has preached the gospel in simplicity, to which there are two senses: preached it not with double-mindedness — saying one thing and meaning another; preached it, not as watermen row, looking one way and pulling another, but preached it meaning what he

said, having a single heart, desiring God's glory and the salvation of men. And what a blessing to have preached it simply, that is to say, without hard words, without polished phrases, never studying elocutionary graces, never straining after oratorical embellishments. How accursed must be the life of a man who profanes the pulpit to the dignity of eloquence; how desperate will be his deathbed, when he remembers that he made an exhibition of his powers of speech rather than of the solid things which make for the winning of souls. That conscience may well be easy that can speak of having dealt with God's truth in simplicity. The apostle says, also, that he had preached it with sincerity, that is, he had preached it meaning it, feeling it, preached it so that none could accuse him of being false. The Greek word has something in it of sunlight, and he is the true minister of God who preaches what he would wish to have hung up in the sunlight, or who has the sunlight shining right through him. I am afraid we are none of us like white glass, most of us are coloured a little, but he is happy who seeks to get rid of the colouring matter as much as possible, so that the light of the gospel may shine right straight, clear as it comes from the Sun of Righteousness, through him. Paul had preached with simplicity and sincerity. And he adds, "Not with fleshly wisdom." Oh! what stories have I heard of what fleshly wisdom will do, and I have learned a lesson during the last fortnight which I would that England would learn. There are three schools of theological error over yonder, and each one leaps over the back of its fellow, some of them holding that all the facts of Scripture are only myths, others of them saying that there are some good things in the Bible, though there are a great many mistakes, and others going further still, and flinging the whole Bible away altogether as to its inspiration, though they still preach it, and still lean on it, saying that they do that merely for the edification of the vulgar, merely holding it up for the sake of the masses, though I ought to add merely to get their living as well. Sad! sad! sad! that the Church has gone to such a length as that — the Old Dutch Reformed Church, the very mirror of Calvinism, standing fast and firm in its creeds to all the doctrines we love, and yet gone astray to latitudinarian and licentious liberty. Oh! how earnestly should we decry fleshly wisdom! I am afraid, dear friends, sometimes that some of you when you hear a minister, you like him to put it pretty well, and you find fault unless he shows some degree of talent. I wonder whether that is not a sin? I am half inclined to think it is. I sometimes think whether we ought not to look less every day to talent, and more and more to the matter of the gospel that is preached; whether if a man be blessed with elocutionary power we may perhaps be

more profited by him — whether that is not a weakness, whether we had not better go back to the days of fishermen once again, and give men no sort of education whatever, but just send them to preach the truth simply, rather than go the length they are now going, giving men, I know not what, of all sorts of learning that is of no earthly use to them, but which only helps them to pervert the simplicity of God. I love that word in my text — “Not with fleshly wisdom.”

And now I lay my claim, as my conscience bears me witness — I lay my claim to this boasting of our apostle. I have preached God’s gospel in simplicity; I do not know how I can preach it more simply, nor can I more honestly declare it. I have preached it sincerely — the Searcher of all hearts knows that; and I have not preached it with fleshly wisdom, and that for one excellent reason — that I have not any, and have been compelled to keep to the simple testimony of the Lord. But if I have done aught, it has been done by the grace of God. If any success has been achieved, it has been grace that has done it all. “And more especially to you-ward;” for though our word has gone forth to many lands, and our testimony belts the globe, yet “more especially to you-ward.” You have we warned; you have we entreated; you have we exhorted; with you have we pleaded; over you have we wept; for you have we prayed; to some of you we have been a spiritual parent in Christ; to many of you as a nursing father; to many of you as a teacher and an edifier in the gospel; and we hope to all of you a sincere friend in Christ Jesus. Therefore do I claim your prayers — *yours* more than any other people’s; and though there will be not a few who will remember us in their supplications, I do conjure *you*, inasmuch as it has been “especially to you-ward,” let us specially have your prayers. Some will say that it is unkind even for me to suppose that you do not pray. Well, I do not so suppose it out of unkindness, but there may be some who forget — some who forget to plead. Oh! do pray for us still! The whole congregation is not saved yet. There are some that hear us that are not yet converted. Plead with God for their sakes. There are some hard hearts unbroken; ask God to make the hammer strike; and while there are some still unmelted, pray God to make the word like a fire. This great London needs to be stirred from end to end. Pray for all your ministers, that God may make them mighty. The Church wants more still of the loud voice of God to wake it from its sleep. Ask God to bless all his sent servants. Plead with him with divine energy, that so his kingdom may come, and his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

O that you all believed in Jesus; for until you do, you cannot pray nor praise! O that you all believed in Jesus! Remember, this is the only way of salvation. Trust Jesus, for he that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the Son of God. Trust Jesus and you shall be saved. May Christ accept you now, for his own love's sake. Amen.

COMFORT TO SEEKERS FROM WHAT THE LORD HAS NOT SAID.

NO. 508

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 10TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.” — Isaiah 14:19.

WE might gain much solace by considering what God has *not* said. What he *has* said is inexpressibly full of comfort and delight; what he has *not* said is scarcely less rich in consolation. It was one of these “*said not*” which preserved the kingdom of Israel in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, for “the Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven.” — 2 Kings 14:27. In our text we have an assurance that God *will* answer prayer, because he hath “*not* said unto the seed of Israel, Seek ye my face in vain.” You, who write bitter things against yourselves, I would have you remember that, let your doubts and fears say what they will, if *God* has not cut you off from mercy there is no room for despair: even the voice of conscience is of little weight if it be not seconded by the voice of God. What God *has* said tremble at! But suffer not your own fears and suspicions to overwhelm you with despondency and sinful despair. Many timid persons have been vexed by the suspicion that there may be something in God’s decree which shuts *them* out from all hope — some secret, written in the great roll of destiny, which renders it certain that if they did pray and seek the Lord he would not be found of them. Our text is a complete refutation to that troublesome fear. “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I have not said,” even in

the secret of

my unsearchable decree, “Seek ye my face in vain.” The decrees are “spoken in secret” — the decrees *are* hidden as “in a dark place of the earth;” but it is absolutely certain that the Lord has said nothing in any of them or anywhere else which can be interpreted to mean, “Seek ye my face in vain.” Oh! no, brother; that truth which God has so clearly revealed, that he *will* hear the prayer of those who call upon him, cannot be contravened by anything which God may have spoken elsewhere. He has so firmly, so truthfully, so righteously spoken, that there can be no equivocation. He does not, like the Sibyls, speak mysteriously with a double tongue, nor, like the Delphic oracle, reveal his mind in unintelligible words; but he speaks plainly and positively, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” O that all of you would accept this sure truth — that prayer must and shall be heard, and that never, even in the secrets of eternity; never, even in the council-chamber of the covenant, has the Lord said unto any living soul, “Seek ye my face in vain.”

The proposition I come to deal with this morning is this, — that those who seek God, through Jesus Christ, in God’s own appointed way, cannot, by any possibility, seek him in vain; that earnest, penitent, prayerful hearts, though they may be delayed for a time, can never be sent away with a final denial. “He that calleth upon the name of the Lord *shall* be saved; he that seeketh *findeth*; he that asketh *receiveth*; unto him that knocketh it *shall* be opened.” I shall prove this, first, by the negative, as our text has it — “I *have not* said, seek ye me in vain;” and then, briefly, by the positive. Oh, may God give us his Holy Spirit, that while I am preaching comfort may be given to many troubled hearts.

I. First, then, BY THE NEGATIVE. It is *not* possible, that a man should sincerely, in God’s own appointed way, seek for mercy and eternal life, and not find it. It is not possible, that a man should earnestly, from his heart, pray unto God, and yet a gracious answer be finally refused. And that for several reasons.

1. We will suppose the case — suppose that sincere prayer could be fruitless, then the question arises, *Why, then, are men exhorted to pray at all?* If prayer be not heard, if supplication may possibly end in a failure, why does God so constantly, so earnestly, so strenuously constrain and command men to call upon him? Would it not be a heartless cruelty on my part, if I saw a poor farmer who could not pay his way, if I exhorted him to plough upon a rock, and scatter the little seed he had upon soil where I

knew it never could grow? Or if a king impose upon his poor subject a law that he should plough the sea-shore and harrow it, and exercise all the arts of husbandry upon it, when he was perfectly aware that not a single grain could ever bless the husbandman's toil? What would you think of any man who should advise a thirsty wretch to pump an empty well? Suppose some sovereign should enjoin it upon his subject, seeing he is ready to die of thirst, to let the bucket down where there is no water, and to continue to do it without ceasing — to be always letting down the bucket, and always winding it up, with the absolute certainty that no good can come of it! And do you think that God, who commands men to pray and not to faint, would bid them do it, if no harvest could be reaped from it? Does he tell them to continue in prayer, to “pray without ceasing” — to watch unto prayer, to arise in the night-watches, and cry unto him — and yet, after all, has he settled it that he will be deaf to their entreaties and despise their cries?

Would it not be a piece of heartless tyranny, if the Queen should wait upon a man in his condemned cell, and encourage him to petition her favor, nay, command him to do it, saying to him, “If I do not send you at once an answer, send another petition, and another; send to me seven times, yea, continue to do it, and never cease so long as you live; be importunate and you will prevail.” And what if the Queen should tell the man the story of the importunate widow, should describe to him the case of the man who, by perseverance, obtained the three loaves for his weary friend, and say to him, “Even so, if you ask you shall receive,” and yet all the while should intend never to pardon the man, but had determined in her heart that his death-warrant should be signed and sealed, and that on the execution morning he should be launched into eternity? I ask you, brethren, whether this were consistent with royal bounty, whether this were fit conduct for a gracious monarch. And can you for a moment suppose that God would bid you, as he does each one of you, to seek his face — would he bid you come to him through Jesus Christ — and yet, secretly in his heart, intend never to be gracious at the voice of your cry?

2. Further, for a second argument: if prayer could be offered continuously, and God could be sought earnestly, but no mercy found, then *he who prays would be worse of than he who does not pray*; and supplication would be an ingenious invention for increasing the ills of mankind. For a man who does not pray has less woes than a man who does pray, *if* God be not the answerer of prayer. The man who prays is made to hunger: shall he hunger, and not eat! Were it not, then, better never to hunger? How then can it be

said, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness!” The man who prays, thirsts; as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so he pants after his God; but if God will never give him the living water to drink, is not a thirsty soul much more wretched than one who never learned to thirst at all? He who has been taught to pray has great desires and wants; his heart is an aching void which the world can never fill; but he that never prays has no longings and pipings after God; he that never makes supplication feels no ungratified desires after eternal things: if, then, a man may have these vehement longings, and yet God will never grant them, then assuredly the man who prays is in a worse position than he who prays not. How can this be? Has God so constituted the world — that virtue shall entail misery, and that vice shall engender happiness? Can it be, while God is the moral ruler of the universe, that he will reward the man who forgets him, and will pour misery into the soul of the man who earnestly seeks his face? ‘Tis blasphemy to suppose it. The beasts in the field do not lament that they are not immortal, for they never had aspirations after immortality; a gracious God has limited their ambition to their attainments: but if the ox could groan after heaven, if the sheep could pray for a resurrection, it were a wretched creature indeed to be denied these things. So the ungodly man, like the beast of the field, has no longing after God’s favor; no yearnings after eternal life; no desire to be conformed to the image of Christ; and his ambitions are so far limited to what he gains: but shall it be that a soul shall pant to be like God, shall thirst to be reconciled to his Maker, shall hunger even to faintness, that he may find “peace with God through Jesus Christ,” and yet shall such desires as these be only given to make him wretched? I cannot suppose such a thing. The absurdity of imagining that the man who *does* pray, would be by God put in a worse position than the man who does not, seems to me to be at once convincing, that the earnest, faithful prayer, shall certainly through the merit of Christ prevail with God.

3. But I go a step further. If God do not hear prayer, since it is clear that in that case the praying man would be more wretched than the careless sinner, then it would follow that *God would be the author of unnecessary misery*. Now we know that this is inconsistent with the character of our God. We look around the world, and we see punishment for sin, but no punishment for good desires. We discover that the fall has brought us loss and ruin; and we know that there is a dreadful hell where justice shall be executed to the uttermost; but I see no chamber of arbitrary torture, where God the

Almighty takes pleasure in the undeserved pangs and unmerited groans of his own creatures; I do not see a single invention made by God, in order unnecessarily to give pain; I find not a joint of my body, nay, not a sinew or a muscle, that is intended to cause me anguish; they may all be racked with aches and pains, since I am a fallen, sinful man; but the body was not organized with a view to pain, but for pleasure. And think you that God would ingeniously put up a mercy-seat to increase human misery by a mockery of grace, a mimicry of bounty? Do you dream that he would send out commands to men, obedience to which would entail upon them greater sorrow than disobedience could bring? Think you that he would woo them with outstretched hands to be more wretched than they were before?

Would he be so false and heartless as to bid them come, knowing that their coming would only make them ten-fold more unhappy than they were already, because he did not intend to accept them when they did come? He that can think thus of my God does not know him; he who could dream that it is possible for him to invite and incite in you the prayer he has promised to hear, and yet, after all, would reject it, must surely be comparing Jehovah to Kalee or Juggernaut; he knows not what Jehovah is. Know you not that prayer itself is the work of God? Prayer is not more the act of the creature than the work of the Creator. Prayer is God in man coming back to God. Prayer is the fruit of divine life. And do you believe that God would himself write upon the human heart prayers, which he did not intend to hear, and that the Spirit would indite petitions which God the Eternal Father had determined to reject? No, no, no; we must, from this negative way of reasoning, be persuaded that our God will hear and answer prayer.

4. Should there still be some desponding ones, who think that God would invite them to pray, and yet reject them, I would put it on another ground. *Would men do so?* Would even you, full of sin though you be, so treat your own fellow-creature? I know that we should hold up to scorn any rich man who should say to beggars in the streets, "I live in such-and-such a place; it is six miles off; if you will all come to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, and knock at my door, repeating my son's name, I will supply your wants," and when he had collected the poor beggars, should let them stand and knock according to his bidding till they were weary, and never grant them an answer, — if he should let them know that there was bread within the house, but not a morsel for them. We should say, "Well, if men must make themselves merry with practical jokes, let them not be carried

on upon the poor and needy; let them find some other victims, and let not the helpless mendicants of the streets be the victims of such foolish mirth. And shall it be possible for my God to be less generous than men? Do we not find continually, if there be an hospital opened, to relieve the sick, or to heal the maimed, that when much injured persons make an application they are received? I know not that there are any peculiar bowels of compassion in those who have the oversight of the hospital, but I do know this, there is so much of the milk of human kindness in their bosoms, that the moment a poor wretch is brought to the door almost dead — if it were a slighter case they might take some exception — the very desperateness of the case throws open the hospital door, and at once the patient is admitted. Man is in such a case, near to die, nay, condemned and utterly ruined by his sin; and I do not believe that my God will shut his door in the face of misery, but I am persuaded that the very desperateness of the case will make an appeal to his heart, and he *will* fulfill his promise. It is a low ground to put it on, I will admit, for God is infinitely more loving than man; “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts,” and if a *man* would not reject the supplication which he had himself invited — if a *man’s* heart would be moved to pity by the cry of misery — much more the heart of the all- bounteous God, whose very name is love, and whose nature it is to give liberally without upbrading. I am persuaded, therefore, that he must and will hear prayer.

5. Yet further: have you forgotten that *this is God’s memorial, by which he is distinguished from the false Gods?* “They have ears, but they hear not;” hands have they, but they help not their worshippers; and feet have they, but they come not to the rescue of their votaries; but *our* God made the heavens, and this is his memorial, “The God that heareth prayer.” Has not David put it — “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come?” One of the standing proofs of the Deity of Jehovah is, that he does to this day answer the supplications of his people. But suppose that any one among you could seek his face day after day, week after week, and month after month, and yet he should refuse you; where would be his “memorial?” O if yonder poor sinner, with tears and plaintive cries were really to besiege the mercy-seat in the name of Jesus, and God the Almighty Father should give him a refusal, and drive him away, I say, where is the boasted name of God? I grant you, the answer may tarry, but only that it may be the more sweet when it comes. I know the ships of

heaven may be long upon the voyage, but only that they may bring a richer cargo to you; but come they must. "If the vision tarry, wait for it; it *shall* come; it shall not tarry." For otherwise, I say, where is the glory of God? How is he distinguished above Baal? How is he exalted above the gods of the heathen? Did not Elijah put it to the test? The priests of Baal cried: they cut themselves with knives; from morning to evening their shrieks went up to heaven, and the sarcastic prophet said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; peradventure he is on a journey, or he sleepeth, and must be awakened." All day long the lancers drew forth priestly blood; but no voice came from Baal. Clear the stage, and let God's servant come. He lifts his hands to heaven, and cries: "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." Down falls the fire of the Lord, consuming not only the bullock, but the stones of the altar, and the water in the trench; for our God *does* hear prayer. Now do you see, soul, that your despair, when you say he will not hear you, really takes away from God one of his grandest titles? You do him a serious dishonor in supposing that he will refuse to hear you; you cast mire upon the escutcheon of Deity, and think unworthily of the Most High, when you imagine for an instant that he would teach you to pray, and come to him through the blood of Christ, and yet refuse to hear the voice of your groaning?

6. Surely these arguments might well suffice; but if unbelief has as many lives as a cat, as John Bunyan says, I will deal it the full nine blows and one over, to make assurance doubly sure.

If God do not hear prayer — suppose such to be the case for a moment — then I want to know what is the meaning of his promises. I ask, with all reverence, how he shall make his veracity to be proved, if he do not answer his people. Let me give you one or two of his own promises — "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I *will* deliver thee, and thou *shalt* glorify me." "He *shall* call upon me, and I *will* answer him." What means this, by the mouth of Esaias — "He *will* be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he *will* answer thee." That is neither more nor less than a falsehood, if God do not hear prayer. What means this splendid passage — "And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I *will* hear?" And this by Zechariah — "They *shall* call on my name, and I *will* hear them; I will say, it is my

people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God?" Can there be words plainer than these, from the lips of the Savior — "Ask, and it *shall* be given you; seek, and ye *shall* find; knock, and it *shall* be opened to you; for *every one* that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it *shall* be opened." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" And what is the meaning of this great promise — "And *all* things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye *shall* receive?" Are not these so many hot shot at the very heart of unbelief? I begin at that ancient writing, the book of Job. "He *shall* pray unto God, and he *will* be favorable unto him, and he *shall* see his face with joy." The Psalms are crowded with such promises, and even the prophet Joel, who is full of thunder and lightning — even he says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall be delivered*;" which the apostle Paul, in the epistle to the Romans, a little varies, and puts it — "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall be saved*." Even James, who is all practical, and very little comforting, cannot get through the epistle without saying, "Draw nigh to God, and he *will* draw nigh to you." Why, even under the old law, Deuteronomy had a promise like this — "If thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou *shalt* find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Under the rule of the kings, we find it written, "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." So might I go on quoting promises, until you were weary with hearing my voice. But, my dear friends, I ask you, if God do not hear prayer, after saying what I have repeated to you, where is his truthfulness? He *must* be true, if every man be a har; his own word *must* stand, though heaven and earth should pass away. Like flowers, ye nations, ye shall die; like a dream, ye kingdoms, ye shall melt; like a shadow, O ye mountains, ye shall dissolve; like a wreck, O earth, thou shalt be broken into pieces; like a worn-out gesture, O ye heavens, ye shall be rolled up; but every word of God is sure and stedfast, "yea and amen in Christ Jesus." "The voice said, Cry; and I said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." How can we find arguments stronger than this?

7. Another stroke. If God hath virtually said to us, "Pray, but I will never hear you; seek ye my face in vain;" then I ask, what is the meaning of all the provisions which he has already made for hearing prayer? I see a way

to God; 'tis paved with stones inlaid in the fair crimson of the Savior's blood. I see a door; it is the wounded side of Jesus. Why that blood shed, if God heareth not prayer? Why that side rent if, after all, the vail still shuts out from access to the mercy-seat? Moreover, in heaven I see a Mediator between God and man; but why a Mediator, if God will not be at peace with man nor hear his prayer? Moreover, I see an Intercessor; I see the Son of God stretch his wounded hands and point to his side, wearing the bejewelled breastplate on his forefront; but why the breastplate, and why the high priest, if prayer be a futile thing and God has said, "Seek ye my face in vain?" Moreover, I see all the marvellous transactions of the covenant from first to last; and I ask, why all this, if it is not meant for sinners who seek his face? Moreover, I see the blessed Spirit; he himself condescends to dwell in us and make "intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." and I ask of ye, O melancholy and despair, why this Spirit sent? why this blood shed? why this Savior ordained and exalted on high "to give repentance and remission of sins?" if remission is never to be given, repentance never to be accepted, and intercession never to be heard? By every wound of Jesus I persuade thee, sinner, to believe that God will hear thee; by every drop of that precious blood, by every cry of that dying lip, by every tear of that languid eye, by every smart of that bruised back, nay, by every jewel of that crown of glory, by every precious stone upon that priestly breastplate, by every honor which God the Father hath bestowed upon our Lord Jesus; yea, by all the power of the blessed Spirit, by all the energy with which he raised Christ from the dead, by all the "power" with which he is acknowledged to be God, I do conjure you, never doubt but that God will in due time be gracious to the voice of your cry.

8. Still to pursue this dying foe, whom methinks we might have slain outright by this time, I use the argument which the apostle uses upon the resurrection. If God hear not prayer, *what gospel have I to preach?* As the apostle said, concerning the resurrection, "Then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins." If God hear not prayer, I say, our preaching is vain. We are sent to tell men that, "though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow," if they will turn from their evil ways and seek the Lord; but if they can turn; and yet not be accepted, I for my part renounce my commission, for I have not a gospel that is worth the preaching; and surely *you* would say, "It is not a gospel worth our

acceptance.” If prayer, offered in Jesu’s name, be not accepted, taking Paul’s line of argument, then is not Christ accepted; if the sinner’s plea, “for Jesu’s sake,” be not heard, then is not Christ heard; and if Christ be not heard and accepted, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain, yea, and we are found false witnesses for God, because we have testified of God that he heareth the intercession of Jesus, whom he heareth not if he hear not those who plead his name. If you could once prove that true prayer could be rejected of God, it is not the corner-stone of the gospel, but still it is a most important one, and if you could take it away you would even disturb the keystone of the heavenly arch.

9. Further, my brethren — and here we strife the ninth blow — if this could be removed, *where were the believer’s hope?* Hang the heavens in sackcloth, let the sun be turned to darkness, let the moon become a clot of blood, if the mercy seat can be proved to be a mockery. Oh! if God would let his people cry, and not be gracious, better for us that we had never been born! The most happy saint, in his best moment, would be wretched as the damned in hell, if he were persuaded that God did not, and could not hear prayer. What would we have to comfort us in our hours of trouble, what to strengthen us in our times of labor, what refuge from the storm, what covert from the heat — where, where, my brethren, could we fly, if the throne of grace were a fiction? Heaven, sure, were shut, when the gate of prayer were shut. Surely every blessing had passed away at once, when prayer ceased to avail; the ladder which Jacob saw would be drawn up into heaven, and henceforth there would be no intercourse between God and man. Glory be to God, such a thing cannot be! Sinner, thou thinkest that God would never hurt his saints, but that he would reject *thee*. But see, if he refuses to hear *thee*, the rule is broken, and the rule being once broken, and there being *one* exception, the whole stability of the saints’ comfort is removed at a blow.

10. I close this negative view of the subject by observing, in the tenth place, What would they say in hell, if a soul could really seek the Lord, and be refused? Oh! the unholy merriment of devils! “Here’s a soul,” says one, “that perished though it prayed; here’s a hand that touched the hem of Jesu’s garment, but that garment did not heal; here are lips scorched with burning fire which once were warm with living prayer.” Methinks they would drag such a one in triumph through the streets of Tophet; they would crowd the thoroughfares to look on; and oh! what dread acclaim of scorn! what thundering laughter would go up! “Aha! Aha! Aha!” they

would say, “where is the boasted Savior now? He lied unto men’s souls; he promised, but he did not give; he taught them to pray, and made them begin their hell on earth, and then threw them into hell for ever.” Could it be? Oh, could it be? What would praying men do in hell? I remember that story of Mrs. Ryland, a good Christian woman, who, when she lay a-dying, was very, very sad, and her husband said to her, “You are dying, my dear?” “Yes,” said she. “And where are you going?” said he. She replied, “Ah! John, I’m going to hell.” “And what will you do there?” said he to her. Well, that had not struck her, what she should do there. “Do you think,” he said, “you will leave off praying, Betsy?” “No, John,” she said, “even if I were in hell I would pray.” “Oh! but,” said he, they’d say, “Here’s praying Betsy Ryland here; turn her out; this isn’t a fit place for her.” And so methinks if one of you could go there with a prayer upon your lips, pleading and crying, they would either rejoice over you, as a proof that God was not true, or else they would say, “Turn her out; we cannot bear prayers in hell; we could not bear to hear the voice of earnest supplication among the shrieks and curses of lost spirits.”

I have been arguing against a thing which you know theoretically is not possible; but yet there are some who, when they are under conviction of sin, still cleave to this dark delusion, that God will not hear *them*.

Therefore, I have tried by blow after blow, if possible, to smite this fear dead. When Jael did but take one nail and hammer, she was able to smite Sisera through his brain with it; since I have used ten nails, and have given ten as lusty strokes with the hammer as I could give them, O may God make them strong enough to strike the Sisera of unbelief dead at your feet!

II. Now, for a very little time, THE POSITIVE VIEW OF THE QUESTION. That the Lord does hear prayer, we think may be positively substantiated by the following considerations.

For the Lord to hear prayer is *consistent with his nature*. Whatever is consistent with God’s nature, in the view of a sound judgment, we believe is true. Now, we cannot perceive any attribute of God which would stand in the way of his hearing prayer. It might be supposed that his justice would; but that has been so satisfied by the atonement of Christ, that it rather pleads the other way. Since Christ has “put away sin,” since he has *purchased* the blessing, it seemeth but just that God should accept those for whom Jesus died, and give the blessing which Christ has bought. All the attributes of God say to a sinner, “Come, come; come to the throne of

grace, and you shall have what you want.” *Power* puts out his strong arm and cries, “I will help thee; fear not.” *Love* smiles through her bright eyes, and cries, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with the bands of kindness have I drawn thee.” *Truth* speaks in her clear, plain language, saying, “He that seeketh findeth; to him that knocketh it *shall* be opened.” *Immutability* says, “I am God, I change not, therefore ye are not consumed.” Every single attribute of the divine character — but you can think of these as well as I can — pleads for the man who prays, and I do not know — I never dreamed of a single attribute of Deity which could enter an objection. Therefore, methinks, if the thing really will *glorify* God, and not dishonor him, he will certainly do it.

“Oh! but,” you say, “I am such a great sinner.” That gives me another argument. *Would it not greatly extol the love and the grace of God* for him to give his grace to those that deserve it least? To give to a man what he deserves is no charity; to bestow a favor upon those who have a *little* offended, is no very great act of beneficence; but to choose out the biggest rebel in his dominions, and to say to that rebel, “I forgive you;” yea, to take that rebel and to adopt him into his family, adorn him with jewels and set a crown of gold upon his head; is this the manner of men, O Lord God? Nay, it is in such cases that we see the broad distinction between the leniency of human sovereigns and the mighty sovereign grace which is in the Ring of kings. The worse you make your case out to be, the better is my argument. The worse the disease, the more credit to the physician who heals; the worse the sin, the more glory to the astounding mercy which puts it away; the greater the rebel, the more triumphant that grace which makes that rebel into a child. I say that the greatness of your sin may act as a foil to set forth the brightness of God’s love. And herein, because the hearing of your unworthy prayers, and the listening to the cry that comes out of your polluted lips; because *this* would honor him, I am persuaded he will do it.

Further, though these two reasons would suffice, let me notice that it is *harmonious with all his past actions*. If you want a history of God’s dealings with men, turn to the 107th Psalm. There you find travelers lost like you, in a desert; they wander in a wilderness in a solitary way; they find no city to dwell in; the water is spent in the bottle; the bread is exhausted from the camels’ backs; they find no well; they perceive no way; they follow this path, then that. At last, hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted within them, and up from the desert’s parched sand there arose to the burning sky the voice of wailing: “O God, spare us, and let us

live.”

How is it written? "He delivered them out of their distresses; and he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation;" for it saith, "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." That is not told us as the exception, but as the rule. This is God's way of dealing with men. When they are lost and turn to him, he hears them. "Ah!" you say, "I am lost, but I am not like those travelers. I am lost by reason of my own sin." The next case in this Psalm will suit you. Here we find rebels brought into prison; they have been rebelling against the Word of God, and they have condemned the counsel of the Most High, therefore he brought them down by labor; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto God in their trouble. Did he hear them? These were "rebels," fitly and properly put in prison, justly and rightly fettered with iron. Do you wear the fetters of conscience and the chains of terror? Are you in the prison of the law? So long as you are not in the final prisonhouse of hell, if you call upon God in your trouble, you will find it with you as it was with them. "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder." "Oh! but," says another, "I have got into trouble through my sin but I do not know how to pray as I should, I am such a stupid blockhead." Then the next case is yours. "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted." One of these "fools" had brought on disease by his sin, and he was so sore sick that he lost all appetite, he abhorred all manner of meat, and drew near to the gates of death. This fool, what sort of prayer did *he* pray? Why, a fool's prayer, certainly; but a fool's prayer God will hear, as it is written, "He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." So, if you be never so great a fool, and the suffering you now feel has been brought on you through your own folly, yet he *will* hear you. "Ah! but," you say, "I have been such a bragging fellow, such a boaster, and I have done such terrible deeds in my day." What is the next case? The case of the sailor. You know, we generally reckon that seafaring men do not care for much; they are dare-devils, and rap out an oath without compunction; and in the olden times, I dare say, they were worse than they are now, so that when they did get ashore they were a very pattern of everything mischievous and bad. But here we have a crew of sailors in a storm; they had, no doubt, been cursing and swearing in the calm, but here comes a storm. They go up to heaven, and then they go down again into the depths: "They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man," for they cannot walk across the deck; the ship reels, "they are at their wits end," and they think, "Surely she will go to the bottom."

Then they cry unto God. There was no chaptain on board. Who prayed? Why, the boatswain, and the captain, and the crew, and I dare say they did not know how to put the words together; they were more used to swearing than to praying: but they went down on their knees on deck, clinging to mast, and bulwark and tiller, and they cried, "O God! O God! save us; the waterfloods swallow us up; God of the tempest deliver us." And did he hear the sailor's prayer — the frantic cry of sinking men? Read here. "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." Well, well, now you that have been accustomed to cursing and swearing, and say, "What is the use of my praying?" here is a case which just suits you. And this is the rule, I say again, not the exception; and I argue, therefore, from the past acts and ways of God, that he will now hear prayer.

Besides, here is another argument for you. What does He mean by his promises? As I said negatively, if he did not hear, where were his promises? — so I say positively this time, because of his promises, he *must* hear. God is free, but his promises bind him; God may do as he wills, but he always wills to do what he has said he will do; we have no claim upon God, but God makes a claim for us; when he gives a promise, we may confidently plead it. I venture to say, that promises made in Scripture are God's engagements, and that as no honorable *man* ever runs back from his engagements, so a God of honor and a God of truth cannot, from the necessity of his nature, suffer one of his words to fall to the ground. In this little book, *Clarke's Promises*, which one likes to have always near to hand, you find two or three chapters containing collected promises of the Lord, that he will answer secret prayer, and listen to the voice of penitents; but I shall not occupy our time with promises which you can all find in your Bibles at home. Only "let God be true, and every man a liar." If God promises, he must and will perform, or else he were not true.

While we dare to say, that God's answering prayer is certified by abundance of facts in our own experience, we observe, that the best proof is to *try for yourself*. It is said that there is no learning to ride except on a horse's back; and I believe there is no learning any truth except by experiencing it. If you want to know the depravity of the human heart, you must find it out when you look at your daily imperfections; and if you would know that God hears prayer, you must test the fact, for you will never learn it through my saying, "He heard *me*" — you will only know it

through his having heard *you*; and I would, therefore, exhort you — all of you who are now within reach of this voice of mine — since it is not a peradventure, a chance, a may-be, a haphazard, but since it is a *dead* — I must not use that word — since it is a *living* certainty, that “he that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth,” go to your houses, fall upon your knees, and pray to God; pray to him even now in your pews, to save your souls. Ambition tempts you to disappointment; riches charm you to speculations which will lead to failure; your own passions drive you to pleasures which end in pain; the best the world can promise you is a *perhaps*; but my Master presents to you “the *sure* mercies of David” — certainties, infallible certainties. Will you not have them? O may the Spirit of God lead you to accept them. In your pew you may pray; in that aisle the silent cry may go up to heaven; in your little narrow chamber, or in the saw-pit, or in the garden, or the field, or in the street, or in the prison-cell — wherever *you* have a heart to pray, *God* has an ear to hear. No words are wanting, except such as spring spontaneously to the lip. Tell him you are a wretch undone, without his sovereign grace; tell him you have no hope in yourself; tell him you have no merits; tell him you cannot save yourself. Say, “*Lord*, save, or I perish!” It was Peter’s sinking prayer; but it preserved him from drowning. Say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” It was the publican’s prayer in the temple; it justified him. Bring a suffering Savior before a gracious God; point to the wounds of Jesus, and say, “O God! though my heart be hard as a millstone, Christ’s heart was broken; though my conscience be untender and callous, yet the flesh of Christ was tender, and it smarted sore; though *I* can give no atonement, Christ gave it — though *I* bring no merits, yet I plead the merits of Jesus.” And let me say to you, pray as if you meant it, and continue as Elijah did, till you get the blessing. I would to God that some of you would never rise from your knees till God had heard you. Plead with him as a man pleads for his life. Clutch the horns of the altar as the drowning man clutches the life-buoy to which he clings. Lay hold on God, as Jacob grasped the angel, and do not let him go except he bless you; for “thus saith the Lord, I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain!”

“LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.”

NO. 509

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 17TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” — Matthew 6:13.

CERTAIN Psalms are entitled “Songs of Degrees;” certainly the prayer before us might be called a Prayer of Degrees. It begins, where all true prayer must commence, with the spirit of adoption, “Our Father.” There is no acceptable prayer until we can say with the prodigal — “I will arise and go unto my Father.” This child-like spirit soon perceives the grandeur of the Father “in heaven,” and ascends to devout adoration. “Hallowed be thy name.” The child who lisps, “Abbe Father,” grows into the cherub crying, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” There is but a step from rapturous worship to the glowing missionary spirit, which is a sure outgrowth of filial love and reverent adoration — “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We do not commence our spiritual career with this mission-spirit; we begin with “Our Father;” we go on to feel his glory, and then the next natural desire is, that others may behold his greatness too, till we are ready to cry with the Psalmist, “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.” In the process of education which this prayer so well describes, we find the man very early conscious of his dependence upon God; for as a dependent creature he cries, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Being further illuminated by the Spirit, he discovers that he is not only dependent but sinful, hence he entreats for mercy — “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” and being pardoned, having the righteousness of Christ imputed, and knowing his acceptance with God, he humbly supplicates for holy perseverance — “Lead us not into temptation.” The

man who is really forgiven is anxious not to offend again; the possession of justification leads to an anxious desire for sanctification. “Forgive us our debts,” that is justification; “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” that is sanctification in its negative and positive forms. Now, it would not be the course of nature to begin a life of prayer with the supplication of this morning. This is a petition for men already pardoned, for those who know their adoption, for those who love the Lord and desire to see his kingdom come. Taught of the Spirit to know their pardon, adoption, and union to Jesus, they can cry, and they alone — “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

I shall this morning, first of all, *anticipate an objection*; then I shall *venture upon an exposition*; and conclude with *an exhortation*.

I. First let us ANTICIPATE AN OBJECTION.

A great many persons have been troubled by that passage in James, where it is expressly said, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” It has been found very difficult to reconcile that express declaration of the apostle with this prayer of our Savior; and some good, but very ignorant men, have gone the length of altering our Lord’s words. I have heard of one who was wont always to say, “Leave us not in temptation” — a most unwarrantable and unjustifiable alteration of Holy Scripture. Because sometimes a learned minister ventures, in all honesty and discretion, to give a more correct translation of the original, can this justify a foolish unlettered man in altering the original itself, and perverting the sense of a passage? There is an end to Scripture altogether, if license be given to alter its teachings according to our will. To teach perfect wisdom how to speak is too great a task to be ventured upon by any but the presumptuous and foolish. When our version is incorrect, then it is a duty to present the proper rendering, if one be able to find it out; but to give translations out of our whimsied heads, without having been taught in the original tongue, is impertinence indeed. There can be no better translation of the Greek than that which we have before us. The Greek does not say “Leave us not in temptation,” nor anything like it; it says, as nearly as English language can convey the meaning of the original, “Lead us not into temptation,” and no sort of pinching, twisting, or wresting, can make this prayer convey any other sense shall that which our version conveys in so many words. Let us always be afraid of attempting improvements on God’s perfect Word, and

when our theories will not stand with divinely revealed truth let us alter our theories, but let us never attempt for one single moment to put one word of God out of its place.

Neither can we get out of the difficulty by supposing that the word "temptation" does not mean "temptation," but must be restricted to the sense of "trial." Now, we grant at once that the use of the word temptation in our translation of Scripture is somewhat liable to mislead. The word temptation has two meanings, to try, and to entice. When we read that God did tempt Abraham, we are by no means to understand that he enticed Abraham to anything that was evil; the meaning of the word in that place, doubtless, is simply and only that God tried him; but permit me to say, that this interpretation will not stand with this particular text now before us.

The word here used for "temptation," is not the word constantly written when trial is meant. It is just the very word which one would employ if temptation to sin were intended, and I cannot believe that any other translation can meet the case. Doddridge's paraphrase is a happy one: "Do not bring us into circumstances of pressing temptation lest our virtue should be vanquished and our souls endangered by them; but if we must be thus tried, do thou graciously rescue us from the power of the evil one." I grant you that the word includes trial, as all temptation does, for all temptation, even if it be temptation from Satan, is in fact trial from God.

Still there is more than trial in the text, and you must look at it just as it stands. As Alford, says, "The leading into temptation must be understood in its plain literal sense." Take the text just as you find it. It means literally and truly, without any diminution, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"Well," says one, "if God does not tempt men, how can it be proper to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.'" Dear brethren, do but notice the text does not say, "Tempt us not;" if it did, then there would be a difficulty, it does not say, "Lord, tempt us not," but it says, "Lead us not into temptation," and I think I shall very rapidly be able to show you that there is a vast difference between leading into temptation and actually tempting. God tempts no man. For God to tempt in the sense of enticing to sin were inconsistent with his nature, and altogether contrary to his known character; but for God to lead us into those conflicts with evil which we call temptations, is not only possible, but usual. Full often the Great Captain of Salvation leads us by his Providence to battle fields where we must face the fell array of evil and conquer through the blood of the Lamb;

and this leading into temptation is by divine grace overruled for our good, since by being tempted we grow strong in grace and patience. Our God and Father may, for wise ends, which shall ultimately subserve his own glory and our profit, lead us into positions where Satan, the world, and the flesh may tempt us, and the prayer is to be understood in that sense of a humble self-distrust which shrinks from the conflict. There is courage here, for the suppliant calmly looks the temptation in the face, and dreads only the evil which it may work in him, but there is also a holy fear, a sacred self-suspicion, a dread of contact with sin in any degree. The sentiment is not inconsistent with "all joy" when the divers temptations do come, it is akin to the Savior's "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," which did not for a moment prevent his drinking the cup even to its dregs.

Let me observe that God in no sense so leads men into temptation as to have any share in the blame of their sin if they fall into it. God cannot possibly by any act of his, become co-partner with man in his crime. As good old Trapp well observes, "God tempts men for PROBATION, but never for PERDITION." The devil tempts men that he may ruin them; God tries men, and puts them where Satan may try them, but he leads them into temptation for probation, that the chaff may be sifted from the wheat, that the dross may be separated from the fine gold. By these trials hypocrites fall, being discovered in the hour of temptation, just as the rough March wind sweeps through the forest, and finding out the rotten boughs snaps them from the tree, the fault being not in the wind but in the decayed branch. James alludes to the actual solicitation to evil in which the most holy God can have no part, but our text deals with the providential bringing about of the temptation which I think you can clearly see may be the Lord's work without his holiness in any degree being stained thereby. When the Lord leadeth us into temptation, it is always with a design for our good. He leads us to battle, not that we may be wounded and worsted, but that we may win glorious victories which shall crown the head of our gracious Leader with many crowns, and prepare us for future deeds of valor. Temptations overcome are inestimable blessings, because they make us lie the more humbly at his feet, bind us more firmly to our Lord, and train us to help others. Tempted men can lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees; they have been tempted in the same manner, and can therefore succor their brethren. Yet, while the benefit which God bringeth out of our being led into temptation is very great, still, temptation in itself is a thing so dangerous, trial and distress in themselves are so

perilous, that it is right for the Christian to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Though, as Martin Luther says, “Temptation is the best school into which the Christian can enter; yet, in itself, apart from the grace of God, it is so doubly hazardous, that this prayer should be offered every day, ‘Lead us not into temptation;’ or if we must enter into it, ‘Lord, deliver us from evil.’”

I do not know whether I have met the objection. Perhaps, in the exposition that is to follow I may be able to make it a little more clear. I wish to say, that although God does not tempt men — that is affirmed in Scripture, and reason, and God’s own character, all prove it to be the fact — yet he may, and certainly does, lead us into positions in his providence, where it is absolutely certain that we shall be tempted; and therefore, our consciousness of weakness should constrain to plead for escape from the terrible contest, and deliverance out of it if come it must.

II. LET US NOW EXPOUND THE TEXT.

Possibly we may get at the meaning of the text better by supposing that we have just risen from our beds this morning. We are about to engage in prayer. Before we do so we endeavor to prepare our hearts for that hallowed exercise. We look back upon yesterday. We remember all our follies, our mistakes, and sins. We feel deeply grieved. We are conscious that we are this morning just as weak as we were yesterday. We feel that if temptation assail us we shall as surely fall into sin as we did on the past day. We have gathered some experience, but we find we are still as weak as water; that while the will to be holy is present with us, how to perform that which is good we find not. At the same time we have an intense abhorrence of sin, we feel in our own hearts that we would sooner die than offend against our God, we can contemplate sorrow with pleasure, but sin only with horror. We feel afraid to venture down stairs. We fear that temptations may await us in the family, and in business, we feel therefore constrained to pray. We know that there is the temptation of the theater and the music-hall, but grace has made us resolute not to go there, for we feel we could not honestly ask God to preserve us from that temptation if we ran into it ourselves. There are our besetting sins but being aware of them, we cry to God for help against them. But the black thought comes across our mind — “You do not know what is to happen to day. You cannot tell what loss you may have to suffer; you do not know what trouble you may meet with, what rough word may be spoken to you; your

ship is on the sea, but you know not what rough waves will beat against it; there are sunken rocks, and hidden quicksands, how if you should be wrecked on these!" You feel that you are about to follow the course of Divine providence, that whatever happens to you will be according to your Father's will, and you put up this prayer, "Lord, thou art to lead me this day; I would follow close to thy footsteps as a sheep follows its shepherd; but since I know not what is to happen to me, suffer me to ask one thing of thee; I do not pray thee to lead me away from sorrow or trouble, do as thou wilt about that, O my Lord, but do not, I beseech thee, lead me in thy providence where I shall be tempted; for I am so feeble, that mayhap the temptation may be too strong for me, therefore, this day make a straight path for my feet, and suffer me not to be assailed by the tempter; or if it must be; if it be better for me to be tempted, and if thou dost intend this day that I should fight with old Apollyon himself, then deliver me from evil. Oh! save me from the mischief of the temptation; let me have the temptation if so it must be; but oh! let it do me no hurt; let me not stain my garments; let me not slip nor slide, but may I stand fast at the end of the day, may this temptation, though it be not joyous but grievous, have so wrought out in me the comfortable fruits of righteousness, that it may be a part of that grand method by which thou shalt ultimately deliver me from all evil, and make me perfectly like thyself in glory everlasting." That, I believe, is the meaning of the prayer.

Possibly we should bring it out more clearly by taking several cases in which the Lord providentially leads men into temptation. There is *poverty*. No one will deny that poverty is in many cases directly an infliction from God. There are some, who by their indolence and debauchery, bring themselves low, and who pities them? But there are others who by the loss of parents are left orphans; others who can never rise from the helpless penury of their first estate. God alone knows the mass of poverty in this city. We talk about the distress in Lancashire, and to some degree, I fear, Christian liberality has been diverted from London, but to my knowledge there is much distress in many of the streets of this huge city. Some of you ride through our fine wide streets, which are a sort of ornamental fringe upon the skirts of poverty, and you know nothing about those narrow back streets, those blind alleys, and those courts inside of courts, where poverty is huddled together, and where too often sin, lust, and disease become its natural consequences. When a gracious man is brought very low in circumstances, it is God's act, an act of God which leads that man into

temptation; for poverty necessarily has its temptations which you cannot possibly dissociate from it. Look at you poor needle-girl — stitch! stitch! stitch! till the fingers are worn to the bone, till her eyes are red, and her heart weary; all that she can earn is hardly enough to keep body and soul together, while her clothes hang in rags about her. Do you know how stern is that temptation when a fallen sister whispers to her that there is money to be had so easily, and paints the gainful sin in flashing colors? What arguments can the tempter find in that bare room, and empty cupboard, and thin slice of dry bread, and perhaps in a starving mother dying on a few rags in the corner. If throughout life we have been preserved from the contamination of vice, and feel at all inclined to exalt ourselves in our virtue, let us remember what we might have been had we been exposed to the same fierce solicitations, and let us pray for ourselves and for all our brethren and sisters — “Lead us not into *that* temptation.” Circumstances alter cases. Oh, my dear young friends, I pray that no terrible circumstances may ever be able to alter you, but may the Lord who tries you, deliver you from evil. Sometimes the temptations of poverty appear in another form. A man finds that his trade does not pay him. He works hard, but he gets poorer and poorer. What few goods he had in the shop are decreasing; the stock gets lower; the children are crying for bread; his wife, perhaps, is an ungodly worm, and she tells him there is trade to be had on the Sunday, and if he will but open his shop he will prosper; she says everybody else in the street does it, and all the neighbors call him a fool for putting the shutters up. Oh! I admire that noble-heartedness which I have seen in some of you! It has made me look upon you with greater pride than ever prince did on his jewels, when you have said — “I can starve, but I cannot sin against my God.” But when to my grief some professors yield to the suggestion, I cannot and do not marvel; I can only pray for the stedfast and pray for myself — “Lord, lead me not into this temptation,” for if a starving wife, and wailing children, and a sickly infant are crying in our ears, who knoweth how soon we might betake ourselves to any means so as to satisfy their wants! Happy are they who have come through this temptation and have been delivered from the evil of it, but happier far are they who have never been led into it. “Give me neither poverty nor riches,” was the good prayer of Agur; and you that have never known poverty, and have never understood what shortness of bread means, pray this prayer this morning for yourselves and for all your brethren in this Church, “Lead us not into temptation.”

The Lord frequently leads his people into *temptation from wicked men in the form of persecution*. It often happeneth that in the course of providence, for the wisest possible ends, a good man is put to labor where he finds no godly associates, but where his name is the theme of laughter. God is sometimes pleased to convert the woman while her husband remains unconverted, and perhaps he is opposed to her religion, and will insist upon it that his wife shall not carry out her convictions. Now, in cases like this, God has manifestly put his people in a position where they are constantly tempted with the fear of men. This temptation is inevitably connected with persecution — a temptation to be ashamed of Christ, to hide one's face, to hold one's tongue when one should speak, to run down one's colors when they ought to be waved to the breeze, and like Peter to deny our Lord. When some young man has been, to use a common expression, chaffed day after day, day after day, these cruel mockings are a great deal harder to bear than a lash upon the back. Oh! it is a grand thing if a man can go through this, can endure the slow roasting alive year after year, and yet is delivered from evil; but, dear brethren, I think you and I may well pray "Lead us not into temptation," for I fear there are some of you who are like the nautilus which, when the Mediterranean is all calm and quiet, floateth in a gallant fleet upon the surface, but as soon as ever the rough waves come, and the Euroclydon begins to blow, every nautilus draws in its tiny sail, and drops to quiet obscurity in the bottom of the sea: there are many such professors, who, while everything goes smooth, float gloriously with us, but if rough times should come, they would be all unknown and unheard of. Many there be, I fear, who walk with religion in her silver slippers, who might desert her if she had to go bare-footed and ragged through the street, having no place to rest, her only destiny being the prison and the flames. We may pray, as we read the stories of martyrdom, or as we look upon some brethren in Church fellowship with us who have to be laughed at day by day, "Lord, lead us not into temptation, or if thou dost, be pleased to deliver us from evil."

I have merely commenced the catalogue. Have patience with me whilst I mention *the daily adversities to which we are heirs*. Some of us fret and think that the Lord deals hardly with us. Let us mend our tune. What a world of mercy God gives to us compared with what others receive! I hear sometimes of a believer who has lost a ship, or a horse, or has sustained a very serious loss with a dishonored bill, or a bad debt, or another of you is out of work for a week, or else your little ones are ill. Well, I pity you all

for these trials, but after all, what little trials these are compared with what some endure! Take the case of Job; house and children, land and servants, and cattle, all swept away at a stroke, and his own body covered with sore blains. Did not the Lord lead him into temptation, and was it not a marvel indeed, that Job did not go even further than cursing the day of his birth? Was it not a wonder that he did not yield to his wife's suggestion, and curse God and die? Surely, brethren, when we see the way in which some saints have met bereavement after bereavement — the holy courage with which others have sustained loss after loss, when we have marked the heroic resignation with which some have borne all the "ills which flesh is heir to," and suffered in head, and hand, and passed through painful surgical operations which have well nigh brought them to the jaws of the grave we may well wonder how it is that they have been delivered from the evil of so much adversity, and may with holy trembling, exclaim, "Lead us not into temptation." How impatient you and I might have been, if we had been sore sick, or bed-ridden for years. What hard things we might have thought of our God if he had swept all our estate away. How bitterly we might have spoken of his goodness if our husband were in a consumption, or if our wife were in the tomb. Our little ones are round about us, and we hear their happy and cheerful voices; but oh! what a temptation to distrust God it would have been, if he had taken them away. Lord, do not so try us; send not such adversities upon us as to lead us into temptation; but if thou do this, be pleased to hold us up in the rough road, lest we fall into evil.

To change the line of thought a moment. There are not only the temptations arising from poverty, from shame, and from trouble, but you know, beloved, that by far, more dangerous temptations come from *prosperity*. You sometimes envy the very rich. You think of them as having more money than they can tell, and broad acres, and parks, and lands so extensive that they hardly know their own boundaries. If you understood the temptations which beset their life, if you knew how hard it is to serve God and be rich, how difficult especially to be a courtier, and at the same time a servant of the living God, you would not aspire to lofty station, but you would say, "Lead us not into temptation." Temptation must be incessant to the man who only has to wish and he can enjoy what he wills. Many men are kept from sin by being poor; their poverty is a clog to them. But when a man has strong appetites, and has no person to rebuke him; and has, moreover, all the means in his own hand of running into sin, we may well cry, "Lord, do not try me in that way." Perhaps you are very

anxious to attain a prominent position in the Church. You may think, for instance that to be a preacher well-known, and listened to by hundreds, is a very enviable position. It is about as enviable as the position of Blondin upon his high rope a hundred and fifty feet from the ground. If you knew the temptations which beset a man who lives in popularity, and has constantly to preach the word to thronging multitudes, you would say, "Lead me not into temptation, and if it be thy will that I must rise to that position, then deliver me from evil." Let me assure you, that high places and high grace do seldom meet together; and that even in the Church any position of eminence is counterbalanced in the pleasure which it brings by the extreme danger to which it exposes its occupant. Long not to be too prosperous! Thank God for bad winds; bless God for a little blight and mildew; ay, and be content to bless him even if the figtree should not blossom, and the flocks should be cut off from the field and the herds from the stall, for any trial in the world is better than unbroken prosperity, concerning which you may well pray, "Lead us not into that temptation."

Now you may see that the list is endless, for if prosperity, and honor, and esteem, may breed in us worldliness, and self-conceit, and forgetfulness of God, and a reliance upon our own strength, and a departure from simple confidence in him that made us what we are, then there must be trials everywhere. But I think I ought to add that frequently God leads men into temptation *in the service which he requires of them*. "Stop," you say, "how can that be? When God prescribes a duty, how can that lead man into temptation?" I reply, that to know duty is often of itself to be tempted not to do it; and that when that duty is high and stern, and demands of us severe self-denial, and earnest perseverance, we may be tempted to shun the engagement. Take the instance of Jonah; he is sent to Nineveh; his prophetic soul forewarns him that the mission will not be to his honor. He objects to go, and attempts to fly to Tarshish to escape the mission of his God. Now, such a temptation is not so rare as some suppose. You think — "I can never face that multitude again." You have to deal, perhaps, with cruel tongues in a church-meeting, and you think — "I can never fight that battle through." You have been preaching in the street, and the whisper comes — "Never do that again; never expose yourself to the insults of the passer-by." You have been teaching in a Sunday-school, and you may be led into this temptation — "Give it up; it is of no use; the children will never be blessed." You may have been a tract-distributor, you may have attempted to go from house to house to speak for God, and the temptation

may have been hot upon you — “Cease from it; there’s no need for you to do it.” Your very duty has led you into temptation. Brethren, pray to God against it. Ask him that the duty required of you may always be such as your strength shall enable you to perform, that you may go to his throne daily, and get such help that your arms may be sufficient for you; else, even in the highest form of spiritual service you may be led into temptation.

What if I add to this that God *may demand sacrifices of us* which lead us into temptation. Look at Abraham. “Take thou thy son, thine only son Isaac, and offer him up upon the place that I will show thee.” I overheard a mother say — “I love my son so much, and he is such a comfort to me, that I could not give him up.” One observed to her that she should not talk so, for the Christian ought to stand to the surrender every hour, and be willing to give up child, or husband, or friend at Christ’s bidding; but her answer was, and it was a true one, — “I could not do it; it is of no use my pretending that I could; I could not do it, and I am persuaded that if God should command me to give him up — he might take him away and I would submit to it — but if I had to give him up voluntarily, I could not do it, and therefore there is no use in my saying I could.” Then I suggested that therefore she ought always to pray that God would not try her that way, but that he would be pleased to spare her the sacrifice which she could not make; that in fact he would not lead her into temptation, or if he did, would give her so much grace that she would not be tempted to rebel, but might give up her son, though he were to her as her own soul.

Oh, dear friends, there are many trials we talk about and think we could bear, but if they were once to assail us, we might find it very difficult to do so. It is easy to be a sailor on shore, and to laugh at the winds when you are snug in your beds. It is all very well to sing of the waves, and shout for

*“The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze,”*

but the battle and the breeze are very different things from what the song would make them out to be, and we had better, I think, while we are free from the trial, unanimously pray this prayer — “Lead us not into temptation.”

I want you to notice that word “*us*,” for selfishness will dictate to you to pray this prayer for yourselves, but we are more than two thousand strong, a great army for God united in Church fellowship, and you know there are

many of the young added to the Church, though a large proportion of the aged also come; more, perhaps, than in any other congregation. Remember our young members, our young men and women, who are very greatly exposed. I charge you, elders of the Church; I charge you, seniors in the faith; I charge you, mothers in Israel, that you offer this prayer to-day and every day — “Lord, lead *us* not into temptation, but deliver *us* from evil; temper the wind to the shorn lamb; put not the little boat upon the rough billows; send not thy little ones to stern butts; and, Lord, since we are all weak, old as well as young, since the grey locks cover no more wisdom than the child’s curls, except as thou givest wisdom, so do thou keep all the Church, and lead neither pastor, nor officers, nor members into temptation, or if we must be led there, take up the latter sentence and pray it still more passionately, “Deliver us from evil.” I have heard of a poor pitman, who after being converted to God, had a great dread of falling, and one morning, after having endured much scorn, and mockery, and blasphemy, and swearing, and ill-treatment from his fellow colliers, before he went down into the pit he knelt down and prayed that God would sooner let him die than fall into sin. He cried — “Lord, let me die sooner than fall into sin,” and he did die there and then; happy thus to be taken up where he should no more know the annoyance of trial from without, or temptation from within.

III. We close our discourse with A BRIEF EXHORTATION. I exhort you to pray this prayer very earnestly, dear friends, and I bid you do it for several reasons.

First, *remember your own heart*. A man who carries gunpowder about with him, may well ask that he may not be led where the sparks are flying. If I have a heart like a bomb-shell, ready to explode at every moment, I may well pray God that I may be kept from the fire, lest my heart destroy me. Perhaps you have angry tempers, constitutionally so, some men still remain hot and quick — some of our Welsh friends, always so; such should pray every day, that they may not be tempted by any jeering words, that they may be kept calm and quiet, and not be led into irritation. We have each besetting sins of some sort or shape or another, and I do not know that the temptation to be hot and quick in temper, is anything so bad as that to be dull, and lumpy, and stupid. Generally speaking, a man who has not some temper in him, is not worth much; and those who, as we sometimes say, are as easy as an old shoe, are not often worth more than that worn out article. We may have temptations, however, of another kind, and just there

we should put up our prayer with great earnestness and intense passionateness of soul, exclaiming, "Lord, lead me not into that temptation." There is a weak point in every one of us; and remember, the strength of a rope is to be measured, not according to its strength in its strongest but its weakest part. Every engineer will tell you that the strength of a ship should always be estimated, not according to her strongest but her weakest part, for if the strain shall come on her weakest part, and that be broken, no matter how strong the rest may be, the whole ship goeth down. Now, I say there is a weak point in every man; indeed, where is there a point wherein we are not weak? Show me wherein our strength lieth. It lieth, surely, nowhere *here*, but only *there* in him who maketh us strong to do exploits in his name. Therefore, because of weakness and inclination to sin, let each man pray, and pray constantly, "Lead us not into temptation."

To use another argument *how many have fallen who were led into temptation!* Think of them, not to congratulate yourselves nor yet to blame *them*, but to take warning. When cases of discipline come before the Church, I have thought how gently we ought to deal, for had we been put where these brethren have been our fall might have been even more desperate than theirs. I have often grieved when a brother has lost his temper, and then I have thought — "Well, I cannot accuse, but I must not judge uncharitably; for if I had been teased one half as much as he has been, I might have been worse than he." When I see another man shipwrecked, I should mind that I carefully navigate my own boat. When I see another who has caught a contagious disease, I should be careful not to go into those quarters where that disease is the most virulent lest I catch it too, and if I know that there is a great disinfectant, a heavenly remedy by which contagion may be stopped, how ought I to use it. That remedy is prayer, and the precise prayer is in the text — "Lead *me* not into temptation, but deliver *me* from evil, lest I fall as others have done, and become weak and vile as they."

Remember to pray this prayer, because *should we fall under temptation, how great will be our misery.* A certain high Antinomian said one day, that if a Christian fell into sin, he lost nothing by it except — what should you think he said? Except his comfort and his communion with God! I suppose he thought the Christian's comfort and his communion with God were a drop in a bucket, but he that has once lost his comfort and his communion with God will tell you quite another tale! Oh! to lose your comfort, to have

to groan out with David, "Make the bones which thou hast broken to rejoice; hide thy face from my sins, and blot out mine iniquities!" Pray that Penitential Psalm over, and you will soon discover that sin is the father of sorrow, and that a saint cannot slip without much damage to himself. I have marked, and marked carefully, those brethren who have backslidden and fallen into sin, and have afterwards been restored, and though I have rejoiced in their restoration, yet I never can help noticing how different they are from what they used to be. So quiet now; so sad in appearance, too; and though, perhaps, better men than ever they were, yet the joy of God is gone; the spring has gone out of their souls! They cannot dance with David before the ark now! You never find David dancing after his sin with Bath-sheba. Not he; there was no dance in him after that! He limped to the day of his death. Take care, man! If you would not make for yourself a garment of sorrows, if you would not stuff the pillow of your bed with thorns, and be perpetually wearing chains, take care that you pray to God to lead you not into temptation.

Worse remains. *Recollect what mischief a Christian's fall will do.* A thousand believers live in holiness, and nobody says anything about them; but if one of them shall fall into sin, the whole world rings with it. I know not why it should be, but if they can but find one bad fish in our net, they hawk it all round the town in four-and-twenty hours. "See here," they say — "here is one of the people that go to hear Spurgeon! Here is one of your professors! Here is one of your Baptists! Here is one of your Methodists!" or something of that kind. Why do they not look at the nine hundred and ninety-nine who stood fast? Why do they not talk of those who serve their Lord well, and are found faithful even to the end? But that, indeed, would not answer their purpose. Brethren, would you fill the mouths of the daughters of Philistia? Would you make the children of Gath and Askelon to rejoice? Would you see the banner of hell floating proudly in the breeze, and the escutcheon of our glorious Christ trailing in the mire? Would you grieve the Spirit? Would you open the wounds of Christ afresh? Would you put him and his fair spouse, the Church, to an open shame? If you would, then be slack in your prayers, but if you would not, if you would adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things, if you would win jewels for Christ's crown, if you would make men wonder at him and at you, because you have been with him, then pray this prayer — "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

I cannot tell why it is that this text should come on this particular Sunday, but it is very likely that your life this week will let you into the secret of it. Thus saith the Lord unto some of you — “This week I will sift thee and try thee.” Pray that you enter not into temptation. Christ pleads for you, for Satan hath desired to have some of you that he may sift you as wheat. Join your prayers with Christ’s supplications that your faith fail not. I cannot tell, I am no prophet, but I feel a call to warn you to watchfulness. There may happen something that may make us bless God for this warning-note. We are fore-armed because we were fore-warned. We are able to put our helmet on in time, to gird on our breast-plate and our shoes of brass, and to put our hand upon our sword; for the battle is coming on, and the Lord hath sounded the trumpet and bidden us cry — “Lead us not into temptation.”

This prayer will not suit some of you. You need not be led into temptation, for you live in it already. A man might pray to be kept out of the water, but a fish cannot, for it lives in it; even so, you whose native element is sin, cannot pray “lead us not into temptation.” There is another prayer for you to pray before you get to this, and that is, “Forgive us our trespasses.” Pray that to-day, and then you shall pray this to-morrow. Your sins are accusing you before God to-day. Your trespasses are clamouring at the mercy seat I hear their cry. They are crying “Justice! justice! justice! Lord, smite that man! Lord, smite that man!” With hoarse voices they cry aloud, “Let him be lost! let him be cast away!” While your sin clamours against you, will you not pray for mercy? Mercy is ready to hear you; the throne of grace is easy of access. Come before God and say, “O Lord! I know that Jesus died and took upon himself the sins of all those that trust him; I trust him, for his sake, Lord, forgive my trespasses, and let my debt be blotted out by his blood.” He will hear you, sinner, and before you go out of yonder doors your sins may be forgiven, and you may be white in Christ’s righteousness, and spotless as the newly-fallen snow. After that, then, use my text, and pray to him who is able to keep you from falling, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

PEACE BY BELIEVING.

NO. 510

A SERMON

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” — Romans 5:1.

A MOMENT’S contemplation would suffice to arouse any man to the terror of the position involved in being at war with God. For a subject to be in a state of sedition against a powerful monarch is to commit treason and to incur the forfeiture of his life. But for a creature to be in arms against its Creator, for a thing that dependeth for its existence upon the will of God to be at enmity with the God in whose hand its breath is; for a soul to know that God who is terrible in his power, and Almighty to protect or to destroy, is his foe; that he whose anger endureth for ever, and his wrath burneth even unto the lowest hell, is his chief and grand enemy — this is an appalling thing indeed. Could any man but understand and realize this, smitten through with terrors as great as those which surprised Belshazzar when he saw the handwriting on the wall, he would cry out in anguish — he would make a thrilling appeal for mercy. God is against thee, O sinful man! God is against thee, O thou who hast never submitted thyself unto his word! God is against thee; and woe unto thee when he shall rend thee in pieces, for none can deliver thee out of his hand! Happy! happy beyond all description is the man who can say with our apostle, “We have peace with God,” but wretched! wretched, again, beyond all description wretched must that man be who is at war with his own Maker, and sees heaven itself in arms against him!

Chiefly now we shall endeavor to talk of *the peace which the believer enjoys*; and then, I shall have *a few words of counsel, warning, and*

encouragement for those who have not this peace with God, or who may have had it, and for a time have lost the enjoyment of it.

I. In speaking of THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH THE CHRISTIAN ENJOYS; we will commence with some remarks upon its basis.

There is the widest possible difference between a man being just in his own eyes, and his being *justified* in the sight of God. Yet, perhaps no fallacy is more common than to mistake the one for the other. Then, as a natural consequence of building on a weak foundation, the structure however fair to look upon, is insecure. The *peace* in which multitudes of professors delight themselves is merely peace with their own conscience, and not in any sense peace with God. I know of no greater contrast than there is between that peace which is a mere stagnation of thought, a lull of anxiety, or a blindness to danger, and that soul-satisfying peace which passes all understanding. The true peace of God flows like a river in unceasing activity; it preserves a tranquil frame amidst storm, tempest, and tribulation, by all of which it is frequently assaulted. It is a part of the panoply of God with which a Christian is clothed, to withstand principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in the evil day. Or, to change the figure, Christ gave his disciples this peace as an amulet, when as he was about himself to depart and go to the Father, he sent them forth to be buffeted about in the world. Just so in the text, if you pursue the subject in the next few verses, you will find that this peace with God is given first, and afterwards cometh experience of tribulations everywhere else. We ourselves, brethren, have proved it. There is a natural disposition of sin to defile, but the blood of Christ speaks peace in the conscience; there is a constant tendency of the world to destroy our hope, but the peaceful word of Jesus comforts us; “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;” there is a painful proneness of human strength to fail, but the promise supports us — “This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian cometh into our land.” And this true peace gives to the believer an inward sense of God’s acceptance, like as Moses never lost sight of the goodwill of the Dweller in the bush; so, too, there is a more blessed assurance of goodwill in the faith that always realises “God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.”

And now as to the experimental basis of that peace which the believer has with his God. It must have some solid rational ground; it must have some basis which judgment may estimate. I know some who have an

apprehension of peace with God that has no foundation whatever. Let me describe the person. "Are you living in peace with God, my friend?" "Yes," says he, "thank God, I have enjoyed a sense of peace for twenty years." "How did you get it?" "Well, as I was walking one day, in great distress of mind, in such-and-such a road, a feeling of comfort came over me, and it has remained with me ever since." "Yes, but, friend, what is the reason of your hope? What is the ground of your confidence that you have peace with God?" "Well, you see, I felt comfortable, and I believe that I have felt comfortable ever since." "No, no — that's not the matter at which I aim.

What is the ground; what is the doctrinal proof; what is the matter of fact that gives you comfort?" "Well, do not press me," says he, "for I do not know. Only this I know — I did feel happy, and I have felt happy ever since, and I have not had any doubt." That man, mark you, if I be not mistaken, is under a delusion. If I err not, it is very possible that that man has received a draught of the opium of hell. Satan has said to him, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace, and he is going undisturbed and quiet down to the place where he shall lift up his eyes and discover too late his error. The peace of a Christian is not such a lull of stupefaction as that. It has a reason; it has some ground-work; and when you come to pull it to pieces, it is as completely a logical inference from certain facts as any deduction that could be drawn by mathematical precision. Let me, however, bring up a few more who think they have peace, but they build their supposition on wrong grounds. Here is a man who very flippantly and joyously says, "Peace with God, sir! Yes — peace with God. I enjoy the unbroken satisfaction that I have made my peace with him." "Well, how?" "Why, you see, some years ago I never went to a place of worship on Sunday at all, and I felt one day that I was doing wrong. Here was I going to the theater most nights, and I was doing my trade in a very bad way, and now and then I took too much drink, and I was doing a great many things that were wrong, and I thought it was time for me to turn over a new leaf, and I have done so. Now I generally go to a place of worship twice on the Sabbath-day. I may now and then indulge myself — well, who is there that never does anything wrong? — but still there is very great amendment in me. If you ask my wife, she sees a wonderful change; and if you ask my workpeople, they will say I am a different man from what I used to be.

Now, I think I am not like the man you brought up just now, with no ground for his peace. I think I have a very good ground for mine, for I am deserving very well of my Maker now. I feel now, if I go to a place of amusement where I ought not, I cannot pray that night; but the next night I

try over again, and manage to get through my form of prayer, and on the whole I am doing so well that I think I may say I have a good bottom and ground for saying that I am at peace with God.” Now, let this man be reminded that it is written, “By the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” All these moral things of which he has spoken are good enough in themselves. They will be very excellent in the temple of Christianity if they be placed at the top; but, if they be used as foundations, a builder might as well use tiles, and slates, and chimney-pots for foundations and corner-stones, as use these reformatory actions as a ground of dependence. Man! do you not perceive that your foundation is not an even and secure one? For what about the past? What is to become of the sins already committed? How are you to get rid of these? Do you suppose that the payment of future debts will discharge old liabilities? Go to your tradesman, and tell him that you owe him a very great sum of money, and you cannot pay him a farthing of it, but you do not expect he will sue you in the court, for you never intend to get into his debt any more. I think he will tell you that is not a method of business he understands. Certainly this is not the way in which God will deal with you. Your old sins! your old sins! your old sins! What about those? Those debts unpaid! those crimes as yet unburied! Let your conscience give them a resurrection in your memory to-night. What about these? Surely you can have no peace with God while these remain unforgiven! Besides, you have an inward conviction that you have not peace with God, but only peace with yourself. You do feel a little better sometimes, but it is a very poor sort of confidence that you have, for a little sickness shakes it. How would you do to die now? Would you wrap yourself up in these miserable rags of yours and say, “Lord, thou knowest I have sinned, but then I have done my best to make up for it.” You know and feel that this bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it, and this coverlet too narrow that a man should be able to wrap himself up in it. Renounce this confidence, for it is one that will never stand before God. To instance yet another case, in which I tread on more delicate ground. Beloved, there are some who have peace which they explain to you in such a way, that while I trust they have a peace with God, I fear they misunderstand the ground of it. Some true Christians will talk to you on this wise — “I hope I am at peace with God now, for my faith is in active exercise; my love is fervent; I have delightful seasons in prayer; the eyes of my hope are no longer dim; my patience can endure many things for Christ; my courage did not fail me yesterday in the midst of Christ’s enemies; my graces are vigorous; the Spirit of God has

been blowing across my soul as over a garden, and all the graces, like flowers, have yielded their best perfume, therefore I feel that I have peace with God." Oh, believer, believer! art thou so foolish as, having begun in the Spirit by faith, to be made perfect in the flesh by your own doing?

Remember, if thou hast peace, if thou putteth thy peace here upon thy graces, then there will come another day — perhaps it may come tomorrow — when all those graces will droop like withered flowers, yielding no perfume; when, instead of beauty there shall be baldness, instead of ornament there shall be decay; when thou shalt see thyself in thy true natural colors, and discover thyself, like Job, and cry out as he did, "Lord, I am vile!" What wilt thou do then with thy peace? Why, if thou hast begun to look to thy graces in any way for peace, then thou art looking to a fickle source; thou art going to the cistern instead of living by the fountain; thou art using Hagar's bottle, instead of sitting like Isaac at the well to drink from never-ceasing streams. Yet this is an evil into which we are so apt to fall after having done well for the Master and being helped to serve him. It is true we do not trust in these things. I hope God has delivered us from self-righteousness; yet there is just that "Now *must* I be a child of God — now *must* I truly be an heir of heaven, for see how I have been sanctified, mark how I have been edified and built up in the faith." Ah, brother! there is the cloven foot there! Be thou on thy guard, it is an unclean thing; it will bring thee into pain and bondage; it will make thee sick, and put thy feet in the stocks, and thrust thee into the inner dungeon ere long. Flee from it as thou wouldest from a serpent. Stand thou ever under the dear cross of Christ, looking up to his wounds, rejoicing in his all-sufficiency, and building your peace there and there alone.

I fear me, too, that there are not a few who I trust have genuine peace, but who, nevertheless, are tempted to found their confidence upon their enjoyments. We have our enjoyments — God be thanked for this. Oh, there are times when our communion is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We have not been into heaven, but we have heard some of the songs of the angels on the other side the pearly gates, or, if not the songs, we have heard the echo of them in our hearts. When we have been in prayer, our soul has been like the chariots of Amminadib, swift and strong. We have had our seasons, as it were, of witnessing the transfiguration; we can remember Tabor's mount; well can we remember the hill Mizar and the Hermonites, for there he spake with us; we have had our experience of Jacob's dream, as well as our fellowship with Jacob's wrestling; we have

seen the Lord, and by faith have put our finger into the print of the nails, and thrust our hand into his side. He has kissed us with the kisses of his love, and his love is better than wine. But the tendency is to say, “Now I *have* peace with God; now *must* I be reconciled to him; now will I press out the wine of comfort from these grapes.” If we do this, let us remember that perhaps tomorrow we may be in Gethsemane; we may have our times of agonizing and fruitless prayer; we may be in the valley of despondency, or in the blacker valley of the shadow of death — no present joys, no promises applied with power, no whispers of Christ’s love, no sweets of his covenant, no delighting ourselves in the Lord — all may be dark and dreary; well, what then? Ah, my brethren, we shall find ourselves weak, because we have taken our comforts to be the basis of our peace, instead of continuing still to look solely and only to Christ. Let me warn you, beloved, though this may not seem a case as dangerous as some others, yet let me warn you that it is essential to our comfort, that we should stand to this and to this only — being justified by faith we have peace with God.

Our peace is solely the result of a justification achieved through faith, and not the result of enjoyments, nor of graces much less of good works, or of any foolish irrational impression which we may think we have been favored with.

Where then does lie the Christian’s conviction of his peace with God? Well it lies in this — that he is justified by faith. The process is plain. It is as clear, I say, as a proposition in Euclid. Christ stood in my stead before God. I was a sinner doomed to die; Christ took my place; he died for me. Well, then, how can I perish? How can I be punished for offenses which have been punished already in the person of my substitute? God demands of me perfectly to keep his law. I cannot do it. Christ has done it for me — kept the law, magnified it, made it honorable. What more can God demand of me? I, a sinner, am washed in Jesu’s blood. I, guilty, am clothed in Jesu’s righteousness. You say “How? I cannot see it is so.” True, it is so by faith. God says that he who believes in Christ shall be saved — I believe in Christ; therefore I am saved. He says, “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” I believe on him; therefore I am not condemned. This is clear reasoning enough. Very well then, the man who has believed in Christ has his sins forgiven, and the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and therefore he is at peace with God. Now this is reasoning which no logic can gainsay. There is a rebel — first he is pardoned, next merit is imputed to him, and he is at peace with his lying, and a rebel no longer. There is a

child; he has offended; his father takes him, accepts him for his elder brother's sake, and he is at peace with his father. The thing is clear enough. Here is a reason for the hope that is within us, which we may give with meekness and fear, it is true, never with diffidence and timidity. We may venture to give it in the presence of the old dragon and defy him to break its force. We might give it even in the midst of a congregation of assembled demons, and defy them, if they can, to break its power. We may give it in the presence of the Eternal God, for he will never gainsay the word on which he has caused us to hope. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It stands for ever. Stand here, and you stand so fast that no howling tempest of temptation can sweep you down. Stand to this, that Christ has finished your salvation for you, that he has done everything that omnipotent justice can ask; he has endured all the penalty, drained the cup of wrath, obeyed the law completely, given to divine equity all it can demand, and therefore, believing in his name, standing in his righteousness, accented in his suretyship, you must have peace with God. This is the basis of the Christian's peace — one on which he may sleep or wake, live or die, and live eternally, without condemnation or separation from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Continuing our remarks on this subject, we shall now turn your attention to the channel of this peace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Take it for a certain fact, then, that we are justified as the result of what Christ has done for us, seeing that he "was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification;" and the experience thereof, in so far as we have assurance of our being personally justified is the result of our trusting Christ. What then? How are we to enjoy the comfort of it? For there are times when we begin to doubt whether we are justified. Brethren, we must not come to our faith to get comfort, but to the primary cause of our justification. The channel through which the comfort comes is Jesus Christ. So then, though justification by faith is in itself a well of comfort, yet, even from that well we cannot get it, except we use Christ, who digged the well, to be the bucket to draw the water up from its depths. It must come through Christ. I will suppose, then, that I am in doubt and fear to-night, and want to get my peace restored — how shall I seek it?

Through Jesus Christ, the surety and substitute himself, must I get it. How? First, by believing in Christ over again, just as I did at the first. Christ tells

me that he came to save sinners, I am a sinner, therefore he came to save me. He says he can save me. This looks reasonable. He is very God; he is perfect man; he has suffered and offered a complete atonement. He tells me he is willing to save me. This also appears reasonable, for why else should he die, if he did not wish to save? Then he tells me if I will trust him, he will save me. I trust him, and I have not the shadow of a shade of a suspicion of doubt that he will be as good as his word. If he be faithful and just — of which, who dare to breathe a suspicion? — this soul of mine in heaven must be; it is committed to the Redeemer's charge with every pledge that God can give, with more security than we could ever ask, in him, I trust — in Jesus, and in Jesus only. Brother, this is how you must get your peace with God to-night — through Jesus Christ, by going to him, by a simple faith, just as you went at the first. Some silly people who have got high doctrine in their heads, so high that it smells offensive in the nostrils of those who read the scriptures — they say we teach that man is saved by mere believing. We do — by mere believing. There is a poor, starving man over there. I give him bread — his life is spared. Why do not these people say this man was saved by mere eating — by mere eating!

And here is another person whose tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth by thirst and is ready to die, and I give him water and he drinks, and his eyes sparkle, and the man is saved by mere drinking. And look at ourselves — why do not we drop down dead in our pews? Just stop your breath a little while and see. Surely we all live by mere breathing. All these operations of nature that touch the vital mysteries may be sneered at as merely this or merely that; and in like manner to speak with disparagement of “mere believing” is stupid nonsense. And yet, let me say it in my sense of the term — we are saved, we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ by mere believing, by the simple act of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if I would get my peace made more full and perfect, having come to Christ by faith, I must continue to get peace from him by meditation upon him, for the more I go to Christ believingly, the deeper will my peace be. If I believe in Christ, and do not know much of him, my faith will necessarily be somewhat slender, but if I continue “to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,” then my little faith will become strong faith; the bruised reed shall become a cedar, and the smoking flax shall become a beacon flaming to the very skies. I must take care above all that I cultivate communion with Christ, for though that can never be the basis of my peace — mark that — yet it will

be the channel of it. If I live near to Christ, I shall not know fear. What sheep is afraid of the wolf when it is close to the shepherd's hand? What child fears when it hangs upon its mother's breast? Who should know fear when he is covered with the eternal wings, and underneath him are the everlasting arms? "While his left-hand is under my head, and his right-hand doth embrace me." I cannot but be at peace, and that peace, if my communion is continued, will be like a river, deep and broad, my righteousness being like the waves of the sea. It is Christ, the substance of my salvation; Christ, the sum of all my hope; Christ who performeth all things for me, and Christ made of God all things to me. As Christ was the first means of giving us peace, so he must still be the golden conduit through which all peace with God must flow to our believing hearts, and that through the act of merely believing, or merely trusting in him. By looking to him I drew all the faith which inspired me with confidence in his grace. And the word that first drew my soul — "Look unto me" — still rings its clarion note in my ears. There I once found conversion, and there I shall often find refreshing and renewal.

Having thus glanced at the basis of our peace, and the channel through which it flows, let us pass on to notice its certainty. I like to read these rolling sentences of Paul, without an "if" or a but in them — "Therefore, being justified, we have peace with God." He talks as logically as if he were a mathematician, and as positively as though he could see the thing written before his eyes. Oh, how different is this from the way in which some talk — "I hope," "I trust," "I sometimes hope my poor soul may have peace with God." Now where this language is genuine it deserves sympathy, but I believe in many cases it is cant. There is a certain class of professors who think strong faith is pride, and doubts and fears are humility; therefore they look upon these base-born thorns as though they were choice flowers, and they will cull them together like a bouquet of nettles and noxious weeds — a fool's nosegay. Have you never seen it in the Magazine? I have observed it not unfrequently. Or they will dig up a nasty ugly thorn, put it in a flower-pot, place it in an ornamental situation, display it outside the window, and call you all to admire it, as being a special, a wonderful piece of Christian experience. Well, one likes to see a thorn when it is developed to the highest degree, but as soon as seen, one likes to see it burnt; and so with these doubts and fears; it is very well for us to know how far doubting and fearing may go, but we think we would like to have them plucked up by the roots and destroyed as soon as

possible. Let those who are the subjects of these doubts be sympathized and cheered, but let their doubts and fears be rooted out utterly. O Christian man, it is not impudence, it is not presumption to believe what God tells you. If he says “You *are* justified,” do not say “I *hope* I am.” If I should say to some poor man — one terribly poor — “I will pay your rent for you to-morrow,” and he should say, “Well, well, I hope you will,” I should not feel best pleased with him. If you should say to your child to-morrow morning, “Well William, I shall buy you a new suit of clothes to-day,” and he should say, “Well, father, I sometimes hope you will, I humbly trust, I hope I may say, though I sometimes doubt and fear, yet I hope I may say I believe you,” you would not encourage such a child as that in his uncomely suspicions. Why should we talk thus to our dear Father who is in heaven? He says to us, “I give unto you eternal life and ye shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of my hand.” Is it humility for us to reply, “Father, I do not believe you, I cannot think it is possible?” Oh, no that is true humility which sits at the feet of the Promiser because it is humble; looks up into the face of the Promiser because it is trustful, and coats on the word of the promise, because it is sincere. He *will* perform it. Avaunt, ye fiends that make me doubt! His honor is engaged to the carrying out of his covenant; he *will* perform it. He says by faith in Christ I am justified; therefore I say, I am justified and have peace with God, nor shall anyone stop me of this glory — I have peace with God through Jesus Christ. I should like to hear you all talking in this way and getting rid of that old Babylonish jargon of “ifs” and “buts,” and doubts and fears, fully persuaded that what he hath promised he will fulfill, as those who *do* believe what God has said, just because he has said it. Here is the certainty of justification by faith.

And now, as to the effect produced. When a man can say he has peace with God — what then? Why, the first effect is joy. Who can be at peace with God and have him for a Father, and yet be miserable? I think I told you one night that, years ago I was waited upon by a woman who wished to convert me to a novel sect that had come up with a false prophet at its head. She talked much and talked long, and talked all to no purpose, but at last I told her I thought it best that she should tell me her way in which she wished to be saved, on condition that she would let me tell her mine. I need not tell you what she said, but I said, “This is how I hope to be saved: it is said in God’s Word, ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;’ and it is

also written, 'he that believeth on him shall be saved.' Now, I do trust in him, and I believe that therefore I shall be saved; nay, more, I *am* saved; my sins are all forgiven. A perfect righteousness, namely, that of Christ, is cast about me, and I am so saved to-day, that nothing by any possibility shall ever destroy me. I am saved for ever." The woman said, "If I believed that that were true, I would very gladly give up my faith for anything so bright as that. But you," she said, "you ought to be the happiest man in the world." And I said, "I thank you for that word, and so will I be, God helping me, for I ought to be; I have the utmost cause." And so should every believer feel he ought to be, because this great salvation, this solid hope, this rocky foundation for our everlasting peace should give us quiet, and calm, and security, till our joy should overflow and become an anticipation and an antepast of the joy of heaven. This peace should give the believer, beyond and in addition to his joy, a calm resignation, nay, a delightful acquiescence in his Father's will. Now smite me if thou wilt, my Father, for I am thy friend and thou art mine, now send the flame, for it shall only chasten, but cannot kill; now take away my goods, for thou art my all and I cannot lose thee; now let the floods of trouble come, for thou art my ark, and though the floods come around me higher and higher, still I shall abide in thee, secure from reach of harm, whilst thou dost shut me in! Thus with calm composure the believer walks along over life's hills and dales, and when he comes to the valley of the shadow of death he fears no evil, for his God is with him, his rod and his staff do comfort him. What fear is there to the man that is at peace with God? Life? — God provides for it. Death? — Christ hath destroyed it. The Grave? — Christ hath rolled away the stone and broken the seal. Affliction, tribulation, famine, peril, or the sword? "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us." To have peace with God, beloved, I cannot tell you what innumerable streams of good shall flow to you from this ocean of pleasure, and these rivers of delight. I have but skimmed over one of these placid streams; there are hundreds of blessed practical results that are sure to follow from a certain conviction of our peace with God through Jesus Christ.

II. In drawing to a close, I want to address myself to THREE CHARACTERS THAT I HAVE NO DOUBT ARE REPRESENTED HERE IN THIS LARGE CONGREGATION.

There is a man here to-night — I know he is here, though I do not know his name — a man who many years ago was a professor of religion. He has

never been easy in his conscience since he forsook the ways of God. There has been some trembling hope sometimes in him that there was a little life not quite extinct, and since he has come in hither, he feels quite like a stranger in the House of Prayer where once faces were so familiar, and there is perhaps a groaning in his spirit as he says, "O that I knew the way of peace, and the sense of peace for which in happier days I once enquired. I have lost my roll, if I ever had it; I have lost my character, and with my character my faith, and with my faith my hope. Can I ever be at peace with God?" Backslider, if thou ever hast been called by grace, let me ask thee this question. Dost thou remember the time when thou hadst a hope? Say, does not memory revive before thee that time, when on thy knees in agony thou didst cry unto him that heareth prayer, and the mercy came, and thy spirit rejoiced in pardon bought with blood? Man, thou dost remember it. The tear is on thy cheek now. Thou wast not a hypocrite — let us hope that it was not all hypocrisy — not all a lie and a delusion. You did feel then that Christ could save, and you did trust yourself with him. Now then, man, do the same to-night, and the dew of thy youth is restored unto thee. Thy leprosy is white upon thy brow, but wash thee in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, even as a little child. Jehovah seeks thee. He cries unto thee to-night, and by the lips of his ambassador says, "Return, O backsliding children, return unto me for I am married unto you saith the Lord. Ye have wearied me with your sins, ye have made me to serve with your iniquities, but I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins."

*"To thy Father's bosom press'd,
Once again a child confess'd,
From his house no more to roam;
Come and welcome, sinner
come."*

"Oh! but I have forsaken him." Lay aside thy "buts" and "ifs." He bids thee come. Avaunt, ye doubts and fears, and black despairing thoughts. The sinner comes, and Jesus meets him. There is the kiss of his love. "Take off his rags, clothe him, put shoes upon his feet, bring forth the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this my son which was dead is alive again, he was lost and is found. O, I would I could persuade thee — though thou art growing old now — I wish I could persuade thee to fling thyself at the foot of his dear cross again! His hands are still nailed — he has not moved them yet; his feet are still fast — he has not stirred from the place where he waits for thee; his arms still open

wide. O believe him! He

is love still, and the blood is mighty still, and the plea in heaven is all-prevailing still. "Believe in the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved." Then I wanted to have said a word to some here who are not backsliders exactly, but they have lost their peace for a little time. Many young Christians are subject to these little fits, in which their evidence gets dark and they lose their peace. I have no need to say more to you, brother and sister, while you are walking in darkness and see no light. "Let him trust," is a prophetic admonition — it shall be mine to-night. When you cannot see a single reason why you should be saved, except that God says you shall, let that be enough for you. When you have nothing here or there, and anywhere to look to; when there is no hope for you except in that Man whose wounds are bleeding, always think that enough, and come to Christ just as you came at first. I find it very convenient to come every day to Christ as a sinner — as I came at first. "You are no saint," says the devil. Well, if I am not, I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

Sink or swim, there I go — other hope I have none.

*"And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
And at his footstool bow thy knee,
For Israel's God thy peace shall be."*

On Christ with all my weight I lean; and, as I throw myself upon my bed to sleep, so on Christ will I stretch myself full length to rest, for he is able and he is willing; and if he can fail, then he fails me and fails all his Church; but if he cannot, then I shall see his face in glory everlasting.

By your leave, I must have two or three words with those who never had peace. They shall be brief. I have no doubt I address many here who never had faith, and you are wanting to get it. I ask you, first of all, not to seek peace at all as the first object; for, if you want peace before you get grace, you want the flower before you get the root, and you will be apt to be like little children who, when they have a piece of garden given them, will go and pluck up the flowers out of their father's bed, and put the flowers into their own ground, and then say, "What a nice garden I have got!" But to their dismay, on the morrow all is withered. Better put the roots in and wait a week or two till they sprout, and then the flowers will be living ones, not borrowed ones. Do not seek after peace first. Seek after Christ first.

Peace will come next. Still, I pray you, do not think that peace is a qualification for grace. If you fancy this, you will be in error indeed. You

are to come to Christ as Nicodemus did, by night, that is, in the night of

your ignorance, in the night of your fear and trouble; you must come just as you are, bringing nothing to Christ, but coming empty-handed. No money, no price, no fee, "nothing to pay." He asks of you but that you would take all gratis from his liberal hand. And will you please to remember, that if you put your eye on anything but Christ, or anything with Christ, so as to disturb your whole thought and attention from being directed exclusively to him, then peace will be an impossibility to you. If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if ye mix another trust, and so your eye be evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. Do not trust your repentance, do not trust your faith, do not rely upon your feelings, do not depend upon your knowledge; above all, do not depend upon your sense of need, do not come to Christ as a sensible sinner, do not come trusting Christ, feeling that you are a man who has a right to come, that you answer to a certain character that may come; but come because you are a sinner, because you have nothing to recommend you, because, if God should search you through and through, he could not find a point in you, a spot in you large enough to put the point of a pin upon that which was good. Come because you are vile, to be pardoned; come, because you are black, to be washed; come, because you are penniless, to be made rich; but look for nothing else save in Christ. Write this for thy motto — "None but Jesus." Oh, men and brethren, if those Israelites of old, who were inside their houses that night, had gone outside to the lintel of their door-post, and said, "Now here is this lintel made of very common wood, we will paint and grain it;" and if they had then gone inside, and trusted to the painting and graining of the lintel, the destroying angel would have found them out and destroyed them. If, again, they had said, "We will write up our name over the door — it is a respectable name; we will record the list of our charities and good works over the door," the plague-angel would have smitten through the whole, and there would have been a wailing through the house as through the houses of the Egyptians. But what did they do? They took the blood; they marked the lintel and the two side posts, and smeared them with a crimsoned stain. Then in they went, and sat contentedly down, or stood at least in peace, and ate the passover with joy; and, while the shrieks of Egypt went up in the cold midnight air, the sons of Israel went up also into heaven, for the angel of death, when he spread his wings on the blast, had seen the blood, and by that mark he knew that he must pass by that habitation, and smite none that were there. The word of the Lord was not "When I see your faith," but "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." Oh, soul, if thou trustest

Christ the blood is on thy brow to-night, before the eye of God no condemnation. Why, then, needest thou to fear? Thou art safe, for the blood secures every soul that once is sheltered thereby. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and if thou believest not, trust where thou mayest, thou shalt be damned. God help thee to believe in Christ for his name's sake. Amen.

PENTECOST.

NO. 511

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 24TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” — Acts 2:1-4.

How absolutely necessary is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit! It is not possible for us to promote the glory of God or to bless the souls of men, unless the Holy Ghost shall be in us and with us. Those who were assembled on that memorable day of Pentecost, were all men of prayer and faith; but even these precious gifts are only available when the celestial fire sets them on a blaze. They were all men of experience; most of them had been preachers of the Word and workers of miracles; they had endured trials and troubles in company with their Lord, and had been with him in his temptation. Yet even experienced Christians, without the Spirit of God, are weak as water. Among them were the apostles and the seventy evangelists and with them were those honored women in whose houses the Lord had often been entertained, and who had ministered to him of their substance; yet even these favored and honored saints can do nothing without the breath of God the Holy Ghost. Apostles and evangelists dare not even attempt anything alone; they must tarry at Jerusalem till power be given them from on high. It was not a want of education; they had been for three years in the college of Christ, with perfect wisdom as their tutor, matchless eloquence as their instructor, and

immaculate perfection as their

example; yet they must not venture to open their mouths to testify of the mystery of Jesus, until the anointing Spirit has come with blessed unction from above. Surely, my brethren, if so it was with them, much more must it be the case with us. Let us beware of trusting to our well-adjusted machineries of committees and schemes; let us be jealous of all reliance upon our own mental faculties or religious vigor; let us be careful that we do not look too much to our leading preachers and evangelists, for if we put any of these in the place of the Divine Spirit, we shall err most fatally. Let us thank God for all gifts and for all offices, but oh, let us ever be reminded that gifts and offices are but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, unless the quickening influence be present.

It has been said by certain modern theologians, that we make this doctrine of dependence upon the Holy Spirit by far too prominent, and that our constant teaching of this truth has a tendency to benumb all human effort, and foster supineness and sloth. Surely it is not so, my brethren. Let us refute this calumny by our own earnestness, and let it be seen, that those of us who confess that without their Lord they can do nothing, are able with his aid to do everything. O may we be so inflamed by the eternal fire that our life may be all zeal and love, self-sacrifice and labor, so shall we teach the gainsayer that the worshippers of the Gracious Spirit are not loiterers in the vineyard of the Lord. I am persuaded that so far from speaking too frequent upon this matter, we do not often enough extol the Blessed Spirit, and certain ministries almost ignore his existence. You might attend some chapels and not even know that there was a Holy Ghost at all except for the benediction; and were it not for the liturgy, and the “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,” there are many of our national edifices where you might never know that a Comforter had been sent to us.

Now, I earnestly pray that, this morning I may stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, by a simple exposition of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We are not observers of days and months, but it happens to be the season of the year in which the Early Church was wont to celebrate the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. We commonly talk of Whitsuntide, or White-Sunday, which name is not without its lesson. In the earlier centuries on this particular day, in commemoration of the great baptism of the three thousand converted under the preaching of Peter, it was the custom of the Church to hold a great baptism, and the candidates for immersion being, as with us, robed in white — (hence the name

“Candidates,” or “White ones”) — that Sunday was called White-Sunday. It was not ill that the outpouring of Pentecost should be celebrated by the baptism of converts, for the cause is always best remembered by the effect. May our Lord help us to enjoy a Pentecost all the year round, and may the pool of baptism be stirred every week.

I shall call your attention to *the season* when the Spirit was poured out; to *the manner* in which it was manifested; to *the matter itself*; and, fourthly, to *the results* which followed.

I. There is much holy teaching in THE SEASON when the Spirit of God was given.

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come.” We may observe, first, that the Spirit of God was given *in God’s chosen and appointed time*. There is a set time to favor Zion. The Spirit is not at all times alike active in his manifest workings. Both to try our faith and to prove his own sovereignty, the right hand of the Lord is sometimes thrust into his bosom, and he will only make bare his arm only at such times and seasons as he shall have himself appointed. “The wind bloweth where it listeth,” is a truth well calculated to hide pride from man. Brethren, if every drop of rain has its appointed birth-day, every gleam of light its predestinated pathway, and every spark of fire its settled hour of flying upward, certainly the will, foreknowledge, and decree of God must have arranged and settled the period of every revival, place of every gracious visitation. Times of refreshing, in a Church or a commonwealth, come not except as the Creator-Spirit has determined; the day of salvation to each individual is appointed time; the second birth is not left to hazard; yea, more, every breath of that Divine Spirit which sweeps across the mind of the believer, every drop of sacred oil which anoints him, or of the holy dew which quickens him, comes to him according to that irresistible will which looseth the bands of Orion, or bindeth up the sweet influences of the Pleiades. In God’s accepted and appointed time, therefore, the light of heaven shall go forth; and although this is not to withhold or restrain us from asking for the Spirit every day, it is to encourage us if he do not at once begin to work, for if the vision tarry we are to wait for it, it shall come in due time — it will not tarry.

There was a further mystery in the season, for *it was after the ascension*. The Spirit of God was not given till after Jesus had been glorified. The various blessings which we receive are ascribable to different parts of

Christ's work. His life is our imputed righteousness; his death brings us pardon; his resurrection confers upon us justification; his ascension yields to us the Holy Spirit and those spiritual gifts which edify the body. "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." As when Roman heroes returned from blood-red fields and the senate awarded them a triumph, they rode in their chariot drawn by milk-white steeds through the thronging streets of the capitol, so did Jesus Christ when he led captivity captive receive a triumph at his Father's hands. The triumphal chariot bore him through the streets of glory, while all the inhabitants thereof with loud acclaim saluted him as Conqueror.

***"Crown him! crown him!
Crowns become the victor's brow!"***

It was the wont of the Roman conqueror as he rode along to distribute large quantities of money which were scattered among the admiring crowd. So our glorified Lord scattered gifts among men, yea to the rebellious also he gave those gifts that the Lord God might dwell among them; in this manner, then, to grace the triumph of Jesus, the Spirit of God was liberally poured out upon the Church below. Perhaps you remind me that our Lord had ascended ten days before. I know he had, but the delay might teach them patience. Not always does the flower bloom from the root in one hour. Christ has ascended and heaven is ringing with his praise, they have kept ten days of joyous holiday before the eternal throne, and now when Pentecost is fully come, the rushing mighty wind is heard. Do you think, my brethren and sisters, that we plead Christ's ascension enough as a reason why the Church should be blessed with the Spirit? I know we often reach as far as "By thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, by thy precious death and burial, by thy glorious resurrection," — but do we proceed to "by thine ascension we beseech thee to hear us?" I am afraid we fail to perceive that the ascension of Christ is to be used as an argument in prayer, when we would have the Church revived by the holy breath of God, or have gifts bestowed upon her ministers and Church-officers.

Moreover, there is yet more teaching in the season. It was at *Pentecost*. Many of the early writers say that Pentecost was the time when the law was proclaimed upon Mount Sinai. Others think it doubtful; if it be so, it

was very significant that on the day when the law was issued amid thunders and lightnings, the gospel — God’s new and better law — should be proclaimed with mighty wind and tongues of fire. We are clear, however, that Pentecost was a harvest-festival. On that day the sheaf was waved before the Lord and the harvest consecrated. The Passover was to our Savior the time of his solving, but Pentecost was the day of his reaping, and the fields which were ripe to the harvest when he sat on the throne, are reaped now that he sits upon the throne.

But certainly the Spirit of God was given at Pentecost because *there was then the most need of it*. On that occasion vast crowds were gathered from all regions. The God of wisdom always knoweth how to time his gifts. What would have been the use of granting the many tongues when no strangers were ready to hear? If there had been no Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia collected in Jerusalem, there would have been no need for the cloven tongues; but inasmuch as the city was full and the high festival was being kept by unusual multitudes, it was most fit and right that now the Lord should say — “Thrust in thy sickle, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” Dear friends, I think that whenever we see unusual gatherings of men, whenever the Spirit of hearing is poured out upon the people, we ought to pray for and expect an unusual visitation of the Spirit; and when I look upon these crowds assembled in this house every Sabbath year after year, I can but entreat you to cry mightily to him with whom is the residue of the Spirit that he would give us a Pentecost, for though neither Parthians, nor Medes, nor Elamites are here, yet there scarcely ever passes a Sabbath without there being representatives of almost all nations under heaven who hear the wonderful works of God, not in their own tongue it is true, but yet in a language which they understand. Oh! pray that the Spirit of God may fall upon the unexampled hosts assembled here.

Still, dear friends, we have not dwelt upon a leading reason why the Holy Spirit descended at this special season. “*They were all with one accord in one place.*” We have been expecting to see the days of heaven upon earth. Our soul has longed to hear the voice of God thundering out of heaven. We have hoped for days such as our fathers have told us comforted them in the old time. We looked to see thousands born in a day; alas, the vision cometh not. But look at our country! We have had spasms of revival; that is as much as I can say. Even the Irish revival, for which we can never sufficiently bless God, was but as a passing cloud; it was not an abiding,

resting shower, and so with all the shakings we have had in these later times. We have had but glimpses where we wanted sights; we have had but twilight where we needed the sacred, everlasting noon. What is the reason of this? Perhaps it is to be found in our want of union. "They were all with one accord in one place." Christians cannot all be in one place. We have no room that would be large enough to hold them, blessed be God! But if they cannot all be in one place, yet they can all be of one accord. Oh! when there are no cold hearts, when there are no prejudices to divide us, no bigotries to separate; no apathy shall hold us down, no false doctrine shall thrust the flocks from one another, and no schism to rend the one sacred garment of Christ, then may we expect to see the Spirit of God resting upon us. And in any one Church where shall be no strife which shall be the greatest, no division about peculiarities, no fighting for respectabilities and selfishnesses, but when the Church are of one accord, then may we expect to hear the sound of abundance of heaven's rain.

Note, dear friends, what they were doing. They were not merely unanimous, but they were earnest about one grand object. *They had all been praying.* Read the first chapter and you will perceive that they had been much in prayer. The whole of the time since the ascent of our Lord they had been occupied in constant supplication, and so pleading both day and night, it was no great wonder that the granaries of heaven should be unlocked. We have had weeks of prayer at the beginning of the last few years, and it was well, but if we had continued in prayer all the weeks of the year, if we had always been with one accord still crying unto heaven, still wrestling with the angel, still interceding, surely the little cloud, like a man's hand, which the eye of faith has seen, would by this time have covered all the heavens, and have discharged a plenteous shower upon all nations of men. There must be unity, but that unity must not be the frozen union of death, but the glorious welding of a glowing furnace heat.

They had been much in prayer, and now I see them sitting still. Wherefore sit they so quietly? It is *the quietude of expectation.* When God's Church adds expectation to supplication, then a blessing tarries no longer. We ask, but we do not expect to receive. We pray, but probably nothing would so alarm us as the answer to our prayers. If after having pleaded with God to send his Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit did come, there are many who would not believe it, there are others who would think it a mere excitement, and there are multitudes who would shut their eyes to it altogether. Oh Spirit of God! work in the hearts of thy children perfect harmony, intense anxiety,

and confident expectation, and then wilt thou come to do thy mighty deeds once more.

These remarks concerning the season may lead to many practical questions; I will but put them rapidly, and leave them. Do I help to hinder the coming of the Spirit by any bitterness of my temper? Do I by any want of love tend to divide the Church? Are my prayers such as are likely to prevail? And when I pray do I expect the blessing of God? If not, how mournful that I should be the means of restraining and limiting the Holy One of Israel, that I should be a Church-robber, and commit sacrilege against the Church of God, not by stealing its gold and silver, but by closing the treasury of God! Let us as a Church humble ourselves under the hand of God, and then, girding up the loins of our mind, to wait upon him with patience and earnestness until the Spirit be poured out from on high!

II. I come now, dear friends, in the second place to notice THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SPIRIT WAS GIVEN.

Each word here is suggestive. "*Suddenly.*" No herald sounded his trumpet, but as they were expecting, in a moment the celestial tempest came. If the Lord is about to do any great work in the world we must not be astonished if we hear of its coming like a thunder-clap. Man sits down, and plans, and arranges, and works, and everybody knows what he is aiming at. God also plans, and arranges, and forestalls himself, but he does not tell man what his purpose is. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, and so, though the Spirit may have been secretly preparing men's hearts, yet the real work of revival is done suddenly to the surprise of all observers. You will have noticed it was so in the great revival in New England, when Jonathan Edwards stood up and read his manuscript sermon, holding the manuscript close to his eye, because he was near-sighted — a method of preaching which I should think would be the very least likely ever to cause an excitement in the audience — and yet while he preached from that text — "Their feet shall slide in due time," the Spirit of God suddenly came down, the people began to tremble and even cry out under the terrors of conviction, and the awakening spread throughout all that region, and many thousands were added to the Church of Christ. Was it not so with Livingstone at the Kirk of Shotts. The presbytery had been holding long services and preaching sermons without any very great results, and just at the close Livingstone was asked to preach. Standing on a grave-stone, in the midst of a driving shower, he addressed the assembled crowd, and

down came the Holy Ghost, more mighty than the shower which fell from heaven, and hundreds were born in one day to Christ. It was the same under George Whitfield, in the notable revivals of which he was the agent, the Spirit came like lightning from the skies. Do not be suspicious when you hear of these things suddenly appearing. You remember yourselves an instance which wakes all your hearts to gratitude. You remember a chapel with but a handful of people in it who could scarce see from one to another. Did the crowds come by slow degrees? Was it a life-work to build up a Church? Nay, but the trumpet sounded; the prepared ears heard it; the house was thronged; the Church grew and multiplied, and now we who are members of it bless God for his mercies every day. When God says, "Let there be light" there is light.

Then there was a *sound*. Although the Spirit of God himself is silent in his operations, yet the operations are not silent in their results. The sound would teach them that the Spirit of God was not come to be concealed in their hearts as a silent guest, but to be heard throughout the world as the voice of God; for now faith was come by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God; and a sound as of a mighty rushing wind, was a type to them of the sound of their own testimony which was to go forth throughout all the world even unto the ends thereof. To their ears the speaking hurricane would say, "Even so, we, a handful of converted men, are to sweep around the globe like a mighty wind, and men are to be compelled to hear the sound of mercy."

Then it was a sound, notice, *as of wind*. It is remarkable that both in the Greek and in the Hebrew tongues, the word used for wind and for Spirit is the same. Hence, when the Savior said to Nicodemus "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof," the type might have been suggested to him by the fact of the word <gk>pnema</gk> having the double signification of the wind and of the Spirit. The wind is doubtless, chosen as a significant emblem because of its mysteriousness: "Thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth;" because of its freeness: "It bloweth where it listeth;" because of diversity of its operations, for the wind blows a gentle zephyr at one moment, and anon it mounts to a howling blast. The Holy Spirit at one time comes to comfort, and at other times to alarm; at one season softly with the promise, and at another time terribly with the threatening.

Observe it was *rushing*. This portrayed the rapidity with which the Spirit's influences spread — rushing like a torrent. Within fifty years from that date of Pentecost, the gospel had been preached in every country of the known world. Paul and his brethren the apostles, had journeyed east, west, north, and south; iron gates had been opened, and bars of brass had been snapped, and the glorious life-giving Word had been preached to every creature under heaven for a witness against them. God's spirit does not creep and crawl as too often our unspiritual agencies do, but when he comes, it is a rush, and half the world is lit with divine light before we dream that the match has struck.

Nor is this all, for it was *mighty*, a wind against which nothing could stand; the house itself might be shaken. They may have been greatly alarmed for fear the house should fall about their heads. The wind was irresistible, and so is the Spirit of God; where he comes, nothing can stand against him. O Spirit of God, if thou wouldst but now come as a rough north wind, the crescent of Mohammed would be prostrate in the dust, and the gods of the heathen would fall upon their faces like Dagon before the ark. Thou hast but to proceed in thy sevenfold operations, and the harlot of Rome would lose her enchanting power. Thou canst dash in pieces the hoary systems which have resisted all human attack. Mightier than the tooth of time, thy finger, O sacred Spirit, could destroy what man reckons to be his everlasting workmanship. Glory be to God, wherever the Spirit comes he proves himself to be divine by the omnipotence which he displays. They heard, then, a sound as of a rushing mighty wind. Although we never expect to hear a sound like this, yet we do expect, dear Christian friends, to have the reality. We hope yet to see the Spirit of God mysteriously at work, and we hope to hear the sound thereof, the glad tidings cheering our hearts. We love to see nations born in a day. We do yet believe that ere our eyes are closed in death, we shall see God's arm stretched out, and the irresistible might of his Spirit felt by his enemies.

Consider the next sentence. "*Which filled all the place where they were sitting.*" The sound was not merely heard by the disciples, but it appeared to penetrate the other chambers besides that large upper room where they were probably gathered together. Ah! and when the Spirit of God comes, he never confines himself to the Church. The influence may not be saving to those without, but it is felt by them. A revival in a village penetrates even the pot-house. The Spirit of God at work in the Church is soon felt in the farm-yard, known in the workroom, and perceived in the factory. It is

not possible for the Spirit to be confined when once he cometh. Oh! if he should but visit this place, Walworth, and Camberwell, and Southwark must all know it. The very streets should be made to wear a different aspect, and whereas we now have to walk down long rooms of shops still open on the Sabbath-day, we should doubtless see them closed, for the Spirit of God would fill all the place where his Church was located. May such glad times come, when from one end of England to another the Spirit of God shall fill all men in all places, because he dwelleth specially with his chosen people.

But this was not all. I must now mention what I think was the appearance seen. It was a bright luminous cloud probably, not unlike that which once rested in the wilderness over the tribes by night. A fiery pillar was seen hovering in the upper part of the room. The cloud is mentioned as "it," so that it seems to have been one, and yet it is called "tongues," so that it must have been many, and in the Greek there is a singular commingling of singular and plural in the verbs, which can hardly be accounted for, unless there really did exist a singularity and a plurality at the same time. There floated in the room, I think, one mass of flame, a great cloud of fire; this suddenly divided, or was cleft, and separate tongues of fire rested upon the head of each of the disciples. They would understand that thus a divine power was given to them, for such a figure was by no means unusual or far-fetched. Heathens have been accustomed to represent in their statues beams of light or flames of fire proceeding from their false deities, and to this day the nimbus with which Roman Catholic painters always adorn the heads of saints, is a relic of the same idea. It was said by the ancients of Hesiod, the first of all the poets, that whereas he was once nothing but a simple neat-herd, yet suddenly a divine flame fell upon him, and he became henceforth one of the noblest of men. We feel assured that so natural a metaphor would be at once understood by the apostles. A tongue of fire resting upon them would be a token of a special inspiration from God.

Notice first it was *a tongue*, for God has been pleased to make the tongue do mightier deeds than either sword or pen; and though the pen shall speak to ages yet to come, yet never with that living force which trembles from the tongue, for what we read in a book is but dead, but that which we hear with the ear comes as a living word to the soul. It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. Then it was a tongue *of fire*, to show that God's ministers speak, not coldly as though they had tongues of ice, nor learnedly as with tongues of gold, nor arrogantly as

with tongues of brass, nor pliantly as with tongues of willow, nor sternly as with tongues of iron, but earnestly and in a mystery, not as with tongues of flesh, but with the tongue of flame; their words consume sin, scorch falsehood, enlighten the darkness, and comfort the poor. Notice moreover that “it SAT upon them.” It did not flicker or remove; it remained there. So the Spirit of God is an abiding influence, and the saints shall persevere. It sat *upon each of them*, so that while there was but one fire, yet each believer received his portion of the one Spirit. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same Lord.

I will not tarry longer with the description of how the Spirit came except to observe that I would to God that he would manifest himself in the same manner this day. We want our young men to have tongues of fire; and you, fathers, we long to see you also kindled by the live coal which touched the lip of Esaias. Even you, my sisters — for doubtless that tongue of fire rested upon the Virgin Mary and upon the other women — we would like to see it rest on you, that in your families, in your Sunday-school classes, or in your visitations and nursings of the sick, you may have the holy fire abiding in you. Oh! may God be pleased to send forth the Comforter to each of us! May none of us be without his power, for the set time to favor Zion shall have come, when both men and women of every rank and degree shall have received the Spirit of the blessed God. I am afraid this does not interest you; you think it happened a long while ago and is not likely ever to occur again, and I am afraid it is not while we remain so indifferent to it; but, oh! if we had the anxiety to desire it and the faith to expect it, we might see greater things than these; without the outward sign, which was but for the babyhood of the Church, we might receive the inward and spiritual grace fit for the full-grown manhood of the advanced believers of our time.

III. Consider now THE MATTER ITSELF, the boon which now was given.

Of the matter itself, we react very briefly that, “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” The sound was not the Holy Ghost, nor was the tongue of fire the Holy Spirit, these were but the symbols of his work; the real work was done when all present were filled with the Holy Spirit. What is this?

What is this strange mystery? The sceptic sneers, and says, “There is no such thing;” the formal religionist says, “I have never felt it;” and the most of Christians think it something to be devoutly believed in, but by no means to be experienced. Is there a Holy Ghost? My hearer, thou darrest not ask

that question, unless thou art prepared to involve a doubt of thine own conversion, for “Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” and if, therefore, the Holy Ghost do not dwell in you, and has not made you a new creature by his miraculous operations, you are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. Only the true Christian knows what it is to receive the Spirit, but there are only a few Christians who know what it is to be filled with it — to be filled with it to the brim. There are times when the preacher has known it, when he had no need to ask himself what he should say, nor in what language he should couch his thoughts, for the thoughts were born all dressed and armed, and they sprung not *from* him but *through* him, of the Holy Spirit. There are times when the soul is full of calm, for the dove is there; full of passion for the fire is there; full of life, for the wind is there, full of growth, for the dew is there; full of divine priesthood and the power to bless, for the oil is there; full of knowledge, for the light is there; and purged and cleansed, because the fountain of living water flows within. There are, it is true, seasons when the man has to complain that he cannot discover any of these signs; but oh! there are glad and high days when God’s anointed servants feel borne upon the mystic wind aloft in thoughts sublime; no longer weak men, but men inspired to break hard hearts, to stir emotions, to quicken the dead, to open blind eyes, and to preach the gospel to the poor, and all by the power from on high. You who have felt the sublime sensation of being filled with the Spirit, may read of Ezekiel’s being lifted by a lock of his hair between earth and heaven, but you will know that to be filled with the Spirit is a greater wonder still, for that lifts a man up from worldly cares, enables him to lay hold upon God in prayer, hatches him in the joy of heaven, and then sends him down with shining face to bless his fellow men. The flesh trembles in the dust because the great Spirit has come to our spirit’s help, and flesh must lose all dominion, but the Spirit rejoices with great joy. Observe the difference between Peter with the Spirit and Peter without the Spirit! There he is, cursing and swearing like a trooper; he never knew Christ, he says. There he is, sinking in the sea, he does not believe that he can walk upon the waters, and he cries, “Lord, save, or I perish.” Peter, the braggart, the rash man, and yet the coward! See him now the Spirit of God has come upon him. How different is Peter! Fearless of all the jeers and taunts which the ribald crew might cast at him, he stands up to preach. Whence hath this man eloquence? He speaks mightily, and not as the scribes. Lo, the people are moved under him as the green corn is moved by the wind, or as the waves of the sea are swept by the gale, and when he has finished preaching

he goes up to the temple and commands a lame man to leap, and the miracle is wrought! He is brought before the rulers and commanded to hold his peace, and he answers like a hero, "Whether it be right to obey man rather than God, judge ye." Peter is found travelling over every country preaching the word in every tongue, and at last, he that was once a coward cheerfully stretches out his aged arms to be nailed to the cross, and head downwards, as though he felt he was not worthy to die like his Master, he expires upon the tree, glorifying Christ in his death! There is no comparison to be drawn; it is a case of clear contrast between Peter the unspiritual and Peter full of the Holy Ghost. No man or woman amongst you knows what he might be if he were filled with the Spirit. What is that rough Luther? He is only fit to have been a killer of bullocks, or a feller of oaks in the forest; but fill Luther with the Holy Spirit and what is he? He takes the bull of Rome by the horns, slays wild beasts of error in the great arena of the gospel, and is more than a conqueror through the might which dwelleth in him! Take John Calvin — fit naturally to be a cunning lawyer, cutting and dividing nice points, judging this precedent and that, frittering away his time over immaterial niceties, but fill him with the Holy Ghost and John Calvin becomes the mighty master of grace, the reflection of the wisdom of all past ages, and a great light to shed a brilliant ray even till the Millennium shall dawn! Chief, and prince, and king of all uninspired teachers, the mighty seer of Geneva, filled with the Spirit of God is no more John Calvin, but a God-sent angel of the Churches! Who knows what yonder young man may be? I know to day he is but as other men; fill him with the Spirit, let it move him in the camp of Dan, and wee to the Philistines! Who knows what that young woman may be? She may sit under the oak quietly with Deborah now, but the day may come when she shall stir up Barak and put a song into his mouth, saying, "Awake, awake, O Barak, lead thy captivity captive thou son of Abinoam! "Only let us be filled with the Spirit, and we know not what we can be. We shall "Laugh at impossibility and say, 'It shall be done.'" We shall attempt what we never dreamed of before, and accomplish that which we always thought to be far beyond our grasp.

IV. Our last point is — THE RESULT OF IT ALL.

Well, well, you will it a very common-place sort of thing. After all this rushing mighty wind, this fire, and so on, what are you expecting? Kings trembling in the dust, or riding in their chariots to do homage to the apostles? Shall the wind blow down dynasties — shall the fire consume

dominions? Nothing of the kind, my brethren; nothing of the kind. Spiritual, and not carnal, is the kingdom of God. The result lies in three things — *a sermon, a number of enquirers, and a great baptism!* That is all! Yes, but though it is all, it is the grandest thing in all the world, for in the judgment of the angels and of those whom God has made wise unto salvation, these are three most precious matters.

There was a *sermon*. The Spirit of God was given to help Peter to preach a sermon. You turn with interest to know what sort of a sermon a man would preach who was full to the brim of the Holy Ghost. You expect him to be more eloquent than Robert Hall, or Chalmers, of course; more learned than the Puritans, certainly; as for illustrations, of course you will have the loftiest flights of poetic genius; you may expect now to have all the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes put entirely in the shade; we shall have something glorious now. No such thing! No such thing! Never was there a sermon more commonplace than that of Peter, and let me tell you that it is one of the blessed effects of the Holy Spirit to make ministers preach *simply*. You do not want the Holy Spirit to make them ride the high horse and mount up on the wings of the spread-eagle to the stars; what is wanted is to keep them down, dealing with solemn subjects in an intelligible manner. What was the theme of this sermon? Was it something so intellectual that nobody could comprehend it, or so grand that few could grasp it? No, Peter just rises up and delivers himself somewhat like this — “Jesus Christ of Nazareth lived among you; he was the Messiah promised of old; you crucified him, but in his name there is salvation, and whosoever among you will repent and be baptized shall find mercy.” That is all! I am sure Mr. Charles Simeon in his “Skeleton Sermons” would not have inserted it as a model, and I do not suppose that any college professor alive would ever say to his students — “If you want to preach, preach like Peter.” Why, I do not perceive firstly, secondly, thirdly, and fourthly, to which some of us feel compelled to bind ourselves. It is in fact a commonplace talking about sublime things — sublime things which in this age are thought to be foolishness and a stumbling-block. Well then, may the Spirit of God be poured out to teach our ministers to preach plainly, to set our young men talking about Jesus Christ, for this is absolutely necessary.

When the Spirit of God goes away from a Church it is a fine thing for oratory, because then it is much more assiduously cultivated. When the Spirit of God is gone, then all the ministers become exceedingly learned, for not having the Spirit they need to supply the emptiness his absence has

made, and then the old-fashioned Bible is not quite good enough; they must touch it up a bit and improve upon it, and the old doctrines which used to rejoice their grandmothers at the fire-side are too stale for them; they must have an improved and a new theology, and young gentlemen now-a-days show their profound erudition by denying everything is the ground, and prop, and pillar of our hope, and starting some new will-o'-the-wisp which they set their people staring at. Ah! well, we want the Spirit of God to sweep all that away. Oh that my dear sister who conducts the female class, and all who are in the Sunday-school, may be helped just to talk to you about Christ. When you get the Spirit of God to come upon you like fire and like a rushing mighty wind it will not be to make you doctors of divinity, and scholars, and great elocutionists; it will only be just for this, to make you preach Christ, and preach him more simply than ever you did before.

The next result was, that the people were pricked in the heart, and began to cry, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" What a disorderly thing to do at a sermon. Beadle! put that man out of the Church; we cannot allow people to be calling out, "What must I do to be saved?" Blessed disorder, blessed disorder which the Spirit of God gives. This will be the result of all sermons in which there is the presence of God. Men will feel that they have heard something which has gone right into their inmost nature, that they have received a wound which they can by no means heal; and at the next enquiry meeting there will be many saying, "How can I find peace? How can I get my sins forgiven?"

What next? Why, where the Spirit of God is there will be faith, and there will be an *outward confession of it in baptism*. "Well, well," says one, "I did not think we were to see all this rushing mighty wind and tongues of fire all to get a few common-place sermons, and conversions, and baptisms." But I tell you again it is just the conversions and baptisms which make the arches of heaven ring. I do not believe there was one extra note in heaven on the day when the Princess of Wales rode through London. *We* all went, and gazed, and admired, but I do not believe that one angel ever opened one eye to look at it; he saw nothing there which struck him. But wherever there is a groaning, and a sobbing, and a sighing after the Savior, a longing after reconciliation, and above all where there is a renewed heart dedicating itself openly to Jesus, where there is a soul that says — "I will be buried with my Master; I will be obedient to his command, and despite every opposition I will go down with him into the liquid grave; I will be

numbered with the ridiculed men and women who acknowledge that they are dead to the world and only alive to Christ” — I say it is in such a case that angels rejoice, and this it is for which we want the Spirit of God.

I have done when I have sown this thought. See, dear friends, see the absolute importance of repentance, and of faith, and of baptism. I pray you, if the Spirit of God comes all the way from heaven to work these, be not satisfied till you receive them. See, again, the importance of preaching, for the Spirit of God descends only to help the preacher. And then see, last of all, the all-importance of the Holy Ghost. Without him we cannot preach, we cannot hear so as to believe and be saved. May I beg you, as you go your way, to entreat the Lord to be with us according to his own promise — “If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”

A PRECIOUS DROP OF HONEY.

NO. 512

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 31ST, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” — Isaiah 49:16.

GOD’S promises are not exhausted by *one* fulfillment. They are manifold mercies, so that after you have opened one fold, and found out one signification, you may unfurl them still more, and find another which shall be equally true, and then another, and another, and another, almost without end. Like the cherubim, God’s promises have a face for every quarter of the earth, and like the wheels, they are full of eyes for every trial of the chosen people. The Lord knoweth how to speak many-handed promises; his words, like the trees of the New Jerusalem, bear twelve manner of fruits, and yield their fruit every month. No doubt the text and the preceding promises all refer to the seed of Abraham; God will not cast them away; he doth no more forget them than doth a woman forget her sucking child. They shall return to their own land, and accept Messiah, the Prince whom they have so long despised. But the seed of Abraham are the grand type of the Church; and hence we believe that every word here, in its widest and most extensive sense, belongs to the elect of God — those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and for whom Jesus shed his blood. We feel persuaded that the favor which is shelved to the whole body is given to each member, and therefore any true believer who is, through faith, one of the spiritual seed of Abraham, may take the promises to himself, and say, “Thus saith the Lord unto my soul; thus and thus speaketh he comfortably concerning me.” I believe, I say, that the text before us belongs primarily to the seed of Israel; next, to the whole Church as a body; and then to every individual member. Understand it so, and may each one of you, even though you are numbered among the little in Israel,

have grace to draw forth marrow and fatness out of the inexpressibly rich text which to-day the Spirit of God presents to us.

I intend, first of all, to *consider our text verbally*, pulling it to pieces word by word; then next, to consider it as a whole; and then, to incite you by it as a whole, to consider what is the conduct demanded of you by truth so sweet.

I. First of all, then, my text is one of those remarkable sentences in which EVERY SINGLE WORD DESERVES TO BE EMPHASIZED.

We will begin with the first word, "Behold." "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." "Behold," *is a word of wonder*; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation. Here, indeed, we have a theme for marvelling. Heaven and earth may well be astonished that God should ever grave upon his hands the names of sinners; that rebels should attain so great a nearness to his heart as to be written upon the palms of his hands. Well might the angels wonder, and those bright spirits be lost in amazement, for unto which of the angels said he at any time, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands?" What cherub ever attained this dignity, or to what seraph was this honor awarded? But to man, who is but a worm; to the son of man who is but dust and ashes; to man who has rebelled, who has lost all claim upon God's favor and deserves his hottest wrath — to man is this consolation given, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." Speak of the seven wonders of the world, why this is a wonder in the seventh heavens! No doubt a part of the wonder which is concentrated in the word "Behold," is excited by the unbelieving lamentation of the preceding sentence. Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me." How amazed the divine mind seems to be at this wicked unbelief of man! What can be more astounding than the unfounded doubts and fears of God's favored people. He seems to say, "How can I have forgotten thee, when I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands? How can it be? How dardest thou doubt my constant remembrance, when the memorial is set upon my very flesh?" O unbelief, how strange a marvel thou art! I know not which most to wonder at, the faithfulness of God or the unbelief of his people. He keeps his promise a thousand times, and yet

the next trial makes us doubt him. He never faileth; he is never a dry well; he is never as a setting sun, a passing meteor, or a melting vapor, and yet we are as continually vexed with anxieties, molested with suspicions, and disturbed with fears, as if our God were fickle and untrue. Here follows the great marvel, that God should be faithful to such a faithless people, and that when he is provoked with their doubting, he nevertheless abideth true. Behold! Behold! I say, and be ashamed and confounded for all your cruel doubts of your indulgent Lord. I remarked that the “Behoid” in our text is intended to attract *particular attention*. There is something here worthy of being studied. If you should spend a month over such a text as this, you should only begin to understand it. It is a gold mine; there are nuggets upon the surface, but there is richer gold for the man who can dig deep. I can only indicate the veins of gold, it is for you afterwards in your meditations to follow them out. I pray you, be very careful with the text; lose not a drop of the wine of consolation contained in its precious crystal; be prayerful and anxious to grind forth from this wheat every atom of its fine flour; leave no meal to grow stale in this barrel; drain all the oil from this cruse, for where God sets a “Behold,” depend upon it, there is a something that is not to be trifled with, nor to be passed over in indifference.

We pass on now to the next word, “Behold, *I* have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” The Divine Artist, who has been pleased to engrave his people for a memorial, is none other than *God himself*. Here we learn the lesson which Christ afterwards taught his disciples — “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” No one can write upon the hand of God but God himself. Neither our merits, prayers, repentance, nor faith, can write our names there, for these in their goodness extend not unto God so as to write upon his hands. Nor did blind chance or mere necessity of fate inscribe our names; but the living hand of a living Father, unprompted by anything except the spontaneous and omnipotent love of his own heart, wrote the names of his people upon his own hands. How dependent are we upon God then! If my name be in the Lamb’s Book of Life, how ought I to adore the sovereignty of the grace which placed it there! Had it not been there, I could not have inscribed it. Had it not been found in the list, no archangel could by any possibility have inserted it.

***“What if my name should be left out
When thou for them shalt call?”***

Is a black thought to any of us, but when I know that it is not left out, but is written there amongst the bright Spirits chosen of God and precious, how this should make me leap for joy! “*I have graven thee.*” Then, again, if the Lord hath done it, *there is no mistake about it.* If some human hand had cut the memorial, the hieroglyphs might be at fault; but since perfect wisdom has combined with perfect love to make a memorial of the saints, then no error by any possibility can have occurred; there can be no erasures, no crossing out of what God has written, no blotting out of what the Eternal hath decreed. Fixed, and fixed for ever must be the inscription which is of divine authorship; the powers of darkness cannot raise those everlasting lines. “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” Soul, this is enough to overwhelm thee with humble adoration that God should so much as take notice of thee. When thou receivest the daily tokens of Divine care, oughtest thou not to exclaim with David — “When I consider thy heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him.” But how is it, Lord, that thou canst go farther than this, and thyself write the names of these insignificant mortals upon thine own hands? “*I have graven thee.*” It is wonderful to see how God comes into immediate contact with his saints, and appears in person in all his acts of grace towards them. In other works it is his far-reaching voice, but in the wonders of his grace it is his present hand. In the making of worlds, he stands at a distance and speaks his will; but when he creates saints, and redeems his people, he comes out of his chambers — he rends the heavens and comes down, he reveals himself as a God nigh at hand; he standeth over his work as the potter over the clay upon the wheel. It is written, that when he made the heavens and the earth, that “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;” but I never hear that God sang; there is nothing in the merely material universe to stir the Infinite heart; the work is not dear enough to him, nor so full of satisfaction as the grand work of redeeming love; but when he saved his people — when he created Israel for himself, I hear it said — “He shall rest in his love; he shall rejoice over thee with singing.” Oh, matchless verse! in which the Eternal Trinity burst forth into sacred song! Do ye not catch the strain even now. “I have done it; I have come forth myself out of the secret of my tabernacle wherein I have concealed myself from the gaze of men, and ‘I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.’”

Take the next word. We have many wells here out of which we may draw water. “Behold, I *have* graven thee.” Not, “I will,” you see; nor yet, “I am doing it;” it is a thing of the past, and how far back in the past! Oh! the antiquity of this inscription! They take us to the British Museum, and show us most reverend writings, which are the memorials of those hoary ages, which were the first born of the years beyond the flood, but here is an inscription older than them all; compared with it, Assyrian antiquities, and Egyptian records are things of yesterday. Before the young earth had burst her swaddling bands of mist, yea, before the globe had been begotten, or yon sun had darted his infant arrows, or yon stars had opened their eyes, the Eternal had fixed his eye of love upon his favourites.

Fly back as far as you will, until this present world and all the worlds within the universe sleep in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn-cup, and even then you have not reached the time, before all time when it was first said — “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” “From everlasting to everlasting thou art God;” from everlasting to everlasting thou art the same, and thy people’s names are written on thy hands! Yet, methinks, there may be a prophetic reference here to a later writing of the names, when Jesus Christ submitted his outstretched palms to those cruel graving-tools, the nails. Then was it surely, when the executioner with the hammer smote the tender hands of the loving Jesus, that he engraved our names upon the palms of his hands, and to-day when he points to those wounds, when by faith he permits us to put our fingers into the prints of the nails, he may still say to us —

***“Deep on the palms of both my hands
I have engraved thy name.”***

Well, Christian, do not these deep things comfort you? Have you no consolation in the ancient things of the everlasting mountains? Does not eternal love delight you? God is no stranger to you; he has known you long before you knew yourself; ay, long ere you were curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, in his book all your members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them. Known unto God from the foundation of the earth were you; he was always thinking of you; there was never a period when you were not in his mind and on his heart. “I *have* graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”

But the next word is “*graven.*” My dear friend, The Revelation John Anderson, of Helensburgh, whom I am glad to welcome here to day, told

me this morning that while travelling in the east he has frequently seen persons with the portraits of their friends upon their hands, so that wherever they went, as one in this country would carry the portrait of a friend in a brooch or a watch, they carry these likenesses printed on their palms. I said to him, "Surely they would wash out." They might by degrees, he said, but they frequently had them pricked in with strong indelible ink, so that there, whilst the palm lasts, there lasts the memorial of the friend. Surely this is what the text refers to. I have graven thee in; I have not merely printed thee, stamped thee on the surface, but I have permanently cut thee into my hand with marks which never can be removed. That word "graven" sets forth the perpetuity of the inscription. Not on the hand of man but on the hand of God is it graven. Oh! mysterious thought! On that hand immortal and eternal is it digged, graven in. Our gravers press upon their tools; they tell us how stern the labor when they cut the hard metal to mark each line, and God has thus graven; with the whole strength of Omnipotence he has leaned upon the tool to cut our names into his flesh. Was there not such a graving at Calvary? Is it not written, "It pleased the Father to bruise him; *he* hath put him to grief?" It is as if eternal strength, I say, leaned upon that graving-tool to write the memorial of his chosen people in the hands of Jesus. "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." We need not indulge the dark foreboding that we shall be lost, but we may sing with Hammond:

*"If Jesus is ours we have a true friend,
 Whose goodness endures the same to the end;
 Our comforts may vary, our frames may decline;
 We cannot miscarry; our aid is divine.
 The hills may depart and mountains remove,
 But faithful thou art O fountain of love!
 The Father has graven our names on thy hands;
 Our record, in Heaven eternally stands."*

Shall we stop to take that next word? Scarcely may I preach from it, but methinks, you meditate upon it constantly. "I have graven *thee* upon the palms of my hands." My Lord, dost thou mean me? Yes, even me, if I by faith cling to thy cross. "I am not shut out from thy heart of love, if by faith I have entered into thy happy family. I know that thou rememberest me or thou wouldest never have helped me to remember thee. Glory be to thee, O my gracious Lord." But I want you, my beloved brethren, to notice that the word runs, "I have graven *thee*." It does not say, "Thy name." The name is

there, but that is not all; “I have graven *thee*.” See the fullness of this! I have graven thy person, thine image, thy case, thy circumstances, thy sins, thy temptations, thy weaknesses, thy wants, thy works; I have graven thee, everything about thee, all that concerns thee; I have put thee altogether there. It is not an outline sketch, you see; it is a full picture, as though the man himself were there. What, darest thou dream that God forgets thee?

Wilt thou ever say again that thy God hath forsaken thee when he has graven *thee*, not thy name, I say, but everything that concerns thee upon his own palms? “Oh!” saith one, “but I am in such a plight this morning.” Well, he has graven that there? “Ah!” saith another, “I am so weak and so feeble!” That, too, is engraver there. “I have graven *thee*.” The Omniscient God knows you better than you know yourself, and whereas you are conscious of some sin and some imperfection, he knows that you have an infinitude of sin and a vastness of infirmity, he has put it all there — “I have graven *thee*.” I say, again, this is a thing too great to be talked of, but more fit to be read, marked, learned, and digested in the silence of your closet.

You have never graven yourselves so well upon the tablets of your own knowledge as God has engraven you upon those blessed tablets — the palms of his hands. Yes, I dare to say it, our indulgent God as much thinks of one saint as if there were no other saint and no other created thing in all the world. Our covenant God so recollects and cares for his child, that if the whole universe were dissolved and had departed like a shadow, and our Lord had but one man to fix all his grace upon, he would not watch him more, nor more carefully and lovingly see after his best interests, than he now cares for each one of his people. “I have graven *thee* upon the palms of my hands.”

We have hitherto taken every word, but we must now take the next two or three. Remember we are engraven where? Upon *his hands*, not upon the works of his hands. *They* shall perish; yea they shall all wax old as doth a garment, but his hands shall endure for ever and ever. We are not graven upon a seal, for a seal might be slipped from the finger and laid aside, but the hand itself can never be separated from the living God. It is not engraven on the huge rock, for a convulsion of nature might rend the rock with earthquake, or the fretting tooth of time might eat the inscription out; but our record is on his hand, where it must last, world without end. Not upon the back of his hands where it might be supposed that in days of strife and warfare the inscription might suffer damage, but there upon *the palms* of his hands where it shall be well protected, so that even

*“When God’s right arm is bared for war,
And thunder clouds his stormy ear,”*

even then, when he smites with his fist, his people shall be well protected within the palms of his hands. The tenderest part shall be made the place of the inscription, that to which he is most likely to look, that which his fingers of wisdom enclose, that by which he works his mighty wonders, shall be the unceasing remembrance, pledging him never to forget his chosen. Do notice, it does not say, “I have graven thee upon the palm of one hand,” but “I have graven thee upon the *palms of my hands.*” There are two memorials. His saints shall never be forgotten, for the inscription is put there upon the palm of this hand, the right-hand of blessing, and upon the palm of that hand, the lefthand of justice. I see him with his right hand beckon me — “Come ye blessed,” and he sees me in his hand; and on that side he says, “Depart ye cursed,” but not to me, for he sees me in his hand, and cannot curse me. Oh! my soul, how charming this is, to know that his left hand is under thy head, while his right hand doth embrace thee. Both hands are marked with the memorial; this left hand, which is the hand of cursing, cannot curse me, for it is under my head; it cannot smite, for it has become my strength and my stay, my pillow and my rest, while his right hand doth embrace me, to keep me safe from death and hell, and to preserve me, and bring me to his eternal kingdom in glory.

Now I am conscious, that I cannot work out the beauty of this passage. I am equally conscious that you cannot either, unless you have much longer time for meditation than such a short service as this can afford you. Take it home and look at it again and again, especially laying an emphasis on the word “thee,” and oh! if you can render it — “He hath graven *me, me, me* upon the palms of his hands,” if your soul can know that God hath you daily in remembrance, and neither can, nor will forget you, then you will dance before the ark of the Lord, and if Michal mocks, you may answer her as David did — “The God that chose me, made me to dance.” Eternal Election and Indissoluble Union, are truths which make believers rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.”

II. Now let us proceed to the second part of the subject, which is to CONSIDER THE TEXT AS A WHOLE.

“I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” This seems to show us, first of all, *that God’s remembrance of his people is constant.* The hands,

of course, are constantly in union with the body. In Solomon's Song we read, "Set me as a seal upon thy hand." Now this is a very close form of remembrance, for the seal is very seldom laid aside by the Eastern, who not being possessed with skill in the art of writing his name, requires his seal in order to affix his signature to a document; hence the seal is almost always worn, and in some cases is never laid aside. A seal, however, might be laid aside, but the hands never could be. It has been a custom, in the olden days especially, when men wished to remember a thing to tie a cord about the hand, or a thread around the finger by which memory would be assisted; but then the cord might be snapped or taken away, and so the matter forgotten, but the hand and that which is printed into it must be constant and perpetual. O Christian, remember that by night and by day God is always thinking of you. From the beginning of the year even to the end of the year, the Lord's eye is upon you, according to his precious word — "I, the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day." *Your* remembrance of God is intermittent; you thought of him this morning when you rose from your beds; you are trying to think of him now, and this evening again your thoughts will go up to him; these are only times and seasons of remembrance, but God never ceases to recollect you. The finite mind of man cannot constantly be occupied, if it is to engage in other pursuits, with any one thought; but the gigantic mind of God can allow of a million trains of thought at once. He is not confined to thinking of one thing, or working out one problem at a time. He is the great many-handed, many-eyed God; he doeth all things, and meditateth upon all things, and worketh all things at the same time; therefore he never is called away by any urgent business so that he can forget you. No second person ever comes in to become a rival in his affection towards you. You are fast united to your great Husband, Christ, and no other lover can steal his heart; but Jesus, having chosen you, doth never suffer a rival to come. You are his beloved, his spouse, the darling of his heart, and he has himself said, "Mine eye and my heart are toward thee continually." Every moment of every day, every day of every month, and every month of every year, is the Lord continually thinking upon you, if you be one of his.

Still further, the text as a whole, seems to show us that this recollection on God's part is *practical*. We are engraven upon his heart — this is to show his love; we are put upon his shoulders — this is to show that his strength is engaged for us; and also upon his hands, to show that the activity of our

Lord will not be spared from us; he will work and show himself strong for his people; he brings his omnipotent hands to effect our redemption. What would be the use of having a friend who would think of us, and then let his love end in thought? The faithfulness we want is that of one who will act in our defense. We need one who so cares for us, that against every arrow of the adversary he will lift up the shield; and for every want will find a supply. We want an active sympathy from God. Surely this is the intention of the text. "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;" as if everything that God touched left a memorial of his people on it; every work he did, he did it with the same hands that carved the remembrance of his people. Do you see the drift of it? If he moulds a world between his palms, and then sends it wheeling in its orbit, it is between those palms which are stamped with the likeness of his sons and daughters, and so that new work shall minister to their good. If he divides a nation, it is always with the hand that bears the remembrance of Zion. Scripture itself tells us this, "When he divided the nations, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." The great wheel of providence, when God makes it revolve, works for the good of the people whom he hath called according to his purpose. There are many strings, but they are all in one hand, and they all pull one way, to draw a weight of glory to the chosen: there are many wheels, and innumerable cogs, and as you and I look about us, we cannot understand the machinery; we cry, "O wheels, what do ye work?" but the end, the end, if you stood there and saw the end of everything, you would see that God has stamped all the wheels with the memory of his children, so that the result is always good, and only good to those whom he has engraven on the palms of his hands. It is, then, a practical as well as a constant sympathy.

Next, dear friends, and to the children of God this will be a delightful thought, this is *an eternal remembrance*. You cannot suppose it possible that any person can erase what is written on God's hand. The Scriptures tell us that we are in the hand of Christ, and that none shall pluck us out. Some Arminians say we can slip out; but how can we slip out if we are engraver there? We may well defy all the devils in hell, with all their craft, even to forge a plan by which they can get at the palms of God's hands. I cannot think of a thing that should seem more impossible, more tremendously, impossible, than that any creature, whether it be life or death, things present or things to come, should ever be able to reach the

palms of God's hands, so as to erase our names. Our hymn is not wrong when it says —

*“Once in Christ, in Christ for ever,
Nothing from his love can sever.”*

And Toplady made no mistake when he said —

*“My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impress'd on his heart it
remains In marks of indelible
grace: Yes, I to the end shall
endure, As sure as the earnest
is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”*

“I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”

Still I have not drained my text dry. Let the treader of the winepress tread the grapes once more, and more holy wine shall flow there from. This memorial — *how tender!* How tender, I say, because it is graven on the hand. We have heard of one, an eastern queen, who so loved her husband that she thought even to build a mausoleum to his memory was not enough. She had a strange way of proving her affection, for when her husband's bones were burned she took the ashes and drank them day by day, that, as she said, her body might be her husband's living sepulcher. It was a strange way of showing love, and there was a marvellous degree of strange, fanatical fondness in it. But what shall I say of this divine, celestial, unobjectionable, sympathetic mode of showing remembrance, by cutting it into the palms. Words fail to express our intense content with this most admirable sign of tenderness and fond affection. It appeareth to me as though the King had said, “Shall I carve my people upon precious stones? Shall I choose the ruby, the emerald, the topaz? No; for these all must melt in the last general conflagration. What then? Shall I write on tablets of gold or silver? No, for all these may canker and corrupt, and thieves may break through and steal. Shall I cut the memorial deep on brass? No, for time would fret it, and the letters would not long be legible. I will write on myself, on my own hand, and then my people will know how tender I am, that I would sooner cut into my own flesh than forget them; I will have my Son branded in the hand with the names of his people, that they may be sure he cannot forsake them; hard by the memorial of his wounds shall be

the memorial of his love to them, for indeed his wounds are an everlasting remembrance.” How loving, then, how full of superlative, super-excellent affection is God toward you and toward me in so recording our names.

Weary not when I yet further remark, *that this memorial is most surprising*. Scripture, which is full of wonders, yet allows a “Behold” to be put before this verse — “Behold!” If the things I have been saying are enough to make you wonder, the deep sea of the text, without bottom and without shore, would much more cause you to hold up your hands in astonishment. Child of God, let your cheerful eyes and your joyful heart testify how great a wonder it is that you, once so vile, so hard of heart, so far estranged from God, are this day written on the palms of his hands.

And then I close this point by saying *it is also most consolatory*. When God would meet Zion’s great doubt — “God hath forgotten me,” he cheers her with this — “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” Where are you this morning, mourner — where are you? Ah, you may well hide your head for shame. You said yesterday, when trial came after trial

***“My God hath forgotten me quite;
My Lord will be gracious no more.”***

Here is God’s answer to you this morning — “It cannot be; I cannot forget you, for I have graven you upon the palms of my hands.”

***“Forget thee, I will not, I cannot, thy name
Engraved on my heart doth for ever remain;
The palms of my hands whilst I look on, I see
The wounds I received when suffering for
thee.”***

There is no sorrow to which our text is not an antidote. If thou be a child of God, though thy troubles have been as innumerable as the waves of the sea, this text, like the channels of the ocean, can contain them all. I care not this morning though thou hast lost everything, though thou camest here a penniless bankrupt beggar; so long as thou hast this text thou art rich beyond a miser’s dream. You may have forgotten your own mercy; your own experience may seem a dream to you; the devil may tell you that you never knew the Lord; your own sins may bear evidence in the same way; but if you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, the covenant made with David’s Lord must not and cannot be broken. “I have graven thee upon the

palms of my hands.” Come, drooping saint, lift up thy head! Thou dreary,

downcast brother, be thou of good cheer! If Christ remembers thee, what more canst thou want? The dying thief's extremity could not suggest a prayer larger than "Lord, remember me!" and thy greatest sorrow cannot ask for a more complete assuagement than this — "Lord, show me that thou hast graven me upon the palms of thy hands."

III. And now we come to the last point, upon which only a hint. I said the last point would be to EXCITE YOU TO THE DUTY WHICH SUCH A TEXT SUGGESTS.

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, if you be partakers of this inestimably precious text, let me say, first of all, *is it not your duty to leave your cares behind you to-day?* We do not want any valuables left behind in the chapel, but these cares can be swept out to-morrow morning when the women clear away the rubbish, and I am sure the dustbin never contained viler druff. Leave them here to-day. What are you fretting about? Is not a Christian inconsistent when he is full of carking care? Should not the fact that God always graciously and tenderly recollects you, compel you once for all to leave your burden with him who careth for you?

*"The Lord our leader goes before,
Sufficient he, and none besides;
And were the dangers many more,
We need not fear with such a
guide.*

*Through snares through dangers, and through foes
He leads, whose arm almighty is;
What, then, if earth and hell oppose!
We need not fear if we are his."*

Then, if you must not have cares, I think *you should not have those deep sorrows and despairs*. Lift up your head. Jehovah remembers thee, man. The billows cannot drown him whom the Lord of Hosts ordains to bring to shore. Be glad in thy God, and his perfect love. Dost thou not think that joy becomes a man to whom such a text as this belongs? Wipe thy brow. 'Tis true, the sweat stands on it, but thy greatest labor is done; Christ has finished it for thee. There need, at least, be no sweat of trepidation and alarm upon thy face. He cannot forget thee; thou hast what angels envy thee; thou nest what poor mourning souls would give their eyes to win — what troubled consciences would give their blood to buy. Be glad. Why should the children of such a lying go mourning any one of their days? Now lift up your heads, and bathe them in the sunlight of God; take the oil

of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. I am certain that the man who wears such a gold chain about his neck, need not bear the rags of penury; the man who wears such a diamond coronet as this upon his brow, ought not to behave like a poor beggar in the streets. Go not clothed in rags of mourning, but put on the scarlet and fine linen of thanksgiving, since God giveth thee this consolation, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

One thing more, and that is, *if this text is not yours, how your mouths ought to water after it.* It is wrong to covet, but not to covet such a thing as this. "Covet earnestly the best gifts." Is there a soul here who says, "O that I had a part and lot in this matter! Would God that I were saved, that I were written in the palms of Jesu's hands?" Poor soul, if thou desirest Christ, he desires thee. If thou hast a spark of love to him, his soul is like a fiery furnace of love toward thee, and thou mayest have his pardoning love shed abroad this morning. "How?" sayest thou. "Whosoever believeth on him shall never perish." To believe is to trust, and if thou trustest confidently, simply, just as a child trusts to its mother's arms, thou shalt find that he will never fail thy trust nor prove untrue to thy confidence. May God bring thee to know thyself, and to know the sweetness of this blessed, blessed text, which overwhelms and destroys all power of speech in me, and makes me feel the poverty of my thoughts and language.

God bless you, for Jesu's sake.

THE YOUNG MAN'S PRAYER.

NO. 513

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 7TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice
and be glad all our days.” — Psalm 90:14.*

ISRAEL had suffered a long night of affliction. Dense was the darkness while they abode in Egypt, and cheerless was the glimmering twilight of that wilderness which was covered with their graves. Amidst a thousand miracles of mercy, what must have been the sorrows of a camp in which every halt was marked with many burials, until the whole track was a long cemetery? I suppose that the mortality in the camp of Israel was never less than fifty each day — if not three times that number — so that they learned experimentally that verse of the Psalm, “For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.” Theirs was the weary march of men who wander about in search of tombs; they traveled towards a land which they could never reach, weary with a work the result of which only their children should receive. You may easily understand how these troubled ones longed for the time when the true day of Israel should dawn, when the black midnight of Egypt and the dark twilight of the wilderness should both give way to the rising sun of the settled rest in Canaan. Most fitly was the prayer offered by Moses — the representative man of all that host — “O satisfy us early with thy mercy;” hasten the time when we shall come to our promised rest; bring on speedily the season when we shall sit under own vine and our own fig-tree, “and shall rejoice and be glad all our days.”

This prayer falls from the lips of yonder brother, whose rough pathway for many a mile has descended into the Valley of Deathshade. Loss after loss

has he experienced, till as in Job's case, the messengers of evil have trodden upon one another's heels. His griefs are new every morning, and his trials fresh every evening. Friends forsake him and prove to be deceitful brooks; God breaks him with a tempest; he finds no pause in the ceaseless shower of his troubles. Nevertheless, his hope is not extinguished, and his constant faith lays hold upon the promise, that "weeping, may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" He understandeth that God will not always chide, neither doth he keep his anger for ever; therefore he watcheth for deliverance even as they that watch for the morning, and his most appropriate cry is, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, show thy marvellous lovingkindness in this present hour of need. O my God, make haste to help me, be thou a very present help in time of trouble; fly thou to my relief lest I perish from the land; awake, for my rescue, that I may rejoice and be glad all my days."

See yonder sick bed! Tread lightly, lest perchance you disturb the brief slumbers of that daughter of affliction. She has tossed to and fro days and nights without number, counting her minutes by her pains, and numbering her hours with the paroxysms of her agony. From that couch of suffering where many diseases have conspired to torment the frail body of this child of woe, where the soul itself has grown weary of life, and longs for the wings of a dove, methinks this prayer may well arise, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy." "When will the eternal day break upon my long night? When will the shadows flee away? Sweet Sun of Glory! when wilt thou rise with healing beneath thy wings? I shall be satisfied when I wake up in thy likeness, O Lord; hasten that joyful hour; give me a speedy deliverance from my bed of weakness, that I may rejoice and be glad throughout eternal days."

Methinks the prayer would be equally appropriate from many a distressed conscience where conviction of sin has rolled heavily over the soul, till the bones are sore vexed, and the spirit is overwhelmed. That poor heart indulges the hope that Jesus Christ will one day comfort it, and become its salvation: it has a humble hope that these woundings will not last for ever but shall all be healed by mercy's hand; that he who looseth the bands of Orion will one day deliver the prisoner out of his captivity. Oh! conscience-stricken sinner, thou mayest on thy knees now cry out — "O satisfy me early with thy mercy; keep me not always in this house of bondage; let me not plunge for ever in this slough of despondage; set my feet upon a rock;

wash me from my iniquities; clothe me with garments of salvation, and put the new song into my mouth, that I may rejoice and be glad all my days.”

Still it appears to me that without straining so much as one word even in the slightest degree, I may take my text this morning as the prayer of a young heart, expressing its desire for present salvation. To you, young men and maidens, shall I address myself, and may the good Spirit cause you in the days of your youth to remember your Creator, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when you shall say, we have no pleasure in them. I hope the angel of the Lord has said unto me “Run, speak to that young man,” and that like the good housewife in the Proverbs, I shall have a portion also for the maidens!

I shall use the text in two ways, first, *as the ground of my address to the young*; and then, secondly, *as a model for your address to God*.

I. WE WILL MAKE OUR TEXT THE GROUND WORK OF A SOLEMN PLEADING WITH YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN TO GIVE THEIR HEARTS TO CHRIST THIS DAY.

The voice of wisdom reminds you in this our text, that you are not pure in God’s sight, but NEED HIS MERCY. Early as it is with you, you must come before God on the same footing as those who seek him at the eleventh hour. Here is nothing said about merit, nothing concerning the natural innocency of youth, and the beauty of the juvenile character. You are not thus flattered and deceived; but Holy Scripture guides you aright, by dictating to you an evangelical prayer, such as God will deign to accept — “O satisfy us early *with thy mercy*.” Young man, though as yet no outward crimes have stained your character, yet your salvation must be the work of reigning grace, and that for several reasons. *Your nature is at the present moment full of sin, and saturated with iniquity*, and hence you are the object of God’s most righteous anger. How can he meet an heir of wrath on terms of justice; his holiness cannot endure you. What if you be made an heir of glory, will not this be grace and grace alone. If ever you are made meet to be a partaker with the saints in light, this must surely be love’s own work. Inasmuch as your nature, altogether apart from your actions, deserves God’s reprobation, it is mercy which spares you, and if the Lord be pleased to renew your heart, it will be to the praise of the glory of his grace. Be not proud, repel not this certain truth, that you are an alien, a stranger, an enemy, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, by nature an heir of wrath, even as others; yield to its force, and seek that mercy which is as

really needed by you as by the hoary-headed villain who rots into his grave, festering with debauchery and lust.

*“True you are young, but there’s a stone
Within the youngest breast;
Or half the crimes which you have done
Would rob you of your rest.”*

Besides, your conscience reminds you that your outward lives *have not been what they should be*. How soon did we begin to sin! Whilst we were yet little children we went astray from the womb, speaking lies. How rebellious we were! How we chose our own will and way, and would by no means submit ourselves to our parents! How in our riper youth we thought it sport to scatter fire-brands, and carry the hot coals of sin in our bosom. We played with the serpent, charmed with its azure scales, but forgetful of its poisoned fangs. Far be it from us to boast with the Pharisee — “Lord, I thank thee that I am not as others;” but rather let the youngest pray with the publican — “God be merciful to me a sinner.” A little child, but seven years of age, cried when under conviction of sin — “Can the Lord have mercy upon such a great sinner as I am, who have lived seven years without fearing and loving him?” Ah! my friends, if this babe could thus lament, what should be the repentance of those who are fifteen, or sixteen, or seventeen, or eighteen, or twenty, or who have passed the year of manhood. What shall you say, since you have lived so long, wasting your precious days — more priceless than pearls, neglecting those golden years, despising divine things, and continuing in rebellion against God? Lord, thou knowest that young though we be, we have multitudes of sins to confess, and therefore it is mercy, mercy, mercy, which we crave at thy hands. Remember, beloved young friends, that if you be saved in the morning of life, *you will be wonderful instances of preventing mercy*. It is great mercy which blots out sin, but who shall say that it is not equally great mercy which prevents it? To bring home yonder sheep which has long gone astray, with its wool all torn, its flesh bleeding, and its bones broken, manifests the tender care of the good Shepherd; but, oh! to reclaim the lamb at the commencement of its strayings, to put it into the fold, and to keep it there, and nurture it. What a million mercies are here compressed into one! The young saint may sweetly sing —

*“I still had wander’d but for thee;
Lord, ’twas thine own all-powerful word,
Sin’s fetters broke, and set me free,
Henceforth to own thee as my Lord.”*

To pluck the sere brand from out of the fire when it is black and scorched with the flame, there are depths of mercy here; but are there not heights of love, when the young wood is planted in the courts of the Lord and made to flourish as a cedar? However soon we are saved, the glory of perfection has departed from us, but how happy is he who tarries but a few years in a state of nature; as if the fall and the rising again walked hand in hand. No soul is without spot or wrinkle, but some stains are spots the young believer is happily delivered from. Habits of vice and continuance in crime he has not known. He never knew the drunkard’s raging thirst; the black oath of the shearer never cancered his mouth. This younger son has not been long in the far country; he comes back before he has long fed the swine. He has been black in the sight of God, but in the eyes of men and in the open vision of onlookers, the young believer seems as if he had never gone astray. Here is great mercy, mercy for which heaven is to be praised for ever and ever. This, methinks, I may call *distinguishing* grace with an emphasis. All election distinguishes, and all grace is discriminating; but that grace which adopts the young child so early, is distinguishing in the highest degree. As Jenubath, the young son of Hadad, was brought up in the court of Pharaoh and weaned in the kings palace, so are some saints sanctified from the womb. Happy is it for any young man, an elect one out of the elect is he, if he be weaned upon the knees of piety and candled upon the lap of holiness; if he be lighted to his bed with the lamps of the sanctuary and lulled to his sleep with the name of Jesus! If I may breathe a prayer in public for my children, let them be clothed with a little ephod, like young Samuel, and nourished in the chambers of the temple, like the young prince Joash. O my dear young friends, it is mercy, mercy in a distinguishing and peculiar degree, to be saved early, because of your fallen nature, because of sin committed, and yet more because of sin prevented, and distinguishing favor bestowed.

2. But I have another reason for endeavoring to plead with the young this morning, hoping that the Spirit of God will plead with them. I remark that salvation, if it comes to you, must not only be mercy, *but it must be mercy through the cross*. I infer that from the text, because the text desires it to be a satisfying mercy, and there is no mercy which ever can satisfy a sinner,

but mercy through the cross of Christ. Many a mercy apart from the cross. Many say that God is merciful, and therefore surely he will not condemn them; but in the pangs of death, and in the terrors of conscience, the uncovenanted mercy of God is no solace to the soul. Some proclaim a mercy which is dependant upon human effort, human goodness, or merit, but no soul ever yet did or could find any lasting satisfaction in this delusion. Mercy by mere ceremonies, mercy by outward ordinances, is but a mockery of human thirst. Like Tantalus, who is mocked by the receding waters, so is the ceremonialist who tries to drink where he finds all comfort flying from him. Young man, the cross of Christ has that in it which can give you solid, satisfying comfort, if you put your trust in it. It can satisfy *your judgement*. What more logical than the great doctrine of substitution? — God so terribly just that he will by no means spare the guilty, and that justice wholly met by him who stood in the room, place, and stead of his people! Here is that which will satisfy your *conscience*. Your conscience knows that God must punish you; it is one of those truths which God stamped upon it when he first made you what you are; but when your soul sees Christ punished instead of you, it pillows its head right softly. There is no resting place for conscience but at the cross. Priests may preach what they will, and philosophers may imagine what they please, but there is in the conscience of man, in its unrestingness, an indication that the cross of Christ must have come from God, because that conscience never ceases from its disquiet till it hides in the wounds of the Crucified. Never again shall conscience alarm you with dreadful thoughts of the wrath to come, if you lay hold of that mercy which is revealed in Jesus Christ. Here, too, is satisfaction *for all your fears*. Do they pursue you to-day like a pack of hungry dogs in full pursuit of the stag? Fly to Christ and your fears have vanished! What has that man to fear for whom Jesus died? Need he alarm himself when Christ standeth in his stead before the eternal throne and pleadeth there for him? Here, too, is satisfaction *for your hopes*. He that getteth Christ getteth all the future wrapped up in him. While

***“There’s pardon for transgressions past;
It matters not how black their cast,”***

There are also peace, and joy, and safety for all the years and for all the eternity to come in the same Christ Jesus who has put away your sin. Oh! I would young man, I would young woman, that you would put your trust in Jesus now, for in him there is an answer to this prayer — “O satisfy us early with thy mercy.”

3. Furthermore, anxiously would I press this matter of a youthful faith upon you, *because you have a dissatisfaction even now*. Do I not speak the truth, when looking into the bright eyes of the gayest among you, I venture to say that you are not perfectly satisfied. You feel that something is lacking. My lad, your boyish games cannot quite satisfy you; there is a something in you more noble than toys and games can gratify. Young man, your pursuits of business furnish you with some considerable interest and amusement, but still there is an aching void — you know there is — and although pleasure promises to fill it, you have begun already to discover that you have a thirst which is not to be quenched with water, and a hunger which is not to be satisfied with bread. You know it is so. The other evening when you were quite alone, when you were quietly thinking matters over, you felt that this present world was not enough for you. The majesty of a mysterious longing which God had put in you lifted up itself and claimed to be heard! Did it not? The other day, after the party was over at which you had so enjoyed yourself, when it was all done, and everybody was gone and you were quite quiet, did you not feel that even if you had these things every day of your life, yet you could not be content? You want you know not what, but something you do want to fill your heart. We look back upon our younger days and think that they were far happier than our present state, and we sometimes fancy that we used to be satisfied then, but I believe that our thoughts imagine a great falsehood. I do from my soul confess that I never was satisfied till I came to Christ; when I was yet a child I had far more wretchedness than ever I have now; I will even add more weariness, more care, more heart-ache, than I know at this day. I may be singular in this confession, but I make it, and know it to be the truth. Since that dear hour when my soul cast itself on Jesus, I have found solid joy and peace, but before that all those supposed gaities of early youth, all the imagined ease and joy of boyhood, were but vanity and vexation of spirit to me. You do feel, if I know anything about you, that you are not quite satisfied now. Well, then, let me say to you again, that I would have you come to Jesus, for depend upon it there is that in Him which can thoroughly satisfy you. What can you want more to satisfy *your heart* than love to him? Our hearts all crave for an object upon which they may be set. We often surrender ourselves to an unworthy object which betrays us, or proves too narrow to accommodate our heart's desire. But if you love Jesus you will love one who deserves your warmest affection, who will amply repay your fullest confidence, and will never betray it. You say that not only does your heart want something, but your *head*. My

witness is that there is in the gospel of Christ the richest food for the brain. Before you know Christ you read, you search, you study, and you put what you learn into a wild chaos of useless confusion; but after you have found Christ, everything else that you learn is put in its proper place. You get Christ as the central sun, and then every science and fact begins to revolve round about him just as the planets travel in their perpetual circle around the central orb. Without Christ we are ignorant, but with him we understand the most excellent of sciences, and all others shall fall into their proper place. This is an age when, without a true faith in Christ, the young mind has a dreary pilgrimage before it. False guides are standing, arrayed in all sorts of garbs, ready to lead you first to doubt this book of Scripture, then to distrust the whole, then to mistrust God and Christ, and then to doubt your own existence, and to come into the dreary dream-land, where nothing is certain, but where everything is myth and fiction. Give your heart to Christ, young man, and he will furnish you with anchors and good anchor-hold to your mind, so that when stormy winds of scepticism sweep across the sea, and other barks are wrecked, you shall outride the storm and shall evermore be safe. It is a strange thing that people should be so long before they are satisfied. Look at some of my hearers to-day. They mean to be satisfied with money, and when they were apprentices they thought they should be so satisfied when they earned journeymen's wages; but they came to be journey-men, and then they were not satisfied till they were foremen; and then they felt they never should be satisfied till they had a concern of their own. They got a concern of their own, and took a house in the city, but then they felt they could not be content till they had taken the adjoining premises; then they had more advertising and more work to do, and now they begin to feel that they never shall be quite easy till they have purchased a snug little villa in the country. Yes, there are some here who have the villa, and handsome grounds, and so on; but they will not be satisfied till they see all their children married; and when they have seen all their children married, they will not be at rest then; they think they will, but they will not. There is always a something yet beyond. "Man never is, but always to be blessed," as Young puts it. There are Fortunate Isles for the mariner to reach, and failing these there is no haven for him even in the safest port. We know some, too, who instead of pursuing wealth, are looking after fame. They have been honored for that clever piece of writing, but they are emulous of more honor; they must write better still; and when they have achieved some degree of notoriety through a second attempt, they will feel that now they have a name to keep up, and they

must have that name widened, and the circle of their influence must extend. The fact is, that neither wealth, nor honor, nor anything that is of mortal birth can ever fill the insatiable, immortal soul of man. The heart of man has an everlasting hunger given to it, and if you could put worlds into its mouth it would still crave for more; it is so thirsty, that if all the rivers drained themselves into it, still, like the deep sea which is never full, the heart would yet cry out for more. Man is truly like the horse-leech; ever he says, "Give! give! give!" and until the Cross be given to the insatiable heart, till Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of him that filleth all in all, be bestowed, the heart of man never can be full. Where shall we find a satisfied man but in the Church of Christ? And in the Church of Christ I find him, not in the pulpit merely, where success and position might satisfy, but I find him in the pew humbly receiving the truth. I find him in the pew, not among the rich, where earthly comforts might tend to make him satisfied, but among the poor, where cold and nakedness might cause him to complain. I could point you to-day to the workman who earns every bit of bread he eats with more sweat of his brow than you would dream of, but he is content. I could point you to the poor work-girl who scarce earns enough to hold body and soul together, and yet in this house of God her heart often leaps for joy, for she is wholly resigned. I could show you the bedridden woman whose bones come through the skin through long lying upon a bed which friendship would fain make soft, but which is all too hard for her weakness, and yet she is content, though a parish pittance be all that is given her to feed upon. I say we have no need to exaggerate, or strain, or use hyperboles; we do find in the Church of Christ those who have been and are satisfied with the mercy of God. Now, would it not be a fine thing to begin life with being satisfied? There are some who do not end it with this attainment; they hunt after satisfaction till they come to their dying beds, and then do not find it at last; but oh! to begin life with being satisfied! Not to say at some future date I will be satisfied, but to be content now; not when I have climbed to such-and-such a pinnacle I shall have enough, but to have enough now, to begin with satisfaction before you launch upon a world of troubles! You may do so, my brother; you may do so, my young sister, if now with a true heart you look to him who hangs upon yonder cross, and commit your soul into his keeping, praying this prayer — "O satisfy us *early* with thy mercy."

The reason which our text gives I must comment upon for a moment. Our text says — "O satisfy us *early* with thy mercy; *that we may rejoice and be*

glad all our days.” We never rejoice in the true sense of the term; we never possess solid gladness, till we are satisfied with God’s mercy. It is all a mockery and a presence; the reality never comes to us till God’s mercy visits our heart; but after that what joy we know! Tell me that the Christian is miserable! O sir, you do not know what the Christian is. We need not appear before you with laughing faces, for our joy is deeper than yours, and needs not to tell itself out in immodest signs. The *poor* trader puts all his goods in the window, but the rich man hath rich stores even in the dark cellar; his warehouses are full, and he makes no show. Still waters run deep and we are sometimes still in our joy because of the depth of our delight. Say we are not happy! Sirs, we would not change one moment of our joy for a hundred years of yours! We hear your joy, and we understand that it is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, which crackle all the louder because they burn so furiously and will so soon be gone. But ours is a steady fire. We do mourn sometimes; we mourn oftener than we ought to do; we are free to confess this; but it is not our religion which makes us mourn; it is because we do not live up to it, for when we live up to it, and have the company of Jesus, we tell you

***“We would not change our blest estate
For all that earth calls good or great;
And while our faith can keep her hold,
We envy not the sinner’s gold.”***

Our sick-beds are often as the doorstep of heaven; even when we are cast down, there is a sweet solace in our sorrow, and a profound joy about our apparent grief which we would not give away; God gave it to us and the world cannot destroy it. They who love Jesus Christ early, have the best hope of enjoying the happiest days as Christians. *The will have the most service*, and the service of God is perfect delight. Their youthful vigor will enable them to do more than those who enlist when they are old and decrepit. The joy of the Lord is our strength; and on the other hand, to use our strength for God is a fountain of joy. Young man, if thou give fifty years of service unto God, surely thou shalt rejoice all thy days. The earlier we are converted, having the longer time to study in Christ’s college, *the more profound shall be our knowledge of him*. We shall have more time for communion, more years for fellowship. We shall have more seasons to prove the power of prayer, and more opportunities to test the fidelity of God than we should if we came late. Those who come late are blessed by being helped to learn so much, but those that come in early shall surely

outstrip them. Let me be young, like John, that I may have years of loving service, and like him may have much of intimate acquaintance with my Lord. Surely those who are converted early may reckon upon more joy, because *they never will have to contend with and to mourn over what later converts must know*. Your bones are not broken, you can run without weariness, you have not fallen as some have done, you can walk without fainting. Often the gray-headed man who is converted at sixty or seventy, finds the remembrance of his youthful sins clinging to him; when he would praise, an old lascivious song revives upon his memory; when he would mount up to heaven, he suddenly remembers some scene in a haunt of vice which he would be glad to forget. But you, saved by divine grace before you thus fall into the jaw of the lion, or under the paw of the bear, will certainly have cause for rejoicing all your life. If I may have heavenly music upon earth let me begin it now, Lord. Put not away the viol and the harp for my fingers when they tremble with age; let me use them while yet I am young. Now, Lord, if there be a banquet, do not bring me in at the fag-end of the feast, but let me begin to feast to-day. If I am to be married unto Jesus, let it not be when my hair is grey, but marry me to Jesus now. What better time for joy than to-day? Now shall my joys swell and grow like a river, which rolls on to a mightier breadth and depth as its course is prolonged! I shall rejoice and be glad in thee all my days, good Lord, if thou wilt now begin with me, in this the morning of my days.

I cannot put my thoughts together this morning as I could desire, but I still feel an earnest longing to shoot the arrow to its mark, and therefore, one or two stray thoughts before I turn to the prayer itself, and these shall be very brief. My dear young friends, you who are of my own age, or younger still, I beseech you ask to be satisfied with God's mercy early, *for you may die early*. It has been our grief this week, to stand by the open grave of one who was, alas! too soon, as we thought, snatched away to heaven. You may never number the full ripe years of manhood. We say that our years are threescore and ten, but to you they may not even be a score; your sun may go down while it is yet noon. God often reaps his corn green; long before the autumn comes he cuts down his sheaves. "Because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God." Then, on the other hand, if you should live; *in whose service could you spend your days better than in the service of God?* What more happy employment, what more blessed position than to be found, like Samuel, a waiting servant upon God while yet you need a mother's care. *Remember hour early temptations beset you*. Would you

not wish to secure your early days? And how can you cleanse your ways, except by taking heed unto them according to God's Word? Do you not know, too, *that the Church wants you?* Your young blood shall keep her veins full of vigor, and make her sinews strong. *Should not the love of Jesus Christ win you?* If he died and shed his blood for men, does he not deserve their best service? Would you desire to give to God an offering of the fag-end of your days? What would you have thought of the Jew who brought an old bullock — who, after having used an ox in his own fields till it was worn out, should then consecrate it to God? Let the lambs be offered; let the firstlings of the herd be brought; let God have the first sheaves of the harvest. Surely he deserves something better than to have the devil's leavings put upon his holy altar! "Oh! but," you say, "would he accept me if I came to him early?" Why, you have more promises than the old man has. It is written that God will be found of them that seek him, but it is specially written, "They that seek me early shall find me." You have a peculiar promise given to you. If there were any who could be rejected, it could not by any possibility be the young. If there were one whom Jesus Christ could leave, it would not be you, for he gathereth the lambs in his bosom. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." May not that cheer you, however young you be? Jesus Christ loves to see young men and maidens join in his praise. We find that the best of saints in the Old and New Testament were those who came to Jesus young. Certain it is, that the pick and cream of the Church in modern times will be found among those who are early converts. Look at those who are Church officials and ministers, and in most cases — and the exception only proves the rule — in most cases the leaders in our Israel are those who, as young Hannibal was devoted by his parents to the great cause of his country, were devoted by their parents to the great cause of Zion and to the interests of Jerusalem. If you would be strong for God, eminent in his service, and joyful in his ways, if you would understand the heights and depths of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, if you would give yourselves before your bones are broken and before your spirit has become tinctured through and through with habits of iniquity, then offer this prayer — "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

II. And now very briefly we shall take the text as YOUR ADDRESS TO GOD.

Every word here is significant. “*O*.” This teaches us *that the prayer is to be earnest*. I will suppose that I have led some of you young people here now to breathe this prayer to God. Am I so unhappy as to suppose that none of you will do it? Are there not some who now say, “I will with my whole heart, God the Holy Spirit helping me, now in my pew offer this supplication to heaven.” It begins with an “*O*.” Dull prayers will never reach God’s throne. What comes from our heart coldly can never get to God’s heart. Dull, dead prayers, ask God to deny them. We must pray out of our very souls. The soul of our prayer must be the prayer of our soul. “*O* satisfy us.” Young man, the Lord is willing to open the door to those who knock, but you must knock hard. He is fully prepared to give to those who ask, but you must ask earnestly. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. It is not a gentle grasp which will avail; you must *wrestle* with the angel. Give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till you have found the Savior. Remember, if you do but find him, it will well repay you though you shed drops of blood in the pursuit. If instead of tears you had given your heart’s gore, and if instead of sighs you were to give the shrieks of a martyr, it would well recompense you if you did but find Jesus; therefore be earnest. If you find him not, remember you perish, and perish with a great destruction; the wrath of God abideth on you, and hell must be your portion; therefore as one that pleadeth for his life so plead for mercy. Throw your whole spirit into it, and let that spirit be heated to a glowing heat. Be not satisfied to stand at the foot of the throne, and say, “Let God save me if he will.” No, but put it thus, “Lord, I cannot take a denial; *O* satisfy me; *O* save me.” Such a prayer is sure to be accepted.

Again, *make it a generous prayer*, when you are at it. “*O* satisfy us early!” I am glad to see among our young sisters in the catechumen class, such a spirit of love for one another, so that when one is converted she is sure to look round for another, the scores in that class who have found the Lord are always searching out some stray young woman in the street, or some hopeful ones attending the congregation, whom they try to bring in, that Jesus may be glorified. The very first duty of a convert is to labor for the conversion of others, and surely it will not spoil thy prayer, young man, if when thou art praying for thyself, thou wilt put it in the plural — “*O* satisfy us.” Pray for your brothers and sisters. I am sure we are verily guilty in this thing. Those that sprang from the same loins as ourselves, would to God that they were all saved with the same salvation. You may, some of you, be happy enough to be members of a family in which all are converted. Oh

that we could all say the same! May the remembrance of this text provoke you and me to pray for unconverted brothers and sisters more than we have ever done. “O satisfy *us*,” if thou hast brought in the eldest, Lord, stay not till the youngest be converted; if my brother preaches the Word, if my sister rejoices in thy fear then let other sisters know and taste of thy love. You young people in shops, in warehouses, in factories, pray this prayer, and do not exclude even those who have begun to blaspheme, but even in their early youth pray for them — “O satisfy *us* with thy mercy.”

See to it, dear friends, in the next place *that your prayer be thoroughly evangelical*. “O satisfy us early with thy mercy.” The prayer of the publican is the model for us all. No matter how amiable or how excellent we may be, we must all come together and say, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” Do not come with any hereditary godliness; do not approach the Lord with the fact of your infant sprinkling; do not come before him to plead your mother’s covenant. Come as a sinner, as a black, foul, filthy sinner, having nought to rely on or to trust to but the merit of God in Christ Jesus; and let the prayer be just such as a thief might offer or a prostitute might present — “O satisfy us early with thy mercy.”

Let the prayer be put up now *at once*. The text says, “O satisfy us *early*.” Why not to day? Oh that it had been done years ago! But there was time enough you thought. There is time enough, but there is none to spare. Acquaint thyself *now* with God, and be at peace. “To day is the accepted time; to day is the day of salvation.” I would to God we would not pray our prayers meaning to have them heard so late. Let it be — “O satisfy us *early*.” The man who truly repents always wants to have pardon on the spot; he feels as if he could not rise from his knees till God has been favorable to him, and mark you, when a man has really come to that point that he must be saved now or else he feels that it will be too late, then has come the solemn juncture when God will say — “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

I must leave this poor sermon of mine with the people of God to pray over it. Sometimes when most I long to plead with men’s souls I find the brain distracted although the heart is warm. God knoweth could I plead with the young I would do it even unto tears. I do feel it such a solemn thing for our country. Happy shall she be if her sons and daughters give their young days to God! It will be such a blessed thing for London, if our young men in business and our young, women in families become missionaries for Christ.

But what a happy thing it will be for them! What joy shall they know! What transports shall they feel! What a blessing will they be to their households! What happy families they will be! Unconverted fathers shall be made to feel the power of godliness through their daughters, and mothers who despise religion shall not dare to neglect it any longer because they see it exemplified and illustrated in their sons. We want missionaries everywhere. This great city never can by any possibility become the Lord's except by individual action. We must have all Christians at work, and since we cannot get the old ones to work as we would; since preach as we may, they will settle on their lees, we long for new recruits, whose ardor shall rekindle the dying enthusiasm of the seniors. We want to see fresh minds come in all a-glow with holy fervor to keep the fire still blazing on the altar. For Jesus Christ's sake I do implore you, you who number but few years, offer this supplication in your pew. Do it now. It is a brother's heart that begs the favor. It is for your own soul's sake, that you may be blessed on earth, and that you may have the joys of heaven. There is a prayer-hearing God. The mercy-seat is still open. Christ still waits. May the Spirit of God compel you now to come before him in supplication. Now may he compel you to come in, with this as your cry — "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

TELL IT ALL.

NO. 514

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 14TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.” — Mark 5:33.

JESUS was pressing through the throng to the house of Jairus to raise the ruler's dead daughter; but he is so profuse in goodness that he works another miracle while upon the road. While yet this rod of Aaron bears the blossom of an unaccomplished wonder, it yields the ripe almonds of a perfect work of mercy. It is enough for us, if we have some one purpose, straightway to go and accomplish it; it were imprudent to expend our energies by the way. Hastening to the rescue of a drowning friend, we cannot afford to exhaust our strength upon another in like danger. It is enough for a tree to yield one sort of fruit, and for a man to fulfill his own peculiar calling. But our Master knows no limit of power or boundary of mission. He is so prolific of grace, that like the sun which shines as it fulfils its course, his path is radiant with lovingkindness. He is a fiery arrow of love, which not only reaches its ordained target, but perfumes the air through which it flies. Virtue is always going out of Jesus, as sweet odours exhale from the flowers; and it always will be emanating from him, as light from the central orb. What delightful encouragement this truth affords us. If our Lord is so ready to heal the sick and bless the needy, then my soul be not thou slow to put thyself in his way, that he may smile on thee! Be not slack in asking, if he be so abundant in bestowing! I will give earnest heed to his word this morning, for it may be, though the sermon should be mainly intended to bless another, yet incidentally, and by the way, Jesus may speak through it to my soul. Men speak of killing two birds with one stone, but my Lord heals many souls on one journey. May he not heal me?

Thou Son of David turn thine eye and look upon my distress, and let me be made whole this day!

The afflicted woman in the narrative came behind Jesus in the press and won a cure from him — all unobserved by the multitude. Ah, how many there may be in the crowd who are really healed by Jesus Christ, but concerning whom little or nothing is known! It is delightful to *see* conversion-work, to trace the good hand of the Lord, and to rejoice therein; but, beyond a doubt, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, we shall find that Jesus Christ has wrought ten times more wonders than eye hath seen or ear heard. We must not dream that we know all that our infinite God is doing. The works of the Lord are great, and are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein, but even these seekers see not all.

*“Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom’d caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”*

Let each timid hearer now say — “If it be so that there are many who receive God’s grace, who through much trembling hide themselves from the eyes of men, may it not be so with me — may I not this morning venture secretly to touch the Lord, and since the virtue streams abundantly from him, may I not hope that he will bless me; even me, unknown, unnoticed though I be.”

I commence with these two or three notes of encouragement, just to tune my harp, for I desire to sing a song to the Lord’s well-beloved, of which the burden shall be — “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.” The story of this trembling woman, from first to last, though it is but a piece of by-play, as I have said before, is one of the most touching and teaching of the Savior’s miracles. The woman was very ignorant. She fondly imagined that virtue came out of Christ by a law of necessity, without his knowledge or direct will. She supposed that the holiness and divinity of his nature had communicated a mysterious efficacy to his garments. Just as the bones of Elisha had restored a dead man to life, so she conceived that the garments worn upon the living body of the Savior might remove her sickness. She had true faith, but there was, to say the least, a tinge of superstition in it. Moreover, she was a total stranger to the generosity of Jesus’ character, or else she would not have gone behind to steal the cure which he was so

ready to bestow. Misery should always place itself right in the face of mercy. Had she known the love of Jesus' heart she would have said — "I have but to put myself where he can see me, his omniscience will teach him my case, and his love at once will work my cure." We admire her faith, but we marvel at her strange ignorance; for how could she imagine that she would be hidden from one whose garment could stanch her issue of blood. He who could cure her secret malady could certainly perceive her secret touch. After she had obtained the cure she rejoices with trembling; glad was she that the divine virtue had wrought a marvel in her, but she feared lest Christ should retract the blessing, and put a negative upon the grant of his grace. How sad that she should have such unworthy ideas of our gracious Master; little did she comprehend the fullness of his love. You and I have not so clear a view of him as we could wish; we know not the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of his love, but we know him better than she did — at least we know of a surety that he is too good to withdraw from a trembling soul the gift which it has been able to obtain.

But here is the marvel of it; little as was her knowledge, great as was her unbelief, and astounding as was her misconception of our Lord, yet her faith, because it was real faith, saved her. If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, there is life in that grain, and die it cannot. A ray of faith ensures complete deliverance from the blackness of darkness for ever. If in the list of the Lord's children you and I are written, as the feeblest of the family, yet being children, and heirs through faith, no power, human or devilish, can reverse our adoption. If we cannot clasp the Lord in our hands with Simeon, if we dare not to lean our heads upon his bosom with John, yet if we can venture in the press behind him, and touch the hem of his garment, we are made whole. Courage, ye that are so timid that ye seldom read your titles clear to mansions in the skies, the title is none the less sure, because you cannot read it. I would to God your faith were stronger, but God forbid that I should wound your sensitive spirits, and discourage your growing hopes; my Master quenched not the smoking flax; he broke not the bruised reed; neither must the servant do so. I had rather see you, with all your timidity, exercising a real faith in Jesus, than I would have to mourn over you, as lifted up with rash presumptuous confidence, without a solid ground for your boldness. Better to go limping to heaven than running to hell. Better to enter into life halt or maimed, than having two hands and two feet to be cast into hell fire. Courage, I say, thou trembler. To cry "Abba," with tears and groans, is better than to shout with loud boastings, "Peace, Peace," where there is no peace. Happier far to be

folded with the tender lambs than to be driven away with the strong and lusty goats.

Now let us turn aside to hear this woman preach. She has a word for two classes. First, *to the penitent*, urging him to a full confession. "She told him all the truth" — penitent do thou the same. Next, *to the true convert*, an exhortation to an open profession; for she declared before them all how she had been made whole. Secret disciple — "Go and do thou likewise."

I. This timid woman shall be AN EXAMPLE TO PENITENTS to make a full avowal of their state and condition. "She told him all the truth." There need be no difficulty about the matter of prayer with a soul that needs help from Christ. Never question your power to pray acceptably if God has given you a sense of need. Say not — "I have no eloquence; I cannot arrange my words; I cannot fashion a suitable form of extemporaneous address." Remember that none of these things are necessary. All that is wanted for acceptable prayer is, that in the name of Jesus, you will tell the Lord all the truth. You require no argument more moving than your misery; you need no description more glowing than your sad case itself affords you. Though you know not how to plead your cause as an advocate in a court of law, plead it as the publican in the court of mercy; the simple statement of your wants, and the sincere expression of your desire that those wants should be supplied, for Jesus' sake, is all the prayer that God asks of you.

We should, dear friends, if we would come before the Lord acceptably, tell him all the truth about *our disease*. This woman did so. Her malady was such that her modesty had prompted her to conceal it from the throng, but she must not hide it from Jesus. Her disease had rendered her unclean, so that she had no right to mingle with the crowd, since her touch defiled all who touched her. All this defilement she must own in the presence of the Healing One, nor must she now her Lord demands it, hide it from the multitude who are round about her. Not to gloat over sin, but to show how sensible we are of it, we ought to make a full declaration of our disease to Jesus, and when he wills it, we must conceal from no one what sinners we were until grace reclaimed us. Sin is our disease. Sinner, acknowledge it. Go, show thyself, in all thy foulness, to the Great High Priest. Confess the depravity of your nature, tell him that thy whole head is sick, and thy whole heart is faint. Do not draw the picture flatteringly when thou art in prayer. Confess that thy thoughts are foul, thy imaginations filthy, thy heart

corrupt, and thy judgment perverted. Tell him that thy memory will treasure up foolishness, but that it drops the words of wisdom from its feeble hand. Tell him thou art altogether as an unclean thing, and that all thy righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Make a clean breast of thy overt acts. Tell him, when thou art alone in thy closet, precisely what thou hast done. Do not disguise thy crimes, nor mince matters by using dainty terms. If thou hast been a thief, tell him so; if thou hast been a drunkard, confess it not thus — “Lord, I have sometimes indulged the flesh;” but say, “Lord, I have been drunk.” Put it plainly. Acknowledge it in thy privacy before God by its own proper name. It is a great temptation of Satan with convinced souls, to induce them to apply grand titles to their sins. I pray thee do not so. Acknowledge, sinner, just what thou hast been, and wear the sackcloth and ashes which befit thy state. Call a spade a spade, and go not about trimming thy way. This is not the time for your Agags to go delicately; they must be hewed in pieces before the Lord your God. Confess the aggravations of your sin; conceal not from God that you sinned against light and knowledge; against many warnings, and the strivings of an awakened conscience. Do not hesitate to acknowledge that you have wiped away the tear which the gospel forced from you, and have gone once again into the world’s sin, and lost every good impression. It is well for us if we are seeking mercy of God, to state the worst of our case and not the best. It is a sure sign that mercy will soon come, when we are ready to confess to the full our misery. O sinner, where art thou? Hast thou been before my God in prayer? Go again, and be more full and clear in thy confession; thou canst not describe thy case in terms too black. It is not possible for thee to exaggerate either thy natural or acquired guilt. Thou art a wretch undone without his sovereign grace; tell him so; and if thou canst find no words, let the groans and sighs and sobs of confession pour forth from thee, for it is the heart and soul of true and sincere prayer to lay yourself in the dust at Jesus’ feet, and tell him all the truth.

The woman next told the Lord *of her sufferings*. The peculiar disease with which she had been afflicted, drained away her strength. She must have presented a most emaciated appearance; there was no flush of health upon her hollow cheek; her gait was that of utter weakness. The toil which her poverty compelled her to endure to earn a livelihood must have been very painful to her, for strength she had none. Her purse was drained by physicians and her heart by the flux of blood. Poor creature! we can little tell the days of languishing and the nights of pain she endured, and the

seasons of despondency and despair which would come upon her spirit in consequence of the weakness of the flesh. But she told him all the truth; she told him briefly, but yet completely, all she had endured. Tried soul! thou with whom God's Spirit is at work, tell the Lord, if thou wouldst pray aright, all thy sufferings; tell him how thy heart has been broken, how thy conscience has been alarmed; tell him how thy very sleep is scared with dreams, how thy days are made as black as though they were nights by a want of hope; tell him that sin has become a torment to thee, that the places in which thou couldst once find pleasure, have now become howling wildernesses to thee; tell him the harp has lost its music, the cup its enticements, the table its charms, society its delights, for thou art full of thy own ways, and thy sins have become a burden to thee. Let your sorrows flow in briny floods before the Lord of hosts, for though no stranger can intermeddle with thy sorrow, yet thy God understandeth it. Tell him, then, tell him, troubled sinner, tell him all the truth.

Next, I am persuaded that this woman did not hesitate to tell him *of her futile attempts* after a cure. She had been to other physicians; she had suffered many things by them, that is to say, some of them had put her under various operations of the most painful character; and others had compelled her to drink medicine nauseous in the mouth and mischievous in the bowels. These ancient professors of physic had given her sleepless nights and days of exquisite anguish, all of which she might have borne with patience if she had been one whit the better; but she rather grew worse. Her doctors, it seems, were her worst disease; they added to the issue of her blood a waste of her money; they gave her consumption in her purse, and vexed her with the plagues of fees. Her substance might have yielded her many little comforts, and some extra nourishment to sustain her under the fearful drain upon her system; but the doctors sucked like vampires, and made an issue in her pockes more rapid than that in her person. She tells the Lord, although that confession was as good as saying, "Lord, I have been everywhere else, or else I should never have come to thee; I have tried everyone, and it is only because all others have failed that I present myself before thee." You would think such a confession as that would make him angry; but it was not so. I would not have you keep back this part of the tale from your Lord and Master. Tell him you have been to other physicians; remind him how you went to Moses, how he took you to the foot of Sinai, and made you exceedingly fear and quake, but never stanchd your wounds; tell him how you rested upon Mr. Civility, and his

father, Mr. Legality, who said they had skill to take the burden from your back; who set you this to do and that to do most irksomely, but never ministered one atom to your cure; tell him of your many prayers, and how you have trusted in them; tell him of your good works, and how you used to repose your confidence in them. You may spread before him the story of your infant sprinkling, your confirmation, your Church-going, your Chapel-going; tell him how you were always up to early prayers, and kept the saints'-days; how you tried to mortify the body and to deny yourself many comforts; tell him how you did everything sooner than come *to him*; and say that even now, if you had not been forced to it, you would not have come, for you are so vile by nature, and so great an enemy to the cross of Christ, that you would not have come to him if you could have found a shadow of hope elsewhere. "Well," says one, "would that be praying?" Yes, dear brother; yes, dear sister, that is the soul of prayer, to tell him all the truth. We cannot expect that he will give us pardon till we make our confession fully and without any reserve. If thou wilt cover any sin in thine heart, thy sin shall condemn thee; if there be one secret corner of thy soul in which thou hidest away any of thy corruptions, or follies, there shall a cancer spring up which shall eat into thy very soul. Tell him all the truth; hide nothing from him, even this thy wicked, wilful pride in going after thine own righteousness, and not submitting thyself to the righteousness of Christ; tell him all the truth.

This poor woman told him *all her hopes*. She said with many a tear, "Lord Jesus, when I had spent my all, and could no longer run after the various physicians of different countries, I heard of thee. It was one evening as I lay on my couch, too faint to sit upright. A neighbor came and told me that a son of hers that had been born blind had received his sight; and she said that the same man, named Jesus of Galilee, a mighty prophet, had also restored one that was dead — a widow woman's son at the gates of Nain. Then I said in my heart, perhaps he will heal me; and my soul that had been given up to despair enjoyed for a moment a beam of hope, for my soul said, 'if it be possible for him to raise the dead, then he can stop my issue of blood; and if he did open the blind eyes, then he can restore me. I thought, if the journey be never so long I will take it; if the way be never so rough, if I may but creep into his presence I will be among the company, and, mayhap, when he is stretching out his hand to bless, he will bless me, even me; and perhaps the man is so full of healing virtue that if he will not look on me, yet if I get near enough to look on him I shall be made whole.'"

So she would tell him of that hope; the many disappointments that she met with when she was pressing through the throng; how the strong men jostled her and the rough men pushed her back; how the thoughtless many told her to be gone, and the zealous few were jealous of her place, and struggled to get before her. She would tell him how at last she did come near enough to touch the ravelling of his skirts, and how she ventured to touch in the hope that she would be made whole. Then she would plead that as she already felt a change for the better, she humbly hoped that he would not take away this omen of love, but that he would carry out the cure and send her away perfectly restored.

If you desire to pray aright, pour out your hopes before the Lord. I remember when I sought the Lord, I said to him, "Lord, I have read in Scripture that thou didst hear Saul of Tarsus, and that thou didst save Manasses. I am a sinner it is true, great as they are; but surely thou canst save me; and my soul hopes that yet thou wilt, turn an eye of pity and say unto me, 'thy sins are forgiven'" Sometimes that hope grew so strong, that I felt as if I should be saved: I knew I should. Then, again, that hope went down so low that it seemed impossible that he could have pity upon me; and I remember I asked him how it was he could have buoyed me up with that fond hope, and put the Scriptures in such a way that they looked as if they were meant for me, and were sent to beckon me to Christ, and yet I could find no comfort in them. Now, you must do the same. Spread those disappointed hopes of yours before your God, and tell him all the truth.

But be sure you tell him also *your fears*. I dare say the woman said to him, "Oh, thou Son of David, I thought at one time it was foolish of me to come to thee, for I know, O Jesus of Nazareth, that thou art very careful concerning the law. Now the law says that a woman with an issue of blood is unclean, and I thought I had no right to come near to thee — that thou wouldest say to me, 'Woman, woman, how darest thou to mix with the throng and make all these people legally unclean? and what is this thy impudence that thou shouldest think of touching me? thou whose touch is a defiling one, how couldest thou venture to come near to me?' Lord, I thought of going back scores of times, but it was my necessity that made me bold; I felt I had no right to come; but come I must. When I did get the cure of thee, I touched thee surreptitiously without any invitation, without daring to do it before thy face, and now I am afraid thou wilt curse me, and say, 'Get thee gone,' and add another disease to me, and so break the back

that is already bent with a crushing load.” How soon her fears were removed when she had told them.

Now, poor sinner, tell all your fears, whatever they may be. You think your sins are too great. Tell him so. You fear you are not one of his chosen. Tell him so. You think that he has never called you. Tell him so. You believe that if you did come to him he would refuse you. Tell him so, if you dare; but I think you would hardly utter so flat a contradiction to his own words, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Do you feel your heart is so hard? Tell him it is like a nether millstone, that the adamant might melt before your heart would yield. Do you feel as if you could not tell him? Tell him that you feel as if you could not tell him. Whatever it is, let all the truth come out. No, no! you need not look into the Prayer-book, you will not find much there that suits a convinced sinner. You need not buy a book of family devotions; your own poor cries are better than the best written forms. “Oh, my prayer will be so broken!” Well, then, it will be all the more suitable for a broken heart, But then you say, “It is such an unworthy prayer.” Yes, but then you are an unworthy soul; the prayer is fitting for the person. If the Great God should hear you, you will know that it was not because of your prayer, but because of Jesus; for all you did was to tell him the truth; and if that prevails with him, why then his heart of love, and the sufferings of the Savior must have moved him to have pity upon you.

I pray God the Holy Spirit guide these words which are meant to encourage you who have been seeking Jesus. Let me urge you to tell the whole of the story for these reasons. *The Lord knows it all beforehand:* you cannot hide it. Whatever your sin may have been, though it was perpetrated at night, though it was under the shadow of the thickest darkness, he saw it all. Secret sins are all committed in the face of God. Was it a theft which no one has yet discovered? or was it only a thought, a black thought that no ear, not even thine own ever heard? God saw it: God heard it. In his book everything which thou hast done is recorded against thee. Be not foolish, then, deny not that which is published on the housetops of glory. The Judge will publish it at last. If thou hidest it all thy life-time, it will come out then. Go then, tell it — tell it now. *To tell this to God will be a very great service to thee.* It will tend to make thee feel thy need more. I believe that often when the penitent begins his confession, he is not half so sensible of guilt as at the close of his prayer. If thou wilt bring thy soul to look at thy sin, to study its foulness, to meditate upon its

heinous ingratitude, whilst thou art considering the subject, the Spirit of God will work upon thee, and thy heart, like the rock in the desert, smitten by this rod, shall gush with streams of penitence.

If your heart be very grieved, do I pray you, remember that confession is one of the most rapid ways of getting relief. While the banks hold good the lake swells; let them break, and the water is drained off. Let a vent be found for the swollen tarn up yonder on the mountains, and the mass of water which might otherwise inundate the valleys will flow in fertilizing streams. When you have a festering, gathering wound, the surgeon lets in the lances and gives you ease. So confession brings peace. Would to God without any delay thou who needest a Savior wouldst go to him and confess thy sin right plainly. Jesus is no hard-hearted foe, no cruel judge. He loves thee. Awakened sinner, he will love to hear that story of thine; and ere thou hast finished it, he will give thee the kiss of love, and say, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud thy transgressions." Trust the immense generosity of Jesus' infinitely tender heart to give thee thy soul's desire, the complete and perfect forgiveness of thy sin.

I have thus bidden this woman become the preacher of this morning, and speak to those who are penitent. May the Word be blessed.

II. We now change the subject for a very short time, to address THOSE WHO ARE CONVERTED, BUT WHO, LIKE THIS WOMAN, HAVE NOT YET ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR FAITH IN THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS.

Our Savior will do nothing by halves. The woman may be content with having her body healed, Jesus is not satisfied till her soul is recovered too. She has gained the cure, but she would probably go slinking away with the retiring multitude to hide herself from all observation. This will not be for her good, nor for the Master's honor, therefore he takes means to get a plain confession from her. Turning round, he says, "Who touched me?" At first, there is no answer. He puts it again, "Who touched me?" They all deny. Peter, moreover, takes upon him to upraid the Savior for asking so absurd a question: "The multitude throng thee," saith he, "how canst thou say, Who touched me?" But he looked round, and probably fixing his eye at last upon the woman herself, he said, "Somebody hath touched me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." That "somebody" came out of the crowd, and railing flat on her face, she declared before them all, so Luke says, what had been done in her.

Now, in the great work of salvation, as we have remarked aforetime, there are many who are saved who through timidity do not come forward and confess what Jesus Christ has done for them. I believe that our Lord often uses singular means to make his secret ones come out and acknowledge him, and the words I may speak just now, may be a part of his plan by which he will make yonder "somebody," whoever that may be, this sister somebody, this brother somebody, who hath touched him, come out and declare before all what the Lord hath done.

His reasons for constraining her to make an open confession, were doubtless three. *It was for his glory.*

***"Why should the wonders he hath wrought,
Be hid in darkness and forgot?"***

When I look abroad upon nature, it is true I do not see nature fussily trying to make itself tidy for a visitor, as some professors do, who, the moment they think they are going to be looked at, trim up their godliness to make it look smart. But on the other hand, nature is never bashful. She never tries to hide her beauties from the gazer's eye. You walk the valley; the sun is shining and a few raindrops are falling; yonder is the rainbow; a thousand eyes gaze at it. Does it fold up all its lovely colors and retire? Oh, no! it shrinks not from the eye of man. In yonder garden all the flowers are opening their bejewelled cups, the birds are singing, and the insects humming amid the leaves. It is a place so beautiful that God himself might walk therein at eventide, as he did in Eden. I look without alarming the bashful beauties of the garden. Do all these insects fold their wings and hide beneath the leaves; do the flowers hang down their heads; does the sun draw a veil over his modest face; does nature blush until the leaves of the trees are scarlet? Oh, no! Nature cares not for gazers, and when any come to look upon her, she doth not hasten to wrap a mantle over her fair form, or throw a curtain before her grandeur. So the Christian is not to be always wishing to expose what is in him; that were to make himself a Pharisee; yet, on the other hand, if God has put anything that is lovely and beautiful and of good repute in you, anything that may glorify the cross of Christ, and make the angels happy before the eternal throne, who are you that you should cover it? who are you that you should rob God of his praise? What! Would you have all nature's beauties hid? Why, then, hide the beauties of grace? Jesus Christ deserves to be confessed before men.

He is not ashamed to own himself our friend amidst the splendours of his

Father's court. Nor was he ashamed amidst the mockery and spitting of Pilate's hall. Why, then, should you find it a hardship or a difficulty to acknowledge *him*? Acknowledge him! I ought to feel proud of the honor to be allowed to acknowledge him! I, who am black, ashamed to call him husband who is the fairest of the children of men! — I, that am poor as poverty, blush to own that the King of kings calls himself my brother! — I, who deserve the deepest hell, I be ashamed, to own that Christ has washed me in his precious blood, and set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song into my mouth! My Master, I cannot be ashamed of thee? How can it be?

***“No, when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere his name!”***

My brother, my sister, you who keep in retirement and hide your candles under a bushel, you should not do so; for the sake of his dear name, who loved you with an everlasting love, and has graven you upon the palms of his hands, come forth and avow your faith.

Doubtless Christ would have her confession *for the good of Jairus*. Did that strike you? Jairus needed much faith. He was just informed that his child was dead. Some faith was wanted to believe that Christ could heal the sick; but that he could restore the dead! — what faith was needed here?

Therefore, this woman's confession is put in to nourish the faith of the trembling ruler of the synagogue. You do not know, dear friends, of how much service your open confession of Christ might be to some trembling soul. One reason why we have churches, and are joined in fellowship, is that we may help the weak; that by our daring to say “Christ has saved me,” others may take heart, and may come to him and find the same mercy. “Oh,” but you say, “the Church does not want me.” Then, *I* might say the same, and all Christians might say the same. Where would there be a visible Church on earth at all? What is right for one Christian to do is right for all to do; and if it is right for you to neglect professing Christ, then it is right for all believers to do so. And then, where is the Church? where is the ministry? where is Christ's truth? how are sinners to be saved at all?

Suppose, my brother, that John Calvin and Martin Luther had said — “Well now we know the truth; but we had better be quiet, for we can go to heaven much more comfortably. If we begin preaching we shall set all the world by the ears, and there will be a deal of mischief done; hundreds of persons will have to be martyrs for their faith, and we shall be subject to many hardships.” They had quite as much right to hide their religion as you

have. They had quite as much reason for the concealment of their godliness as you have. But, alas! for the world, where would have been the Reformation, if these had been as cowardly as you are, and like you had skulked to the rear in the day of battle.

I ask again, what would be the wretched lot of England, what calamities would happen to our island, if all who know Christ as you know him were to act as you do. There would be no ministers to preach the gospel! Why, I might to-day be sitting in my own house reading my Bible, or enjoying private prayer with much comfort; I certainly should not be pleading with sinners if I imitated your example. Where would be the deacons of our Churches, and other useful Church officers? Where? Echo only answers, "Where?" if all were like you. How would the heathen be converted? Who would be the missionary — who would venture among the heathen if they were like you? The Christian would be dumb and have no testimony; in fact, I must add there could be no Christians. Even if there could be a number of secret Christians everywhere, then the world would say, "The religion of Christ is the most despicable religion under the sun, for those who believe in it will not join together; they will not even profess it; they are so ashamed of their Master, that they will not come forward any of them to acknowledge what he has done for their souls." You are acting inconsistently, if you will not come forward and own your Lord. My dear brethren, do not shirk it! I mean some of you who have been attending here for years, and ought to have been members of this Church years ago; and I mean others of you who have come in here this morning, who have known the Lord some little time, and ought to be united with other Christians. I say, how much real good you might do after you had once broken through the shell, and had told to others what Jesus has done. You would find that after having once made a profession, you would be obliged to speak for your Lord, and who can tell what a career of usefulness might be opened up before you if you would but dare to do this for his sake.

Moreover, I have no doubt that the main reason why Jesus Christ would have this woman declare what was done in her was for her own good. Suppose he had let her go home quietly — there she goes — when she reached home she would have said, "Ah, I stole that cure; I am so glad I have it." But there would come a dark thought: "One of these days it will die away; I shall be as bad as ever, for I never asked Him." Conscience would say to her, "Ah, it was a theft;" and though she might excuse herself, still she would not be easy. Now Christ calls her up, and

conscience cannot disturb her, for *he gave* her the cure before them all. She will not be afraid of the return of her disease, for Jesus said, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.”

What a blessing it would be to some of you if you would come out and confess your Lord and Master. “Well,” saith one, “I do not like baptism.” There are a great many naughty children in the world who do not like to do what their father tells them; but those children often get whipped, and this will probably be your lot. Our good brother who spoke here last Sunday evening, astounded me by leaving out part of the text which he most frequently quoted. If he quoted a text he should quote it all. “He that believeth shall be saved,” said he. I know no such text in Scripture. There are texts very like it, and the doctrine is true; but the text is, “He that believeth *and is baptised* shall be saved.” So the text stands. Those of us who are Baptists are supposed to lay too much stress on Baptism. I think the danger is in not having stress enough upon it. I know this, if my Master tells me to preach the gospel to every creature, and puts it thus, “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved,” I dare not take the responsibility of leaving out part of my Master’s message. I know that he who believeth is saved; but, mark you, I would not run the risk of wilfully refusing to attend to the second part of my Master’s command. If there be anything in Scripture that is as plain as noonday, it is the baptism of believers. The deity of Christ is a point which might quite as readily be disputed as the baptism of believers in Jesus. Let any simple-minded man take the Bible without prejudice, and I conceive that it would be impossible for him to read it without discovering that the believer in Jesus is to be buried with Christ in baptism.

Little do our friends know how much mischief they do by teaching infant sprinkling. I believe it to be the root and pillar of Popery, the stronghold and bastion of Puseyism. It is an invention of man, against which Christians ought to protest every day, because infant sprinkling is a practical denial of the need of personal godliness. It is not so intended by those who use it; but it is so read and interpreted by the world. It puts into the Church those who are not in the Church. It gives religious rites to the unconverted. It teaches men that because their mothers and fathers were good people, therefore they are Christians; whereas they are not, they are heathens, and as much heathens as if they were born amidst the Hottentot’s kraals. They are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, notwithstanding all their parents’ excellence. To give Christian ordinances to unconverted

persons is to pervert the testimony of God's Church. The baptism of the believer in the name of Christ is and must be a significant emblem of death to the world. It is the crossing of the Rubicon, the throwing away of the scabbard, and the drawing of the sword against the world for ever. It is an ordinance whose sign can never be erased. An ordinance which disgraces and shames a man in the world's eye more than anything else, the opprobrium of Christianity, the scoff and scorn of his religion, is believer's baptism; and blessed is that man who so can look at it, and then for Jesu's sake take up his cross and follow him.

"Well," says one, "I do not see it." My dear brother, if you cannot see it, I cannot help that. Your conscience is not the rule of your duty, but God's Word is; and if God's Word commands it, whatever your conscience may say about it, you are sinning if you refuse to obey. Oh! I would press this point upon you of making an open declaration, and of doing so in Christ's way, for you have no right to do it in a way of your own. It is idolatry to worship the true God by a wrong method. Acceptable service can only be rendered to God in his own way. To the law and to the testimony; if we speak not according to that word, it is because there is no light in us. I believe that after you have once thus professed your faith before men your courage will grow; your separation from the world will be more complete. You will be a marked man, often a despised man. People will point you out and say, "There is one of your Methodists." Your profession will distinguish you from the world, and will be a bond to keep you right, a heavenly chain of gold to bind you fast to the principles of your Lord and Master's truth. Do, with this poor woman, tell all the truth, and tell it in your Master's way.

Now I send you away, dear friends, reminding penitents of that with which we began, the necessity of telling Jesus all; still wishing, however, that you who have found a Savior, would tell the world all, and bear your witness that, let others do as they will, as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord.

And unto the name of God be glory for ever. Amen.

THE SINNER'S ADVOCATE.

NO. 515

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 21ST,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” — 1 John 2:1.

THE Apostle John presents us with a very clear and emphatic testimony to the doctrine of full and free forgiveness of sin. He declares that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin, and that if any man sin, we have an Advocate. It is most evident that he is not afraid of doing mischief by stating this truth too broadly; on the contrary, he makes this statement with the view of promoting the sanctity of his “little children.” The object of this bold declaration of the love of the Father to his sinning children is “that ye sin not.” This is a triumphant answer to that grossly untruthful objection which is so often urged by the adversaries of the gospel against the doctrines of free grace — that they lead men to licentiousness. It does not appear that the Apostle John so thought, for in order that these “little children” should not sin, he actually declares unto them the very doctrine which our opponents call licentious. Those men who think that God's grace, when fully, fairly, and plainly preached, will lead men into sin, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. It is neither according to nature nor to grace for men to find an argument for sin in the goodness of God. Human nature is bad enough — and far be it from me to flatter that leprous criminal, that reeking mass of corruption — but even a natural conscience revolts at the baseness of sinning because grace abounds. Shall I hate God because he is kind to me? Shall I curse him because he blesses me? I venture to affirm that very few men reason thus. Man has found out many inventions, but such arguments are so

transparently abominable that few consciences are so dead as to tolerate them. Bad as human *nature* is, it seldom turns the goodness of God into an argument for rebelling against him; as for souls renewed by grace, they never can be guilty of such infamy. The believer in Jesus reasons in quite another fashion. Is God so good? — then I will not grieve him. Is he so ready to forgive my transgressions? — then I will love him and offend no more. Gratitude hath bands which are stronger than iron, although softer than silk. Think not, sirs, that the Christian needs to be fogged to virtue by the whip of the law! Dream not that we hate sin merely because of the hell which follows it! If there were no heaven for the righteous, the sons of God would follow after goodness, because their regenerated spirit pants for it; and if there were no hell for the wicked, from the necessity of his new-born nature the true Christian would strive to escape from all iniquity. Loved of God, we feel we must love him in return. Richly, yea, divinely forgiven, we feel that we cannot live any longer in sin. Since Jesus died to rid us from all uncleanness, we feel that we cannot crucify our Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame. We need no nobler or more cogent arguments to lead a man to thorough consecration to God's cause and detestation of all evil than those fetched from the free grace of God. And what if some men do pervert the doctrine? Do not wicked minds corrupt everything? What truth is there in Scripture with which a man may not ruin himself if he will? Did not the prophetic eye of our Lord anticipate this when it was written that to some the Word of God is "a savor of death unto death?" Have there not been in all ages men who hold the truth of God in licentiousness? When were there not evil men to wrest Scripture to their own destruction? Shall we keep back the children's bread lest the dogs should steal the crumbs? Shall we destroy health-restoring drugs because fools may poison themselves therewith? Shall all the trees be cut down for fear the owls should build their nest in them? Shall the sea be dried up because sharks swim in it? Shall the pure virgin truth be condemned because gross villains have forged her name and abused her character? God forbid. Let us never blush to preach the whole Gospel, and to preach its full forgiveness of sin in the boldest and baldest manner, believing that the naked breasts of truth are her best armor, and that she is least protected when she is encumbered with a coat of mail of human reasoning and prudence.

As God shall help me, then, believing that the doctrine of free grace and of God's infinite love to his people is a doctrine which will lead the "little

children of God” to avoid all sin, I intend this morning to preach that doctrine, and God grant that the result may be according to his mind and will.

I. We commence our exposition of the text with the remark that THE SAINT IS STILL A SINNER.

Our apostle says — “If any man sin.” The “if” may be written in as small letters as you will, for the supposition is a matter of certainty. “If any man sin?” Although the gentle hand of the beloved disciple uses such mild and tender terms, putting it as a supposition, as though it were an astonishing thing after so much love, and mercy, and kindness, that we should sin, yet John very well knew that all the saints do sin, for he has himself declared that if any man says that he does not sin he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Saints are, without exception, sinners still. Far be it from us to deny that divine grace has wrought a wondrous change, it were no grace at all if it had not. It will be well to note this change. *The Christian no longer loves sin*; it is the object of his sternest horror; he no longer regards it as a mere trifle, plays with it, or talks of it with unconcern. He looks upon it as a deadly serpent, whose very shadow is to be avoided. He would no more venture voluntarily to put its cup to his lip than a man would drink poison who had once almost lost his life through it. Sin is dejected in the Christian’s heart, though it is not ejected. Sin may enter the heart, and fight for dominion, but it cannot sit upon the throne. It haunts the town of Mansoul, and lurks in dens and corners to do mischief, but it is no longer honored in the streets, nor pampered in the palace. The head and the hands of Dagon are broken, although the stump remains.

The Christian *never sins with that enormity of boasting of which the unregenerate are guilty*. Others wallow in transgressions, and make their shame their glory, but if the believer falleth he is very quiet, mournful, and vexed. Sinners go to their sins as children to their own father’s orchard, but believers slink away like thieves when they have been stealing forbidden fruit. Shame and sin are always in close company in a Christian. If he be drunken with evil he will be ashamed of himself; and go to his bed like a whipped cur. He cannot proclaim his transgressions as some do in the midst of a ribald crowd, boasting of their exploits of evil. His heart is broken within him, and when he has sinned he goes with sore bones for many and many a day.

Nor does he sin *with the fullness of deliberation* that belongs to other men. The sinner can sit down by the month together, and think over the iniquity that he means to perpetrate, till he gets his plans well organised and has matured his project; but the Christian cannot do this. He may put the sin into his mouth and swallow it in a moment, but he cannot continue to roll it under his tongue. He who can carefully arrange and plot a transgression is still a true child of the old serpent.

And again, *he never chews the cud of his sin*; for after he has sinned, however sweet it may have been in his mouth, it becomes bitterness in his bowels, and glad enough would he be to be rid of it altogether. The retrospect of sin to a converted man is nothing but blackness and darkness in his heart.

The Christian, unlike other men, *never finds enjoyment in his sin*; he is out of his element in it. Conscience pricks him; he cannot, even if he would, sin like others. There is a refined taste within him, which all the while revolts at the apparently dainty morsel of sin. The finger of grace, with its secret and mysterious touch, turns all the honey into gall, and all the sweetness into wormwood. If the Christian shall sin, and sin I grant he will, yet it shall always be with half-heartedness; still he clings to the right, the evil that he would not he does, while the good that he would do he fails to perform.

You will notice too, how different the Christian is *as to the habit of sin*. The ungodly man is frequent in overt deeds of rebellion, but the Christian, at least in open acts of crime and folly, rather falleth into than abideth in them. The swallow dippeth with his wing the brook, and then he is up again into the skies, soaring toward the sun; but the duck can swim in the pool or dive under the water — it is in its element. So the Christian just touches sometimes with his wing — alas! for him — the streams of earth, but then he is up again where he should be; it is only the sinner that can swim in sin and delight therein. You may drive the swine and the sheep together side by side; they come to some mire, and they both fall into it, and both stain themselves; but you soon detect the difference in nature between them, for while the swine lies and wallows with intense gusto, the sheep is up again, escaping as soon as possible from the filth. So with the Christian; he falls, God knoweth how many times, but he riseth up again — it is not his nature to lie in sin; he abhors himself that ever he should fall to the ground at all: while the ungodly goeth on in his wicked way till sin becomes a habit, and habit like an iron net has entangled him in its meshes.

There are all these degrees of difference between the Christian and the ungodly man, and far more, for the believer is a new creature, he belongs to a holy generation and a peculiar people; the Spirit of God is in him, and in all respects he is far removed from the natural man, but for all that we must come back to that with which we started — that the Christian is a sinner still. He is so *from the imperfection of his nature*. His nature is such that he cannot but sin until the old Adam shall die in him, and that will not be till the funeral knell is tolled for himself. Sin, by reason of his imperfection, pollutes the best thing the believer does. Sin mars his repentance. There is filth in our tears, and unbelief in our faith. The best thing we ever did apart from the merit of Jesus only swelled the number of our sins, for when we have been most pure in our own sight, yet, like the heavens, we are not pure in God's sight, and as he charged his angels with folly, much more must he charge us with it, even in our most angelic frame of mind. The song that thrills to heaven, and seeks to emulate seraphic strains, has still mortal infirmity in it. The prayer which moves the arm of God is still a sinful prayer, and only moves that arm because the Sinless One, the great Mediator, has stepped in to take away the sin of our supplication. I dare to say it, the best faith or the highest degree of sanctification to which a Christian ever attained on earth, has still so much of the creature's infirmity in it as to be worthy of God's eternal wrath in itself considered. There is so much sin about the highest and loftiest thing to which the creature can attain, that we mournfully confess — "We are altogether as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags."

As the Christian thus sins in his devout performances, *so he constantly errs in the every-day tenour of his life*. Sins of omission to wit, how many of these may be compressed into a single hour! Oh! what multitudes of things we have left undone! Remember that these make up a very great part of the sin which brings the curse. "I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; sick and in prison and ye visited me not." Have we no sins of commission? Our thoughts, our imaginations, our words, and must I not say our deeds, have these been what they should be? If any man dare to tell me that he lives for a single day without a sinful deed, I will dare to tell him that he never knew himself. Do but see your own chamber. If you disturb it I see but little dust floating about in it, but if a stray sunbeam shall enter through the window I see millions upon millions of little motes dancing up and down, and I discover that the whole of what I supposed to be clear, pure air, is filled

with innumerable atoms of all sorts of things, and that I am breathing these even in the purest atmosphere. So is it with our heart and life. When the Spirit shines into us we see that the atmosphere of life is as full of sin as it can hold, and a man may sooner count the hairs of his head, or the sands upon the sea-shore, or the drops of the dew of the morning upon the grass, than count the sins of a single day. O Lord, thou knowest us, but we know not ourselves; yet this much we know, that we are a people full of sin and laden with iniquity. You will tell me these are little sins, but I remind you that a multitude of grains of sand may overload a vessel quite as surely as bars of iron, and therefore these daily iniquities should be confessed with care, and repented of with sincerity. The Christian, then, from the imperfection of his nature, sins. The old unchanged fountain of Harah must send forth bitter water. The old Adam can do nothing else but sin. Fire can do nothing but burn; water can do nothing but quench fire; everything acts according to its nature. The new nature that is in us cannot sin, because it is born of God; it is so heavenly and divine that it never stoops to anything like sin. There is a spark of the celestial and of the perfect within every believer which never can be quenched; but the old Adam, that which made Paul cry out — “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death” — must sin, and as certainly as sparks fly upward, so certainly the old nature will commit iniquity.

Moreover, *many Christian people sin from certain peculiar infirmities*. You know, each of you, what your own infirmity may be, at least I hope you have been watchful enough to discover it. Some sin *through shortness of temper*; they are not long-winded in patience with their fellow-creatures; they are vexed; they grow hot; perhaps they imagine some cause for anger where there is none, and they wax warm, and speak unadvisedly with their tongue. This gives much trouble to many of the most gracious of men. A hasty temper is a perpetual temptation. There are others *who have a high and proud spirit*, and if they fancy they are a little snubbed or put into the back ground, at once they feel inclined to resent it. There — listen to him — “I am not to be thus trodden upon! Who dares to treat me thus?” Many who have done good service for Christ have had to carry that thorn in their flesh even down to their graves. Sensitiveness, a high spirit, a suspicious temperament, these are like blisters to the feet of a pilgrim, he will always walk painfully, if not slowly. Some of us have to contend with *sloth*. Perhaps we are afflicted with a torpid liver, and the physician has never been able to touch the complaint. God help the man thus afflicted, for he

will need to whip himself every day to his duty, and often he will feel so dull and sleepy, that he will wish for Cowper's "lodge in a vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade" that he might hide himself in quiet from the toil of the spiritual harvest. How many we know, dear friends, who have to contend with *constant unbelief brought on through depression of spirits*. Their nerves, perhaps, have experienced a great shock at some period in life, and, constitutionally they look always at the black side of affairs. If they see a grassy knoll they suspect it to be an extinct volcano; and if they happen to be in a green valley where the mountains frown like the battlements of heaven, they are dreadfully afraid that an avalanche must certainly come down and destroy them. They cannot help it; it is a peculiarity of their constitution, but it leads them into much sin, and should cause them much repentance before the face of the living God. So I might go on to mention the peculiarity of some *who are suffering from bashfulness*; they will often be tempted to hold back where they ought to go forward, and if not to disavow their Master yet not to proclaim their love for him so boldly as they should do. The Christian, when he reads this verse, "If any man sin," may well say — "Ah! indeed I do; through these infirmities I constantly commit iniquity." And then, dear friends, we all sin *from the assaults of evil*. There are times when we are not watchful, and as Satan is always on his watch-tower he is sure to attack us just then. We wear our vizor up and then in flies the stone from the infernal sling. We have forgotten a piece of our armor, and the foeman spies our nakedness and cuts us deep, leaving a scar for years. The *temptations of the world*, when we are thrust into ungodly company, and *the trials of business and even of the household*, all these in unguarded moments may take the Christian off his feet. Ah, my brethren, he who was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles yet called himself the chief of sinners; and we with far inferior graces must take the lowest place, acknowledging that in us, that is in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. Sinner is *my name*, sinner my nature, but thanks be to him who came to save sinners, I am a sinner *saved*.

II. I now leave that point for a second one full of comfort. OUR SINS DO NOT DEPRIVE US OF OUR INTEREST IN CHRIST.

Note the text. "If any man sin we *have* an advocate." Yes, we have him though we do sin; we have him still. It does not say — "If any man sin he has forfeited his advocate," but "we have an advocate," sinners though we are. All the sin that a believer ever did or can be allowed to commit, cannot

destroy his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Into whatsoever he may be suffered to fall, yet none of these things can by any possibility touch his title deeds. Indeed in some characters Jesus is only mine when I can claim the name of sinner. I cannot have an advocate unless I do sin, I do not want one. Who wants an advocate to plead his cause in a court of law if there is no suit against him? Sin is a charge against me; I am a sinner; I have an advocate. I have today a brother in Christ? "Go, tell my brethren," said he; and yet they had all forsaken him, and therefore were all sinners, but he was their brother still. I have a husband in Christ too, though I sin. "Israel hath forsaken me," saith God, "and played the harlot; she hath gone a-whoring from me, but return, return, for I am married unto thee." She is his wife still, you see, though she had gone into adultery. The Christian, even when he has stained and fouled himself, is the spouse of Christ still for all that. We are members of his body, and if so the members cannot be removed or taken off and on — limbs are not so easily removed. Did not Christ wash Peter? Peter was a member of Christ's own body, and yet Peter wanted washing. O blessed picture, the Head washing the feet. So at this day, stained though we be, we are claimants of Christ as Head of our body. And, beloved, we know that notwithstanding all our sin we are perfectly justified in Christ, for he justifieth the ungodly. We know, too, that we are perfectly accepted, for we are accepted in the Beloved, and not in ourselves. Notwithstanding all our iniquities we are pardoned, for the fountain is opened for sin and for all uncleanness, not for righteousness and purity, but for sin and for uncleanness, therefore we conclude that all our sins do not deprive us of that which Christ is to us, namely, the fountain of life, and light, and purity, and safety. Oh! my brethren, if our first title to Christ had depended on our good works, then it would fall when our works grew bad, but he loved us when we were as bad as we could be.

***"He saw us ruined in the fall,
Yet loved us notwithstanding all."***

He chose us when we were sinners; he bought us when we were sinners; he loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins; and if we are as bad as that to-day, he loves us still. If our right to heaven rested on the covenant of works, that unstable tenure, it would soon fail us; but seeing it rests on the covenant of grace, which has no conditions in it, but which is of pure immutable grace from first to last, therefore be it known unto you, O sons of God, that notwithstanding all your faults and failings, wanderings and backslidings, he is your God and you are his children; he will be your God

to all eternity, and you shall be his children world without end. “What a bold thing to say?” says one. Yes, and did I not tell you that I meant to say it to the little children that they sin not; believing that the bold open statement of the fact that all the sin that a believer can commit cannot mar his interest in Christ, though it may mar his enjoyment of that interest for the present, believing, I say, that this doctrine instead of driving men to sin, will draw them to love that gracious and immutable God, who notwithstanding all our sin, and care, and woe, will never suffer us to perish.

III. Now let us change the note a little. Our third point is, THAT THE ADVOCATE IS PROVIDED ON PURPOSE TO MEET THE FACT THAT WE ARE STILL SINNERS.

If I be a sinner then there is a court, and there is one who sits as Judge — the Father. There is a charge against me, otherwise I should not want an advocate to meet it, and this implies that I have sinned. There is an adversary to press his suit against me, and he would hardly venture to do this if there were no sin. There must be a right of reply on my part; I must have the right to put in a disclaimer in court, and to stand up and plead before the bar of justice. He who has a right to plead in court is the man who is accused, and the man who has some offense. If I were neither accused nor had been a sinner; then I should have no right to occupy the time of the court; but being a sinner, and being brought up upon that charge, and having one who presses the charge against me, I have a right to reply, and that reply, through God’s good grace, I have a right to make through my advocate.

Let us say concerning our advocate, that he is ordained with a special view to sinners; all his names and attributes prove him to be a suitable advocate for such. You and I, who though saved are still sinners, may safely put our case into his hands, for see who he is — “*Jesus Christ the righteous.*”

“*Jesus.*” Ah! then he is an advocate such as I want, for he loves me and takes an interest in me. Jesus is the name of one who became man for my sake. He knows what sore temptations mean, he understands what trials mean, what afflictions mean. I am glad I have one who will be interested in my welfare, and will plead for me as a friend for a friend, and as a brother for a brother. I thank God that though I sin I still have Jesus who is my “brother born for adversity,” the friend of sinners, and will therefore plead the sinner’s part. Is his name Jesus? Then he is sure to succeed, because

“they shall call his name Jesus, for *he shall save* his people from their sins;” his very name implies his success. Is his name Jesus? Then if he do not succeed in my case his honor is compromised. He is called Jesus because he does save sinners, if he does not save me he is no Jesus. If I, a sinner, trusting in him, give him my cause to plead as my advocate, and I be tried, and the verdict be against me, he is no Jesus, he may lay down his claim to be Jesus, for he does not and cannot save his people from their sins.

Beloved friends, do you not see how the saint is regarded as a sinner because he who is his advocate is the appointed Savior of sinners. He is put down as their advocate, I say, because he is the sinner’s friend. I never heard of his pleading for the righteous; I never dreamed of his being the friend of the sinless. I find him always on the side of publicans and sinners, offenders, and those who have gone out of the way; and therefore I conclude, that sinner though I be, continually sinning as I am, I may leave my case with Jesus, for he is just the advocate the sinner wants.

Notice, next, it is “*Jesus Christ*” — Christos — the anointed. This shows *his authority* to plead. There are only certain gentlemen who can plead in the Court of Chancery, and only certain others that can enter the Common Pleas, or the King’s Bench. Jesus Christ has a right to plead, for he is the Father’s own appointed, the Father’s own anointed. My soul, thou hast a good pleader, one whom God himself has chosen to plead the sinner’s cause. If he were of thy choosing he might fail, but if God hath laid help upon one that is mighty, do thou put thy trouble where God has laid his help. He is Christ, and therefore authorised; but I add, he is Christ, and therefore *qualified*, for the anointing has also qualified him for his work. He can plead better than Judah pleaded when he spake for Benjamin. He can plead so as to move the heart of God and prevail. What words of tenderness, what sentences of persuasion will he use when he stands up to plead for me! But more, he is Christ, that is, he is God’s Messiah; therefore God would not send him unless he *guaranteed him*. If God should send into this world a Savior who could not save, then God would have no mercy. God’s appointing, and sending Christ is a guarantee of Christ’s success. Oh! my soul, thou hast one well-fitted to be thine advocate, and one that cannot but succeed; leave thyself entirely in his hands.

Notice next, it is “*Jesus Christ the righteous.*” This is not only his character, but it is his plea. It is his character, and if my advocate be righteous then I am sure he would not take up a bad cause. I do not know,

it may be right for a lawyer to plead for a villain when he knows him to be

a villain, but this I think, the greater villain the lawyer is the better qualified would he be to do it. But my Lord and Master, the great advocate, would not plead a bad cause, for he is Jesus Christ *the righteous*, therefore if I sin, if I be put down among the any men that sin, yet if he pleads for me my case must be good, for he would not take up a bad one. But how can he do this? Why, because he meets the charge of unrighteousness against me by this plea on his part, that *he* is righteous. He seems to say to the great Father in the day when the sinner stands arraigned — “Yes, my Father, that sinner was unrighteous, but remember that I was accepted as his substitute; I stood to keep the law for him, and gave my active obedience; I went up to the cross and bled, and so gave my passive obedience; I have covered him from head to foot with my doing and my dying; I have so arrayed him that not even the angels are adorned as he is, for though they may be clothed with the perfect righteousness of a creature, I have given him the righteousness of God himself; I am become unto my people the Lord their righteousness; see, I have taken the jewels out of my crown to bedeck them; the garments from my own back to cover them, and the blood from my own veins to make the dye in which I have dipped their garments, till they are purpled with imperial glory.” What can there be asked more for the sinner than this? Jesus Christ the righteous stands up to plead for me, and pleads his righteousness; and mark, he does this not if I do not sin, but if I do sin. There is the beauty of my text. It does not say — “If any man do not sin we have an advocate;” but “if any man sin we have an advocate,” so that when I have sinned, and come creeping up to my closet with a guilty conscience and an aching heart, and feel that I am not worthy to be called God’s son, I have still an advocate, because I am one of the any men that sin. I sin, and I have an advocate. Oh! I know not how to express the joy I feel in my soul to be able to put it so! It is not — “If any man be righteous we have an advocate;” it is not — “If any man be prayerful, and careful, and godly, and walk scripturally, and in the light,” and so on, but “If any man *sin* we have an advocate.” Oh! my soul, there is the music of God’s heart in those words; music such as the prodigal heard at the festival which welcomed his return. “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

IV. And now we turn to our fourth point which is, that THIS TRUTH, SO EVANGELICAL AND SO DIVINE, SHOULD BE PRACTICALLY REMEMBERED.

It should be practically remembered, dear friends, *at all times*. Every day I find it most healthy to my own soul to try and walk as a saint, but in order

to do so I must continually come to Christ as a sinner. I would seek to be perfect; I would strain after every virtue, and forsake every false way; but still, as to my standing before God, I find it happiest to sit where I sat when first I looked to Jesus, on the rock of his works, having nothing to do with my own righteousness, but only with his. Depend on it, dear friends, the happiest way of living is to live as a poor sinner and as nothing at all, having Jesus Christ as all in all. You may have all your growths in sanctification, all your progress in graces, all the development of your virtues that you will; but still I do earnestly pray you never to put any of these where Christ should be. If you have begun in Christ then finish in Christ. If you have begun in the flesh and then go on in the flesh, we know what the sure result will be. But if you have begun with Jesus Christ as your Alpha, let him be your Omega. I pray you never think you are rising when you get above this, for it is not rising, but slipping downwards to your ruin. Stand still to this —

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.”***

Still a sinner; but still having an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous — let this be the spirit of your every-day life.

Make this essentially the rule of your life *on particular occasions*. Here let me say a word that may at once comfort and enlighten some here who are in darkness. When the Spirit of God gives you a clearer view of your own depravity, mind that you hold to this: “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father.” Perhaps when you were first converted you did not suspect the depth of wickedness that lay under, in your heart; perhaps you did not even believe that you could be so unutterably bad as you really were. But lately the fountains of the great deep have been broken up and you have been horrified; you are almost driven mad, or else into despondency and despair, by this discovery of your innate corruption, until you fly to this, — “Sinner as I am, and never more consciously so than I am now that God’s Spirit has enlightened me, I yet know that if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, and I, black, foul, and filthy, more foul and filthy than I ever thought myself to be, put my case into the hand of my advocate, and leave it there for ever.” When after this you have fallen into sin, and oh! I may address some member of this Church who has done this though the pastor knows it not — you have fallen into some sin that pricks your conscience; you carry about with you a something that will

not let you sleep at night; there is a sin that disturbs you, and you wish you could forget that you had committed it; you have gone before God as David did; you have used the language of the fifty-first Psalm, but you cannot get rid of that sin; you believe you are a child of God sometimes, but that sin has got into your conscience, and, like a cancer, is eating into your comfort. My brother, now is your time; “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” Jesus Christ is of no use to you if he will only save you when you have no sin. Let me repeat it: now you are a sinner; now you are condemned by the verdict of your own conscience; now you have sinned, sinned wilfully and foully, and God forbid that I should extenuate your sin; yet let your sin be as gross, and black, and hellish, as it may be, if you believe in Jesus Christ you have an advocate with the Father, and through that advocate your cause shall speed, and your sin shall be put away. Perhaps you will tell me that your sin has had some gross aggravation about it. If you are a Christian it has, for a Christian always sins worse than other men; if the sin be not in itself so bad as other men’s, it is worse in you. For a king’s favourite to play the traitor is villainy indeed. For one that has been highly favored, as you have been, with love-visits from Jesus, to be false to him; oh! this is shame, double shame to him. For you who have been washed in his blood to crucify him afresh, what shall I say to that? You deserve the hottest wrath of God and the deepest hell. But thus saith the Lord unto thee — “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities; return unto me.” “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” It does not say, “If some men sin we have no advocate;” or, “if some men sin in an aggravated way.” No, it is not put so. It says, “If *any* man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;” so that though you have heaped aggravations one upon another, and your crime has been as foul as any that could have been committed, still you can say, “we have an advocate.” Fly with a humble, contrite heart, and throw thyself at the feet of that advocate, and by his blood and by his wounds he will plead for thee, and thou shalt prevail.

What if I add to all this, that you have so sinned as to bring a scandal upon the name of God, upon his Church, and upon his cause? Oh! my brother, you may well weep in secret; you may weep tears of blood for having done this; but still, for all that, I cannot shut the gate where God sets it wide open. I have not a thunderbolt for you; if you be a child of God, still mercy is free, and still it is preached to you — “If any man sin,” publicly, like

David, so as to make God's enemies to blaspheme, yet still "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Oh! what splendid mercy is this! Archangel never dreamed of such mercy as this to sinners, to real sinners, to hugely vile sinners, to black, hellish sinners, to devilish sinners, to such as no adjective can be found to describe them. Yet, if they believe in Jesus, sin as they may, they have still "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

I wish I could meet the case of that brother yonder, who has long given up all hope of ever being restored. He has been excommunicated; he has been driven away from the society of the godly; he thinks though he is in this house this morning he has no business here; and sometimes the devil has tempted him to make away with himself, and he has said, if I must be lost I may as well be lost at once. Ah! but, my brother, you dare not do it with such a text of Scripture as this before your eyes. The Lord loves you still, and if he ever loved you, all your sin cannot wean his heart from you. You may have gone to the utmost length of your tether, but he has so tied you that you can never go beyond it. You may have got to the very extremity and edge of the precipice, but over that edge you must not and you shall not go. This day he sends me to stop you. Return! return! return! a Father bids you return. You are feeding swine to-day, and all foul and filthy as you are, you would fain fill your belly with their husks; but you cannot; you have a hunger that husks can never satisfy. Your Father waits to receive you. Come, he will meet you; he will fall upon your neck and kiss you; he will set you at his own table, and there shall be music and dancing for you. The best robe awaits thee, prodigal! The fatted calf is killed for thee! Come. O believe it; believe that God is able to do this great thing for thee. "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts above thy thoughts, and his ways above thy ways."

*"What though your numerous sins exceed
The stars that fill the skies,
And, aiming at the eternal throne,
Like pointed mountains rise,"*

yet still the red sea of Jesus' blood shall cover the tops of the mountains of your sins, till, like Noah's ark, that floated twenty cubits upwards, the tops of the mountains shall be covered. "If any man sin" — here you see, there is nothing said about goodness, nothing about virtue, or tenderness of heart — it is only put, "If any man sin, we have an advocate."

O thou that believest in Jesus, pray for those who believe not, that they too may have an advocate. If you and I have come and put our trust in him, and found a shelter in his wounds, let us never be satisfied till we see our children, our brothers, our sisters, our friends, our kinsfolk brought to this advocate. Go ye, and tell it wherever your voices can be heard, that Jesus Christ receiveth sinners, and that he eateth with them. Go and say that he is the sinner's friend, and that he is willing to take them as they are, and wash them, and make them whiter than snow. Since you have proved it yourself, and need to prove it every day, try and bring others to the conviction of it, that they with you may sing to the praise of that divine love which has given the advocate to every believer, whatever his guilt and condemnation may have been.

The Lord bless you now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

THE MINISTER'S STOCK-TAKING

NO. 516

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.” —
Acts 28:24.*

THIS is the only proper way to calculate the results of our ministry. We just want the account-book ruled with two columns. On one side we must put down the long list of the some that believe not; and on the brighter side we may enter what is too often, the far less number of the some that believe. This is the only true method, I repeat it, by which we can hold a stock-taking so as to ascertain the net profit of the preaching of the gospel. We must not estimate the good that is done by the number of those who listen. It is a very pleasant thing to see the house of prayer filled to overflowing. It is intensely delightful to reflect that often on the Sabbath evening in London now the theatres are full, St. Paul's Cathedral is full, and multitudes of churches and chapels are crowded with willing listeners. Still it is not all pleasure. Instead of its being of any advantage for the persons who have heard the gospel but have not believed, it will rather increase their doom. If they have only heard, and the truth has penetrated no deeper than the natural ear, then alas for the preachers who have spent their strength for nought! and alas for the multitudes who, having ears, have heard as though they heard not!

Nor ought we to calculate the result of our work by the persons who have been pleased with our ministry. What man is not gratified when he hears that the people have been pleased with his preaching? It were not in flesh and blood for a man to be uncheered by applause. The love of praise is ingrained in human nature.

*“The proud to gain it toils on toils endure,
The modest shun it but to make it sure.”*

But still, it were a miserable thing if all that a man effect be just to win the ear and to strike the people with wonder at the amazing way in which he could utter forth the words of truth. Shall God’s servants live upon the breath of men’s nostrils? Can the approbation of the crowd be nutritious enough to constitute the solid food of a God-sent herald of the cross?

Never! When a man has to die, this shall give him no comfort. To have preached faithfully, though some were angry, will always be consolatory. To have preached unfaithfully, or to have held back any part of the truth, though he may have won universal acclaim, would be but a passport to perdition at the last. No, no, if our ministry has only pleased people it is good for nothing. A sermon often does a man most good when it makes him most angry. Those people who walk down the aisles and say, “I will never hear that man again,” very often have an arrow rankling in their breast. Smarting from a wound that never will be healed till God heals it, they will come again right enough. Others, alas, who are quite pleased and delighted, will come and go from the place of the holy, unimpressed and unimpressible as slabs of marble, adown which the oil runs without producing the slightest impression.

Nor even dare we hastily to calculate the effect of our ministry by the number of persons impressed with serious convictions. Of course, it is a hopeful sign to see the people weep under the Word, especially if it is the gospel that moves them to weep, and not the pathos of the preacher. I do not think it does anybody much good spiritually, when tears are excited simply by the description of a funeral, or by being reminded of one’s childhood, or of one’s parents. Some preachers appeal much to the passions, and think when the congregation are weeping, good is being done. I do not see the use of it at all. When the preacher can make these natural emotions a platform upon which to stand and work upon the conscience, then it is well and good, but if he has only succeeded in drawing briny tears from mortal eyes, they may flow until the floor be watered with them without any salutary result. We must go deeper than the eye; we want to make the heart weep; we want tears of penitence for sin, not tears of regret for departed husbands and wives. We want emotions which spring from a startled conscience, and not those which come from a want of resignation to the divine will. No, dear friends, we have done

nothing after we have preached a thousand times unless we can write down that some believe on the Lord Jesus.

I. Turning to our text a little more closely, let us remark in the first place that, UNDER THE BEST MINISTRY IN THE WORLD THE RESULTS WILL BE DIVERSE, AND THAT YOU WANT TWO COLUMNS TO WRITE THE ACCOUNT IN.

There will always be the some that believe and the some that believe not. This is not altogether the minister's fault. It is the custom of the age to blame ministers very much, and I dare say we deserve it; but still the blame in this matter does not lay entirely with us, for even when Paul preached — a model preacher, he! — there were “some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.” Did I say that Paul was a model preacher? let me prove it. Was he not a model preacher as to *matter*? There are some persons who greatly admire a doctrinal preacher. They like a man who will lay down the doctrines as a master-builder would put the stones, one here, another there — each one in its proper place. When they go up to the house of prayer they say they want really to learn something, to get some thought, to get a deeper insight into some great Biblical truth, and they are not satisfied unless their understandings are provided for. Mere appeals to the passions they do not care about; they want to have their minds enlightened. Well, a doctrinal preacher is an exceedingly useful man, especially if he do not degenerate into endless controversy, preaching Christ of envy and strife. I have heard it said that while a course of some twelve lectures by any ordinary lecturer on geology would give you a pretty clear idea of the science, you might sit and listen to twelve hundred sermons upon Christianity by some ministers, and never get an idea of what are its fundamental doctrines. If it be so it is a crying evil, and grievously will the Church have to answer for it in the ill that will come upon her. It may be so in some cases, but I am sure it was not so with the Apostle Paul. Who could preach doctrine more clearly than he did? If you want the very highest doctrine, read the ninth chapter of Romans. If you would have a clear system of truth, read the Epistle to the Ephesians. If a young man wants to get a body of divinity in miniature, he has only to read that Epistle. The apostle is full of the most weighty matter, and the most important truth. He keeps back nothing that is profitable for the people. He can say — “I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.” To him it never was a question as to which part of the truth would best please the people; he gave them the whole of it in due season. But yet even under

the apostle Paul there were some that believed not! And you, young man, if you have been listening to the gospel under any minister, if you have not been converted, neither would you have been if you had heard Paul. Having Moses and the prophets with you at this day, if you believe not them, neither would you be converted, though an apostle should rise from the dead.

I think I hear one observe — “Well, I do not care for a doctrinal preacher myself. I like *an experimental preacher* best.” Be it so, dear friend, and I can fully approve your choice; I like an experimental preacher, because he can get inside a man’s heart and see what is there. He knows just what I am and what I feel. If I am distressed he has been distressed too, and he can talk of my temptations and of my trials, because they have been his own. If I am full of comfort or full of joy he has been up on the mountain too, and he tells me of my ecstasy and of my delights. If I find some knotty passage in my inner life he can translate it to me, for he has been through it all himself. Perhaps of the three orders of preachers — the doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical — the experimental preacher is the most useful. I think if one had to choose which should be his pastor he should prefer such a man as this, for a ministry without any experience in it must be a very poor, miserable, savourless thing to the people of God. But do you not think that in this respect the apostle Paul himself was a perfect model? Would you understand the conflicts of the human heart? Does not Paul paint them to the life as he says — “When I would do good, evil is present with me; to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not?” And again, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Does he not just express the sighing and longing of all the children of God who have been vexed with contests within? On the other hand, if you have high and glorious frames, the apostle can go with you and beyond you, and tell you of times when he was caught up to the third heavens, and heard things which it is not possible for a man to utter. Are you full of assurance and confidence? Then Paul preaches to you from this text — “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Are you full of apprehensions? Then he fears and trembles with you — “Lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Paul had his doubts and fears, and was afraid that he might

perish after all; yet he had his high flights and glorious confidences, and knew that the believer in Christ could never be cast away. But mark you, if you have listened to the preaching of the gospel, and have remained an unbeliever under it, neither would you be converted, though the apostle Paul's deep experimental knowledge should be brought to bear upon your conscience; for even under him there were some that believed not, and so I suppose it would be even were he here now.

Then there is *the practical preacher*, and some men greatly admire him. So do I if he does not become legal, and if he does not degenerate into a preacher of mere morality. If he shall urge holiness upon the people of God, from evangelical motives, he may be very useful; but if upon legal terms he strives to stir the people of God to good works, he will do more harm than good. Yes, the practical preacher is very useful. The man who tells me precisely what my duty is in my sphere of life, talks to me as a husband, a master, a servant, or as a son, who when I come after the cares of the week and sit down in my pew, just refreshes my memory about my week's faults, and tells me how to behave myself during the week that is to come — such a man is useful. But who ever did this so well as the apostle Paul? That same Epistle to the Ephesians, which is an epitome of doctrinal theology, also contains the practical precepts of the gospel fully written out. Children, parents, fathers, husbands, wives, servants, masters — the apostle has a word to every one. He is pre-eminently practical, generally basing his appeals for righteous conduct upon some divine motive. Yet, dear friends, if you have not been converted, I have no reason to believe it is because your ministers fail on the practical points; for even had you heard the apostle, who was a pattern in this respect, neither would you have been converted, for under him some believed not. Now put the practical, the experimental, and the doctrinal together, and you get the model exhibited in the apostle Paul. Would that we had such preachers in all pulpits, and such ministers to preside over all flocks. But even if such were given to us, there would still be some that believed not.

“Yes, yes,” says one, “I do not doubt that the *matter* was right enough. But you know there is more required of a preacher than *matter*; it is *manner* we want.” Well now, I hold that the apostle Paul was a model preacher as to *manner*. He was a *bold* preacher. He never feared the face of man, but preached just what the Lord told him, in the Lord's own words, whether men would hear or whether they would forbear. He was an *eloquent* preacher. Barnabas was no mean speaker, but Paul was a better

speaker than he was; for at Lystra they called Paul “Mercury,” and Mercury was their god of eloquence. Perhaps the concluding part of the eighth chapter of the Romans is the most remarkable piece of human language ever known. He who wrote it was a master, able to soar with eagle-wing to any height, yet willing for the most part to keep near the ground. “Not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but with simplicity and godly sincerity he ordered his speech.” He was a profound thinker, capable of the deepest argument or the finest allegory, but withal an easy talker, who loved to tell of the grace of God. When occasion required, as an impassioned orator, his thunders could make Festus tremble; and his persuasive appeals could wring confessions from Agrippa; but as a teacher in the Church of God, he was proverbially plain spoken. He spoke like a child, and babes in grace were fed under his ministry as with pure milk.

This is just the style we want; not the simplicity of ignorance, but the dignified simplicity of the man who has really the highest intellect, if he cared to show it, but who rather chooses to instruct the poor and ignorant. Then the apostle *was very affectionate* with his boldness and simplicity. He loved the souls of men. He felt sometimes such a passionate longing to save souls, that he was almost ready to lose his own soul, if he might but save others. “Oh,” you say, “but that was an extravagant thing for him to say.” Yes, love is often extravagant, and I will never believe that a man has any love at all if he speaks in a cold, calculating way. Love must sometimes speak in rapturous phrases, which in its cooler moments it would not endorse. When I hear the apostle say — “I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren according to the flesh,” I understand what his love means. He feels as if his own personal interest in Jesus he would fain give up, if he might but see his own kindred saved. It is in a spirit akin with that of Moses, when he said — “If not, blot my name out of the book of life.” Dear, dear! how critics and commentators have stumbled over these two passages! They cannot make it out. They cannot understand it. But I tell you Paul meant exactly what he said. I have felt the same strong emotion boiling in my own soul, till when I have looked upon some immense congregation, and my heart has yearned after their conversion, I have felt that if I could die as a substitute for them I would fain do it. Of course in more sober moments no man would ever barter his own soul’s salvation on any account, nor were it possible that such a ransom could be accepted. Still, love makes one feel as if even that were less than the evil that threatens our people, and we exclaim, with Esther, “How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?” The apostle, thus full of eloquence,

of love, and of holy boldness, seeking after souls, pressing them home with blessed arguments, pleading with them night and day with many tears, was a faithful and a perfect minister, as nearly so as mortal can be. "Oh!" says one, "I wish I sat under such a minister!" Yes, but are you converted to God? For if you are not, I am not sure that you would be saved if you had Paul himself for a pastor. If at your wish he could leave his grave, start up, unwrap his cerements, and address you from this pulpit, I have no reason to believe that his voice would have any more power over you than another man's voice. Paul would plant in vain where others have not been successful, and if you have not believed on Jesus with this book in your houses, with your Sabbaths repeated hundreds of times, with earnest, affectionate parents, and with loving friends, neither would you be converted though Paul rose from the dead.

II. I now proceed to notice, in the second place, THE TWO SORTS OF PEOPLE, AND THE REASON WHY SOME BELIEVED, AND WHY SOME BELIEVED NOT.

There were some that believed. Shall I describe them? So far as one young man is concerned, I will just give a little sketch of his history, and that sketch will suffice for all. He dropped in one Sunday morning to hear the preacher; he stood in the aisle, for he did not intend to stop all the time, but the place was full and he could not well get out. He listened; he thought it very common-place; it did not attract his attention much; but all of a sudden — yes, it was so — the truth dropped right into his heart. He listened with greater interest than he had done before; he gathered himself up. Another sentence came. When he came in, he was like a man in armor. All the shots fell upon his armor and were repelled then; but now something had got in between the joints. He listened again. The preacher went on to discourse of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and the young man felt as if there was no one else in the place. The minister's eyes were on him, he began to tremble. "What must I do to be saved?" was the language that was in his heart, though he could not utter it with the lip. He walked out of that aisle a calm and quiet man; he went home; there was no talking by the way; he went into his chamber. Well, I will not say he prayed the first time but it was something like it, for he breathed out words like these, "Oh! ah! would that!" He began to have living desires after the living God. In the evening he went to the house of God again. It seemed that night as if the preacher prepared a most terrible sermon on purpose for him. The whole sermon through, the great hammer

of God seemed to be breaking his flinty heart smaller and smaller, till there was not a single piece of it that was not ground to powder. He could not help feeling that there was no hope for him — that mercy would never reach his case. He had thought that morning that he was about as good as most people, and that if it did not fare well with him, it would fare ill with all the world; but now he felt himself to be the vilest of the vile. He could not understand it, nor could his friends either. They thought he had been taken with a fit of melancholy; they hoped it would wear off; but it did not wear off. He was very quiet that week; he could not go out with his friends to places of amusement as he had been accustomed to do. One of them did get him to one place, but he was so miserable that he came out when it was half over, and said, “I have no taste for such things now; I cannot stay.” Well, I do not know how long it was that this went on; in some cases it is only a few minutes, in others it is a long, long time. I knew one young man with whom it lasted for five years, and he stands here to-day to tell of that long period of affliction. And that young man went in a state of sadness and grief on account of sin, seeking rest and finding none, till one morning the preacher lifted up Christ upon the cross, and said — this is the import of the words he used — “You see the Hebrew prophet raise the brazen serpent high upon the cross. Look, look, ye that are bitten with serpents!

Turn hither your eyes; however swollen you are, do but look! There is life in a look at the brazen serpent for any of you, for all of you.” And then the preacher said, “See Jesus hanging there on his cross! his wounds are streaming; his head is bowed down with grief. There is life in a look at the Crucified. Sinner, there is life this moment for thee.” He explained that to look was simply to trust Christ, and to put one’s confidence in the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus. Well, the young man had heard that a great many times, but he had never heard it with his conscience before; it had never sunk deep down into his heart. Now it came home to him. Standing there in the aisle just as he was, conscious of his guilt and ruin, he turned his eyes to Jesus; he looked; he lived; he went his way like a man who had received a new life; he was blessed, happy, joyful; a tremendous burden had rolled into the deep sepulcher; the chains had been snapped from his manacled wrists; he was free; and whereas he could not creep before, he now ran and danced for joy and gladness of heart. That is how it all came about. The conversion was so wrought by his simply hearing his ruin and learning the remedy. The young man waited awhile in prayer and silent meditation, and matured the piety which God had given him, and he then came forward and made a profession of his faith. It was a happy day when

he saw the pastor and told his experience, when he was joined to the Church and separated from the world. From that day all that knew him could but marvel at the change.

And now comes the question, "*Why did some believe?*" Well, it was not any difference in the preacher, for the same preacher addressed both. It was not any difference in the sermon, for the same sermon was preached to all the people, and yet some believed and some did not. It could not be the power of persuasion, for there were some that were persuaded and some that were not by the very same address. Nor can we attribute it to a difference of constitution, for that were to make salvation of works and not of grace. Were we to bring up the old legal covenant again, and thus preach another gospel, then we should be accursed. I only know of one answer to this question, "*Why did some believe?*" and the answer is this, *because God willed it.* "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." If any man is saved, it is not because he willed to be saved. If any man be brought to Christ, it is not of any effort of his, but the root, the cause, the motive of the salvation of any one human being, and of all the chosen in heaven, is to be found in the predestinating purpose and sovereign distinguishing will of the Lord our God. I know some Christians do not hold this as a doctrine, but I believe there is no Christian alive who does not believe it as a matter of experience. I was once with a good Christian man who was a little blind in both eyes, and he laid down this theory — if God gave grace to one, he was bound — just listen to this — he was bound to give it to all. God, he said, was no respecter of persons, which I interpret to mean that he did not owe anything to anybody but did just as he liked with them, but he understood it to mean that God gave alike to all, and that if he gave anything to one, he must give the same to another. You see, however, that if it is a matter of debt to anybody, then it is not a matter of grace any longer. Well, after that, we had prayer, and my friend prayed for his own family, and his unconverted relatives — yes, actually prayed to God to give *more grace* to them that they might believe and be saved! When he had done, I said, "Well now, that would have been a very proper prayer for me to offer, because I think it just for God to give more to one than he does to another, but it was a very improper prayer for you and completely subversive of your own theory; in fact, you have no right to make a distinction, and to pray for your own child more than for

anybody else's child. According to your scheme you believe that God ought to serve all alike, whereas I believe that no man has any claim on God, that if he pleases to save anyone he has a right to do it, and that if men perish they perish because they deserve to perish, and I, therefore, can present special petitions to God for special persons." I remember hearing of a case where a very high Calvinistic brother never would believe that a Wesleyan could have the grace of God in him, so bigoted was he to his own views. One night there was a prayer-meeting, and the gas would not light. They could not get it to light anyhow, and at last it was proposed to hold the meeting in the dark. A Wesleyan prayed first; he was at the far end of the room, and he prayed, oh! so sweetly! Our Calvinistic friend said — "What a delightful prayer! What a depth of doctrinal knowledge! What a blessed character that person must be!" So he watched for him when he came out: he stood at the door to find him, and to his surprise discovered who had been offering the prayer that was so full of grace and truth. I believe that if once we came to real, experimental godliness, we should not find a child of God anywhere that would not in some form or other subscribe to the substance of what I have asserted, that it is God who quickens the souls of those who believe, and that if men be saved all the glory must be unto God from first to last, and not an atom nor a particle attributed to the goodness, or the power, or the will of the creature. This is a doctrine which some people have not learned very fully yet, but they will have to learn it if they are God's people. Jonah, you know, had never learned it from the schools, but when the Lord got him in the whale's belly, at the bottom of the mountains, with the weeds wrapped about his head, then it was that he said, "Salvation is of the Lord;" and often some sore trials and terrible afflictions are necessary schoolmasters to teach us this lesson, that salvation is of the Lord alone.

Now let me change the note, and speak *a few words respecting the some that believe not*. They are of different characters. Some of you were brought up at a Sunday school; you have attended a place of worship nearly all your lives, and yet you have not believed in Christ. There are others who do not often go to the house of God; in fact they have got into the habit of spending their Sundays in dissipation or frivolity. These are among the some that believe not, and some of them try to quiet their conscience by pretending that they do not believe the Bible to be true. They set up for Atheists, or Deists, or Freethinkers, and when they can get some fools to applaud them, they vent out their spleen against the saints

and their blasphemy against God, albeit they do not believe their own blasphemies. Their consciences are uneasy. Atheism affords no rest for the sole of man's foot. Let a man go to the utmost extent in abandoning moral restraints and disowning religious obligations, there is still an aching void within him which even hell itself cannot fill; the man feels that he wants something, he knows not what, but it is the cross of Christ and faith in a crucified Savior that alone can supply the cravings of man's inner nature. Some of these people that believe not are very moral. There is that young lady yonder, amiable and admirable in her degree, but she does not believe, hence the crudeness of her tastes, the want of harmony in the colors that vary her disposition. There is that young man over there who is full of commercial integrity, his employer would trust him with a bag of untold gold; but he is among the some that believe not; and with strange inconsistency he relies on one virtue which procures him respect among men, to cover a thousand vices which proclaim his alienation from God. On the other hand, there are a great many of them who are debauched, and who go very far astray. We must put you all down together. There are no third parties. You either do believe or you do not. If you have believed in Jesus, bless and praise almighty grace, but if you have not, listen a moment while I try to answer the question —

Why do you not believe? There are some people who will be ready to say — “Hear what contradictory doctrine is preached!” I cannot help it. The only reason why you do not believe in Christ is because you will not. The reason why you are an unbeliever at this hour is your own will, and nothing but your own will. It is not that you have not heard the gospel; you have heard it. It is not because it is unworthy of your credence; it is the most reliable intelligence in all the world. It is not because it does not deserve your faith; it claims and demands it. It is not because you have never been aroused; you have had impressions without number. You know when you had that fever; you know there was a something striving with you that would have brought you to the cross, but you would not come. The reason why you have not come to Jesus is contained in Christ's own words — “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” Give me not back an answer that would excuse yourself and charge God foolishly; it is not God's fault that you are not a believer; it is your own fault and your own fault alone. I know there are some very wicked persons, and some on the other hand who claim to be very orthodox, who lay the damnation of men at God's door, but God forbid that your soul or mine should have any

sympathy with such blasphemy as that! I will suppose a case. There is a woman who has stabbed her own child, reddened her hands with the blood of her own offspring. She is brought up to the court to be tried for murder, and she makes use of a singular defense. Her counsel bids her be silent; but she will speak. She says — “My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, I am not guilty; I did stab my child ‘tis true, but I did it as the agent of God; I was decreed to do it; I could not help it; I was predestinated to do it, and the fault, therefore, lies not with me, but with God.” Now the impression made in the court would be this, that a person whose moral sense was so depraved would be quite capable of murder or any other crime. A state of heart which would allow a person to give utterance to such a saying against God would allow murder to be thought of without any compunction whatever. I should not wonder at such a remark being made by the culprit. But suppose the lawyer himself, the woman’s counsel, should get up and claim the attention of the judge and the jury, and should say — “Gentlemen, really this woman is not guilty, when you come to think of it, for it was fore-ordained from before the foundation of the world that she should do this; she was predestinated to it, and therefore, my lord, moral culpability does not rest with her.” Can you think what the judge would say — such a man as the late good Lord Chancellor Campbell. Why, I think I see him rise from his seat and exclaim — “Hold your tongue, sir, or else change your line of argument; for as long as I am one of the judges of this realm I will never sit in this court to hear God openly and publicly blasphemed. If you do not change your line of argument the usher shall put you out.” And I am sure every Englishman in the court would applaud a judge for so saying. Verily ye would hold your breath and feel your blood chilled in your veins at the very idea of murder being laid at the door of God. What then shall I say of those men, calling themselves ministers of Christ, but who become the devil’s advocates, and preach that the ruin of men’s souls is the result of divine sovereignty, that God’s decree damns men and not their own sins? O my soul, come not thou into their secret; with their confederacy be not thou joined! This is sewing pillows to all arm-holes; this is, indeed, stuffing beds with down for sinners to sleep on, till at last they wake up in damnation! Sinner, you know it is a lie. It is a gross lie to say that God is responsible for your damnation. If your soul shall perish, it shall perish as a suicide; for you will have ruined yourself. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.” If the damned in hell could be made to believe that they did not deserve to be there, why hell would be no hell to them; but this is the sting of perdition — “I deserved this!” You will see

written in lines of fire — “You knew your duty, but you did it not!” and when you cry for mercy this shall be God’s answer — “I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded it; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.” Do I hear some one say, “Why, that is Arminianism!” Precisely so. But some people say the truth lies between Calvinism and Arminianism. It does not; there is nothing between them but a barren wilderness. If you are asked why a man is saved, the only Scriptural answer is — “Sovereign grace” — grace, unmoved by anything in the creature, flowing spontaneously from the mighty depths of the divine heart. But if you are asked why are men damned? answer this — “It is their own sin; their own wicked, carnal, sensual, devilish nature, that they even dare to trample on the blood of Christ, to despise Jesus, and to turn aside from him that speaketh from heaven.” Never be frightened because one man says it is too high, or because another says it is too low. Take truth as you find it; take it as it is in the Bible. “Well but,” I hear one say, “are the two things consistent? Can you reconcile them?” I do want to reconcile them; they never fell out; they are good friends; they are both true, and truths never quarrel. “Well,” says one, “but I cannot see that they are quite straight.” Have you never been rowing in a boat on the water, and remarked that your oars look bent? Are they bent? No. If you had an oar that was bent and put it in a certain position it would look straight, but it was a straight oar that you put in, and now that it should look bent is a mere optical illusion. Why is this? Well, we are told it is because the rays of light pass through two different mediums — through the air and through the waters; these mediums are of different density, and therefore the ray of light is refracted, and the thing looks bent, though it really is not. Now part of the truth is divine — that part which has to do with divine sovereignty, and part of the truth is human — that which has to do with human responsibility. A great truth in passing through two such different media must look bent, and if it did not look bent, it would be strange indeed. You may look at two lines; they are almost parallel, but not quite, and they do not meet anywhere that you and I can see, but they do meet somewhere that God can see. When we get to heaven we shall see where these two lines meet, and we shall find, perhaps, that where we thought they were the farthest apart, was just the place where they touched each other. Of this, however, I am absolutely sure, man’s conscience bears witness, it is one of the instinctive apprehensions of every enlightened man’s mind, that if he be saved it is of God’s mercy, and that if he be lost it is his own fault. I only want the witness of your own

conscience to this point. In vain you drug conscience with nauseous doctrines; you may go and listen to something that is not pure gospel, but a spurious compound; you never can stifle the deep conviction, that if you rebel against God you perish as the result of your own act and deed. The worm that never dieth would cease to gnaw at your vitals if you could lay your ruin at God's door, and the fire that never can be quenched would have no meet fuel in your body and soul, if your own sins were not the cause of your own destruction.

And what does all this lead to? Why, it comes to this, dear friends, that I must close *by dividing this house*. Sometimes, in the House of Commons, you know, when a person has been speaking and has been very prosy, and another man gets up to speak whom they do not want to hear, they will cry out, "Divide, divide." Then the House divides, and the "ayes" go out on one side, and the "noes" on another. Well — I have not a convenient place here for some of you to go on one side of the house, and some another — I do not suppose we could carry it out; but suppose this aisle now to represent the great division, and that the some that believe had to stand on this side, and the some that do not believe on that side. There would soon be a change of seats, I expect. But do you know, I am afraid there would be a great number of you that would say, "Well, I cannot go on this side; I dare not say I do believe in Christ. And yet I cannot go to the other side; I dare not go there, it is such an awful thing to go with those that do not believe; let me stand here in the aisle." No, no; there are only two places, heaven and hell, and there are only two sorts of people, the righteous and the wicked. The priests of Christian idolatry have been preaching about purgatory for hundreds of years, but we do not believe in that doctrine, except as a means of filling their coffers, while they make merchandize of souls. We know that all the people that have died have either gone to hell because they did not believe, or have gone to heaven because they did, and we know that there has never been a cross-breed between a believer and an unbeliever. A man must be either dead or alive. There is no neutral ground. You must either be on one side with those who are alive, or on the other side with those who are dead and need to be quickened. Think not to halt between two opinions. For the most part those who are said to be halting between two opinions are really of one opinion, they do not intend to serve the Lord, and they say in their hearts, "Who is the Lord that I should serve him?" Now will you do me this favor? I asked it once, and it was blessed to the conversion of several. Will you take a little time alone, perhaps this

evening; take a paper and pencil, and after you have honestly and fairly thought on your own state, and weighed your own condition before the Lord, will you write down one of two words: if you feel that you are not a believer write down this word — “*Condemned*,” and if you are a believer in Jesus, and put your trust in him alone, write down the word “*Forgiven*.” Do it, even though you have to write down the word condemned. We lately received into Church-fellowship a young man, who said — “Sir, I wrote down the word condemned, and I looked at it; there it was; I had written it myself — “*Condemned*.” As he looked the tears began to flow, and the heart began to break; and ere long he fled to Christ, put the paper in the fire, and wrote down “*Forgiven*.” This young man was about the sixth who had been brought to the Lord in the same way. So I pray you try it, and God may bless it to you. Remember you are either one or the other; you are either condemned or forgiven. Do not stand between the two. Let it be decided, and remember if you are condemned to-day, yet you are not in hell. There is hope yet. Blessed be God, still is Christ lifted up, and whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have everlasting life. The gate of glory is not closed; the proclamation of mercy is not hushed; the Spirit of God still goeth forth to open blind eyes and to unstop deaf ears, and still is it preached to you, to every creature under heaven — Whosoever believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that be believeth not shall be damned. Believe. God help you to believe. Trust Jesus; trust him now; and may the Lord grant that your name may be written among the some that believe, and not among the some that believe not.

THE RAINBOW.

NO. 517

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 28TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” — Genesis 9:16.

THE story of Noah’s preservation in the ark, is a suggestive representation of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, we think, especially intended to depict that part of our salvation which lies in the washing of regeneration. In the same way as baptism is the outward symbol of regeneration, so also is the ark, “wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” The ark was immersed in those dreadful rains and awful cataracts which deluged the earth, and Noah’s family were buried in that ark to all the world; but by this burial they were floated out of the old condemned world, into the new world of life and grace. Death to the world, and burial in the ark, were the means of their safety. “The like figure whereunto,” saith the apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:21), “even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Baptism is a most significant picture of regeneration, but it is in no sense the cause of the new birth; and the blunder of the Puseyites lies in considering the outward manifestation of an accomplished fact, as though it were the means of creating that fact.

Baptism saves no one, except, as Peter says, *in figure*; but as a figure, it is eminently full of divine teaching, for it sets forth the great truth that the believer, standing to-day in the old world, is buried to that world, “buried with Jesus Christ by baptism into death;” and his rising from the liquid tomb, is the figure of his resurrection in Christ, into a new world, as a new man, “that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the

Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4.) Would to God that we thought more of being dead with Christ, buried with him and risen with him. Brethren, let Noah in his ark preach the work of righteousness within the heart to all of us this morning.

Do you not think, dear friends, that the history of Noah, when he left the ark, in all its items, may be viewed as typical and instructive? Noah came out of the ark — no longer cooped up and penned within its narrow limits, he walked abroad, and the whole world was before him where to choose. Was not that a picture of the freedom of the believer who has been “buried with Christ,” and enjoys the possession of God’s free Spirit? For him there is no spirit of bondage, he is free as a child in his father’s house; all things are his, by gift of God, to use and to enjoy; he has learned the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free, and if the Son make us free, we are free indeed. When Noah slew the bullock and the other clean beasts, and offered them upon the altar, did he not show forth the believer’s employment? for we also offer acceptable sacrifices of prayer and praise unto God, and we ourselves are living sacrifices unto God. Did he not as much as say to all generations of saints, “You being thus delivered from a death which you deserve, are to spend your lives as priests unto your God?” When the Lord was pleased on that day to bless Noah and his family, bidding them be fruitful, did he not therein set forth the fruitfulness which belongeth unto believers, so that, abiding in Christ, they “bring forth much fruit?” May not that benediction teach us how earnestly we should seek to be spiritually the parents of immortal souls, travailing in birth till Christ be formed in them? When the Divine Father gave them dominion over the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and over all cattle, did not this pourtray the power which believers have over lust, and sin, and evil, and did it not prophesy the subjugation of all things by the power of their faith, so that they who become “priests” in sacrifice become also “kings,” by virtue of the charter of dominion which the heavenly Father bestows upon them? What think ye, brethren? When he enlarged the grant of food, and permitted them to eat flesh, did he not set forth that food on which true believers feed, who now eat *his* flesh and drink *his* blood who has become the spiritual food of our souls? Is it straining the allegory, is it carrying it too far, if I close these spiritualisings by observing that the very same security which God then gave to Noah and his descendants is that security under which *we* stand. He gave them a covenant — a covenant embellished with a divine symbol, and ratified with his own signature

written out in all the colors of beauty; we too stand under a covenant which has its own faithful witness in heaven, more transcendently illustrious and beautiful than the rainbow — the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Leaving, however, all those points, which I have only started to excite thought among you, we come to this. We have scriptural reason for asserting, that this venerable covenant, that the world shall no more be destroyed by a flood, is typical of a yet more ancient compact, which God made with Christ, that he would be unto his people a God, and they should be his chosen ones, world without end. In the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah we find such language as this: “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for 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 wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” The covenant of Noah, then, is typical of the great covenant made with Christ on the behalf of his people; and the rainbow, as the symbol of the covenant with Noah, is typical of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord’s witness to the people. You read in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, in the third verse, “there was a rainbow round about the throne;” showing that the bow is not a temporary symbol for earth only, but is a symbol of everlasting and heavenly things; and in the tenth chapter of the book of Revelation, if I mistake not, in the first verse, you will find that the mighty angel with the book in his right hand, who shall put one foot upon the sea, and another upon the land, is described as having his head crowned with a rainbow. In this place our Lord Jesus Christ, in his mediatorial capacity, wears the symbol of the covenant about his brow; and in the other passage our Lord, as King, is represented as sitting upon the throne, surrounded with the insignia of the covenant of grace which encompasses the throne, so that there are no goings forth of his majesty and his power and his grace, except in a covenant way and after a covenant sort, since the rainbow must be passed, before the bright rays of his power and love can reach the sons of men.

This brings us now into the center of our discourse. We have to talk of two things — first, the *tenor* of the covenant, and secondly, the *token* of it — running a parallel all the way through between the two covenants. The

tenor of Noah's covenant is the tenor of the covenant of grace — just as the rainbow represents, and in some sense *is*, the token of the covenant of grace also.

I. First, then, the covenant itself: WHAT IS ITS TENOR?

We reply, that it is a covenant of *pure grace*. There was nothing in Noah why God should make a covenant with *him*. He was a sinner — and proved himself to be so in a most shocking manner within a few days; he *needed* a sacrifice, for he afterwards became drunken. He was one of the best of men; but the best of men are but men at the best, and can have no claim upon the favor of God. He was saved by faith as the rest of us must be, and faith we all know is inconsistent with any claim of merit. At least one of his sons we must set down as being an open and abandoned sinner, and in him there could have been no ground why God should make a covenant with him. We have no reason to imagine that Noah ever *sought* this covenant. He did offer a sacrifice; but we do not know that he ventured to indulge the idea that God would enter into bonds with him not to destroy the earth. We imagine that the very first cloud which swept across the sky would excite the patriarch's alarm; the first drop which fell would damp his comfort. As a preacher of righteousness he understood well enough that on grounds of justice he had no claim upon the Most Holy God, and he would not venture to plead any merit of his own. But out of pure favor — just as out of the mountain's side the sparkling fountain gushes freely without the labor or art of man, so this covenant of sparing mercy sprang spontaneously from the overflowing, ever bounteous and loving heart of God. Certainly it is so with that greater covenant, whereof we strive to speak; for this was made with Christ, “or ever the earth was;” and as there were no men to supplicate, it could not have been possible that it was due to their intercession; as there were no men to merit anything it could not be bought by their worthiness, and as divine foreknowledge well knew that man would be evil — “only evil, and that continually from his youth up,” no foresight of human goodness could have suggested it. And yet, because he “will have mercy on whom he *will* have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he *will* have compassion,” he, the gracious God, whose heart was swelling like the deep sea with flood-tides of lovingkindness, was pleased to strike hands with Christ, our covenant and federal head, and from grace and grace alone to enter into engagements with him on our account.

The covenant, we note, in the next place, was all *of promise*. You will be struck, if you read these verses, how it runs over and over again “I *establish*” — “it *shall* come to pass” — “I *will*” — “it *shall*” — “I *will*.” He who knows the difference between “*thou shalt*” and “I *will*” is a good theologian. The old covenant of works is “*thou shalt*.” “Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal.” Death always comes to us by that covenant of command; but the new covenant is “I *will*,” and life comes to us by its promises. The covenant of grace runs on this wise: “I *will* sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your iniquities *will I* save you.” If there be a “*you shall*,” it is not by way of command, but by way of promise. “I *will*,” and “*you shall!*” O dear friends, one’s heart rejoices to think of those potent *shalls* and *wills* — those immoveable pillars which death and hell cannot shake — the *shalls* and *wills* of a God who “speaks, and it is done;” who “commands, and it stands fast.” I do not see an *if*, nor a *but*, nor yet the shadow of a shade of a ghost of a *peradventure* in it. It is all “I *will*, I *will*, I *will*,” from beginning to end. And so when God covenanted with Christ, it was not, “I *will* save my people *if* they do this,” but “I *will*,” and “they *shall*,” from first to last.

**“‘Tis like a living spring of waters, sweet and clear;
There’s not an if to foul the stream nor peradventure here.
Grace is its fountain head, the source from whence it came;
In wills and shalls of Gospel grace, eternally the same.”**

The apostle Paul is very clear upon this. In that most blessed epistle to the Galatians he calls this “the covenant of promise,” and marks the difference between Ishmael, “the son of the bondwoman,” according to nature, and according to works, and Isaac, “who is the child of the promise, and the gift of God, *above* nature — not according to the efficacy and energy of the creature, but according to the will and power and truthfulness of the Most High. You and I do not stand to day under a covenant which demands anything of us. Unconditional favors, unlimited mercies, made sure to all the seed by the oath and promise, the *shall* and *will* of God!

Further, I would have you observe that this covenant *has hitherto been faithfully kept*. It cheered my heart, when thinking this matter over, to remember that although I depend upon covenant faithfulness, I am not alone in that dependence, for every living thing upon the face of the earth lives by virtue of the immutable covenant of God. Covenant engagements preserve the world from flood; were it not for that covenant, the tops of

the mountains might be covered to-morrow. So that a covenant tenure is a very sure one, seeing that these thousands of years the world has never been destroyed by a flood. Ask ye, read ye, ask your sires, go back to ancient histories, and see whether since the deluge God has ever again swept away the race of man with water, and ye shall not even dare to hint that such a thing has been. No, the earth standing in the water and out of the water, since the fathers fell asleep, according to the testimony of scoffers themselves, abideth still the same; and so does the covenant of grace; it has never been removed or altered, nor have its promises been broken. O saint, ye dwell in tabernacles which shall never be taken down! God has never failed his people, nor cast away his chosen; not one promise hath lost its fulfillment, nor one word its faithfulness.

***“This cov’nant of grace all blessings secures;
Believer, rejoice, for all things are yours,
And God from his purpose shall never remove,
But love thee and bless thee and rest in his love.”***

Beloved, there is this about Noah’s covenant, and about the covenant of grace, that *it does not depend in any degree at all upon man*; for, if you will notice, the bow is put in the cloud, but it does not say, “And when ye shall look upon the bow, and ye shall remember my covenant, *then* I will not destroy the earth,” but it is gloriously put not upon *our* memory, which is fickle and frail, but upon *God’s* memory, which is infinite and immutable. “The bow shall be in the cloud; and *I* will look upon it, that *I* may remember the everlasting covenant.” Oh! it is not *my* remembering God, it is God’s remembering *me*. it is not *my* laying hold of his covenant, but his covenant laying hold on me, Glory be to God! the whole of the bulwarks are secured, and even the minor-towers which we may fancy might have been left to man, are guarded by divine strength. Even the remembrance of the covenant is not left to our memories, for we might forget, but our Lord cannot, will not forget the saints, whom he has graven on the palms of his hands. It is with us to-day as it was with Israel in Egypt. The blood was upon the lintel and upon the two side-posts; but God did not say, “When *you* see the blood I will pass over you; “no, no, but “When *I* see the blood I will pass over you.” My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God’s looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all his elect; for it is impossible for our God to look at Christ, our bleeding Surety, and then to be angry with us for sins already punished in him. No, dear friends, it is not left with *us* even to be saved by remembering the

covenant. There's no linsey-wolsey here — not a single thread of the creature mars the fabric. Here we have the pure gold, and not an atom of alloy. It is not of man, neither by man, but of the Lord alone. We *should* remember the covenant, and we *shall* do it, through divine grace; but the hinge of the matter does not lie there; it is God's remembering *us*, not our remembering *him*.

And hence — for all these reasons it is *an everlasting covenant*. We know that as long as there is day and night, and summer and winter, and these shall be so long as the earth standeth, the proud waves can never cover the earth. *For ever* has God established this covenant in heaven. Even so the covenant of grace is not intended to be fleeting and temporary. “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.” “He hath made with us an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” “He will ever be mindful of his covenant.” If it concerns *you* to-day, it is “the same yesterday to-day and for ever;” if the covenant blesses you at this hour, it shall bless you in old age, in the article of death, at resurrection, and throughout eternity. No *time* can change one of its stipulations. Ye may walk the centuries and fly adown the ages far into eternity, but ye can never discover such a thing as the change or failure of one single article of the covenant of grace, its jots and tittles are sure to all the seed.

***“He lov’d the world of his elect,
With love surpassing thought;
Nor will his mercy e’er neglect
The souls his Son has bought.
The warm affections of his breast
Towards his chosen burn;
And in this love he’ll ever rest
Nor from his oath return.
Still to confirm his oath of old,
See in the heavens his bow,
No fierce rebukes, but love untold,
Awaits his children now.”***

Would to God you and I studied more the doctrine of this covenant of grace. Our old Puritanic forefathers were wont to preach much about it. Those Scotch Theologians, who were a second band of Puritans, Erskine and the men of his day, were always dwelling upon the covenants. Good Witsins has left us a marvellously learned and potent treatise on the same, and Fisher's Marrow of Theology is a valuable exposition of the matter. He

who studies the doctrines of the covenant is not very likely to make a mingle-mangle of his ministry, or to preach a yea and nay gospel. My dear friends, when you think of the covenant of law and the covenant of grace, and remember that they are contrary the one to the other, and can never mingle, can never be united, so that the one can dilute the other, it must come out forcibly before you that we may address the gospel to the sinner *as* a sinner, without a fitness on his part; that we may still believe in God's love to the saint, even *though* he has sinned, and that notwithstanding all the misbehaviour of any of the chosen people, since they are under the covenant of grace and not of works, their salvation is *never* in jeopardy, *never* at hazard, so far as God's will and God's power are concerned; but he that vowed to save them, and loved them in Christ, and has given them faith, which is the token of his grace, will most assuredly save them and bring them to glory. The earth shall be destroyed, with water, long before one of God's elect shall be damned; it *shall* be destroyed, with fire we know, but when "the mountains depart" and "the hills are removed," the covenant of his grace shall still stand, and He will be mindful of all who have an interest in it.

So much, then, concerning the tenor of the covenant itself. My soul! search, and look, and see whether *thou* hast an interest in that covenant. Canst *thou* say from thy heart —

*"My hope is fixed on nothing less
Than Jesu's blood and righteousness?"*

Then, my soul, that everlasting covenant is thine, and thou art safe beyond risk of harm.

II. Secondly, THE TOKEN OF THE COVENANT.

The covenant needs no token, as far as *God* is concerned; tokens are given for *us*, because of our littleness of heart, our unbelief, our constant forgetfulness of God's promise. The rainbow is the symbol of Noah's covenant; and Jesus Christ, who *is* the covenant, is also the symbol of that covenant to *us*. He *is* the Faithful Witness in heaven.

1. Briefly, upon this part of the subject let us notice *when we may expect to see the token of the covenant*.

The rainbow is only to be seen painted upon a *cloud*. Expect no tokens, except when thou needest them. The Lord Jesus, when he *can*, will trust us

to our faith; for it is, on the whole, more healthy, more strengthening to us, to “walk by faith, and not by sight.” Tokens are helps for our childhood; they would be unnecessary to us were we men. Tokens, to men whose faith is in vigorous order, would be as crutches to a man who is not lame, or as glasses to those whose eyes are perfect. The Lord is pleased to give tokens when tokens are wanted, I say; and hence he gives them, as he gives rainbows, when there is a cloud. When the greatest cloud which ever gathered upon earth, had covered Calvary with blackness, when the sun himself had suffered eclipse, when human sin and divine wrath had made a tempest so black and terrible that all the earth was in affright, then on that black cloud was painted the rainbow — for Jesus was lifted up, and amidst that thick darkness *he*, the expiation and the atonement, offered up himself, and poured forth his blood. When the sinner’s conscience is dark with clouds, when he remembers his past sin, when he mourneth and lamenteth before God, Jesus Christ is revealed to him as the covenant Rainbow, speaking peace; and to the believer, when his trials surround him, when temptations beset him, when he suffers depression of spirits, then how sweet it is to behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ — to see him bleeding for us, offered up for guilty men — God’s rainbow, hung over the cloud of all our sins, our sorrows and our woes. Look, believer, when thou hast a cloud — look for a token, and be not satisfied without it. The ancient Church said upon one occasion, “We see not our signs;” and you and I have sometimes to say the same; but let us hasten to the Rock of our salvation, and beseech him to bestow upon us a comfortable sight of Jesus, who shall will the covenant to our souls again.

Nor does a *cloud* alone give a rainbow; There must be *rain*. There can be no rainbows, unless there be the crystal drops, to reflect the light of the sun. So, beloved, our sorrows, must not only threaten, but they must really fall upon us. There had been no Christ for us if the vengeance of God had been merely a threatening cloud. It must fall in terrible drops upon him.

Christ, who sets forth to us the vengeance and the love of God at the same time, had not come to us, unless there had been a *real* vengeance, and a *real* punishment of sin: until there is a *real* anguish in the sinner’s conscience, there is no Christ for him; and until the chastisement which you feel becomes grievous to you — till the big drops bespatter you, and you feel it is not a threatening, but a real infliction of sorrow upon you, you cannot expect to see Jesus Christ. Perhaps, dear brethren, some of us have but slight views of Christ, and few have visits from him, because we have

so few troubles; and the reason why the most of saints in these days do not live so near to Jesus as they were wont to do in the centuries gone by, may be because we have not so many of those showers of persecution which fell at that season. Why, when, in the reign of Dioclesian, and in the preceding centuries, believers were stoned, and dragged into the amphitheatre, or hacked to death with knives, they saw the glory of Jesus as the rainbow painted on the black cloud of persecution, while the rain-drops fell upon them. It makes us even long to suffer as they suffered, that we may behold Jesus as they beheld him. But the day is coming when the world shall “hear of wars and rumors of wars.” The earth shall rock and reel, and the pillars of heaven shall be shaken; the stars shall fall, the moon shall be turned into a clot of blood, and the sun shall be black as sackcloth of hair. Ah! then how glorious will that rainbow shine to all the people of God, when over the conflagrations of earth, and the destruction of men, and the melting of empires, and the blazing of earth, there shall be seen Christ the Mediator, securing all his people, and ratifying still the covenant of Grace. There must be drops of rain, or else no rainbow; some failings of vengeance, or else no sight of Christ.

But then, there must be *a sun*; for clouds and drops of rain make not rainbows, unless the sun shineth. Beloved, our God, who is as the sun to us, always shines, but we do not always see him, clouds hide his face; but no matter what drops may be falling, or what clouds may be threatening, if *he* does but shine, there will be a rainbow at once. When the blessed Spirit “sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts” — when we can say, “Abba, Father,” and a Father’s love and a Father’s peace are breathed upon us, then we see Jesus Christ, beholding the Father in the person of his Son.

It is said, that when we see the rainbow, that particular shower is over. So good Bishop Hall tells us in his “Contemplations.” Certain it is, that when Christ comes, our troubles are over; when we behold Jesus, our sins are gone — our doubts and fears subside at his command; when *he* walks the waters of the sea, there will be a calm. But others say that the rainbow is the showery arch, and heralds bad weather. And probably this is quite as true. Certainly, whenever you get a love-token from Christ, you may expect some trouble; for he brings his people into the banqueting house either before a battle, or after it. Melchisedec came to meet Abraham when the kings had all been slaughtered; but sometimes our Melchisedec brings the bread and wine just before the battle is to commence. We are not *always* to be living upon love-tokens; our beloved Jesus would rather make

us live by simple faith, and therefore we “walk in darkness, and see no light.” Still, rainbows are delightful sights, and a vision of Jesus is rapturous and transporting, but we cannot expect to see him, I say, unless it is when the storm is over or when another storm is coming on, or when the cloud is there, or the drops are falling, or the light of God’s countenance is especially shining upon you.

We will say no more about *when* this token is seen, but we will now notice briefly, what this token *is*.

2. *What do we see in our Covenant Witness in heaven?* We see in him what we see in the rainbow. In the rainbow we see *transcendant glory and beauty*. As one of the works of God, it is worthy to be sought out by them that have pleasure therein. One might stand and gaze on the rainbow with wonder and admiration, and never be weary. I do not know whether you have noticed paintings of rainbows — did you ever see a good one? *Will you ever see a good one?* There are one or two in the Royal Academy this year — I am no judge of paintings, but I can judge that they are as much *unlike* rainbows as they well could be. Rainbows cannot be painted; the thing is impossible; there is such a melting and blending of colors, that human art shall never be able to rival the art of God. The Master Painter, with the black cloud for his palette, and the sun’s rays for his pencil, painteth so that no artist shall rival him. If you should gather together a heap of all the glittering gems and jewels which adorn an Oriental prince and build therewith a glorious arch, ye could not make such glitter and brightness of glory as in the rainbow, which is the simple work of a drop of rain and a ray of light. But shall I compare my Lord Jesus to the rainbow? I do him an injustice.

“All human beauties, all divine, in my beloved meet and shine.”

You never saw a picture of *his* face which satisfied you, and you never will. You shall go all over the Continent, and see some of the marvellous productions of the masters put up as altar pieces; and you will say when you see them, “*That is not like Jesus Christ.*” They can paint Judas; there are some fine heads of Peter; sweet guesses at John — John the Bapstist to the life, all but that little bit of a cockle-shell in his hand; they can paint Mary Magdalen if you will, but never Jesus Christ; they can never paint him; no artist that ever lived can catch his expression of countenance, much less put it on canvas. And as to the beauty of his character, must we not burst out with the spouse in the Cantioles, “He is altogether lovely?”

*“The spacious earth, the swelling flood,
 Proclaim the wise and powerful God;
 And thy rich glories from afar,
 Sparkle in every rolling star,
 But in his looks a glory stands,
 The noblest labor of thine hands:
 God, in the person of his Son,
 Hath all his mightiest works outdone.”*

The rainbow has been recognised by ancient poets and bards as an appointed messenger of God. Homer calls it the messenger of the gods, and the old mythologies speak of it as the Iris, the messenger of Juno. They knew not who had sent it, nor what was the errand on which it came. Still they recognised it as a divine ambassador. And surely such is Christ, the messenger of the covenant whom we delight in, God’s great ambassador, who is “our peace,” “the desire of all nations,” who shall yet come, and shall be hailed as “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” O blessed rainbow! Jesus! when shall thy beauties be beheld by mortal eyes? When shall *all* kings fall down before thee, and yield their sceptres and their crowns to thee?

Again: in the rainbow, and in Christ, I see *vengeance satisfied*. Is not the bow the symbol of the warrior’s power? With far-reaching arrows he draws the string, and woe unto his enemies; but when a hero hangs up his bow upon the wall, what meaneth he but that warfare is over, and peace is proclaimed? When he looseneth the bow, and leaveth it without the string and without an arrow, it means that he will go no more out to hunt his adversaries; his arrows shall be no more “drunk with the blood of the slain;” he layeth the bow aside, hangeth it up on high, and leaveth it unstrung, without an arrow. Such is the rainbow. A bow, it is true, but a bow hung up — a bow without string or arrow. And such is Christ, God’s bow. “*Thine* arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.” When *he* takes the “rod of iron,” he breaks his enemies in pieces “like a potter’s vessel.” “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of his strength?” Jesus, the arrow of God, the polished shaft in the quiver of the Most High. But *there* I see him: a bow still — still mighty to destroy — but yet a bow without a string. He threw *that* away, when he came from heaven to earth, and lay slumbering in the manger. A bow without an arrow!

*“No thunder clothes is brow,
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.”*

Beloved, Christ *is* vengeance satisfied. Those wounds, those bright and burnished jewels of his hands, betoken that God demands no more of man.

The rainbow, yet again, is a token that vengeance itself has become *on our side*. You see, it is an unbroken “bow.” He did not snap it across his knee. It is a bow still. Vengeance is there, justice is there; but which way is it pointed? It is turned upward; not to shoot arrows down on us, but for us, if we have faith enough to string it, and to make it our glorious bow — to draw it with all our might, to send our prayers, our praises, our desires, up to the bright throne of God. Mighty is that man, omnipotent is his faith, who has power to bend that bow and draw it, and shoot his prayers to heaven.

Nay, more, inasmuch as it is a bow not black, nor blood-red, but a bow painted with the colors of holiday and delight, it seems to me as if heaven hangs out its streamers of joy, while angels sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.” *They* pull the banners from the standards of glory, and they hang them out across the sky, as *we* do on our ships upon marriage days. Heaven hangs out its glorious banners, to show that God is so completely satisfied with Christ, and so at peace with man, that He joys in man’s joy rejoices in man’s rejoicing, “rests in his love, and rejoices in us with singing,” Look up, believer, to the person of Christ, behold the *joy* of God, “the pleasure of the Lord” prospering “in his hands,” and your soul will be full of ecstasy and delight.

Once again. In the rainbow we see the one color of light, which appeareth to us to be but white, broken up, refracted, distributed, blended, harmonised, brought out in all its distinct elements. There is no doubt that there are more colors in light than our eyes have ever seen. The spectrum of eye can only compass a certain quantity of the colors; but beneath the lowest, and above the highest, there are others. There is infinitely more in God than you and I will ever be able to see. One of the best sights of light, as dissolved and analysed, is to be had in the rainbow. There you see the colors arranged in their proper order, and you are able to mark the red melting into the orange, and the orange into the yellow, and the yellow yet again into the green, and the green into the blue, and the blue into the indigo and the violet. They are all there — not one put out of place, not

one left out. The character of God is one, like his essence; yet to us, that we may read it, it must be, as it were, broken up, but not thrown out of harmony. He that hath seen Christ “hath seen the Father.” He that sees the rainbow sees “Light.” He that sees Christ sees the Father: God’s justice meeting and blending into his truth, God’s truth melting into his mercy, that mercy melting into his love, that love in contact with his faithfulness; and so every attribute standing side by side with its next of kin; the whole of them absolutely necessary to complete the glory of that arch, and every one of them necessarily to be put in its proper place also, to make the arch a harmony and a very music of colors.

Beloved, such is Jesus Christ. If we could but understand Jesus Christ, we could not make mistakes about *God*. In Jesus how I see blood-red justice, justice as fierce as if there were no mercy; but what love I see also! What boundless love! As Watts puts it, we cannot tell

*“Which of the letters best is writ,
The power, the wisdom, or the grace.”*

They are all so clearly there. The *whole* of God written out in Christ! And yet, I warn you, we can never *see* the whole of God — in this life never. I do not know whether it is quite correct, but two or three of the older commentators, in glossing upon that passage, “there was a rainbow round about the throne,” say that it means entirely round it, and that therefore there is a complete circle — that we only see one half of it, but that in fact the covenant rainbow is a circle. Now, whatever you may think of that gloss, there certainly is one circular rainbow in the Bible, for that angel, in the tenth of Revelation had “a rainbow round his head,” he wore it as a crown round his head. We may, without straining a point, say, the most we can ever see even in Christ, as revealed to us, while we are here, is just a glorious semi-circle of truth — an arch, like a divine ladder, by which we may mount to the very loftiness of God himself. But there is another half which you and I have not seen, and we shall not see it till we get to the throne of God. Moreover, that rainbow that is in heaven differs from ours; for there it is like unto an emerald.” The green preponderates. The mild lustre of the mercy of God, and his love, will seem to triumph over the fiery sardus and jacinth of his justice.

3. How ought we to act, dear friends, with regard to this rainbow, and Jesus Christ as the symbol of the covenant?

First, let us act *like little children*. Little children run in clapping their hands with glee; “Father, there’s a rainbow!” Out they run to look at it; and they wonder whether they could find the end of it; they wish you would let them run till they could catch it; they look, and look, and look, and look, and when the shower begins to abate and it dies out, they are so sorrowful because they have lost the splendid vision. Beloved, let us be children. Whenever we think of Christ let us be little children, and look, and look, and look again; and let us long to get at him, for, unlike the rainbow, we *can* get at *him*. Pliny, who by the way talks a deal of nonsense, declares that wherever the rainbow’s foot rests the flowers are made much sweeter; and Aristotle says, the rainbow is a great breeder of honey-dew. I do not know how that is, but I know that wherever Jesus Christ is he makes the perfume of his people very sweet. “His name is as ointment poured forth,” and I know He is “a great breeder of honey-dew.” There is sure to be much more lovingkindness in that man’s heart who has seen much of Jesus. I recommend you to follow that divine rainbow till you reach the foot of it, and till you embrace it, and say with Simeon, “Now let thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Play the child then.

While we gaze, ought we not *praise and admire*? One or two of the nations of antiquity had it as a part of their religion always to sing hymns when they saw the rainbow. Should not we whenever we see Christ? Should it not be a red-letter day marked in our diary? “This day let us praise his name.” And as we ought always to see him, I may improve upon this, and bid you say, —

***“I will praise thee every day; now thine anger’s passed away,
Comfortable thoughts arise from the bleeding sacrifice.”***

And again, when we see Christ, we ought to *confess our sin with humiliation*. An old writer says, that the Jews confess their sins when they see the rainbow. I am sure, whenever we see Christ, we ought to remember the deluge of wrath from which he has delivered us, the flames of hell from which he has saved us; and so, humbly bowing ourselves in the dust, let us love, and praise, and blesse his name.

To some of you there is nothing in this sermon, because you have never laid hold on the covenant. You have never believed in Jesus. Remember, that a simple faith in Christ is the evidence of your being in the covenant. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thine heart, then thy name is

written in the roll of the blessed; but if thou wilt not believe in him, however excellent thy character, however goodly thy works, thou shalt perish in thy sins; for “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not,” be he who he may or what he may, “shall be damned.” Believe, and believing, thou putteth thyself under the divine arch of the blessed covenant; thou shalt see its glorious colors with exultation and delight, and thou shalt be secure, whatever catastrophies shall shake the earth, whatever calamities shall trouble the race of man.

THE BRIDGELESS GULF

NO. 518

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 5TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” — Luke 16:26.

FOR the last few months I have been led to blow the silver trumpet, sounding forth the love and mercy of our God in Christ. Many times in your hearing I have preached a full Christ for empty sinners, and have set forth the freeness and graciousness of the divine proclamation which in the gospel is made to the chief of sinners. I have not, concerning that point, shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. But I feel that I must now blow a blast upon the rough ram's horn, for sometimes our congregations need to be reminded of the law and terrors of God, and of the judgment to come; our experience is, that the preaching of judgment is greatly blessed of God; we have remarked that a very large number of conversions have occurred under those sermons in which the declaration of God's wrath against all iniquity has been the most plain and solemn. A thunder-storm clears the air; there are pestilences which would gather beneath the wings of calm which can only be purged away by the lightning flash. When God sends his servant with heavy tidings, his message of alarm cleanses the spiritual atmosphere, and kills the sloth, pride, indifference, and lethargy, which otherwise might fall upon the people. As the sharp needle prepares the way for the thread, so the piercing law makes a way for the bright silver thread of divine grace. The lancet is quite as needful as the healing balm. The law is our pedagogue to bring us to Christ; like the old Greek pedagogue who led the boy to school, so the law leads us to Christ, who teaches and instructs us, and makes us wise unto salvation.

Those who preached the law, as well as the gospel, in the Puritanic times, were the most fruitful soul-winners. We find our blessed Lord and Master, whose heart was overflowing with compassion, and whose very nature was love, often dwelling upon the wrath to come; and indeed, his utterances are more telling and terrible than the most burning threatening from the lips of thundering seers of old. God grant that this morning, the effect which so anxiously I desire, may follow from that burden of the Lord which now weighs so heavily upon me. May the Master gather out this day a seed unto himself, who shall be saved from the wrath to come, and be to all eternity the reward of the Redeemer's travail. Lift up your hearts to God, ye that know him and have power with him, and ask that now the divine Spirit may work mightily, that hearts may be broken and sinners led to Jesus.

"Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." Human ingenuity has done very much to bridge great gulfs. Scarcely has the world afforded a river so wide that its floods could not be over leaped; or a torrent so furious that it could not be made to pass under the yoke. High above the foam of Columbia's glorious cataract, man has hung aloft his slender but substantial road of iron, and the shriek of the locomotive is heard above the roar of Niagara. This very week I saw the first chains which span the deep rift through which the Bristol Avon finds its way at Clifton; man has thrown his suspension bridge across the chasm, and men will soon travel where only that which hath wings could a little while ago have found a way. There is, however, one gulf which no human skill or engineering ever shall be able to bridge; there is one chasm which no wing shall ever be able to cross; it is the gulf which divides the world of joy in which the righteous triumph, from that land of sorrow in which the wicked feel the smart of Jehovah's sword. Whatever other arguments there may be why the righteous should have no communion with the wicked in a future state, beside all these other things, any one of which is enough and sufficient of itself, there is a great gulf fixed, so that there can be no passage from the one world to the other.

I. In trying solemnly to speak upon this matter, I shall commence with this — THERE IS NO PASSAGE FROM HEAVEN TO HELL — "They which would pass from hence to you, cannot." Glorified saints cannot visit the prison-house of lost sinners. Long enough were the righteous mingled with the wicked; sufficient was the evil time in which the wheat was choked with the tares; quite long enough was the period in which the chaff laid upon the same floor, side by side with the wheat. Patience had its perfect work.

They did both grow together until the time of the harvest; it is not necessary now that harvest has come, that they should lie together any longer. It were inconsistent with the perfect joy and the beatific state of the righteous, with its perfect calm and purity, that sin should be admitted into their midst, or that they should be permitted to find companionships in the abodes of evil. It were not glorious to the Lord Jesus Christ, that they should cease from beholding his beauties and adoring his person, in order to succor his enemies, and comfort his desperate foes. Shall the courtiers of heaven become traitors to their King, that they may relieve his implacable adversaries? Shall the princes of the blood imperial, who wear eternal coronets, lay aside their robes of honor, to become menial servants to the damned in hell, who would not, when Christ was preached to them, bow the knee and kiss the Son? This must not and cannot be. Besides, the decree of God, like a great mountain of brass, has for ever shut the righteous in with holiness, with happiness, with God, and they cannot, if they would, must not, cross the great gulf which divides them from the world of the wicked.

It follows that *the most earnest and assiduous preacher* must then renounce all hope of converting sinners. God has raised up some apostolic spirits, whose presence in a nation is like the rising of the sun; darkness flies before them, and the light of salvation streams from them to tens of thousands. When they lift up their hands to preach, God gives them power to shake the gates of hell, and when they bend the knee to pray, they unlock the gates of heaven. Men like Baxter with bursting hearts of love, or Joseph Alleine with glowing tongue, or Whitfield with seraph's fire, or Wesley with cherub's zeal; these are the men who bless their age and are most truly great. These men can go to the borders of the earth if they will; their commission is co-extensive with the human race — "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world." These men are never so happy as when they are preaching. Woe is unto them if they preach not the gospel, and when they preach it and God helps them, they are like Elihu, refreshed by the effort. They were born to preach the gospel and to win sinners to Christ, and they are never content except they are fulfilling their high commission. But they must cease from their labors soon, for in heaven they are not needed, and from hell they are excluded. O sinner, even our voice, feeble though it be, may win you to Jesus now; but if you die impenitent, it can never woo you again to a Savior. *Now* is my time to preach to you, and

set open mercy's door before you, but *then* I can never warn you, nor invite you; never again depict the agonies of my Lord and Master and endeavor to attract you by the story of his love, his dying, bleeding love. No, it will be all over then. "They rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." They must bring their sheaves with them, for they cannot return into another field to sow, nor journey into other broad acres to reap. Burning as their hearts will still be with divine love, they will have to exercise it in another way. Their passionate longings for God's glory will find other channels in which to flow. They will bow their heads and adore him day and night, but they can no longer serve him in gospel ministry. The ambassador rolls up his commission for God has run up the black flag of damnation, and hangs out no more signals of peace. Poor sinner, fain would I win thee now, for it is now or never with thee and me.

The efforts of the most importunate visitor, the most earnest friend, must cease with death. Some of you have friends who can get nearer to your heart than I can. You can afford sometimes to forget my poor words and go your way to sin again; but you have a sister, and when she pleads with you, you do feel it; you have one loving friend, and when he speaks to you you cannot be deaf; your conscience has often been impressed by him, and sometimes through him the strivings of the Spirit have been very mighty with your soul. I love, my brethren and sisters, to see you earnest for the souls of others. God may give *you* some souls whom he will never give to me, and so long as they be but saved, though I have a holy covetousness and earnestly desire to bring many to Christ, yet I will as unfeignedly rejoice in their salvation by your instrumentality as if it had been accomplished by my own. Go and labor with all your might. Tell what Christ has done for you. With pleading, loving accents, beseech them to be reconciled to God. But oh! remember you can only do that in *this* life, for when the gates are shut, you are shut in for your reward, and all the world is shut out from your efforts. O my hearer, dost thou hear this? not only will there be no public congregations, no Sabbaths, no houses of prayer, but there shall be no private messengers, no earnest Christians who shall privately seek thy soul's good. What sayest thou to this? Does not this give an awful value to those tender words of importunate love? Turn thee at the gentle rebuke, for otherwise thou shalt be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

Those who are nearest and dearest must be divided from you, if you perish in your sins. A mother can put her arms about her child's neck and pray for

it here; she may affectionately exhort her son to seek peace with God now; she may earnestly and incessantly follow him with her holy entreaties, but she can never come to him from the realms of glory if once he is lost. "They that would come from us to you cannot." Do ye hear it, young man? Those glistening eyes of a mother's love shall never weep again for you.

That touching voice which sometimes awoke the echoes of your heart, shall never plead again. O ungodly woman, thou shalt never see thy godly child. Father, is it that daughter you are thinking of who loved and feared God in childhood and was taken from you? Did she say to you when she was dying, "Follow me to heaven, my Father?" You have heard her voice for the last time; that child will never see her father more unless he turns from his evil ways. Methinks if she could be in heaven what she was on earth, she would fling her arms about your neck and seek to draw you to the glorious throne of the Most High; but oh! it cannot be. A just God condemns the impenitent sinner, and just men assent to the Divine sentence. See then, O ye ungodly ones that are present to-day, you often think our company a great nuisance, and perhaps while I am preaching, my alarming words annoy you. Ah, we shall not annoy you long. Does your mother tease you when she bids you seek the Lord? She will not tease you long. When I bring home the judgment to come, is the subject obnoxious to you? I shall not ask your patience long. We shall be separated; if you go your way and follow after sin and wrath, there will come a dividing time, and O let me say to you, you would give worlds if you had them; you would give them if they were solid diamonds, to hear again the voice which now fatigues you, and to listen once more to those plaintive invitations which vex you and spoil your mirth. Ah, how would you bless God if he would let you come back again and have once more those Sabbaths which were so dull and dreary, and permit you to go up once more to the house of God which now perhaps is like a prison-house to your vain and frivolous spirits. O sirs, I say ye may well have patience with us for a little time and bear with our importunities, for we shall not plague you much longer. We beseech you to come to Jesus; we would pluck you by your garments and beseech you to flee from the wrath to come; forgive us for being thus in earnest, for even if we should fail with you, you will soon escape the importunities of our love. A few short months of mortal life, and then you will be far away from all religious discourses and all spiritual talk of things to come; you will be in your own company, but I warn you this will yield you little enough content.

Dear friends, how earnest this ought to make the people of God to work while it is called to-day. If this is our only time for doing good, let us do good while we can. I hear people sometimes say, "Mr. So-and-so does too much; he works too hard." Oh! we none of us do half enough. Do not talk about working too hard for Jesus Christ, the thing is impossible. Are souls perishing, and shall I sleep? My idle, lazy flesh, shalt thou keep me still while men are dying and hell is filling? Brethren and sisters, let us be lukewarm no longer. If God makes us lights in the world, let us spend ourselves as a candle does, which consumes itself by shining. As the poor work girl, who has but one light, works with desperate pace because that will soon be burned out, so let us be instant in season and out of season, watching, praying laboring for the souls of men. We are not earnest enough about immortal souls. If we had but a view of the shortness of life, the fleeting character of time, and the terrors of eternal wrath; if we could but see lost souls, and understand their unutterable woe, we should shake ourselves from the dust, and go forth to work while it is called to day.

II. As we cannot go from heaven to hell, so the text assures us, "NEITHER CAN THEY COME TO US THAT WOULD COME FROM THENCE." The lost spirits in hell are shut in for ever. I see the angel standing at that iron door; I hear the awful key as it grates among the tremendous wards, and when that gate is closed, he hurls the key into the abyss of oblivion, and the captives are fast immured, bound in fetters which will never break, in chains which never rust. The sinner cannot come to heaven for a multitude of reasons. Among the rest, these. First, *his own character* forbids it. As a man lives and dies, so will he be throughout eternity. The drunkard here will have all a drunkard's thirst there without the means of gratifying it. The swearer here will become a yet more ripe and proficient blasphemer. Death does not change but fixes character; it petrifies it. "He that is holy let him be holy still; he that is filthy let him be filthy still." The lost man remains a sinner and a growing sinner, and continues to rebel against God. Would you have such a man in heaven? Shall the thief prowl through the streets of the New Jerusalem? Shall the atmosphere of Paradise be polluted by an oath? Shall the songs of angels be disturbed by the ribaldry of licentious conversation? It cannot be. Heaven were no heaven, if the sinner could be permitted to enter it. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and as there is no hope of the finally lost ever being born again, that kingdom of God they cannot see. Sinner, if you are not fit for heaven now, hast thou any right to hope thou ever wilt be? If you die

without God and without hope, where must your portion be? Without a God can ye dwell in heaven — God's own dominions? Without hope, can ye enter where hope is consummated in full fruition? Never. The enemies of God shall never be permitted to beard him to his face, and vent their blasphemies in his own palace; they must be driven from his presence, and driven from that presence for ever.

Moreover, not only does the man's character shut him out, but also *the sinner's doom*. What was it? "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." If it is everlasting, how can they enter heaven? What does the Savior say, "Where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched." If there be any truth in that metaphor, the lost are lost for ever; the worm would die if they entered heaven, and the fire were quenched if they obtained celestial seats. How does the Holy Spirit put it? Does he not describe the wrath to come as a bottomless pit? It were not such if they could get handhold, and afterwards climb upward to the starry thrones of angels. Brethren, he that dooms men, he that has put it in the strong expression, "He that believeth not shall be damned," will certainly and literally carry out his own words; and if it be so, it shall never be possible for them to break their prison of fire, and enter the land of joy and peace.

Moreover, sinner, thou canst not go out of the prison-house because *God's character* and God's word are against thee. Shall God ever cease to be just? But if he be just, he must never cease from punishing thee when thou art finally condemned. "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," is the never ceasing cry of cherubim, but as long as he is "Holy, Holy, Holy," thou canst never be acceptable to him. Shall God ever cease to be true? But remember, as long as he is true to his own threatenings, he must and will send his arrows through you, and make his fierce wrath to consume you. Then there stands his decree, "He that believeth not shall be damned;" this is the great gulf, that fixed chasm by which the impenitent sinner is fast as firmest destiny bound like Prometheus to the rock for ever, never to be loosed in time or in eternity. It must not — it shall not be — if God be God, and if his decree be not a falsehood and a vanity, ye must not come out of the place of your torment.

Nay, yet more, remember sinner, there never was but one bridge between fallen man and a holy God. That bridge you reject. The person of the Mediator, his substitution, his righteousness, his painful death, these make the only road from sin to righteousness, from wrath to acceptance. But

these you reject. If you should ever be lost you will have finally rejected Christ; and inasmuch as you are not this morning saved, O my poor fellow creature, thou art now rejecting Christ; thou art as good as saying, "Christ died, but not for me; Christ shed his blood to save men, but I will not be saved in his way. Let him die. I count his death a trifle, and his blood a vanity; I had sooner perish than be saved by him." This is what you in effect are saying. I know the words make you shudder; you would not venture to utter them, but that is your feeling. Ye will not have this man to reign over you; you will not bow the knee and kiss the Son; you will still be an adversary to God, and sooner be destroyed than be saved through the atonement of Christ. Well, now, if you reject the only way, what wonder, if having rejected that, there remains no hope? Besides, remember there is no other sacrifice for sin. Scripture expressly tells us that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. Do you think that Jesus will come a second time to die? Shall those divine hands be stretched again to the wood? You reject him now. If he died again you would reject him. Shall the head again be pierced with thorns? Shall the side again be rent with the spear? Why, sinner, if thou refusest to have him now thou wouldest refuse him could he die a second time. But that cannot be. He has offered an atonement once for all, and now for ever he sits down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. No second atonement — no second redemption shall ever be offered for the sin of men.

Besides, remember, there is no Holy Spirit in the pit. The blessed Spirit is here to-day, and often has he striven with some of you. Do you remember when you trembled like Felix? Do not you remember the time when, like Agrippa, you were almost persuaded? but still all this was put away; conscience was hushed; the Spirit of God was quenched. Well, that Spirit can strive with you again, and if he comes forth in his irresistible strength, if your heart be like a flint, he can break it; and if like iron, he can melt it. But once in the pit, and the Holy Spirit never comes there. That blessed dove shuns the place of wrath, and over souls given up to destruction, never will his life-giving wings be known to brood. If so, then you cannot be born again, and cannot enter heaven; ye cannot be sanctified; and unsanctified spirits cannot have a portion in the skies. So then, it is clear enough you cannot possibly pass from hell to heaven. Ah, this will be a judgment upon you, a solemn judgment upon you for many things. You do not like the house of God; you shall be shut out of it. You do not love the Sabbath; you are shut out from the eternal Sabbath. The voice of sacred

song had no charm in it for you; you shall not join it. The face of God you never loved; you shall never see it. The name of Jesus Christ was never melodious in your ears; you shall never hear it. Jesus Christ was preached to you, but you rejected him; his blood you trod beneath your feet. The way to heaven was freely set open before you, but you would not come unto him that ye might have life. There is a road from earth to heaven: sinner, though thou hast gone into the depths of sin, if thou hast been the most infamous and most outrageous of offenders, there is a road for thee to heaven yet. The harlot, the thief, the profane, the drunkard, may yet find mercy through the grace of Jesus, but

*“There are no acts of pardon passed
In that cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair
Reign in eternal silence there.”*

God bless the solemn remarks we make, and he shall have the glory.

III. But now, once again to change the subject for a few minutes, I have to notice in the third place, that while no persons can pass that bridgeless chasm, so NO THINGS CAN. Nothing can come from hell to heaven. Rejoice ye saints in light, triumph in your God for this — no temptation of Satan can ever vex you when once you are landed on the golden strand; you are beyond bowshot of the arch-enemy; he may howl and bite his iron hands, but his howlings cannot terrify and his bitings cannot disturb. No longer shall you be vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly. Lot shall never hear another foul word. You shall not have to say, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar.”

*“No light discourse shall reach your heart,
Nor trifles vex your ear.”*

You shall be shut out from everything that belongs to hell. And, remember you shall be in heaven, so secure that the wrath of God which makes hell shall never light on you. Your Savior carried it, not a drop of it shall fall upon your persons. No present pains shall be in heaven, they are for the lost; no pains of body, no distractions of mind. You shall have no sin; sin cannot pass from them to you; you shall be perfect — like your Lord, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

*“Your inward foes shall all be
slain, Nor Satan vex your peace
again.”*

You shall have no fears for the future. You shall know that your bliss is eternal. This shall always be the honey of your honeycomb — that it lasts for ever. Millions of years you shall gaze into the face of your beloved, throughout endless ages you shall bask in the sunlight of his smile. This is joy, I say, to the Christian, if he will but think it over it will reconcile him to the hardest strokes of temporary tribulation, and make him rejoice in the hardest toil of this mortal struggle. Courage, man, it is but a day or two of wrestling, and then the immortal crown; an hour or two of fighting, and then the everlasting rest. Methinks I see to-day the angels leaning from the battlements of the celestial palace, and as they mark you, like armed men cutting your way to the gates thereof, they cry to you: —

*“Come in, come in,
Eternal glory you shall win.”*

Will ye sheathe your swords? Will ye stop the conflict? No; press on, and let your true Jerusalem blades cut through soul and spirit, and divide joint and marrow, till you reach the summit, and the eternal glory shall be yours.

IV. Again, we change the strain for a fourth point, and this a terrible one. As nothing can come from hell to heaven, so nothing heavenly can ever come to hell. There are rivers of life at God’s right hand — those streams can never leap in blessed cataracts to the lost. Nay, Lazarus is not permitted to dip the tip of his finger in water to administer the cooling drop to the fire-tormented tongue. Not a drop of heavenly water can ever cross that chasm. See then, sinner, heaven is *rest*, perfect rest — but there is no rest in hell; it is labor in the fire, but no ease, no peace, no sleep, no calm, no quiet; everlasting storm; eternal hurricane; unceasing tempest. In the worst disease, there are some respites: spasms of agony, but then pauses of repose. There is no pause in hell’s torments. The dreadful music of the eternal miserere has not so much as a single stop in it. It is on, on, on, with crash of battle, and dust and blood, and fire and vapor of smoke.

Heaven, too, is a place of *joy*; there happy fingers sweep celestial chords; there joyous spirits sing hosannahs day without night; but there is no joy in hell; for music there is the groan; for joy there is the pang; for sweet fellowship there is the binding up in bundles; for everything that is blissful there is everything that is dolorous. No, I could not exaggerate, that were impossible; I cannot come up to the doleful facts, therefore there I leave them. Nothing of the joy of heaven can ever come to hell.

Heaven is the place of *sweet communion* with God —

*“There they behold his face,
And never, never sin;
There from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”*

There is no communion with God in hell. There are prayers, but they are unheard; there are tears, but they are unaccepted; there are cries for pity, but they are all an abomination unto the Lord. God willeth not the death of any; he had rather that he should turn unto him and live, but if that grace be refused —

*“The Lord, in vengeance dressed,
Shall lift his hand and swear,
You that despised my promised rest
Shall have no portion there.”*

Tell me what heaven is if ye will, and I must say of any description that ye give of its joys, that there is none of them in Tophet, for heaven’s blessings cannot cross from the celestial regions to the infernal prison-house. No, it is sorrow without relief, misery without hope, and here is the pang of it — it is death without end. There is only one thing that I know of in which heaven is like hell — it is eternal. “The wrath *to come*, the wrath *to come*, the wrath *to come*,” for ever and for ever spending itself, and yet never being spent.

And now, would to God, I could speak with you as my heart desireth; for this is my only opportunity, since, as I have already said, I can do this no more if I be saved and if you be lost. Spare me, then, two or three minutes while I close this poor discourse of mine, by trying to reason with those of you who are unconverted. I have had little to say to God’s people this morning; I may comfort them in the evening, but this morning I have to deal with you who fear not God. Many of you now present are unconverted. I will never flatter you by preaching to you as though you were all Christians. The Lord my God knoweth there is many a heart here that never was broken; there is many a spirit here that never trembled before the majesty of infinite justice, and never kissed the outstretched scepter of a crucified Redeemer. You know this, some of you; you know you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. I do not mean you alone who live in open sin; but I mean you who are amiable, excellent, admirable in your carriage and deportment, but yet the love of God is not

in you. There is no fault to be found with your outward character, may be, but you have not been born again; you have never passed from death unto life; and remember, sirs, there is the same hell for the most excellent as for the most abominable, unless ye fly to Christ — “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;” and if ye believe not in him, ye shall die in your sins, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Come, then, let me plead with you, and I will ask you a question — do you believe all this? Do you believe that there is a hell? Do you believe that there is a heaven to be lost? If you profess that you do not so believe, I have done with you. God bring you to a better mind. But what did you come here for? Why do you profess to be a Christian if you reject the Christian’s inspired Book? Become an infidel, and be honest. For my part, modern infidelity never gives me any alarm; I had as soon see you outwardly infidels, as to hear you pretend to be Christians, and yet disbelieve what that Book teaches. I like honesty, and it seems to me that when a man honestly says, “I shall not make a profession of believing what I do not believe,” that there is at least one virtue in him, and we may hope that others may find soil to grow in. But you that profess to be religious, and attend your Church or your Chapel, and yet do not believe the revelation of God, what can I say to you, but that your damnation will be most just. I think I hear many of you say, “Believe it, sir, oh! we never doubted it; we learned it in our earliest childhood, we have heard it always, and we never ventured to doubt.” Ah! well then, I ask you — are you in your sober senses to believe that there is a hell, and not seek to escape from it? Do you believe there is a wrath to come, and that it may fall upon you in the next minute, for you may be dead and never leave this house of prayer, and yet do you sit easy in your pews; or are you mad? has sin so besotted you with its foul intoxication, that you cannot think? for if you can think, and there be an angry God who will punish with the awful force of his omnipotence, how is it that you can be at ease in Zion?

Let me ask you another question: if these things be so, have you used your senses in giving a preference to the pleasures of this life beyond the joys of heaven? in following the pleasures of to-day, when you know they will be followed with the miseries of eternity. Do not mistake, I do not mean to say that a Christian is without pleasures, we have the highest and purest pleasure that mortal or immortal can know; we have not the pleasures of sin, but we have higher, more delightful, and deeper pleasures. But this is

what I mean, will you spend yourselves in sinful pleasure? will you occupy your time with lust, or drunkenness, or with the frivolities of fashionable life, and do you think that these are worth the expense that they will cause? “Oh,” said one to me, who holds a high position in society, as I talked with him long, after having preached earnestly the gospel, he took me by the button, and he said, “it does seem to me to be an awful thing, that I, knowing as I do what will be my lot if I live and die as I am, should still act as I do. When you are with me,” said he, “and I listen to a solemn address, I think there shall come a change over me; I will serve God, but O sir, you do not know the temptations of my life; you do not know how it is when I get into the midst of pomps and vanities, and perhaps mingle with men who ridicule all thoughts of religion, it all goes, and I am such a fool that I sell my soul — sell my soul for it.” Oh! there are such fools here to-day, who sell their souls for a little sin — one or two whirls in the world’s mad dance, and then the devil is your partner, and your mirth is over. I ask you to use your reason, and judge whether it be worth your while to gain the whole world and lose your own soul.

I shall put it to you in another way. How is it that ye do not lay hold of Christ, since this is the only time when there is a probability that Christ can be laid hold of. I will tell you why it is. You do not love Christ; you love sin. Or else you are too proud to come to Christ; you think yourselves good enough, and you think that Christ is not for such as you are, but only for great sinners and the lowest of the low. O sirs, is your pride such a fine thing, that you will be damned in order to maintain its dignity? Throw your pride down, come as a sinner must come, and lay hold of Jesus Christ. Or if it be your sin which hinders, may God the Holy Ghost help you to pluck out the right eye and cast off a right arm sooner than having two eyes and two arms to be cast into hell fire.

“But,” saith one, “how may I lay hold on Christ?” May the blessed Spirit enable you to do it. Here it is, trust Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Conscious that you deserve his wrath, trembling because of his terrible law, look to Jesus. There hangs a bleeding Savior. Methinks these eyes can see him bleeding there; God eternal, he by whom the heaven of heavens were made, and the earth and the fullness thereof, takes upon himself the form of man and hangs upon the tree of the curse.

*“See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”*

There is life in a look at that crucified One, there is life at this moment for thee. Will you glance at him with a tearful eye, “Jesus, slaughtered, martyred, murdered for my sake, I do believe in thee; here at thy feet I throw myself, all guilty, polluted, foul; let thy blood drop on me; turn thine eye upon me; say to me ‘I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with the bands of my kindness have I drawn thee.’ Come and welcome, sinner — come.” I have but preached the law to you out of love. God knoweth how these hard things, as I speak them, make my heart bleed blood. O that you would believe in Jesus; he is freely preached to you — accept him. May the Spirit of God lead you now to accept him. These are no hard terms, no stern conditions of a bloodthirsty tyrant; he does but say, “Bow the knee and kiss the Son. Come, and welcome, sinner — come.” Young man, wilt thou be saved or not? Thou sinner, yonder, with thy grey head, betokening the approach of death, wilt thou believe in Christ or not? It may be this is thy last time — thou shalt never hear the gospel faithfully and affectionately pressed home upon thee again. Wilt thou have Jesus to be thine; Spirit of God, lead that heart to say, “Yea, Lord, I will;” and as the acceptance is heard on earth, may it be registered in heaven, and may salvation come to that man’s heart this day. The Lord bless you all, every one of you; and when he gathers his people together, may I and you, every one of us, be found at his right hand, to see his smiling face.

BELIEVING WITH THE HEART.

NO. 519

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 12TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” — Romans 10:10.

EVERY star in heaven yields its ray of light to cheer the mariner upon the watery waste, but there are leaders among that sparkling host — stars of the first magnitude — whose golden lamps are so dexterously hung, and withal trimmed with such excessive care, that they offer waymarks to the wanderer by which he may be able to steer his vessel to the desired haven. So all the promises of Scripture are full of comfort, in their sphere, they glow and glisten with the warmth and light of love; but there are “bright particular stars,” even among these; promises, conspicuous as Orion, brilliant as the Pleiades, fixed as Arcturus with his sons. Brethren, you know those soul-saving texts to which I refer, which are radiant with comfort, and have in them such a blessed combination of simple words and comforting sentences, that they guide multitudes of sinners to the port of peace in Jesus Christ. My text, I think, is one of these. At least, the doctrine which it teaches — that of salvation by faith — is the very polestar of the gospel; and he who steers by it shall find the heavenly shore. Be not at all displeased that such a truth should again be proclaimed in your hearing. The physician who is about to go abroad, and knows that he shall not be able to procure more drugs, lays in a store of all the valued medicines in pharmacy, but he buys the largest stock of remedies for the more common diseases of the body; and so, my brethren, we are bound in our ministry to preach upon all sorts of subjects; we ought not to bring out things *old* and old, but things new and old; yet, still the preacher must dwell most upon that doctrine which is the most required, and is most

likely to heal the sin-sick soul. We believe that for every one converted under another doctrine, there have been ten brought to Christ by the simple preaching of salvation by faith. Although every truth in Scripture is like a mesh of the great gospel net, the great truth of justification by faith makes up so many meshes, that it constitutes the major part of the net, and holds within its influence great multitudes of fishes. God help us to cast this net to-day on the right side of the ship. While I let down the great drag-net, do you take your share in the gospel fishery, and pray that God may send the fishes into it, and may his name be praised this day both in heaven and on earth.

The text very simply divides itself into two parts. *Faith* and *confession*. The two are joined together, let no man put them asunder. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Three things on each of these topics. First, upon *faith*. We have here set before us, either in the text, or in the context, the *object of faith*, the *nature of faith*, and *its result*.

I. THE OBJECT OF FAITH is clearly mentioned in the context.

The preceding verse runs thus: — "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" from which it is evident that Jesus Christ, dead and risen, is the foundation of faith. The *object of faith* is probably the most important subject of our contemplation. I believe there are many who think too much of their faith and too little of the object of it. For many a weary month they are questioning whether they have the right sort of faith; whereas they would do a great deal better if they looked to see whether their faith rested upon a right foundation; for after all, while faith is important, the foundation of that faith is all-important, and we must look most to that. Now, soul-saving faith rests, according to a thousand places in Scripture, upon Christ — upon Christ in all his characters, works, and offices. Faith, first of all, rests upon Christ, as *incarnate*. What was sung by angels becomes the song of the poor depressed spirit. Jesus, the Son of God, was born in Bethlehem's manger; God was made flesh and dwelt among us. Faith believes this great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh; believes that he, by whom the heavens were framed, and without whom was not anything made that was made, did for us men and for our salvation, come down from heaven to

tabernacle in the virgin's

womb. Faith so believes this as to draw comfort from it. For, says Faith, “If God thus became man that he might come into nearness with our nature, this deed of love attracts me, gives me confidence toward God, and bids me approach the Lord with boldness, inasmuch as God comes to me.”

*“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel’s face appear,
My hope, my joy, begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.”*

Faith next sees Christ in his life. She perceives that he is perfect; in obedience, sanctified wholly to his work, and although “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” Faith delights to admire and adore him in his complete obedience to the law of God; and she perceives with rapture, that in every jet and tittle he has fulfilled it, magnified it, and made it honorable. Faith, with holy boldness, cries, “This righteousness shall be mine, Christ has kept the law for me. Evidently he was under no necessity to do this of himself; but being found in fashion as a man for my salvation, he with the same end and object kept that law.” Faith looks to that righteousness of Christ, and, like the apostle, she learns to say, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” But, chiefly, Faith looks to Christ as offering up himself upon the tree. She stands at the foot of the cross, watching that mysterious, that matchless spectacle — God made flesh, bleeding, dying; the Son of God wasted with pangs, rent with agonies, and throes unutterable — obedient, even unto death. She watches him with the expectancy of hope and the emotion of gratitude, both of which bring the tears streaming down her cheeks. She hears the expiring sin-bearer cry with a loud voice, “It is finished,” she adds a glad Amen, “It is finished!” My soul believes that there is enough in those wounds to wash away my sin; enough to avert the thunders of an angry God; enough in that righteousness to cover me from head to foot, and win for me the smile of infinite justice. O blessed cross,

thou art the one pillar of our consolation; faith builds her all on this chief corner-stone.

But beloved, Faith has never done with Jesus, where he goes she follows hard after him. Her eye tracks the body of the Savior to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. She beholds that body, on the third day, instinct with life, rolling away the stone and bursting its cerements. "Jesus lives," says Faith; and inasmuch as Christ was put into the prison of the tomb as a hostage and bail for his people, Faith knows that he never could have come out again if God had not been completely satisfied with his substitutionary work.

*"If Jesus ne'er had paid the debt,
He ne'er had been at freedom set.*

Faith, therefore, perceives that if Christ is risen the soul is justified. God has accepted Christ on my behalf, his resurrection proves it; and I stand accepted in the Beloved, because Jesus Christ has risen. If thou believest in this sense in thy heart, that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Borne aloft as on eagle's wings, Faith is not afraid to pursue her Redeemer up to his Father's throne; her illuminated eye beholds him in his session at the right hand of God, sees him pleading as the great High Priest before the mighty Father's throne; and expecting until his enemies are made his footstool. Faith builds upon his intercession and dominion, as well as upon his death and resurrection. He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Mark, my dear brethren, the whole foundation upon which Faith rests is, Christ living in the flesh, Christ dying in that flesh, Christ rising from the dead, Christ pleading in glory in behalf of sinners. Not so much as a hair's breadth of Faith's foundation is to be found out of Christ Jesus. Faith does not build on its own experience; it rests on no graces, raptures, meltings, communings, fightings, or prayings; its chief corner-stone is Christ Jesus. Faith never builds on any knowledge which it has obtained by research; on no merit which it fancies it has procured by long and ardent service. It looks altogether beyond self and out of self. Christ Jesus, and Christ Jesus alone, is the object of its confidence. Sinner, what sayest thou to this? There is nothing in thee, but there needs be nothing. Canst thou trust Jesus? Jesus, the Son of God, becomes thy brother, bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh. Canst thou not trust his love? Jesus, the Son of God, dies

on the cross. Canst thou not trust that blood, that agony, that death? Look, sinner! From head, and hands, and feet, the blood is streaming. It is a Divine Being who thus suffers; it is none other than God over all, blessed for ever, who is nailed to that tree. Canst thou not believe that there is merit enough in agonies like these to stand in the place of thy sufferings in hell? Dost thou not believe that justice gets an ampler recompense from the wounds of Christ than it ever could find in all thy wounds, even if thou hadst been beaten from the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head, until thou hadst been nothing but wounds and putrifying sores? Methinks you will reply, "I believe that upon Calvary God received a greater glorification of his law than in all the agonies of all the damned in hell, though they suffer eternally the infinite anger of God." I ask thee, sinner, canst thou not believe that Christ's perfect righteousness is enough for thee? Canst thou see a flaw in it? Is it not fair white linen? Is there a spot? Is it not made of such precious material, the divine work of a divine Savior, that nothing can match it? If thou hadst it, sinner, dost thou not think thou wouldst stand before God without so much as a spot or wrinkle? And I ask thee, sinner, dost thou not believe that if Jesus pleads for thee, thou wilt be saved? Can he stretch out his hands and say, "Father, save that sinner," and will God refuse to hear his prayer? If thou givest him thy cause to plead, dost thou think he will be an unsuccessful advocate? Why, man, with all the unbelief that is in thy heart, I hope thou wilt believe that if Jesus, who was the very heart of God, shall espouse thy cause, he cannot plead in vain.

I think I hear you answer, "Oh, yes, we believe all this; we believe that this is ground for the fullest confidence to saints, but may *we* rest upon it? Are we to understand that if we trust in Jesus Christ, because he was a man, and because he lived, and died, and rose again, and pleads, we are saved?" Soul, this is just what I would have thee understand. If thou hast no good thoughts or feelings, if hitherto thou hast been the most damnable of rebels against God, if up to this moment thy hard and impenitent heart has been at enmity against God and against Christ, yet if now, this very day, thou wilt believe that Christ incarnate, Christ died, Christ risen, Christ pleading, can save thee, and if thou wilt rest thy soul upon that fact, thou shalt be saved. God, the infinitely loving father, is willing to receive thee just as thou art. He asks nothing of thee. O prodigal, thou mayst come back in thy rags and filthiness, notwithstanding that thou hast spent thy living with harlots; notwithstanding that the swine have been thy companions, and thou wouldst fain have filled thy belly with their husks; thou mayest come back

without upbraiding, or so much as a word of anger, because thy Father's only begotten Son has stood in thy stead, and in thy place has suffered all that thy many sins deserved. If thou wilt now trust in Jesus, the Lord, who loved thee with unspeakable love, thou shalt be this very day received into joy and peace, with a Father's arms about thy neck, accepted and beloved; with thy rags stripped from off thee, clothed in the best robe; with the ring upon thy finger and the shoes upon thy feet, listening to music and dancing, because thy soul which was lost is found, thy heart which was dead has been made alive.

This, then, is the object of faith — one only Savior, doing all, for all who trust him.

II. Next, we have in the text, the NATURE OF FAITH. This is obvious. We are told that “*with the heart* man believeth unto righteousness.” This is not introduced by way of making a subtle distinction. Sometimes ministers make so many distinctions about faith, that true seekers are much perplexed. I am very jealous of myself this morning, lest I should do the same. I have read sermons upon natural faith and upon spiritual faith, and I have been persuaded that what the preacher called natural faith, was as much spiritual as that which he distinguished as the faith of God's elect. The less distinction we try to make here, I think, the better, when Jesus Christ has broadly put it, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Where he makes few distinctions, but openly puts it, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” we ought not to be making and multiplying theological points of difference. Still, dear brethren, the text does say, “*With the heart* man believeth.” And this is somewhat strange, because we generally attribute the act of faith to the mind, to the understanding. The understanding believes certain facts, which appear to it to be worthy of credence, but our text puts saving faith upon the heart, and makes it to be a work of the affections rather than of the understanding. I take it this is done for this reason: first, in order merely to state that faith — saving faith — *must be sincere*; we must not merely say, “I see the thing is so,” but we must heartily believe it. It must not be a notional faith which a man professes, because his mother was of the same persuasion, or because living in a Christian land, he would be somewhat singular if he were to set up to be an infidel. Our faith must be a hearty, honest, sincere persuasion of the truths which we profess to believe. If I say to myself, “Well, I have no doubt the Christian religion is true; I dare say it is;” but if

I do not in my heart feel and know it to be true, then my faith will not save me.

Doubtless, the word “heart” is put in here to make a distinction between doctrinal faith and the faith which accepts Christ. Why, I have the misfortune to know scores who are well read in divinity; they can get on excellently in all the scholastic parts of theology; they are orthodox — ay, orthodox to the last turn of the scale — and they fight like lions and tigers for but one hair of the head of a creed; and yet, they will never be saved by their faith, because their belief is merely a belief of certain abstract propositions which never affected their nature, which, to speak honestly, they do not believe after all. Those dogmas which they accept as truths have no relationship to them; their unregenerate hearts cannot perceive the true bearing of those doctrines upon themselves, consequently they receive them as lies. If you put a truth out of its proper place, you make it either marvellously like a lie, or else really a lie. And if I hold certain doctrines, merely as having respect to some particular persons, but not as having any reference to me, and if I hold them so that they do not in any degree influence my character and touch my heart, then I hold them falsely; I turn the truth of God into a lie, and my faith can never save my soul. True religion is more than notion, something must be known and felt; and faith is something more than acceptance of a sound creed — it is believing *with the heart*.

But now, I hope I shall not darken counsel by words without knowledge. Let me try, if I can, to explain what I think believing with the heart is.

Beloved, you know very well that the first work of God the Holy Spirit in man, is not to teach him doctrines, but to make him feel a great hungering and thirsting, a great emptiness within himself; he is vexed with an uneasiness, a perpetual pining, and longing, and groaning after a something, he scarcely knows what. Now, that is his heart set in motion by the Spirit. His heart, like the needle, touched with the magnet, cannot rest, because it has not found its pole; it has been, touched mysteriously, it does not know how or why; but this it knows, it has a restlessness in it, and trembles after a settled and abiding peace. It is the heart, you know, which is thus sore troubled. Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in our hearing as being a perfect and complete Savior, able at this very moment to pardon all sin, and to give as perfect righteousness, to give us this day a salvation which is complete, and which will be complete when time shall be

no more, then the heart says, "Why, that is just what I have been wanting." Just as the flowers which have been shut up all night, as soon as ever the sun is up, open their cups as if they felt — "There! that is what we were wanting! Hail, glorious sun!" So the breaking, yearning, longing, thirsting heart, says, "Ah, that is what I need; thou, O Christ, art all I want — more than all in thee I find." Then, that heart says, "Come to me, Jesus, come to me; be thou mine, I would entertain thee; if thou wouldst but come under my roof, I should have my poor humble heart made happy as the gates of heaven." The heart stretches out its arms to Christ, and Christ comes into that heart; and the heart presses him close to itself. That is believing with the heart. It is the heart's own conviction that Jesus Christ is just what it wants.

Many of you have a true faith in Christ, and yet you have never read "Paley's Evidences," nor "Butler's Analogy;" it would not hurt you if you did; but you never did study such books, and perhaps you never will. You hardly know upon what ground the Bible is accepted as true, and hence, cunning infidels give you a good shaking when they get hold of you upon that point. But there is one thing upon which you can never be shaken: you feel the gospel *must* be true, because it just suits the wants of your heart. If any man should say to you when you are thirsty, "Water is not good," you would say, "Give me more of it; I have a thirst in here that makes me desire it." By an irresistible process stronger than logic, you can prove to yourself that water is good because it quenches your thirst. Just so with bread; when you are hungry, if you come to the table, and a philosopher should say to you, "You do not understand the ground upon which bread nourishes the human frame; you do not know anything about the process of digestion, and the method of assimilation, and how the bones are nourished by the phosphorus, and by the lime, and by the silica contained in the flour!" You would say, "I do not know; I do not care particularly to know; but one thing I know, I am sure bread is good to eat if I am hungry, and I will show you;" and you seize the loaf and begin to cut and eat. So it is with the believing heart. The heart is hungry, therefore the heart feeds upon Jesus; the heart is thirsty, therefore the heart drinks the living water; and so the heart believes unto righteousness.

Again, there is another explanation. Is it not, dear friends, man's heart renewed by divine grace which is led to perceive the difficulty of reconciling the apparently discordant attributes of God? Do you not remember well that day when your heart said, "God is just; it is right he

should be?" and your heart seemed as if it would kiss the hilt of the sharp sword Justice. You said, "Lord, though it is my own damnation, yet I would adore thee, because thou art holy, holy, holy." Your heart said, "Lord, I know thou art merciful, for thou hast told me so; I see in the lovely works of thy hands, in the bountiful cornfields laden with the yellow grain, in this fair sunshine ripening all the fruits, I see proof that thou art a good and gracious God. But, Lord, I cannot understand how thou canst be gracious and yet be just; for if thou be just, thou art sworn to punish, and if thou be gracious, then thou wilt forgive; how canst thou do both, how canst thou punish and yet forgive? — smite and yet receive with tokens of affection?" You came up to the sanctuary one day when your heart was just in that state — in a quandary. Your heart was like the city of Shushan, it was perplexed; but you heard the preacher show clearly that Christ became the substitute for man, and paid to the last drachma all that mighty debt which man owed to God. You saw the wounds of Jesus, and you understood how an angry God had all his justice satisfied in the agonies of his beloved Son, and your heart said, "There, that is the very answer I have been wanting. I perplexed myself, vexed myself; I had a jealousy for the justice of God; my conscience made me jealous for it; I had a longing toward the mercy of God, my heart made me long for it. Now, I see how righteousness and peace have kissed each other, how justice and mercy fall about each other's neck and are reconciled for ever." And your heart says, "This is the thing; here is the master-key which unlocks all the doors of doubt; the divine finger which draws back the bolts." Oh! the joy and gladness with which your heart laid hold upon a crucified Redeemer, saying, "It is enough; I am satisfied, I am content, my trouble is removed." So you see it is not difficult to understand how the belief can be a belief of the heart.

But I want you to notice yet further, that believing with the heart implies a love to the plan of salvation. I will suppose that one of you to-day, troubled with thoughts of sin, shall go home, and you shall reach your chamber, and sit down and think over the great plan of salvation. You see God choosing his people from before the foundation of the world, and choosing them though he knew that they would be lost in the fall of Adam. You see the Son entering upon a covenant relationship towards them, and engaging to be their surety to redeem them from wrath. You see Jesus Christ in the fullness of time coming forth as that surety, and fulfilling all his engagements. You see the Spirit of God working to teach man his need,

influencing him to accept the plan of salvation. You see the sinner washed and cleansed; you mark him kept, and preserved, and sanctified, and perfected, and at last brought home to glory. While you are thinking over this work of the Lord, you say to yourself, "Well, I do not know that I have any interest in it; but what a blessed plan it is! how sublime! how condescending! how admirably suited to the wants of man! and how excellently adapted to bring out and glorify every attribute of God!" As you are thinking it over, there is a tear in your eye, and something whispers, "Why, such a plan as that must be true." Then, the sweet promise flashes across your mind, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed;" and your heart says, "Then, I will believe on him; that plan is worthy of my credence; that system, so magnificent in its liberality, is worthy of my loving acceptance." You go down upon your knees, and say, "Lord, I have seen the beauty of thy great work of grace, and my soul is in love with it. I have no quarrel against it; I submit myself to it; let me be a partaker in it. Jesus, let the virtue of thy precious blood stream on me; let the power of the cleansing water, which flowed with the blood, come and kill the power of sin within me. 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!'" That is believing with the heart; it is believing because the heart is led to see that this must be true; and therefore, by a process of logic that is more subtle and more mighty in its magic influence than the logic of the brain, the soul, the whole mind, the whole powers of the man are compelled, blessedly compelled to yield obedience to it.

What is true, dear friends, of us when we commence our spiritual career, is true all our lives long. Soul-saving faith is always the belief of the heart as well in the full-grown Christian as in the new-born babe. Let me appeal to some of you who have been years in Christ. What, my dear brethren, is your testimony to-day to the truth as it is in Jesus? Does your heart believe it? I think I see some gray-headed man rise up, and leaning upon his staff, he says, "In my young days I gave my heart to Christ, and I had a peace and joy such as I had never known before, though I had tried the pomps and vanities, the pleasures and allurements of sin. My heart can bear its witness to the peace and pleasantness which I found in religion's ways. Since that time, this brow has been furrowed with many cares, and as you see, this head has become bleached with many winter's snows, but the Lord has been my heart's stay and confidence. I have rested on Christ, and he has never failed me. When trouble has come in upon me, I have never been bowed down under it, I have been able to sustain it. I have had

bereavements;” and he points to the many graves he has left behind him in the wilderness; “but I have been helped to bury wife and children, and faith has enabled me to say with bursting heart, ‘the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ I have had many conflicts, but I have always overcome through the blood of the Lamb. I have been slandered, as all men must be, but I have taken *that* with all my other crosses upon my shoulder, and I have found it light when I have carried it by faith. I can say that such is the hallowed serenity and calm which the religion of Jesus gives to my heart at all times and all seasons, that I do believe it, not as a matter of head, but as a matter of heart. My heart is itself experimentally convinced that this cannot but be the religion of God, seeing that it works such wonders for me.”

Remember, dearly beloved, this is the right way to believe in Jesus, because this is the way in which you can believe in him when you come to die. You have heard of the renowned bishop, a true servant of our Lord and Master. On his dying bed, memory reeled. He had grown old and forgotten everything. His friends said to him, “Do not you know us?” There was a shake of the head. He had taken sweet counsel with them, walked to the house of God in their company, but he had forgotten them all. Next, the children cluster round the hoary father, and they beg him to remember them. But he shakes his head, he had forgotten them all. Last, came his wife, and she thought was it possible that she should be forgotten? Yes, he had forgotten her, and shook his head again. At last, one said in his ear, “Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?” The response was instantaneous.

That charming name Lord brought back consciousness from its innermost retreat to the more outward temple of the mind. “Know him?” said he, “yes, he is all my salvation and all my desire.” You see it was the heart that knew Jesus; and though the heart may know the wife and the child, yet never can the heart know the dearest earthly object as it knows Christ. The letters of earthly names may be larger than the name of Christ, but the name of Christ is cut deeper. All other names may be cut deep through many skins of the soul, if I may use so strange a metaphor, but that name is cut into the core, right into the core of the soul. He that believeth with his heart hath Christ in him, not *on* him, Christ *in* him, the hope of glory.

My dear hearers, you who have not believed in Jesus, I have tried not to puzzle you with refinements, but to talk in simple style. I do think it is a very blessed thing that the text says, “*With the heart* man believeth,” because some of you might say, “I have not *head* enough to be a

Christian.” If you had not any head at all, if you had a loving heart you could believe in Jesus. You may say, “Why, I never had any very great natural parts.” No great natural parts are wanted. You may say, “I never had any education” — and by the way, I do like to see smock frocks here, I would to God that more would come — “I never had any education; I went to a national school, and they taught me many things; but I do not recollect them.” Well, suppose you do not recollect them; you have a heart, and some of you have bigger hearts than many who have let their brains swell while their hearts have shrivelled; you can believe with your heart.

Your heart can see that Christ is such a Christ as you want; that pardon and mercy are just what you require; and your heart can say, and may God the Holy Spirit make it say, “I accept Christ; I trust in Christ; I take Christ to be my all in all.” This precious word, “With the heart man believeth,” sets the gate of heaven wide open to those who are of the least capacity, who seem to be on the very verge of idiocy, if there should be such persons here. Even those who write themselves down as being the biggest fools that ever lived, such fools as these may still believe. “The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.”

III. Now I must conclude, intending to take the second half of the text next Sunday morning, if God spares our lives. I take the most necessary first. You may go to heaven without confessing: you cannot go to heaven without believing. So we have the believing first, and the other can come next. I have to close by noticing THE RESULT of faith. “With the heart man believeth UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS.” The text means that the man who believes in Christ is righteous: he is righteous at once, in a moment; he is righteous in the germ. When God makes up the account, he has two books. The one is the black book in which he writes down the name of the ungodly, the unrighteous. You may look that all through, and though that man has been a thief, a whoremonger, and adulterer; though he has been the biggest sinner that ever defiled society and polluted God’s air, you may look that book through, if that man has been led to believe with his heart, his name is not there among the unrighteous; you cannot find it there, it is not in that book. You must get the other. You look into the Book of Life, and there is the name of Noah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, John Baptist, and so on. You say, “You do not expect to find that man’s name there, do you?” I do. If that man believed in Jesus Christ with his heart, he has believed unto righteousness, and his name is there among the righteous men; for he is righteous first of all in the germ. God has put into him an unquenchable

spark of righteousness; he has dropped into that man's heart a vitalising force which never by any possibility can die, which has made him righteous in part already, and which will go on until it has sanctified him, spirit, soul, and body, and made him completely righteous, in the real sense of the term righteous, righteous in the sense of holiness through the sanctification of the Spirit.

But there is another sense. The moment the man believes in Jesus Christ, he is in the righteousness of Christ — perfectly righteous; he has put upon him the Savior's garments. You heard Mr. Weaver say on this platform — I thought it was a good illustration — that one day he met with a very poor man who was in rags. This man being a Christian, he wished to befriend him; he told him if he would go home with him, he would give him a suit of clothes. "So," said Richard, "I went upstairs and took off my second best, and put on my Sunday best, for I did not want to give him my best. I sent the man upstairs, and told him he would find a suit which he could put on; it was my second best. So after he had put on the clothes, and left his rags behind, he came down and said, 'Well, Mr. Weaver, what do you think of me?' 'Well,' I said, 'I think you look very respectable.' 'Oh, yes, but, Mr. Weaver, it is not me. I am not respectable, it is your clothes that are respectable.' And so," added Mr. Weaver, "so is it with the Lord Jesus Christ; he meets us covered with the rags and filth of sin, and he tells us to go and put on not his second best, but the best robe of his perfect righteousness; and when we come down with that on, we say, 'Lord, what dost thou think of me?' and he says, 'Why, thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.' We answer, 'No, it is not me, it is thy righteousness; I am comely because thou art comely; I am beautiful because thou art beautiful.'"

So we may conclude by saying with Watts —

*"Strangely, my soul, art thou array'd
By the great saved Three!
In sweetest harmony of praise
Let all thy powers agree."*

All this is by believing — nothing but believing. After believing will come the confessing and the doing; but the saving, the righteousness, rests in the believing, and in nothing else.

***“Nothing, sinner, do,
Nothing great or
small; Jesus did it all,
Long, long ago.”***

Come to him as he is. Take him as your complete righteousness, and you will have believed with your heart unto righteousness.

God add his own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Next Sabbath, Mr. SPURGEON hopes to take up the second sentence of the text.]

CONFESSION WITH THE MOUTH.

NO. 520

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 19TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” — Romans 10:10.

THIS morning, according to promise, I discourse upon the second part of this verse — “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” I feel a measure of regret that all my hearers of this morning were not present last Sunday, since you may wrongly imagine that I exaggerate the importance of outward confession, whereas had you been present when we were considering the first sentence, you would have seen that I magnified the “believing with the heart,” and declared it to be the all-important, the essential thing; without which, confession with the mouth would be a sin, a falsehood, and a grievous insult to the Most High. One circumstance greatly mitigates my fears — you may all read both sermons at your leisure, and so see for yourselves how earnestly I have labored to put the two duties in their proper place, not unduly exalting the less, nor depreciating the greater.

“With the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” There must be no confession with the mouth where there is not a believing with the heart. To profess a faith which you have not, is to make yourself a deceptive trader, who pretends to be carrying on a very large business, while he has no stock, no capital, and is only obtaining credit on false presences, and so is a thief. To make a profession, without having a possession, is to be a cloud without rain — a river-bed, choked up with dry stones, but utterly without

water; it is to be a mere play-actor, strutting about for an hour with the name and garments of a king, to be exchanged, behind the scenes, for the garb of poverty, and the character of shame; it is to be a rotten tree, green on the outside, but inwardly, as John Bunyan pithily puts it, “only fit to be tinder for the devil’s tinder box.” Be ye warned against fair pretensions where there is nothing to back them up. Above all things, eschew hypocrisy; stand aside from all mere presence. Profess not to be what you are not, lest in that day when God comes to search the secrets of all hearts, you shall be condemned as reprobate silver, and consumed like dross.

True faith, wherever it exists, produces works; and, among the rest, a bold, constant, consistent confession of Christ. That man has no faith at all who is not led to confess with his mouth unto salvation, in the sense intended in the text. Faith, without works, is a dead root, sending forth no bud and yielding no fruit; it is a well, yielding no water, but filled with deadly vapor; it is a tree twice dead, plucked up by the roots, like some of those forest monsters which block up the navigation of the Mississippi, and form dangerous snags upon which many a goodly vessel has been wrecked.

Faith, without works, is one of the most damnable things out of hell. Flee from it, for remember if ye profess to have a faith in Christ, and your conduct is not holy, you bring disgrace upon the Church of Christ; you crucify the Lord of glory afresh; you turn the truth of God into a lie; and you do, as far as lies in your power, make God the panderer to your lusts. As you are to flee from profession without faith, so equally flee from a faith which does not bring forth a good profession, which may be manifested before many witnesses.

I believe that the confession mentioned in the text, embraces the whole of Christian life. I do not think it means the mere saying, “I am a disciple of Christ,” or submission to the God-ordained rite of baptism. The apostle includes, under the term confession with the mouth, the whole life of the Christian — which is, in fact, the working out of that which God has wrought in. It is the confession, both by act, deed, and word, of that grace which God, by his Holy Spirit, hath put into the soul. We say, in a common proverb, that “One swallow does not make a summer.” So the merely confessing Christ once with the mouth does not make the confession here intended. One tree is not a forest, and one avowal of Christ is not the confession of Christ unto salvation. There is something more intended than one act, however distinct or however excellent it may be considered in itself.

I shall endeavor this morning, if God shall help me, to illustrate *the meaning of confessing with the mouth unto salvation*; and then, I shall occupy a few minutes in *enforcing this confession*; urging those who do love the Lord, and have believed with their heart, to see to it that they confess with their mouths.

I. TO CONFESS CHRIST WITH THE MOUTH, I have said, embraces the whole life-work of the Christian. I think you will see this ere I have done. Different cases demand of men different forms of confession. Some may have to confess the Lord in one way; some in another. Every Christian is called upon to confess him with his mouth according to that way which his own state, abilities, and position in providence may demand at his hands.

1. First, then, one of the simplest and earliest forms of confessing Christ with the mouth, is to be found in *uniting in acts of public worship*. Early — as soon almost as the two distinct parties of the seed of the woman and of the serpent were discernible, we read, “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.” Those who feared not God went away to their various occupations; while the righteous, on the seventh day, gathered themselves together for prayer, and praise, and sacrifice; so that anyone joining the ranks of the men who called upon the name of the Lord, would at once be discovered by that act to be a servant of the Most High. Throughout the whole stream of history, we find the righteous identified by assembling themselves together, unitedly, to send up their prayers and thanksgivings to the Most High. Public worship becomes an acceptable form of confession when the seed of the serpent are able to persecute. In the times when Jeroboam set up the calves at Bethel, when any Israelite wended his weary way to Jerusalem under fear of being persecuted by his king, then the act of standing with the multitude that kept holyday around the courts of the temple, was at once a distinct confession of his allegiance to Jehovah, and his abhorrence of all idols. In the apostolic times, those who believed were constant in the apostle’s doctrine, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. Where two or three were met together, and especially where the greater numbers gathered, to listen to the preaching of the Word, or for the purpose of breaking bread, the admission of any person to that assembly became a confession of his faith in the Lord Jesus, in whose name they were assembled.

In the early Christian days, you may see a picture something like this, if I know how to paint it: there is a low arch — it is foul and dark, like the

opening of a sewer — over it grows the briar, and from its base springs up the nettle and the deadly nightshade. Yonder comes a maiden, and creeping low, she stoops beneath the arch; in the thick darkness she gropes her way for several yards. No one has noticed her entrance. Did you observe how she looked around, lest any sentinel might perceive her? She hears a voice in the distant passages; that voice guides her. She emerges into a vault; it is one of the catacombs beneath the city of Rome. A torch renders darkness visible. No sooner does she approach the assembly, than some watchful brother observes her; asks for the pass-word. It is one of Caesar's household, a noble maiden who has heard the gospel from her Jewish slave, who waited upon her, and she has come to join in those secret rites, which are performed by believers in dens and caves of the earth. Her being there proves her a Christian. She would not have been there to worship God among those hunted ones whom the upper earth and the pure air might not receive. She would not thus have degraded herself, to mingle with these pariahs of society; those who are only fit to be like beasts of prey for the blood-hounds of Nero. Her coming there to join that simple hymn to one *Christus*, to bow her knee solemnly in that silent prayer to Jehovah and to his adorable Son: she had not been in that assembly, if she had not loved the Lord.

Very much so was it in later times. If a man went to hear Luther, you might have hope of him that he was a Christian; and especially in England, when the Lollard preached to the handful in some remote farmhouse, with a watcher outside, lest the monks should come; you might have been pretty clear that those who worshipped thus when death was the penalty, were true disciples of the Lord. Again, in the days of the glorious Covenant, when Cargill and Campbell opened the Bible, and read by the lightning's flash, while the dragoons of Claverhouse were scenting out their prey, you might be clear, whether it was yon shepherd with his dog, or yon heritor leaning upon his gun, or yon ladies sitting on the grass, and listening with tearful eye to the fiery words of the Covenanting leader — you might be clear that they were for the Lord of Hosts, and for his covenant, and for the truth as it is in Jesus, or else they had not met there among the saints of the living God at peril of their lives.

To-day it is so to a very few. There are some who, perhaps, have come into this house this morning, whose husband's last words were, "If you go there, you will never enter my house again." Or, perhaps, it was the brother's word, as he cursed his sister for a love of the truth; or the father's

deep, damning curse upon his child, for venturing to believe in Christ. *Your* being here to-day is a distinct confession with your mouth of the Lord Jesus. But it is not so with most of you; it is not so with nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand. Many come, because it is the custom, and more, I hope, because being Christians, it is their delight always to come. They do not recognize any distinct profession of religion in the mere act of being here. For we mingle together saint and sinner, godly and ungodly. And if this were the only profession of religion that we have made, it would not fulfill the intention of my text. In persecuting times it would; in the dark, black, bloody days it would; but not to-day, for now it is little or no confession to most of us to sit comfortably in our seats and listen to the preacher, and then walk down the stone steps and go our way.

2. The confession of Christ which is here intended, is still better to be carried out by *a dutiful attention to those two ordinances which are intended by Christ to be the distinctive badge of believers*. Under the old Mosaic dispensation, ordinances were only for Israelites. Circumcision and the passover were not for Philistines, nor for Egyptians, but for the seed of Abraham, and for the seed of Abraham and proselytes alone. It is even so under the Christian dispensation. We have no ordinances for aliens; we have no ordinances for strangers and foreigners; they are both intended for the commonwealth of Israel. You will remember how very carefully the ancient believers kept up these ordinances. You will find that the Ethiopian eunuch traveled all the way from the realm of Candace, in order that he might be present at the temple worship, because that was the distinctive worship of the Jew and of the proselyte to the Jewish faith. He would not be away. You remember how carefully and anxiously the heads of the Jewish householders saw to it, that they and all their children were present at the celebration of the passover; they would not one of them neglect that which was distinctive of themselves as a separated people. Now, baptism is the mark of distinction between the Church and the world. It very beautifully sets forth the death of the baptized person to the world. Professedly, he is no longer of the world; he is buried to it, and he rises again to a new life. No symbol could be more significant. In the immersion of believers there seems to me to be a wondrous setting forth of the burial of the believer to all the world in the burial of Christ Jesus. It is the crossing of the Rubicon. If Caesar crossed the Rubicon, there would never be peace between him and the senate again. He draws his sword, and he throws away his scabbard. Such is the act of baptism to the believer. It is

the crossing of the Rubicon: it is as much as to say, "I cannot come back again to you; I am dead to you; and to prove I am, I am absolutely buried to you; I have nothing more to do with the world. I am Christ's, and Christ's for ever."

Then, the Lord's Supper: how beautifully that ordinance sets forth the distinction of the believer from the world in his life and that by which his life is nourished. He eats the flesh of Christ, and drinks his blood. I marvel at some of you who love my Lord that you should keep away from his table. It is his dying will — "This do ye in remembrance of me." It is so kind of him to institute such an ordinance at all; to let us, who were as the dogs, sit at the children's table and eat bread such as angels never knew. I understand not, my dear brother, my dear sister, what sort of love yours can be if you hear Jesus say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," and yet you neglect his ordinances. You will say, they are non-essential; and I will reply to you, most true, they are non-essential for your salvation, but they are not non-essential for your comfort; nor are they non-essential for your obedience. It is for a child to do what his parent bids him. If, my loving friend, my dear Redeemer had bidden me do something hurtful to myself, I would do it out of love to him; how much rather, then, when he said to me, "This do in remembrance of me."

Both these ordinances bring a cross with them to some degree, especially the first. I was noting when reading yesterday the life of good Andrew Fuller, after he had been baptized, some of the young men in the village were wont to mock him, asking him how he liked being dipped? and such like questions which are common enough now-a-days. I could but notice that the scoff of a hundred years ago is just the scoff of to-day. But, brethren, you are not afraid, I trust, to be pointed at as a baptized believer? You believe that these are his commands. I charge you, therefore, before God and the elect angels, before whom you shall be judged at the last great day, if you with your hearts have believed, with your mouths make the confession which these ordinances imply, and God shall surely give you a sweet reward therein.

3. In order to confess Christ with the mouth aright, there should be *an association with the Lord's people*. It was so in the olden times. Moses is an Israelite, but he may if he wills, live in the court of Pharaoh, in the midst of luxury and ease. What is his choice? He goes forth to his brethren, and he looks upon their burdens; he espouses their cause, counting the

reproaches of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Moses, the reputed son of Pharaoh's daughter, associates with the poor despised slaves who make bricks for the king. What a very touching picture we have of following the people of God, in the history of Ruth. One is charmed to hear that godly woman saying to her mother-in-law, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." There was a confession of the God of Israel when Ruth clave unto Naomi with all her heart. Now, we find in the early times of the Christian Church, that as soon as a man became a Christian, he went to his own company; he associated with the saints. When you asked "Where are the believers?" they were found together. You may find other creatures wandering separately on the mountains, but sheep love to be in flocks. Paul was not content with being baptized, but after his baptism he essayed to join himself unto the Church; and we find that wherever there were people of God, they were always formed into a Church; whether it was at Philippi, or at Ephesus, or Pergamos, or Thyatira, or Rome itself, Paul everywhere formed Churches; and as he went from place to place, it was upon the Church that he looked as the pillar and ground of the truth. I very greatly delight in the preaching in the theatres. You know how heartily I rejoice in the preaching of Christ anywhere. But there is a lack in all this labor; the corn is sown, but there is nobody to see to it afterwards; nobody to gather it in. The way in which all this ought to be carried on is, not by Associations, but by the Church. The Church of God is the true mother of converts; it is from her womb that they must be born, and at her breast they must suck, and on her knees must they be dandled. Those who go about and speak lightly of Church fellowship, and would have all Christians maintain themselves in separateness from the Churches, do mischief, and are unwittingly the agents of evil; for the Church is, under God a great blessing to the world; and union with the Church is intended to be a method of confession which is not to be neglected. Suppose for a moment, brethren, instead of the compact phalanx of this one Church, we were broken into individual Christians, and had no association with one another, I do not hesitate to say, that some of the warmest-hearted among you would grow cold, for your associating with one another promotes your zeal and kindles your enthusiasm. The little ones among us would be subjected to I know not what of dangerous heresy and of false doctrine; while even the strongest brother or sister here would feel it to be a most solemn bereavement if they had to lose association with the brethren and sisters in Christ who now comfort and strengthen them.

4. To some, confession with the mouth will involve the *taking up of the cross in the family*. I know of no form in which this confession is more delightful to God, and at the same time more arduous to men — to take up the cross in the family. It may be you are the first one converted in it, and you frequent the house of God while the rest take their pleasure on God's day. You pray: the moment you kneel down in that chamber there is a ringing laugh within the walls. You talk of Christ and things divine, and father and mother open their eyes, and brothers and sisters all have some jest and jeer for you. You ask me, what you are to do? Persevere! Stand fast! Be stedfast! for now it is that you are to make confession with your mouth unto salvation. I will not believe that your faith can save you unless you do now unhesitatingly, at all costs, though it were at the risk of losing father's love and mother's care, at once say, "I cannot help it: I am sorry to give you any vexation, but I cannot love father or mother more than Christ, least I should not be worthy of him." You must be willing to give up all that is near and dear to you, whoever it may be; though loved as your own self, and precious as your own life, you must give all up if these stand in the way of your following Christ Jesus the Lord. "Ah, well," says one, "this is hard!" Yes, but remember for whom you do it! It is your Redeemer, who left his Father's court and became flesh, that he might be one with you, and stretched his hands to the cross, and gave his side to the spear. Surely, all you can give up is but a trifle compared with what *he* gave up for you. Do it cheerfully; do it at once.

Young man, be not frightened and alarmed at the family trials you have to endure. Ask God to make you like one of the iron-clad vessels, so that though they shoot their fiercest bolts, and hurl them with the most tremendous force, yet still they will only fly off from you, not hurting you, because you are iron-clad with invincible courage and determined faith. The kingdom of heaven is to you, like the old city which had been long besieged, and there was no hope of relieving the inhabitants of the town unless some ship should enter the harbour. But there was a great chain stretched across. You remember how the captain, when the wind was fair and the tide was high, dashed against the boom, broke it, and sailed into port. You must break the chain which threatens to keep you out of heaven. Do but pray to God to give you much grace, that shall be like the flood-tide; much of the Holy Spirit, that shall be like a fair wind; and if you dash against the chain, it will break before your courage and determination. Family trials are hard to bear. A living cross is often more severe to carry

than a dead one, but you *must* do it, for “with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

5. This confession will be very acceptable if it is made in the *time of temptation*. Young Joseph has his garment seized by his wanton mistress: his answer is, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” The woman might have answered, “God! what do I know of him? I know Isis; I understand the golden calf, but I know nothing of Jehovah — who is he?” where was a bold, distinct confession of his allegiance to Jehovah, as a reason why he could not sin. The case of Nehemiah is equally to the point. When they invite him to a secret conference in the temple, he says, “Can such a man as I flee?” He avows his confidence in his God as a reason why he cannot for a moment act dishonorably. Now Christian, here it is that you are to make confession with the mouth. Some dirty trick in business, which has become so common that nobody thinks any harm of it, comes in your way. Now, play the man, and say, “I would rather starve than do it; I cannot and I will not live by robbery, even though it should be half legalized by society.” Now is your opportunity, young man. When the Sabbath morning comes round, and you are pulled by the sleeve by a dozen to go with them to waste its holy hours, you can say, “No,” and give the reason, “I cannot do it; I am a Christian.” Or, it may be you have come up from the country, and your friend — ah! your *friend* proposes to take you to a den of infamy, just to show you life. Tell him he does not understand how to cater to your appetite, for you are a Christian. For some ends I would prefer the averment of one’s faith in Jesus in the time of temptation to any other form of confession, since there surely can be no hypocrisy in it. Take care, brethren, that you never fail to acknowledge your Lord in the time of temptation. “Ah,” says one, “I know I never shall.” Do not talk too positively. Peter denied his Lord before a silly maid; mind you do not fall in like manner. It is easy to say, “I am a good sailor,” when you are on shore. You walk the quarter-deck all right enough when the ship is in dock; you do not know what the storm is, how the ship rocks and the waves wash her decks. You had better hold your boasting till you have been to sea. Boast not thyself of anything thou wilt do, but rather say, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

6. Confession with the mouth should be carried out with double earnestness whenever *we are called into trial for Christ’s sake*; when the avowing of Christ will bring loss upon us, or when the denial of his name may secure us temporary prosperity. You know in the olden time, how the

three holy children refused to bow to the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up; they could *die*, but they could not *deny* their God; they could *burn*, but they could not *turn*. And so, into the furnace they were cast, because they could not cast away their trust in God. Look at Daniel, yonder, with his open window, seven times a-day worshipping towards Jerusalem, as he had done aforetime. It is bravely done. It was a bold answer of Peter and John, when the Scribes and Pharisees bade them speak no more in that name, "Whether it be right to obey God rather than man, judge ye." I have noticed that whenever persecution rages, and men are likely to lose anything for Christ, that the most timid persons who are sincere, generally come out at that time. There is Joseph of Arimathea. You do not hear of him while Jesus lives. But when Jesus Christ's body is on the cross, who shall go into the lion's den? Who shall see Pilate? Joseph of Arimathea begs the body of Jesus. He finds the sepulcher. And who shall help to wrap him in spices? Why, Nicodemus, that came to Jesus Christ by night; another coward. They both advance, and are cowardly no longer when it comes to the pinch. The stag takes to its heels and flies before the hounds, but when it comes to bay, fights with the bravery of desperation; so those who are timid, trembling Christians in ordinary times, when it comes really to the point, come out and are as bold as the most heroic of believers. I would give nothing for your religion if it does not come out in persecution. Some of you would hide your heads if it came to persecution, burning, and death. Erasmus used to say he was not made of the right stuff to be a martyr. So, I believe, the Papists picture Erasmus as hanging somewhere between heaven and hell; and the Protestants need not quarrel with the portrait. He had some sort of knowledge of the truth, but he had not the courage to avow it, and stood shivering while his friend Luther went straight forward and smote the triple crown upon the Pope's brow. Never let us be like Erasmus. "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." If the world and sin be worth living for, live for them with all your heart, and soul, and strength: but if God be God, do not stand questioning and halting between two opinions, but decidedly, boldly, positively say, "I am on the Lord's side." There is no time like the time of loss and trial for the making of this confession.

7. I believe, my brethren, that a Christian man can hardly carry out this confession with his mouth, unless he goes a little out of his way at times *to bear testimony*. "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me," said Moses, when he came down from the mountain and broke the golden calf.

“And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.” Every now and then we shall not be able to confess Christ, unless we do something which shall seem harsh and strange, but which *must* be done for God and for the truth’s sake. Surely, God’s Elijahs cannot be silent; while thousands of Baal’s priests are kindling their fires and calling to Baal, they must stand forth. “Are not ye servants of Baal, and I the servant of the living God?” We shall find it needful to intrude upon the dainties of etiquette, and trample under our feet the formalities which dignified society would set up; and like the prophet who came to Bethel, we shall have to cry against altars at which others pay their vows.

I have admired — and here I take up my cross with a good brother — I have greatly admired a testimony lately borne in the assembly of the Free Kirk of Scotland, by my brother Candlish, against the inscription that has been placed upon the cairn erected in memory of the excellent Prince Albert. I have admired him for his boldness in stating what he thought and felt. I believe instead of a howl of indignation, he should have received a meed of honor. Little cares he whether he be praised or censured, but justice ought to be done to his courage and fidelity. He has pointed out the popish character of the inscription, of which I will venture to say that the Prince himself would abhor it, could his peaceful spirit visit the cairn. If I remember rightly, Mr. Baptist Noel told us that the Prince exclaimed on his dying bed —

***“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.”***

He died a Christian, humbly clinging to the cross of Jesus. Wherefore is his monument to be dishonored by an inscription fitted for a popish saint, but not for one who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no disloyalty in our expressing our opinion frankly, nor do we intend to intrude upon the liberty of others. A large license should be given to affection, and sorrow should have its own choice of words, but it is a mistake, if not a sin, to obtrude a papistical eulogy where a Christian epitaph had been far more in keeping. I take up my cross with Candlish; and I were not true to God if I did not, for I believe that he who confesseth Christ sometimes against the

popular run and the popular current, is the only man who can expect to receive a reward from his Master for having acted faithfully in all things. Sometimes you will have to do this, but not always — perhaps not often. Go not out of your way to testify, but when the burden of the Lord is upon you, testify: and let none make you afraid.

8. Again, to confess Christ with the mouth is not possible unless we are willing to *use our position as a method of confession*. Joshua is the head of a household. He uses that position: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” I will not believe in your faith if you do not see to it that in your household God is recognised. Let the family altar be reared; let the sacrifice smoke upon it. If it cannot be twice, let it be once in the day. But do see to it that you pay your vows unto the Most High in that position, or else you have not made a confession unto salvation. Or it may be you have influence where you can help Christ’s Church. Mind that you do it. Esther is the queen of Ahasuerus. If she fails to discover herself as a Jewess, if she does not make the quarrel of Israel against Haman her own quarrel, then she shall be put away. She has come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Some of you are large employers, or you may happen to be members of Parliament, or you are in spheres where you have power very much to influence the minds of other men. See that you do it for God; for all that influence is so much money given to you to put out to interest for your Lord and Master, and if you bury it in a napkin, or only use it for yourself, in the last great day he will say to thee, “Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou shall be cast away to the tormentors.”

9. Once more. There are some men who never will confess the Lord Jesus with their mouths as they ought to do unless they *become preachers*. David said he had preached the Word before the great congregation; and he makes it his boast that he had not shunned to declare it before kings. Now there are some of you who have ability to speak, but you never do. All the whole length of London streets await you as a pulpit; the whole population of London are ready to be your audience. Why do you not begin to speak? You can talk upon politics. The other evening, at the literary institution, I understand you read a capital paper upon some astronomical subject. If you love the Lord Jesus are you going to give all your attention to these inferior themes? No, at least sometimes give it to him who bought you with his blood. “You are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.” Mind, then, that your speech be as much Christ’s as any other thing which you possess. Speak for your Lord and Master. You

tell me you are nervous. Never mind your nervousness. Try once. If you break down half a dozen times, try again; you shall find your talents increase. It is wonderful how those break-downs do more good than our keeping on. Just deliver your soul of what is in it. Get your heart red hot, and then like some volcano that is heaving in its inner bowels, let the hot lava of your speech run streaming down. You need not care for the graces of oratory, nor for the refinements of eloquence, but speak what you do know; show them your Savior's wounds; bid his sorrow speak to them; and it shall be marvellous how your stammering tongue shall be all the better an instrument because it does stammer, for that God "hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

You see, brethren, this confession of Christ with the mouth is a lifework. The Christian man is to be something like a physician. You know we call a physician a professional man. Well, how does he profess? There is a large brass plate on his door and a big bell, and everybody knows what the brass plate and the bell mean. That is part of his profession. What else? How does he profess to be a physician? He goes into company, and his dress is like anybody else's. You do not see a box of lancets hanging at his side; you do not observe that he is dressed in any peculiar costume. He is a physician, and he is always a physician, but his profession is carried on by his practice. This is how a Christian's profession is to be carried on, by his practice. The man is a physician professionally, because he really does heal people and write prescriptions, and attend to their wants. I am to be a Christian in my actions, my deeds, my thoughts, my words. Therefore, if anybody wants a Christian, I should be known by my words and my acts. When we used to go to school, we would draw houses, and horses, and trees on our slates, and we remember how we used to write "house" under the house, and "horse" under the horse, for some persons might have thought the horse was a house. So there are some people who need to wear a label round their necks to show that they are Christians at all, or else we might mistake them for sinners, their actions are so alike. Avoid that. Let your profession be manifest by your practice. Be so clearly a piece of divine painting, that the moment a man puts his eye upon you, he says, "Yes, that is the work of God; that is a Christian, the noblest work of God."

II. I have only one or two minutes just to give a few words of exhortation. Dear friends, see that you confess Christ with your mouth. Do not make excuse, for NO EXCUSE YOU CAN MAKE WILL BE VALID.

You will lose your business! you say. Lose it, and gain your soul. You will be unfashionable! What is it to be *fashionable*? You will be despised by those who love you! Do you love husband or wife more than Christ? If so, you are not worthy of him. But you are so timid! Mind you are not so timid as to be lost at last, for the fearful and unbelieving shall have their portion in the lake that burneth. Not those who fear and sometimes doubt their interest in Christ, but those who are afraid to confess Christ before men.

You know that in the silence of the sick or dying hour, no excuse, however specious it may appear to-day, will answer your conscience; and if it will not answer your conscience, depend upon it it will not satisfy God. In the next place, remember *how dishonorable* it is in you to say you believe with the heart, and yet not to make confession. You are like a rat behind the wainscoat, coming out just now and then when nobody is looking, and then running behind again. "What a degrading metaphor," you say. I meant to degrade you by it, so as to drive you out of your cowardice. What! is Christ to be treated like this, as if the name of Christ were a thing to be avowed in skulking holes and corners? No, in the face of the sun let it be said, "I do love Jesus, who gave himself for me." It is not a thing to be said alone, nor to be hidden from the ears of men. He died in the face of the sun, with mockers round about him; and with mockers round about us let us declare our faith in Jesus Christ too.

How *honorable*, on the other hand, will the confession be to you. If I had to join an army, and I found on the muster-roll a list of ragamuffins and the scrapings of the street, I do not think I should like to be a soldier. But if, on the other hand, I found my colonel a great conqueror, and that I had for compeers and comrades men who had some glorious names upon their banners, I should feel honored by being allowed to be a drummer-boy in such a regiment. So when I read the list, and find Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Daniel, Isaias, Jesus Christ himself, the apostles, Luther, Calvin, and men whose names have become household words in every Christian family, I count it an honor if my name shall be found written with theirs, as the humblest and feeblest soldier in the whole army. It is an honorable thing; therefore, cast in your lot with us, and be prepared to be despised as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. I urge this upon you, because it will make you *useful*. What is the good of a secret Christian? He

is a candle under a bushel; he is a light shut up in a dark lantern. Let your light shine. What is the good of a secret Christian? He is salt without savor. And what is he fit for but to be trampled under foot of men? Come, let the savor of your salt be felt throughout the world. *Grace is sufficient.* That is another argument for you. You think you will have fresh responsibilities and dangers if you make a confession. *Grace is sufficient.* If grace put you upon a pinnacle of the temple, depend upon it, grace will keep you there. If you get off the pinnacle, and come down on the hard ground, you will be unsafe there; but if God put you on the pinnacle let all the devils in hell come to push you down, you shall stand fast. Be not disobedient and choose your own way; take God's way and you are safe in it.

Lastly, *the reward* is splendid. "He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is heaven." There was a Prince of right royal blood, who once upon a time left his Father's palace and journeyed into a distant part of the king's dominions, where he was little known and cared for. He was a true Prince, and he had about his face those princely marks — that strange divinity which doth hedge a king — that might have made the onlooker know that he was right royal. But when he came into the place, the people said, "This is the heir to the throne; let us insult him, let us hoot him!" Others said, he was no heir at all. And they agreed to set him in the pillory. As he stood there, every man did pelt him with all kinds of filth, and used all manner of hard words towards him; and they said, "*Who dare acknowledge him for a Prince? who dare stand by him?*" There stood up one from the crowd, and said, "I dare!" They set *him* up in the pillory side by side with the Prince; and when they threw their filth on the Prince it fell on him, and when they spoke hard words of the Prince they spoke hard words of him. He stood there, smiling, and received it all. Now and then a tear stole down his cheek; but that was for them, that they should thus ill-treat their sovereign. Years went by, the king came into those dominions and subdued them; and there came a day of triumph over the conquered city: streamers hung from every window, and the streets were strewn with roses. There came the king's troops dressed in burnished armor of gold, with plumes upon their glittering helmets. The music rang right sweetly, for all the trumpets of glory sounded. It was from heaven they had come. The Prince rode through the streets in his glorious chariot; and when he came to the gates of the city, there were the traitors all bound in chains. They stood before him trembling. He singled out from among the crowd one man only who

stood free and unfettered, and he said to the

traitors, “Know ye this man? He stood with me in that day when ye treated me with scorn and indignation. He shall stand with me in the day of my glory. Come up hither!” said he. And amidst the sounding of trumpets and the voice of acclamation, the poor, despised and rejected citizen of that rebellious city rode through the streets in triumph, side by side with his King, who clothed him in purple, and set a crown of pure gold upon his head.

There is the parable. Live it out! Amen.

THE POWER OF AARON'S ROD.

NO. 521

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 26TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.” — Exodus 7:12.

WE shall not attempt to discuss the question as to whether these magicians actually did turn their rods into serpents or no; it is probable that they, by dexterous sleight of hand, substituted living serpents for dry rods, and so deceived the eye of Pharaoh; on the other hand, it is possible that God was pleased to permit the devil to aid their enchantments, and so the old serpent produced a brood. Into that question, I say, I shall not enter. It is of no importance which opinion we may hold. Curious questions must this morning give way to important truths. I call your attention to the fact, that Aaron’s rod proved its heaven-given superiority, and silenced all the boastings of Jannes and Jambres, by readily swallowing up all their rods. This incident is an instructive emblem of the sure victory of the divine handiwork over all the opposition of men. Whenever a divine thing is cast into the heart, or thrown upon the earth, it swallows up everything else, and though the devil may fashion a counterfeit, and produce swarms of opponents as sure as ever God is in the work, it will swallow up all its foes. “Aaron’s rod swallowed up all their rods.”

Without any preface, let me ask you, first of all, *to observe this fact*; when we have duly considered it, let us, in the second place, *draw an inference from it*; and then, in closing, let me endeavor to *show some reasons why it is right that it should be so*.

I. Let us turn aside to see this great sight — the divine triumphant over the diabolical: the spiritual subduing the natural — AARON’S ROD

SWALLOWING ALL ITS RIVALS.

1. Let us take the case of the awakened sinner. That man was, a few days ago, as worldly, as carnal, as stolid, as he well could be. If anyone should propose to make that man heavenly-minded, to lead him to set his affection upon things above, and not on things on the earth, the common observer would say, "Impossible! the man has no thought above what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed; his heart is buried in a grave of cares; he rises early; he sits up late; he eats the bread of carefulness; he is glued and cemented to the world — as in old Roman walls, the cement has become so strong, that the stone is no longer a separate piece, but has become a part of the wall itself — so this man is cemented to the world, he cannot be separated from it. You must break him in pieces with the hammer of death; you cannot separate him in any other way from the cares of life. Ah, but Aaron's rod shall swallow up this rod. The man listens to the Word; the truth comes with power into his soul; the Holy Ghost has entered him; and the next day, though he goes to his business, he finds no true contentment in it, for he pants after the living God. Though still he will buy and sell, and get gain, yet there is a craving within — an awful hunger — a thirst unquenchable — which above the din and clamor of the world's traffic, will be heard crying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Now, his spirit pleads its needs, and outstrips the body in the contest for his warmest love. He spurns the trifles of a day: he seeks the jewels of eternity. The grovelling swine which wallowed in worldliness is transformed into an eagle; the man who lived for this shadowing earth has now an eye for the upper spheres, and a wing to mount into celestial heights. Grace has won the day, and the worldling seeks the world to come.

It may be that the man is immersed in pleasure. He is at this theater and at that. In all gay society he bears the palm. You shall find him at every horse-race and fighting ring; ah, and worse still, you may track him to dens of licentiousness, and learn that he is diving deeper than others in the turbid streams of vice. What power can make this gay sinner become a saint? As well ask over a mouldering grave, "Can these dry bones live?" How shall he find joy in the praise of God, or interest in waiting upon the worship of the Most High? "Absurd!" cries Unbelief, while Worldliness shouts, "Ridiculous!" The man is too far gone for regeneration! He is married to pleasure, and he wears the ring upon his finger! Ay, but Aaron's rod can swallow up this rod. For we have seen such a man loathe the very joys he loved, till there was a charm in the music of sin — no mirth in the society

of folly. He fled away to hide himself; he sought seclusion that he might weep alone. Where now the sweetness of your bowls and the melody of your viols? Where now the charms of the earth's harlotry? Where now the giddy delights of chambering and wantonness? They are gone, for Aaron's rod has swallowed up these rods of the magicians, and the mad sinner is sitting yonder — a penitent at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. His companions follow him, with many weighty reasons, as they seem to think, they invite his return; they conjure him not to make a fool of himself, by joining those melancholy fanatics; they point out the faults of many professors; they remark that hypocrisies are common; they describe the inconsistencies of good men; and they say, "What! will you throw away the joviality of youth, the bloom and flush of life, to be united with a miserable band of enthusiasts and deceivers like these?" Then they insinuate cunning doubts; they thrust into the man's way certain strange things, of which he had never heard before, which startle him like thunder-claps, and almost drive him from his purpose. If God's grace be in him, the world's best magicians may throw down all their rods: and every rod may be as cunning and as poisonous as a serpent, but Aaron's rod will swallow up their rods. The sweet attractions of the cross will woo and win the man's heart. The blessed arguments, fetched from the bleeding wounds of Jesus, will answer all the blandishments of Madam Wanton and the reasonings of her sister Madam Bubble. Everything shall be set aside, when true religion comes in. The man shall have a longing so intense, that he cannot stay it, nor can he stay himself from obedience to it — a longing after pardon by blood, and salvation by grace.

Oh, have you not seen the trembling penitent, when under conviction of sin, apparently oblivious to everything else? How changed the man! The furrows of that brow prophesy a harvest of hope. Tears, those jewels of repentance, bedeck his eyes. He is dressed in the sackcloth and ashes, which are the court robes of those blessed mourners who shall be comforted. For a season even righteous joys yield him no solace; the comforts of his household, and the enjoyments of the fireside, fail to reach his case. There is no balm in Gilead for him, heaven alone can supply him a fit physician. His cry has become, "These can never satisfy; give me Christ, or else I die." You have marked the stag when it is let down for a royal hunt. Away it flies. The dogs are behind it. It flies over flowery meads, but it does not pause to snuff the fragrance of the gale. It dashes along the wood, but it waits not for shelter beneath you umbrageous oak! It scatters

the sparkling waters of the brook, but it scarce has time to bathe its limbs. Onward, up the hill, the scenery is grand; but that wild eye, starting from its head, is solaced by no sight of beauty. The birds are singing sweetly in yonder copse, but those startled ears are not comforted. The bay of the dog is all the noble victim hears; the wrath of the hunter is all it dreads; on — on — on it flies, panting for life. Such is the soul hunted by the dogs of conscience. Such is the awakened spirit, when the wrath of God is let loose upon it. No comforts can charm it; no joys can delight it. It flies on — on — on — resting never until it finds a shelter and deliverance in the clefts of the Rock of Ages. It is in vain that Satan tries to attract it from the one master-thought; the divine life must and will have its course. As some lofty mountain casts its shadow all along the valley, so a sense of condemnation throws its dark influence over the whole life; then follows a longing for mercy, which, like a swollen torrent, bears all before it. To use another illustration: the man has found the pearl of great price, and for joy thereof, he parts with all to buy it. No matter how dear the old ancestral homestead, it must be sold; the favourite horse; the faithful dog — all must go. He will sell his dearest joys and his most prized luxuries of sin, that he may buy this priceless, peerless pearl. Aaron's rod swallows up all other rods, and serpents too.

2. Beloved, the same fact, with equal distinctness, is to be observed in the individual when he becomes a believer in Jesus Christ; his faith destroys all other confidences. Once that man could trust in his self-righteousness. He was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing. He was honest. Who could say that he ever fraudulently failed in business, or robbed a creditor? For integrity, he boasted that none could say him nay. He was, moreover, kind and charitable; amiable in his deportment, and tender in heart towards the poor. He trusted that if any man went to heaven by his merits, he should. But where is that rod now? Lo, Aaron's rod has swallowed it up. For now that man can say with the apostle Paul, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The man once could rely upon ceremonies. Was he not sprinkled in infancy in the customary manner? Was he not confirmed afterwards by episcopal

hands? Did he not receive the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper? What more was wanted? He was regular at his Church, or punctual at his chapel. He paid the contribution expected of him, and perhaps a little more. He had family prayers, and went through a private form at his bedside. What more did he want? But Aaron's rod swallows this up, too, for all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. This is the cry of the man now — "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." My hearers, you are no Christians unless your faith in Christ has devoured every other confidence; unless you can say,

***"On Christ, the solid rock I stand!
All other ground is sinking sand."***

It is not to trust Christ and to trust self; to rely on Jesus somewhat, and then upon our prayers and our works to some degree. *Jesus ONLY!* must be your watchword. Christ will never have a partner. He trod the wine-press alone, and he will save you alone. He stretched his hands to the cross, and none but he could bear the burden of sin: nor will he divide the work of salvation, lest at the last he should have to divide the crown. The rod of the one only High Priest must swallow up all other rods.

My dear friends, what multitudes of foes has our faith had to meet with; but how it has swallowed them all up. There were our old sins. The devil threw them down before us, and they turned to serpents. What boasts of them! What multitudes! How they hiss in the air! How they intertwist their many coils. How horrible are their deadly poison-fangs, the gaping jaws, their forked tongues! Ah, but the cross of Jesus, like the rod of Amram's son, destroys them all. Faith in Christ makes short work of all our sins, for it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Then the devil stirs up another generation of vipers, and shows us our inbred corruptions, our neglects of duty, our slackness in prayer, our unbeliefs, our backslidings, our wanderings of heart; and sometimes you and I get so tormented by these reptiles, that we grow alarmed, and are half inclined to flee. Do not run, brother, but throw down Aaron's rod, and it will swallow up all these serpents, even though they were poisonous as the cobra, fierce as the rattlesnake, or huge as the python. You shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb. "Jesus is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." The battle is the Lord's, and he will deliver them into your hands. The old enemy will throw down another host of serpents in the form of worldly trials, diabolical

suggestions, temptations to blasphemy, ill-thoughts of God, hard thoughts of his providence, rash thoughts of his promises, and such like, till you will be almost distracted. You will wonder how you can meet such a host as this. Remember to stand fast, and throw down Aaron's rod — your simple trust and faith in Jesus Christ — and it must and shall swallow up all these rods. There is not one doubt which the craft of hell can insinuate — there is not one difficulty which the infernal wisdom of Diabolus can suggest — but simple faith in Christ can disarm, tread under foot, and utterly destroy.

On a certain railroad there is a viaduct, the arches are of considerable height, wooden centres of course were used for the building of these arches, and they remain there till this day, because there is some suspicion that if the wooden centres were knocked out, the brick arches might not be strong enough and might come tumbling in. Now, there are some professors whose faith is of that kind, it is supported by wooden centres of human persuasion, reasoning, or excitement, which they cannot afford to lose. But the Christian man can say, that if by providence all the earthly props of his confidence should fail; if feelings, graces and excitements were all gone, still the cross alone is an all sufficient dependence, and faith could bear the most terrible strain which earth or hell could put upon it. I would to God we were more and more possessed of that faith which leans on God and God alone; for remember that the faith which is supported by anything except the word and promise of God, is no faith at all. It is a bastard faith which has the cross for a buttress, but finds its foundation elsewhere; the cross must be the foundation, corner-stone, and buttress too. None but Jesus! none but Jesus! We need to have a faith which can endure every form of trial, and that as long as life lasts. One day last week, when I was preaching, it came on to rain, a gentleman asked why the largest chapel in the neighborhood could not be used for the occasion? The reply was, "Why, the galleries are not safe." I thought, what was the good of galleries into which they were afraid to let the people. Pull them down and get fresh ones. So there are some people who have a faith like that good-for-nothing gallery; it is not safe; it will not sustain a crowd of afflictions and temptations, difficulties and troubles; it would all come down with a crash in the day of trial, and great would be the fall of it. Brethren, if you have such a faith as I have described, prey God to take it away; it is worthless and dangerous; for remember, in the hour of death, if it cannot stand the tramp of the eternal feet, it will give way, and your everlasting ruin will be the result. Have a faith which is built upon God, which will bear whatever

comes. But mind you mix not therewith wood, hay, stubble, of your own gathering. Let Aaron's rod swallow up all other rods. Let your faith in Christ overturn every refuge of lies.

3. The same fact is very manifest after faith in all who truly love the Savior. It will be found, I am sure, that every true lover of Jesus has an all-consuming love — coals of juniper, which have a most vehement flame. They who love Christ aright, love no one in comparison with him. The husband is dear; the father is cherished; the children are precious; but after all, Jesus Christ is better than all kindreds. We can look upon all and say, "Yes, it were a bitter pang to lose you, but we would sooner lose you all ten times over, than once lose our Savior;" for, oh! if we lose him, we have lost all, even if all else remained; but if all be gone, and we still keep our Savior, we have all in him. The Christian as he loves nothing in comparison, so he loves nothing in contradiction to Christ. Whatever comes between him and his Savior, the true lover of Jesus abhors and rejects in a moment. He holds no deliberation or debate about the matter. He counts *that* vile, which, precious in itself, becomes evil through interposing between him and his Lord.

*"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be" —*

Though it be a golden idol; though it be myself; whatever that idol be —

*"Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee."*

The Christian's love to Christ is of such a kind, that he would forego honor and think it honor to be dishonored for Christ. Persecution's flame cannot, by any means, consume bands of union which unite his soul and his Lord. Through fire and through water this love can march; for "many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." That is not true love to Jesus, which governs only one part of the man out of twenty. It must be all the passions bound into one. This is the reason why our apostle does not say, "Set your *affections* on things above;" but "Set your *affection* on things above." Tie up the affections in one bundle. There are not to be a host of them; they are to be made into one. Bind them into a bundle of camphire and then offer them to your Best Beloved. Oh, if I pretend to love Christ, and have other lovers, too — he careth not for such a heart as mine, it must be an undivided heart. "Their heart is divided; now shall they

be found faulty,” said Hosea; “Unite my heart to fear thy name,” cried the Psalmist, and let each of us pray so too. “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Let that be without any sort of reserve. Let the giving up of ourselves to Christ and the taking of Christ to ourselves be done heartily and earnestly, with all the powers of the soul.

This love to Christ reminds me of the fire which fell of old upon Elijah’s sacrifice: there stood the altar made of twelve rough stones; on it lay the bullock and the wood: and over all the prophet had poured water, until it saturated the bullock and stood in the trenches. But when the fire came down from heaven, it devoured not only the wood and the sacrifice, but the very stones of the altar, and licked up the water from the trenches. So when this heavenly fire of love comes down upon our hearts in very deed and truth, it not only burns the sacrifice and the wood — our own true intentions and our renewed heart — but the stones, the very flesh that seemed as dull and cold as a stone — ay, and those old corruptions which seemed to quench the fire of grace like water, this love licks the whole up, and the whole man goes up to heaven, a living sacrifice unto God. “My heart and *my flesh*,” said the Psalmist, “cry out for the living God.” I used to wonder however he made his flesh to do it, for the flesh lusteth against the spirit; but there are times when Aaron’s rod does swallow up all other rods, and even the heart and the flesh cry out for the living God. Our love to Jesus should be like the love of David to Jonathan, and of Jonathan to David; as Jonathan was ready to take off both his sword and his bow, and his girdle, and give them to David, so should we make no reserve, our selfishness being swallowed up, giving to Jesus all that we are, and all that we have evermore.

I have heard of one good man who carried out to the letter this love to Christ. He was rich, he prospered much in business. A very sincere friend who might take great liberties, called upon him and said, “My dear brother, you are so prosperous, that I am afraid lest your heart should depart from God.” The other replied, “No, my brother, I thank you for the warning, but I am not in that danger, for I enjoy God in everything.” Years went on: riches took to themselves wings and fled away. The rich man was brought to the depths of poverty; he even knew what it was to want bread. The same friend came to see him, and he said, “My dear brother, you remember what I said to you in your prosperity; now, I am afraid lest in your adversity you should grow unbelieving, and so dishonor your Lord.” But the other said, “Dear brother, I thank you for your warning as I said

before, but I am not in danger, for before I enjoyed God in everything, and now I enjoy everything in God.” Oh, this is a sweet way of living, when our love to Christ is such that we find Christ in everything. We see the marks of his pierced hands on our daily bread, and see the blood mark upon the garments which we wear. It is good, too, when suffering and wanting times shall come, to find we are rich because we have Christ, and can sing.

*“Thee, at all times, will I
bless; Having thee, I all
possess; How can I bereaved
be,
Since I cannot part with thee?”*

4. Brethren, you will notice this in the man who makes his delight in the Lord Jesus. He who makes his delight in Christ after a true sort, will discover that this delight swallows up all other delights. There is none equal to this. The Christian man enjoys himself as others do. He is not denied the sweets of this life any more than another man. But to him all these things are brown bread. He has eaten manna, his mouth has tasted angels’ food; and he feels that the choicest mirth and delight his soul can know in all the bounties of God’s rich providence, are mere ashes compared with what he finds in Christ. His delight in Christ is of such a kind that nothing can stop it. In disease he still rejoices in his God, who makes his bed in his sickness. When he comes to die, that last of foes cannot interrupt the music of his soul. “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord,” he hath said; and he carries out his vow. He has little to delight in besides; but he has more delights than those who have all the world. Though he were rich as Solomon, and had singing men and singing women, and gardens and houses, and chariots, and all manner of delights, he would not be so contented as he is with Christ, and with his Christ alone. I speak experimentally, I who am but a babe in Christ, even I, know that there is such joy to be found in Jesus, such rapture, such ecstasy — what shall I say? — such heaven to be found in his dear name and in communion with him, that if I could have but five minutes of my Lord’s company, I would sooner have it than a whole year of the society of princes rolling in wealth and exalted in fame. One glance of his eyes outshines the sun. The beauties of his face are fairer than all flowers. There is no such fragrance as in the breath of his mouth. “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.”

5. Yet more is it so in a man who is devoted to God's service. The service of God swallows up everything else when the man is truly God's servant. When a man gets fully possessed with an enthusiastic love for Jesus, and there is no other love worth a moment's care, difficulties to him become only things to be surmounted, dangers become honors, sacrifices pleasures, sufferings delights, weariness rest. Life he looks upon but as a loan, and gives it back to Jesus Christ with interest. Look in the olden times how the martyrs despised death. Aaron's rod swallowed up the terrors of fire, and stake, and rack, and dungeon. Poverty, nakedness, peril, sword, the love of Christ made short work of these. In later days, in the Reformer's times, to meet the score of the multitude and the wrath of princes, was a thing of every-day. They laughed at all sufferings for the love of Jesus. To-day some of our missionary brethren prove the same fact. Williams staining Eromanga with his blood; Knibb spending a weary life in the midst of his swarthy brethren; Moffat at this hour cut off from intercourse with those whom he holds dear, pressing on still in the work of saving the Bechuana and the Bushman — these men, and men like them of whom the world is not worthy, prove that the love of Jesus will swallow up everything else. I hope there are some in this Church in whom the service of Christ has become the main object of their lives. If you stand up and preach in the street, and you are mocked at, Aaron's rod will swallow up all the ribaldry of scoffers; you can bear all that and rejoice in it. If you go home and find persecutors there, you can patiently endure their cruel mockery. Aaron's rod will swallow up that rod very speedily. Perhaps you have to lose customers by closing your shop on the Sabbath; perhaps friends forsake you because of your godly walk; perhaps adversaries gather round you, and say spiteful things of you because Jesus is yours. Aaron's rod will swallow up that rod. I would to God there were more Christians, however, in whom all their business cares and their worldly pursuits were subjugated and subservient to their devotion to their Master. For he is not a Christian of any standing who lives for anything but to extend the name of Christ, and to spread his kingdom among the sons of men.

Brethren, we are waiting for the time in which my text shall have a more splendid significance than I can give it just now. In every neighborhood wherever Christ's truth is preached, like Aaron's rod, it swallows up all the serpents of sin. Find out the darkest alley in London, take Jesus Christ there, and Aaron's rod shall swallow up their rods of ignorance, vice, and ungodliness. Go to popish countries, spread the Bible, let the name of

Jesus Christ be proclaimed, and there is no lie of the Pope which the cross cannot overcome. Go you to the heathen land, where Juggernaut sits in bloody contentment on his throne, or to the islands of the South Sea, or to Afric's wondrous plains; wherever you go, cast down Aaron's rod, and whatever the form of superstition or error, it shall swallow all up. Wait yet a little while, when from eastern coast to western, one song shall be heard, the Hallelujah to the Lord; when Jesu's name shall be exalted, and every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord; then admiring angels looking from the battlements of heaven, or flying down and mingling with the sons of earth, shall rejoice to see that *Jannes* and *Jambres*, who withstood Moses, were not more totally defeated than the foes of Christ shall be when Aaron's rod shall swallow up their rods, and the chorus shall be heard, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

II. WE NOW DRAW AN INFERENCE.

If it be so, that wherever true religion — the finger of God — comes into a man, it becomes a consuming passion, till the zeal of God's house eats the man up. Then there are many persons who profess religion, who cannot have found the right thing. I will picture you one or two of them. There are some who sit and listen to the gospel, and who somewhat delight in its doctrines. They feel an attachment to the truth, and find some degree of comfort in it. But the one thing they think of is how they shall scrape together money; how they shall, by some means or other, fill their exchequer. As for God's house, though it has many claims, it is looked upon as a nuisance when it once entrenches upon their pocket. They give — well, what per cent do they give of their incomes? So small is the fraction that we will not waste our time in calculating it. I dare say they give as much as their religion is worth. We have heard of one who said that his religion did not cost him above a quarter of a dollar a year; and somebody said he thought it was very dear at that price. I dare say most people are pretty good judges of what their religion is worth, and their payment for its support may be taken as a fair estimate. Those who are mean, screwing, miserly, and miserable in the cause of Christ, whose only expenditure is upon self, and whose main object is gain, what can we say of them? Why, that they look upon religion as some great farmers do upon their little off-hand farms. They think it is well to have a little religion; they can turn to it for amusement sometimes, just to ease them a little of their cares; besides, it may be very well, after having had all in this world, to try

to get something in the next. They are not honest people; serving the devil all their lives, the devil has a sort of deferred interest in them, and will no doubt see to his claims; but, instead of doing justice, they want to cheat him at the last. No doubt, in the end, they will have their due. There are many of these in our Churches, with whom we can find no fault in other respects. They are moral and decent in all ways; they can pray very nicely in prayer meetings, yet they never dream of consecrating their secular employments unto God. Aaron's rod, in their case, has never swallowed up their rods.

I heard of a minister, who, having need to have a chapel built, told the collector to call upon a certain person. The collector said, "Oh! he will not give anything; he never gives anything." "Well," said the minister, "if he gives as he prays, I should think he would give all he has!" So the collector called. "Well," the gentleman replied, "really he had so many calls — -." You know all the fibs which are customary on such occasions. He would give nothing. So the collector said, "Sir, our minister said, if you were to give as you pray, he thought you would give a large amount." Well, that touched his conscience. "Our minister said, he thought when you prayed, you would give yourself away." There are many who say that, who are a long way from meaning to carry it practically out. But give me the man who, with all worldly discretion, feels that it is as much his business to get money for God, as it is mine to preach for God. He sells his calicoes, his joints of meat, his earthenware, or his groceries, for Christ, as truly as I come upon this platform to speak for Christ. He sanctifies his ordinary calling to the cause of Christ, and makes himself the Lord's servant in everything, saying, "Here, Lord, I give myself to thee; it is all that I can do." I am afraid the inference I am to draw from what I have already said, is, that those who love the world, have a religion they had better get rid of.

There are other persons who profess to be Christians, but who spend all the week round without ever brushing against their religion. They expect it to call upon them as the postman does, at regular hours; it may knock them up on Sunday morning, but it must mind it does not intrude upon the Monday. What are the books they read? Those yellow volumes of one shilling or two shilling trash, which abound at the railway book-stalls? What is their talk about? Well, anything you like, except what it should be. What do they do during the week? Oh, they do twenty things. But what do they attempt for Christ? *Do for Christ, sir!* With what surprise they look at you, when you put the question. What did they do all the week? Well, let

us see; beginning with Monday and going on to Saturday — hear it all — and what is its sum total? As far as the Church or the world is concerned, these people might just as well have been in bed and asleep all the time; they do nothing whatever; they have a name to fire, and practically they are dead. If a young man joins a rifle corps, there he is; he stands in the rank; he learns his practice and drill; and tries to get a prize by hitting the target. But when a man joins the Christian Church, where is he? I do not know where he is. You may find his name seven hundred and something in the attendance book. He is there, but what is he? You find him at chapel on Sunday, but where is he, and what is he doing for the cause of Christ during the week? The smallest scrap of paper would be too large to record his deeds of faith. He thinks he adorns his profession; but what kind of adornment it is, or who ever sees that adornment, I cannot tell. I believe that the man who does not make his religion his first and last thought, who does not subject all his actions, his eating and drinking too, to the cause of Christ, has not the work of God in his soul. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” The man who has not consecrated the lapstone — who has not dedicated the counter to God — who has not made the desk and the pen holiness unto the Lord, has yet to learn what the Christian religion is. It is not a uniform to be worn one day and cast away the next; it ought to be a part of the woof and warp of your being; it ought to run in your blood, penetrate the marrow of your bones, work in the arms, gaze from the eyes, and speak from the tongue. O to be baptized, saturated, immersed in the Spirit of God, and so, wherever we go, to say to men who put our Lord at the bottom of the scale, “For us to live is Christ;” only such, I say, will ever be able to add, “For me to die is gain.”

I hope this may come home to some of you; and if it do, may it produce from this day forth a more thorough love to Jesus — a more practical way of showing a more entire devotedness to that great cause which is either an awful imposition, or else deserves to have our whole heart, our whole spirit, soul and body devoted to it.

III. Now, I will close, by trying to GIVE SOME REASONS WHY I PUT THE SERVICE OF GOD SO PROMINENT, AND THINK THAT AARON’S ROD OUGHT TO SWALLOW UP ALL OTHER RODS.

What does the great gospel revelation discover to us? Does it not show us an awful danger, and one only way of escape from it? Yonder is the place

where the wrath of God burns without abatement, where souls suffer pangs indescribable. "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." Horrors, past imagination, are revealed to us by the words of Jesus, when he speaks of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that never shall be quenched. If we could once, but for an instant, have an idea of the wrath to come; if but for a moment the scathing lightnings of God could flash before our vision; if we could taste, but for an instant, the bitterness of that cup of trembling, the dregs whereof the wicked earth must drink, I am sure we should feel that the religion which teaches us how to escape from it must be worthy of a man's most solemn consideration, and we should give to it all the strength of our mind. To escape from hell — O sirs! if you do but manage this, though you die in a garret, you will have done well. Oh! if you have but escaped from the wrath to come, you will have been wise; though you have lived as paupers here, wiser far than he who has piled — like the tower of Babel — wealth on wealth, only to find his way to despair at last.

Does not our religion also reveal to us the joyous reward of another world? It opens to us yonder pearly gates, and bids us gaze on angels and glorified spirits. It tells us of celestial glories, of immortality; the crown of life, which fadeth not away. It brings to our ear the melody of heavenly harps, and bids our eyes look upon the splendours of the Son of God upon the throne. Heaven — if there be a heaven, and we by calling ourselves Christians accept it as truth — should it not be the first and last thought, the Alpha and Omega of man's existence, to seek and find it — so that we may not be shut out like the foolish virgins, but may enter with the wise into the marriage supper? By hell, and by heaven, therefore, I do entreat you, let Aaron's rod swallow up all other rods; and let love and faith in Jesus be the master passion of your soul.

Moreover, do we not learn in our holy faith of a love unexampled? Where was their love such as that which brought the Prince of Glory down to the gates of death, and made him pass the portals amid shame and scoffing? Oh, matchless love which draws the Prince of Life down to the shades of death, takes the crown from his lofty brow, removes his purple robe from his shoulders, loosens his glittering girdle, and strips his fingers of their golden rings, then wraps him in clay, clothes him in rags, houses him nowhere, gives him no place to lay his head, makes him eat the bread of penury, and drink the water of affliction. Shall such a love as this have half

our hearts? Shall it have a cold love in return? Shall Jesus sit at the bottom of the table? Shall we stow him away in some back chamber of the heart? Shall we treat him to cold meats, to dogs' meat? God forbid. Let us make him King of kings within our hearts, as he is to-day King of kings in the highest heavens. If Christ be anything, he must be everything. If he deserve not to be everything, he deserves to be less than nothing.

But, my brethren, does not the grace of God create in us a new and noble nature? And if new and noble, should it not predominate? He is accursed who lets his body rule his mind, who lets his eating and drinking chain the immortal spirit. And he is equally accursed who shall let his mind rule his new-born spirit. No, let that nature which feeds on Christ, which breathes Christ, and which ascends to Christ, as flame ascends up to the central source of fire — the sun — let that nature always have its full liberty. Let it be ruling in us. Though the law in our members strive against it, yet let it rule and reign: like the rod of Aaron, let it swallow up all other rods. And since, dear brethren, God has been pleased to ennoble us by giving us the high dignity of being his children, shall we make our being a son of man a greater thing than being a son of God? Shall men, as they look at me, say of me first, "He is a tradesman?" O let me live so that the first thing they may say, shall be — "He is a Christian!"

I heard of one, speaking of a certain earnest man's religion, as riding his hobby. I knew that the person who so spoke of him knew nothing about the secret. For this is a steed which you may ride all day and all night long. It is a very Pegasus which will bear you up to heaven, and carry you aloft up to the starry spheres. Never dismount, Christian; but having been once set upon Christ's own beast, continue to ride thereon till he brings you safely home. Whatever others may be with their religion. Let yours be of a sort which you cannot lay aside; you *must* hold it, you *must* speak about it.

The Brahmins and the Hindoos practice caste. A Hindoo one day asked our missionaries whether they had caste in England. The missionary replied, No; that all men might eat and drink together. The Brahmin said this was very disorderly and even immoral. But the missionary said, "Well, but upon your great feast day — for instance, the great feast of Juggernaut — the Sudra eats with the Brahmin." "Oh," says he, "that is because we are in the presence of our God." "So," said the missionary, "that is the reason why we have no caste in England, because we are always in the presence of our God." I would that we thought of this; and being always in

the presence of our God, live every day as the idolater does some days; as the Romanist does now and then. Talk of holy-days! why, every-day ought to thee a holy-day. Speak of keeping the Sabbath holy! every-day should be kept holy. Only the Sabbath day is a day of rest unto us more than the others. Write upon the bells of the horses, "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD;" and let the pots in your own house be like the bowls before the altar.

I shall not say any more upon this subject, only praying that the Lord may give to this Church a larger number of consecrated men and women, and asking of you, for I make a point of it, to remember that this must always be a labor of love, if it is to be acceptable. No man ever does anything for the Lord acceptably which he would rather not do: no man ever gives to the Lord acceptably that which he would rather withhold. The service of Christ is perfect freedom: to serve him day and night is to enjoy perpetual liberty. Only you try it, dear brother. You that are low in your grace, and weak in your faith, doubting and unbelieving, do more for Christ; make your consecration more perfect, and your light shall come forth as brightness, and the glory of your soul as a lamp that burneth.

May the Lord now add his blessing. Amen.

MEALTIME IN THE CORNFIELDS.

NO. 522

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 2ND,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.” — Ruth 2:14.

IF we lived in the country, it would not be necessary for me to remind you that the time of harvest has again happily come upon us. I saw, one day last week, a fine sample of the new wheat, part of a considerable quantity which had just been sold; and in many places I have observed the fields yielding their sheaves to the reapers' sickle. Loud let us lift our praise to God for the abundance which loads the land. An unusually heavy crop has been given in many quarters, and scarcely anywhere is there any deficiency. While there is so much of distress abroad — while the great manufacture of our country is standing still — we should be grateful that God is pleased to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, by an unusually bountiful harvest. And we must not forget to pray, that during the next few weeks, the Lord would be pleased to give suitable weather, that so the corn may be safely gathered into the garner; that there may be abundance of bread, and no complaining in our streets. I always feel it necessary, just at this season, to give these hints, because God's natural remembrances cannot reach us: we hear not the lark teaching us how to praise, nor do the green fields of grass, and the yellow ears of corn, preach to us of the Lord's bounty. Little is there to be learned from these long corridors of dreary cells, which we call streets and houses. Dull brown or dirty-white bricks everywhere I see;

enough to make one earthly, however much we may pant for heavenly things. We see neither the green blade nor the full corn in the ear, and we are so apt to forget that we all depend upon the labor of the field. Let us unite with the peasant and his master, in blessing and praising the God of Providence, who first covered the fields with grass for the cattle, and now with herb for the food of man.

This morning we are going to the cornfields, as we did last year, not however, so much to glean, as to rest with the reapers and the gleaners, when under some wide-spreading oak, they sit down to take refreshment. We hope there will be found some timid gleaner here, who will accept our invitation to come and eat with us, and who will find confidence enough to dip *her* morsel in the vinegar. May they have courage to feast to the full on their own account, and then to carry home a portion to their needy friends at home.

I. Our first point this morning is this — THAT GOD’S REAPERS HAVE THEIR MEALTIMES.

Those who work for God will find him a good master. He cares for oxen, and has commanded his Israel, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” Much more doth he care for his servants who serve him. “He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.” The reapers in Jesus’ fields shall not only receive a blessed reward at the last, but they shall have plenteous comforts by the way. He is pleased to pay his servants twice: first in the labor itself, and a second time in the labour’s sweet results. He gives them such joy and consolation in the service of their Master, that it is a sweet employ, and they cry, “We delight to do thy will, O Lord.” As heaven is made up of serving God day and night, so to true workers, their constantly serving God on earth brings with it a rich foretaste of heaven.

God has ordained certain mealtimes for his reapers; and he has appointed that one of these shall be *when they come together to listen to the Word preached*. If God be with our ministers, they act as the disciples did of old, for they received the barley loaves and fishes from Christ as he multiplied them, and handed them to the people. We, of ourselves, cannot feed one soul, much less thousands; but when the Lord is with us, we can keep as good a table as Solomon himself, with all his fine flour, and fat oxen, and roebucks, and fallow-deer. When the Lord blesses the provisions of his House, no matter how many thousands there may be, all

his poor shall be

filled with bread. I hope, beloved, you know what it is to sit under the shadow of the Word with great delight, and find the fruit thereof sweet unto your taste. Where the doctrines of grace are boldly and plainly delivered to you in connection with the other truths of revelation; where Jesus Christ upon his cross is *ever* lifted up; where the work of the Spirit is not forgotten; where the glorious purpose of the Father is never despised, there is sure to be food for the children of God. We have learned not to feed upon oratorical flourishes, or philosophical refinings; we leave these fine things, these twelfth-cake ornaments, to be eaten by those little children who can find delight in such unhealthy dainties: we prefer to hear truth, even when roughly spoken, to the fine garnishings of eloquence without the truth. We care little about how the table is served, or of what ware the dishes are made, so long as the covenant bread and water, and the promised oil and wine, are given us. Certain grumblers among the Lord's reapers do not feed under the preached Word, because they do not intend to feed; they come to the House of Bread on purpose to find fault, and therefore they go away empty. My verdict is, "It serves them right." Little care I to please such hearers. I would as soon feed bears and jackals, as attempt to supply the wants of grumbling professors. How much mischief is done by observations made upon the preacher! How often do we censure where our God approves. We have heard of a high doctrinal deacon, who said to a young minister who was supplying the pulpit on probation, "I should have enjoyed your sermon very much, sir, if it had not been for that last appeal to the sinner. I do not think that dead sinners should be exhorted to believe in Jesus." When that deacon reached home, he found his own daughter in tears. She became converted to God, and united with the Church of which that young man ultimately became the minister. How was she converted, think you? By that address at the close of the sermon, which her father did not like. Take heed of railing at that by which the Holy Ghost saves souls. There may be much in the sermon which may not suit you or me, but then we are not the only persons to be considered. There is a wide variety of characters, and all our hearers must have "their portion of meat in due season." Is it not a selfishness very unlike the spirit of a Christian, which would make me find fault with the provisions, because *I* cannot eat them all? There should be the unadulterated milk for the babe in grace, as well as the strong substantial meat for the full-grown believer. Beloved, I know that however murmurers may call our manna "light bread," yet our gracious God does "in this mountain make unto all people

feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”

Often, too, our gracious Lord appoints us mealtimes *in our private readings and meditations*. Here it is that his “paths drop fatness.” Nothing can be more fattening to the soul of the believer than feeding upon the Word, and digesting it by frequent meditations. No wonder that some grow so little, when they meditate so little. Cattle must chew the cud; it is not what they crop with their teeth, but that which is masticated, and afterwards digested by rumination, that nourishes them. We must take the truth, and roll it over and over again in the inward parts of our spirit, and so we shall extract divine nourishment therefrom. Have you not, my brethren, frequently found a Benjamin’s mess prepared for you in a choice promise of your God? Is not meditation the land of Goshen to you? If men once said, “There is corn in Egypt,” may they not always say, that the finest of the wheat is to be found in secret prayer? Private devotion is a land which floweth with milk and honey; a paradise yielding all manner of fruits; a banqueting house of choice wines. Ahasuerus might make a great feast, but all his hundred and twenty provinces could not furnish such dainties as the closet offers to the spiritual mind. Where can we feed and lie down in green pastures in so sweet a sense as we do in our musings on the Word? Meditation distils the quintessence from the Scriptures, and gladdens our mouth with a sweetness which exceeds the virgin honey dropping from the honeycomb. Your retired seasons and occasions of prayer, should be to you regal entertainments, or at least refreshing seasons, in which, like the reapers at noonday, you sit with Boaz and eat of your Master’s generous provisions. “*The Shepherd of Salisirury Plain*” — you who have read that excellent book will remember — was wont to say, “That when he was lonely, and when his wallet was empty, his Bible was to him meat, and drink, and company too.” He is not the only man who has found a fullness in the Word when there is want without. During the battle of Waterloo, a godly soldier mortally wounded, was carried by his comrade into the rear, and being placed with his back propped up against a tree, he besought his friend to open his knapsack, and take out the Bible which he had carried in it. “Read to me,” he said, “one verse, before I close my eyes in death.” His comrade read him that verse: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you;” and there, fresh from the whistling of the bullets, and the roll of the drum, and the tempest of human conflict, that believing spirit enjoyed such holy calm, that

ere he fell asleep in the arms of Jesus, he said, "Yes, I have a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps my heart and mind through Jesus Christ." Saints most surely have their mealtimes when they are alone in meditation.

Let us not forget, that there is one specially ordained mealtime which ought to occur oftener, but which, even monthly, is very refreshing to us, I mean *the Supper of the Lord*. There you have literally, as well as spiritually, a meal. The table is richly spread; it has upon it both meat and drink; there is the bread and the wine, and looking at what these symbolize, we have before us a table richer than that which kings could furnish. There we have the flesh and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereof if a man eat, he shall never hunger and never thirst, for that bread shall be unto him everlasting life. Oh! the sweet seasons we have known at the Lord's Supper. If some of you really did understand the enjoyment of feeding upon Christ in that ordinance, you would chide yourselves for not having united with the Church in fellowship. In keeping the Master's commandments there is a "great reward," and consequently in neglecting them there is a great loss of reward. Christ is not so tied to the Sacramental table as to be always found of those who partake thereat, but still it is in the way that we may expect the Lord to meet with us. "If ye *love* me, keep my commandments;" is a sentence of touching power. "And his commandments are not grievous," is the confession of all obedient sons. Sitting at this table, our soul has mounted up from the emblem to the reality; we have eaten bread in the kingdom of God, and have leaned our head upon Jesus' bosom. "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love." On these occasions we may compare ourselves to poor Mephibosheth, who though lame and despicable in his own esteem, yet was made to sit at King David's table; or we may liken ourselves to the little ewe lamb in the parable, which did eat of its Master's bread, and drink from his cup, and slept in his bosom. The prodigal, who once fed upon husks, sits down to eat the bread of children. We, who were worthy to be esteemed as dogs, are here permitted to take the place of adopted sons and daughters.

Besides these regular mealtimes, there are others which God gives us, *at seasons when perhaps we little expect them*. You have been walking the street, and suddenly you have felt a holy flowing out of your soul toward God; or, in the middle of business your heart has been melted with love and made to leap for joy even as the brooks which have been bound with

winter's ice leap to feel the touch of spring. You have been groaning, dull and earth-bound; but the sweet love of Jesus has embraced you when you scarce thought of it, and your spirit, all free, and all on fire, has rejoiced to dance before the Lord with tabrets and high-sounding cymbals, like Miriam of old. I have had times occasionally in preaching, when I would fain have kept on far beyond the appointed hour, for my happy soul was like a vessel wanting vent. Seasons too you have had on your sick-beds, when you would have been content to be sick always, if you could have your bed so well made, and your head so softly pillowed.

*“These are the joys he lets us know
In fields and villages below:
Gives us a relish of his love,
But keeps his noblest feast above.”*

Our blessed Redeemer comes to us in the morning, and wakes us up with such sweet thoughts upon our soul, we know not how they came; as if, when the dew was visiting the flowers, a few drops of heaven's dew had fallen upon us. In the cool eventide, too, as we have gone to our beds, our meditation of him has been sweet. Nay, in the night watches, when we tossed to and fro, and could not sleep, he has been pleased to become our song in the night.

*“He is the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights;
The glory of my brightest days,
And comfort of my nights.”*

God's reapers find it hard work to reap; but they find a blessed solace when they sit down and eat of their Master's rich provisions; then, with renewed strength, they go with sharpened sickle, to reap again in the noontide heat.

Let me observe, that while these mealtimes come, we know not exactly when, there are *certain seasons when we may expect them*. The Eastern reapers generally sit down under the shelter of a tree, or a booth, to take refreshment during the heat of the day. And certain I am, that when trouble, affliction, persecution, and bereavement, become the most painful to us, it is then that the Lord hands out to us the sweetest comforts. As we said last Thursday night, some promises are written in sympathetic ink, and can only have their meaning brought out by holding them before the fire of affliction. Some verses of Scripture must be held to the fire till they are

scorched, before the glorious meaning will stand forth in clear letters before our eyes. We must work till the hot sun forces the sweat from our face; we must bear the burden and heat of the day before we can expect to be invited to those choice meals which the Lord prepares for those who are diligent in his work. When thy day of trouble is the hottest, then the love of Jesus shall be sweetest; when thy night of trial is the darkest, then will his candle shine most brightly about thee; when thy head aches most heavily — when thy heart palpitates most terribly — when heart and flesh fail thee, then he will be the strength of thy life, and thy portion for ever.

Again, these mealtimes frequently occur *before* a trial. Elijah must be entertained beneath a juniper tree, for he is to go a forty-days' journey in the strength of that meat. You may suspect some danger nigh when your delights are overflowing. If you see a ship taking in great quantities of provision, it is bound for a distant port. And when God gives you extraordinary seasons of communion with Jesus, you may look for long leagues of tempestuous sea. Sweet cordials prepare for stern conflicts. Times of refreshing also occur *after* trouble or arduous service. Christ was tempted of the devil, and *afterwards* angels came and ministered unto him. Jacob wrestled with God, and then afterwards, at Mahanaim, hosts of angels met him. Abraham wars with the kings, and returns from their slaughter; then is it that Melchisedec refreshes him with bread and wine. After conflict, content; after battle, banquet. When thou hast waited on thy Lord, then thou shalt sit down, and thy Master will gird himself and wait upon thee. Yes, let the worldling say what he will about the hardness of religion, we do not find it so. We do confess that reaping is no child's play; that toiling for Christ has its difficulties and its troubles; but still the bread which we eat is *very* sweet, and the wine which we drink is crushed from celestial clusters —

*“I would not change my bless'd estate
For all the world calls good or great
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold.”*

II. Follow me while we turn to a second point. To THESE MEALS THE GLEANER IS AFFECTIONATELY INVITED. That is to say, the poor, trembling stranger who has not strength enough to reap; who has no right to be in the field, except the right of charity — the poor, trembling sinner, conscious of

his own demerit, and feeling but little hope and little joy. To the meals of the strong-handed, fully-assured reaper, the *gleaner* is invited.

The gleaner is invited, in the text, to *come*. “At mealtime, come thou hither.” We have known some who felt ashamed to come to the House of God; but we trust you will none of you be kept away from the place of feasting by any shame on account of your dress, or your personal character, or your poverty; nay, nor even on account of your physical infirmities. “At mealtime come thou hither.” I have heard of a deaf woman who could never hear a sound, and yet she was always in the House of God, and when asked why, her reply was, “Because a friend found her the text, and then God was pleased to give her many a sweet thought upon the text while she sat in his House; besides,” she said, “she felt that as a believer, she ought to honor God by her *presence* in his courts, and recognizing her union with his people; and, better still, she always liked to be in the best of company, and as the presence of God was there, and the holy angels, and the saints of the Most High, whether she could hear or no, she would go.” There is a brother whose face I seldom miss from this house, who, I believe, has never in his life heard a sound, and cannot make an articulate utterance, yet he is a joyful believer, and loves the place where God’s honor dwelleth. Well, now, I think if *such* persons find pleasure in coming, we who *can* hear, though we feel our unworthiness, though we are conscious that we are not fit to come, should be desirous to be *laid* in the House of God, as the sick were at the pool of Bethesda, hoping that the waters may be stirred, and that we may step in and be healed.

Trembling soul, never let the temptations of the devil keep thee from God’s House. “At mealtime come thou hither.”

Moreover, she was bidden not only to come, but to *eat*. Now, whatever there is sweet and comfortable in the Word of God, ye that are of a broken and contrite spirit, are invited to partake of it. “Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinners*” — sinners such as you are. “In due time Christ died for the *ungodly*” — for such ungodly ones as you feel yourselves to be.

You are desiring this morning to be Christ’s. Well, you *may* be Christ’s. You are saying in your heart, “O that I could eat the children’s bread! “You *may* eat it. You say, “I have no right.” But he gives you the invitation! Come without any other right than the right of his invitation. I know you will say how unworthy you are.

***“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream.”***

But since he bids you “come,” take him at his word; and if there be a promise, believe it; if there be rich consolation, drink it; if there be an encouraging word, accept it, and let the sweetness of it be yours.

Note further, that she was not only invited to eat the bread, but to *dip her morsel in the vinegar*. We must not look upon this as being some sour stuff. No doubt there are crabbed souls in the Church, who always dip their morsel in the sourest imaginable vinegar, and with a grim liberality invite others to share a little comfortable misery with them; but the vinegar in my text is altogether another thing. This was either a compound of various sweets expressed from fruits, or else it was that weak kind of wine mingled with water which is still commonly used in the harvest-fields of Italy, and the warmer parts of the world — a drink not exceedingly strong, but excellently cooling, and good enough to impart a relish to the reapers’ food. It was, to use the only word which will give the meaning, a sauce, which the Orientals used with their bread. As we use butter, or as they on other occasions used oil, so in the harvest-field, believing it to have cooling properties they used what is here called vinegar. Beloved, the Lord’s reapers have sauce with their bread; they have sweet consolations; they have not merely doctrines, but the holy unction which is the essence of doctrines; they have not merely truths, but a hallowed and ravishing delight accompanies the truths. Take, for instance, the doctrine of election, which is like the bread; there is a sauce to dip that in. When I can say, “He loved *me* before the foundations of the world,” the personal application, the personal enjoyment of my interest in the truth becomes a sauce into which I dip my morsel. And you, poor gleaner, are invited to dip your morsel in it too. I used to hear people sing that hymn of Toplady’s, which begins —

***“A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear with thy righteousness on,
My person and offerings to bring.”***

And rises to its climax —

***“Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”***

And I used to think I could never sing that hymn. It was the sauce, you know. I might manage to eat some of the plain bread, but I could not dip it in that sauce. It was too high doctrine, too sweet, too consoling. But I thank God I have since ventured to dip my morsel in it, and now I hardly like my bread without it. I would have every trembling sinner be prepared to take the *comfortable* parts of God's Word, even those called "HIGH." I hope, brethren, you will never grow as some Christians do, who like all sauce, and no bread. There are some high-flying brethren, who must have nothing but the vinegar; and very sour it turns upon their stomachs too. I hope you will love the bread. A little of the vinegar, a little of the spice, and much savor; but let us keep to the bread as well; let us love all revealed truth; and if there be a trembling gleaner here, let me invite and persuade her to come hither, to eat the bread, and to dip her morsel in the sauce.

Now I think I see her, and she is half prepared to come, for she is very hungry, and she has brought nothing with her this morning; but she begins to say. "I have no right to come, for I am not a reaper; I do nothing for Christ; I did not even come here this morning to honor him; I came here, as gleaners go into a cornfield, from a selfish motive, to pick up what I could for myself; and all the religion that I have lies in this — the hope that *I* may be saved; I do not glorify God; I do no good to other people; I am only a selfish gleaner; I am not a reaper." Ah! but thou art *invited* to come. Make no questions about it. Boaz bids thee. Take thou his invitation, and enter at once. But, you say, "I am such a *poor* gleaner; though it is all for myself, yet it is little I get at it; I get a few thoughts while the sermon is being preached, but I lose them before I reach home." I know you do, poor

weak-handed woman. But still, Jesus invites thee. Come! Take thou the sweet promise as he presents it to thee, and let no bashfulness of thine send thee home hungry. "But," you say, "I am a stranger; you do not know my sins, my sinfulness, and the waywardness of my heart." But Jesus does; and yet Jesus invites you! He knows you are but a Moabitess, a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel; but he bids you. Is not that enough? "Eat the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar." "But," you say, "I owe so much to him already; it is so good of him to spare my forfeited life, and so tender of him to let me hear the gospel preached at all; I cannot have the presumption to be an intruder, and sit with the reapers." Oh! but he *bids* you. There is more presumption in your doubting than there *could* be in your believing. HE bids you. Will you refuse Boaz? Shall Jesus' lips give the invitation, and will you say me nay? Come, now, come. Remember that

the little which Ruth could eat did not make Boaz any the poorer; and all that thou wantest will make Christ none the less glorious, or full of grace. What! are thy necessities large? Yes, but his supplies are larger. Dost thou require great mercy? He is a great Savior. I tell thee, that his mercy is no more to be exhausted than the sea is to be drained; or than the sun is to be rendered dim by the excess of the light which he pours forth to day. Come, thou. There is enough for thee, and Boaz will not be hurt thereby.

Moreover, let me tell thee a secret — Jesus *loves* thee; therefore it is that he would have thee feed at his table. If thou art now a longing, trembling sinner, willing to be saved, but conscious that thou deservest it not, Jesus loves thee, sinner, and he will take more delight in seeing thee eat than thou wilt take in the eating. Let the sweet love he feels in his soul toward thee draw thee to him. And what is more — but this is a great secret, and must only be whispered in your ear — *he intends to be married to you*; and when you are married to him, why, the fields will be yours; for, of course, if you are the spouse, you are joint-proprietor with him. Is it not so? Doth not the wife share with the husband? All those promises which are “yea and Amen in Christ” shall be yours; nay, they all are yours now, for “the man is next of kin unto you,” and ere long he will spread his skirt over you, and take you unto himself for ever, espousing you in faithfulness, and truth, and righteousness. Will you not eat of your own? “Oh! but,” says one, “how can it be? I am a stranger.” Yes, a stranger: but Jesus Christ loves the stranger. “A publican, a sinner;” but he is “the friend of publicans and sinners.” “An outcast;” but he “gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.” “A stray sheep;” but the shepherd “leaves the ninety and nine,” to seek it. “A lost piece of money;” but he “sweeps the house” to find thee. “A prodigal son;” but he sets the bells a ringing when he knows that thou wilt return. Come, Ruth! Come, trembling gleaner! Jesus invites thee: accept the invitation. “At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar.”

III. Now, thirdly — and here is a very sweet point in the narrative. BOAZ REACHED HER THE PARCHED CORN. “She did come and eat.” Where did she sit? You notice, she “sat beside the reapers.” She did not feel that she was one of them — she “sat beside” them. Just as some of you do, who do not come down here this evening to the Lord’s Supper, but sit in the gallery. You are sitting “beside the reapers.” You are sitting this morning as if you were not one of us — had no right to be among the people of God; still you will sit beside us. If there is a good thing to be had, and you

cannot get it, you will get as near as you can to those who *do*; you think there is some comfort even in looking on at the gracious feast." "She sat beside the reapers." And while she was sitting there, what happened? Did she stretch forth her hand and get the food herself? No, it is written, "HE reached her the parched corn." Ah! that is it. I give the invitation, brother, to-day; give it earnestly, affectionately, sincerely; but I know very well, that while I give it, no trembling heart will accept it, unless the King himself comes near, and feasts his saints to-day. He must reach the parched corn; *he* must give you to drink of "the juice of the spiced wine of his pomegranate." How does he do this? By his gracious spirit, he first of all *inspires your faith*. You are afraid to think it can be true, that such a sinner as you are accepted in the beloved; he breathes upon you, and your faint hope becomes an expectancy, and that expectation buds and blossoms into an appropriating faith, which says, "Yes, my beloved is *mine*, and his desire is toward *me*." Having done this, the Savior does more; *he sheds abroad the love of God in your heart*. The love of Christ is like sweet perfume in a box. Now, he who put the perfume in the box is the only person that knows how to take the lid off. He, with his own skillful hand, takes the lid from the box; then it is "shed abroad" like "ointment poured forth." You know it may be there, and yet not be shed abroad. As you walk in a wood, there may be a hare or a partridge there, and yet you may never see it; but when you startle it, and it flies or runs before you, then you perceive it. And there may be the love of God in your heart, not in exercise, but still there; and at last you may have the privilege of seeing it — seeing your love mount with wings to heaven, and your faith running without weariness. Christ *must* shed abroad that love; his spirit must put your graces into exercise.

But Jesus does more than this; he reaches the parched corn with his own hand, when *he gives us close communion with him*. Do not think that this is a dream; I tell you there is such a thing as talking with Christ to-day. As certainly as I can talk with my dearest friend, or find solace in the company of my beloved wife, so surely may I speak with Jesus, and find intense delight in the company of Immanuel. It is not a fiction. We do not worship a far-off Savior; he is a God nigh at hand. We do not adore him as one who is gone away to heaven, and who never can be approached; but he is nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart, and we do to-day walk with him as the elect did of old, and commune with him as his apostles did on earth; not

after the flesh, it is true, but spiritual men value spiritual communion better than any carnal fellowship.

Yet once more let me add, the Lord Jesus is pleased to reach the parched corn, in the best sense, when *the Spirit gives us the infallible witness within, that we are "born of God."* A man may know that he is a Christian infallibly. Philip de Morny, who lived in the time of Prince Henry of Navarre, was wont to say that the Holy Spirit had made his own salvation to him as clear a point as ever a problem proved to a demonstration in Euclid could be. You know with what mathematical precision the scholar of Euclid solves a problem or proves a proposition, and just the same, with as absolute a precision, as certainly as twice two are four, we may "know that we have passed from death unto life." The sun in the heavens is not more clear to the eye than his own salvation to an assured believer; such a man would as soon doubt his own existence, as suspect his interest in eternal life.

Now let the prayer be breathed by poor Ruth, who is trembling yonder. Lord, reach me the parched corn! "Draw me, we will run after thee." Lord, send thy love into my heart!

*"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,
And that shall kindle ours."*

There is no getting at Christ, except by Christ revealing himself to us. IV. And now the last point. After Boaz had reached the parched corn, we are told that "SHE DID EAT, AND WAS SUFFICED, AND LEFT." So shall it be with every Ruth. Sooner or later every penitent shall become a believer. There may be a space of deep conviction, and a period of much hesitation; but there shall come a season, when the soul decides for the Lord. If I perish, I perish. I will go as I am to Jesus. I will not play the fool any longer with my *but*s and *ifs*, but since he bids me believe that he died for me, I *will* believe it, and will trust his cross for my salvation. And oh! whenever you shall be privileged to do this, you shall be "*satisfied*." "She did eat, and was satisfied." Your *head* shall be satisfied with the precious truth which Christ reveals; your *heart* shall be content with Jesus, as the altogether lovely object of affection; your *hope* shall be satisfied, for whom have you in heaven but Christ? your *desire* shall be satiated, for what can even the hunger of your desire wish for more than "to know Christ, and to

be found in him.” You shall find Jesus fill your *conscience*, till it is at perfect peace; he shall fill your *judgment*, till you know the certainty of his teachings; he shall fill your *memory* with recollections of what he did, and fill your *imagination* with the prospects of what he is yet to do. You shall be “satisfied.” Still, still it shall be true, that you shall leave something. “She was satisfied, and she left.” Some of us have had deep draughts; we have thought that we could take in all of Christ; but when we have done our best, we have had to leave a vast remainder. We have sat down with a ravenous appetite at the table of the Lord’s love, and said, “Now, nothing but the infinite can ever satisfy me; I am such a great sinner that I must have infinite merit to wash my sin away;” but we have had our sin removed, and found that there was merit to spare; we have had our hunger relieved, and found that there was a redundance for others who were in a similar case. There are certain sweet things in the Word of God which you and I have not enjoyed yet, and which we cannot enjoy yet; we are obliged to leave them for a while. “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” There is a knowledge to which we have not attained — a place of fellowship nearer yet to Christ. There are heights of communion which as yet our feet have not climbed — virgin snows upon the mountain untrodden by the foot of man. There is a yet beyond, and there will be for ever.

But please to notice: it is not in the text, but it is recorded a verse or two further on, what she did with her leavings. It is a very bad habit. I believe, at feasts, to carry anything home with you; but *she* did, for that which was left she took home; and when she reached Naomi, and showed her the quantity of wheat in her apron, after she had asked “Where hast thou gleaned to-day?” and had received the answer, she gave to Naomi a portion of that which she had reserved after she was sufficed. So it shall be even with you, poor tremblers, who think you have no right to any for yourselves; you shall be able to eat and be quite satisfied, and what is more, you shall have a morsel to carry to others in a like condition. I am always pleased to find the young believer beginning to pocket something for other people. When you hear a sermon, you think, “Well, poor mother cannot get out to-day, I will tell her something about it. There now, that point will just suit her; I will take that, if I forget anything else; I will tell her that by the bedside. There is my brother William, who will not come with me to chapel; I wish he would; but, now, there was something which struck me in the sermon, and when I get close to him, I will tell him *that*, and I will say,

‘Will you not come this evening?’ I will tell him those portions which interested me; perhaps they will interest him.” There are your children in the Sunday-school class. You say, “That illustration will do for them.” I think sometimes, when I see you putting down my metaphors on little scraps of paper, that you may recollect to tell somebody else; I would fain give more where they are so well used; I would let fall an extra handful, on purpose that there may be enough for you, and for your friends. There is an abominable spirit of self among some professors, prompting them to eat their morsel alone. They get the honey; it is a wood full of honey, like Jonathan’s wood; and yet they are afraid — afraid, lest they should eat it all up; so they try to maintain a monopoly. I do know some congregations which seem to me to be a sort of spiritual protectionists; they are afraid heaven will be too full, that there will not be room enough for them. When an invitation is given to a sinner, they do not like it — it is too open, too general; and when there is a melting heart and a tearful eye for the conversion of other people, they feel quite out of their element; they never know what it is to take home that which is left, and give to others.

Cultivate an unselfish spirit. Seek to love as you have been loved. Remember that “the law and the prophets” lie in this, to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself.” How can you love him as yourself, if you do not love his soul? You *have* loved your own soul; through grace you have been led to lay hold on Jesus. Love your neighbour’s soul and never be satisfied till you see him in the enjoyment of those things which are the charm of your life and the joy of your spirit. I do not know how to give my invitation in a more comfortable way; but as we are sitting down to feed at his table in the evening of this day, I pray the Master to reach a large handful of parched corn to some trembling sinner, and enable him to eat and be satisfied.

FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

NO. 523

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 26TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.” — 1 Samuel 2:6.

THIS sentence occurs in the very remarkable song of Hannah, who was equally illustrious as a poetess, and prevalent as a suppliant. She sings an experimental song, for her deep sorrow had been a living death to her, and her joyful exaltation was a triumphant resurrection. Her hymn is a golden bracelet, set with the jewels of sparkling contrasts; and this verse, with its vivid opposition between life and death, restoration, and the grave, bears in it diamonds of the first water. Like the ewes in the Canticles, this verse beareth twins. There is the double blessing of Othniel’s wife in this text — it hath both the upper and the nether springs as its inheritance. It has its own plain and *natural meaning*, which lies upon its surface like dust of gold; it has, moreover a *spiritual meaning*, which needs to be digged for like silver in the mine.

I. In reference to ITS FIRST AND MOST MANIFEST MEANING “The Lord bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.” Here the agency of God, in life and death, is clearly revealed to us. How well it is to discern the Lord’s hand in everything. Our Puritanic forefathers were wont to speak of God as restraining the bottles of heaven, or sending a gracious rain; as sending forth the wind, or hiding it in his storehouse; but we have grown so wise, that we begin to understand how the rain is formed, and we talk about the winds as if we had been into the chambers from which they come howling forth, and had discovered all the secrets of the universe. We ascribe events to second causes, to the laws of nature, and I know not what. I think it

were better far, if we would go back to the good old way of talking and speaking of the Lord as being in everything. While we do not deny the laws of nature, nor decry the discoveries of science, we will suffer none of these to be hung up as a veil before our present God. O foolish wisdom, which widens the distance between me and my heavenly Father! O sweet simplicity of love, which sees the God of love in every place, at every hour! I need no telescope to see my God with; behold, O sons of men, he is here; and my heart joyfully perceives him.

God is in life and death, in sickness and in health. This, surely, will soften the pains of sickness, and gild the joys of recovery. If you look upon sickness and restoration as merely the products of natural causes, you will not feel humbled when you are stretched upon the bed nor grateful when you walk out again and breathe the fresh air; but if you see God's finger in touching your bones and your flesh, you will be humbled under the chastisement; and if you discern his hand, in restoring your youth, like the eagle's, you will be able, like David, to say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Let others forget God if they will, that is the attribute of the wicked; but let his saints remember him, and let them speak well of his name, and have it in their mouths all the day long.

***“Tis God who lifts our comforts high,
Or sinks them in the grave.”***

This most precious fact should produce several gracious results in our hearts.

First of all, *it should awaken gratitude*. What a mercy it is that we are here this evening! You would think it more a mercy, perhaps, if certain of yonder seats had been left unoccupied, because those who sat there but a few days ago have gone the way of all flesh. If those pews could tell you where their former owners now are, you would praise the preserving hand of God far more heartily. Why, I looked just now with solemn gaze upon a spot where was wont to sit one who has heard me preach for years, but God has lately called him to his bar; and I turn my head and look upon another spot — just there! — where used to sit another friend, but this last week, while journeying in Wales for his health, he ran down a slope on one of the beautiful mountains a little more rapidly than he should have done, the fence at the bottom gave way, and he was precipitated into an eternal world.

Even in our recreations, what dangers dog our heels! You sometimes smile at old-fashioned people who thank God for “journeying mercies” and “journeying protections,” but, indeed, such petitions are as fitting as ever they were. I always like to offer to my God thanksgivings for mercies known and mercies *unknown*. Christ had unknown sufferings, and we enjoy, as the result thereof, unknown mercies. When we know that

***“Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
To push us to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home,”***

our preservation from these dangers should make us bless our God, “who redeemeth our life from destruction.” Glory be to that solitary arm, which shields us from a vast array of foes.

While it causes gratitude, dear friends, it should *compel consideration*, and lead us to pray that sickness and health may be sanctified to us. “The Lord bringeth down to the grave.” and it is his rule never to do anything without a purpose. “He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men for nought.” There is always a “needs be,” if “we are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Is it not the part of wisdom to say, with Job, “Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?” Should not the sick chamber be a place where we should seek unto God? Indeed, where is there a place in which we should not seek unto him? Brethren, we ought to ask the sanctified use of everything. Are we not to ask a blessing at the table upon our every-day meal? What is there, then, upon which we do not need the blessing of God? But especially do we need it upon our trials. Ask a blessing, my brethren, upon your troubles. Say grace over a table which is not so well loaded as it used to be. Say grace over broken bones and aching heads, over pains, and pangs, and partings, for there you want grace more than anywhere else, with the exception, it is true, of your prosperity, and there, likely enough, you need a double portion of his Spirit. If we have been lifted up from the couch of languishing and suffering, then let us quietly expect the comfortable fruits of righteousness which are afterwards to be brought forth in those who are exercised with trials. Let us pray God that the pruning may make us bring forth more fruit; that the filing may make us shine the more brightly; that the furnace may consume our dross, and the deep rivers drown our follies. If the rod shall scourge our sloth to death, and the staff shall strengthen our faith, both rod and staff shall be seen to be in the Lord’s hand, and shall therefore comfort us.

I think you will all agree with me, too, that the Lord's bringing us low and raising us up again, *should cause great searching of heart*. Suppose I had died when last I was sick: was I then prepared to die? Woman, you remember when last you were stretched upon that sick-bed, and even the physician had given you up for hopeless — God spared you; but if he had not, where now would your soul have been? Let your conscience answer that question, and it may be that it will make you tremblingly say, "I should have been like unto them that go down into the pit." If it had been your lot, my hearers, some of you to have perished as this friend of ours has done during the past week, I dare not have said of you, "Lord, we thank thee that it hath pleased thee to take this our brother to thyself." I could not have uttered a sentence of hope concerning you; I should have forged a lie had I comforted your friends by holding out a fraction of hope concerning your soul's salvation, for alas! are there not some of you who are gospel-hardened, and grow worse rather than better? While we are preaching to you, and pleading with you, and weeping for you to turn to Christ, and trying to lift up Jesus upon his cross, in the hope that the Spirit may thereby attract you, you are getting to look upon the gospel as an old, old tale, and upon the preacher himself as one whom you have heard so often, that really he is growing quite tedious and dull. Ah! there are some of you whom I could stir *once* as a thunder-clap, or a flash of lightning would have startled you, but you can almost sleep under my voice now. God knoweth I am willing enough to confess my own want of zeal and earnestness; but still, my hearers, it is not that which keeps some of you from coming to Christ. It is because you keep putting off the day of repentance by perpetual procrastination; you live in a continual suicide, always destroying your own soul. Meanwhile, that which does not melt you hardens you, and so you grow worse and worse, ripening like tares for the fire. My dear friends, let the judgments of God lead you to try your hearts, and to see what your state before God may be. "Beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee."

To those of us who are believers in Christ, restoration from sickness, and the privilege of again coming up to God's house after an absence from it through illness, *should suggest renewed activity*. Haste thee! haste thee! for behind thee are the flying wheels of the chariot of death, and the axles thereof are growing red-hot with speed. Fly, man, if thou wouldst accomplish thy life-work, for thou hast not a moment to spare! I think I see my work before me — the wheat ripe unto the harvest — broad acres and

wide fields” multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! “Arise,” saith the Master, “reap for me!” I have reaped until my arm aches, and my head swims. I wipe the hot sweat from my weary brow, and would fain rest awhile, but he saith, “Reap! reap! reap! Reap while the morning’s dew is falling! Reap while the hot sun scorches the ripening corn! Reap while the sun is setting! Reap until he has quite gone down; then thou shalt rest from thy labors; but until then thy work shall not be done!” Am I to reap alone? My brethren, there are many new, bright sickles; here is one for each of you. Up and to the fields, my fellow-reapers! Men and women up from your lethargy. Woe unto you that are at ease in Zion, that lie upon beds of down, and forget that men are making their beds in hell! Get ye up, and begin to be troubled for the sorrows of God’s people, for the deaths of sinners, for the destruction of this great city. If ever Jonah’s soul was stirred within him as he thought of Nineveh, much more ought yours and mine to be stirred with the burden of this great London. There is no time to waste. Men are dying! Hell is filling! How dare ye loiter! Again I sound the alarm. Work, O ye saints of the Lord, with all your might. Work with both your hands, by night and by day; sow beside all waters; in the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand. Let, then, the nearness of death, and the shortness of life, be to us as double spurs to stimulate our jaded spirits to fresh action.

What need I say more? You who are scholars in the college of affliction, are fitter to instruct me than I am to teach you. I shall but add this one thought: surely, if it is the Lord who bringeth down to the grave, and he may do it at any day, *we ought to be very watchful*. Are we not, many of us, like the virgins of the parable? We have fallen asleep; we have our lamps with us, but are not they almost out? It is the dead hour of night and all things are quiet. Methinks I hear a cry which ought to startle every sleeper: “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!” Do you sleep after that? Do I not see you startled? You rub your drowsy eyes; you look at your lamps, and you find the oil gone; you seek to trim them, and the cry fills you with alarm and confusion, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!” But some of you have no oil, and now you would fain borrow it where it is not to be had. Alas for you, for you will be shut out, and shut out for ever. Others of you have oil in your vessels, but you need hastily to trim your lamps or else the Bridegroom will come and find you sleeping. The Lord grant that as he may come to-day, as

you, sitting there in your seat, may die; as I, standing here, may cease to breathe ere the next word shall come from my lips, we may all be ready.

“That awful, that tremendous day, Its coming who shall tell? For as a thief Unheard, unseen, it steals with silent pace Through night’s dark gloom. Perhaps as here I stand, And rudely talk of these tremendous themes, Soon shall the tongue be check’d and dumb the mouth

*That lisps the faltering strain.
O Power supreme, thou Guardian of my life,
Preserve me from a dread surprise in death.
From ways where I might weep to find a grave,
Keep thou thy servant by thy mighty grace.
O may thy heavenly summons ne’er disturb,
Nor come, unwelcome, to my waiting heart
But find me rapt in meditation high,
Hymning my great Creator! — or in prayer,
Bringing the blessing down upon the crowd;
In earnest work for Jesus, lifting up
His cross, and glory of his saving name.”*

Be watchful, brethren, for the Lord bringeth down to the grave, and from that grave he bringeth us not up again to work, though he will bring us up to the reward and to the rest which remain for the people of God.

I shall now leave the text as it stands naturally; and briefly, but O may the Spirit of God help me to do it earnestly, try to speak of it in a spiritual sense.

II. OUR TEXT SEEMS TO INDICATE A STATE OF HEART THROUGH WHICH THOSE PASS WHO ARE BROUGHT TO GOD.

There always is in every case, though not to the same degree, a stripping-time before there is a clothing-time; there must be an emptying before there is a filling; there is the digging out of the foundations before the building up of the house; there is a time in which this verse is fulfilled — “The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.”

Let me describe now, for the comfort of those who are passing through the same, what that state of heart is in which the Lord bringeth down to the grave. I shall speak now experimentally, for if there breathes one soul on earth that can speak experimentally here, I am that man.

The sinner is led, first of all, *to hear his own sentence pronounced*. He was getting careless and thoughtless before, but now he is brought to think; thinking, he perceives his sins; perceiving his sins, he fears an angry God looking down from heaven: nay, with his sword drawn, reaching down from heaven, to smite him on account of his iniquities. Well do I remember when I stood at God's bar speechless. Not a word had I to answer him with for one sin of a thousand. When I read, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," I knew that that curse was upon me, for I had not continued in anything, much less in all things written in the book of the law. It seemed to me, as though I saw the Judge open the book; not to read my indictment, for that had been already published, but to proclaim the sentence. The trial had been gone through; I myself had made confession of my crime, and now the Judge put on the black cap, and commanded me to be taken to the place from which I came to suffer eternal wrath. When that sentence was to be executed he did not tell me, but it appeared to me as if it must come the next moment; and if it did come, I knew I could not blame the justice of God, for I deserved it well. Is that *your* position? Oh! where are you to-night, poor condemned sinner? Perhaps I cannot see you, for the crowd is great, nor can you see me, for you are in a corner, but yet you are bowing your head and saying, "Ah! that is just my case; I am cursed, and I deserve it. God is angry with the sinner every day, I am a sinner, and deserve that anger."

***"There is a dreadful hell
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains."***

"That is my lot," you are saying, and you are wringing your hands, while you are speechless as to any self-justification, and are only able to say, "It is most just; I deserve it well."

Further than this: the convinced sinner is often made to feel, not only the sentence and the justice of it, *but the very horror of death itself*. You may have read in the narrative of the old American war, of the execution of deserters. They were brought out one bright morning, while yet the dew was on the grass, and were bidden to kneel down each man upon his coffin, and then a file of soldiers stepped forth; the word was given, and each man fell upon his coffin in which he was to be buried. Such things as the punishment of deserters are common in every war, but what must be the

horror of the man who stands there, knowing that the bullet is waiting to reach his heart? In the old wars, they used to have a black heart sown on the man's breast, and all the soldiers were to take aim and fire at that. Why the man must suffer a thousand deaths while he stood waiting for the word of command. I have stood there, spiritually; and there are hundreds here who have thus faced their eternal doom. They have felt the horrors of death get hold upon them, and the pangs of hell encompass them, and they have found trouble and sorrow. O sinners, if you know yourselves, you will soon feel this, for do you not know that if you are without Christ, you are standing in just that position now? The great guns of the law, charged to the muzzle, are all pointed at you; they do but wait the fatal moment, when the uplifted finger of justise shall bid them be discharged, and where will you be then? Lost beyond hope! ruined beyond remedy! Beware, sinner, beware of this. "Well," says one, "that is the horror which I felt to-night; I felt as I came along that it was a wonder the earth did not open and swallow me up, and though I am now in God's house, I feel as if such a wretch as I am ought not to be in the company of the faithful; I wonder that I am still alive, and I am ready to cry out with the hymn-writer —

***"Tell it, unto sinners tell;
I am, I am out of hell."***

Ah! dear friends, this is another part of the experience through which many are called to go, before the Lord who brings them down to the grave vouchsafes to bring them up again.

Then there is a yet further death which the convinced sinner is made to feel, and that is *the death of inability*. While we are unregenerate, we think that we can do everything. Nothing is so easy, we imagine then, as believing; it is mere child's play to pray to God; quite a trifle to turn to God and get a new heart. Ay, but when man begins to work in real earnest, he finds it a very different thing. He feels like one in a swoon. There lies a woman who has fainted. You tell her, it is but to put up her finger, to open her eyes, to move her limbs, to walk into the fresh air, to drink a draught of water, and to recover. Yes, but she cannot do any one of these things. In one sense she can; the faculties are there, but they are all in a dormant state, and so utterly powerless, that all the woman is conscious of is her inability. Such is the state of the sinner when under a sense of guilt. He feels that deadly swoon of death into which Adam threw all his children.

Now he moans most wretchedly, in words like those of good old John Newton —

*“I would, but cannot
 sing, I would, but cannot
 pray;
 For Satan meets me when I try,
 And frights my soul away.
 I would, but can’t repent,
 Though I endeavor oft;
 This stony heart can ne’er relent
 Till Jesus make it soft.
 I would, but cannot love,
 Though woo’d by love divine;
 No arguments have power to move
 A soul so base as mine.
 O could I but believe!
 Then all would easy be;
 I would, but cannot — Lord, relieve,
 My help must come from thee!”*

He feels himself brought into a perfect state of death, as if a stupor had gone through every nerve, and frozen every muscle rigidly in its place, so that even the lifting of his little finger to help himself appears to be beyond his power. I am glad, dear friend, you are brought here, for I know the Lord never does empty a soul thoroughly of all creature-strength without very soon showing what the Creator can do. If he has brought you down to this grim sepulche of corruption, dishonor, weakness, and self-despair, he will shortly bring you up again. It is when you are strong that I am afraid of you; but when you are weak, then my hopes are high. The climax of your disease is just the dawn of my hopes; your direst poverty is the time when I expect to see you enriched, for when you are completely emptied and have nothing, then Jesus Christ will be your strength and your salvation. Trust him to be your all-in-all now that you are nothing at all. There must, at least in some degree, be a sense of thus being brought down to the grave before there will be a bringing up again.

No doubt, the man *now sees death written upon all his hopes*. There was a door through which I had hoped to enter eternal life. I had spent much time in painting it, and making it comely to look upon. It seemed to me to have a golden knocker, a marble threshold, and posts and lintels of mahogany, and I thought it was the door of life for me. But now what do I see? I see a great black cross adown it, and over it there is written, “Lord,

have mercy

upon us.” This door is the door to heaven by my own good works, which I thought full sure would always be open to me; but lo, I see that all my best works are bad, and “Lord, have mercy upon us,” is the highest thing my works can produce for me; still must I cry, even over them, “God have mercy upon my good works; forgive me for my best deeds, for I need to be forgiven even for these.” The death of legal hope is the salvation of the soul. I like to see legal hope swung up like a traitor. There let him hang to rot before the sun, more cursed than any other that was ever hanged on a tree. O, soul, have done with him, for whilst thou art so fond of him, whilst thou dost treat him with the best thou hast, and dost set him at the head of thy table, thou art ruined; but when thou dost slay him and drive him from thee, then it is that thy joy and thy hope begin.

No more, then, concerning this death — “The Lord bringeth down.”

But now a word or two of comfort for any of you who are brought down to this spiritual grave. There are many precious promises for such. “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” “Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” Remember the experience of Jonah: “For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple... I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.” Let the hope of Jeremiah be your consolation: “But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of merit” You that are brought very low, you feel that you are wounded to-night. Do you not know how many promises there are to the wounded ones? “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” Was not Jesus Christ sent on purpose for this — “to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound?” The name of our God is “Jehovah-Rophi — the Lord that healeth thee.” His own words are, “I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds.” “I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.” You are to-night like the dead. Do you not remember that passage in Ezekiel, fraught with rich mercy to you, where the Lord speaks concerning Israel, that they said their bones were dry, their

hope was lost, and they were cut off from their parts; but yet, nevertheless, he would raise them up, and they should live in his sight? “Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.” Remember how Hosea, speaking of the dead who were slain as you are, says, “The third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.” And that passage we read just now — “I kill, and I make alive” — do you not see the comfort of it? That “and” is a diamond rivet, joining the two sentences together. You cannot separate the “I kill” from the “I make alive,” for where God kills by his Spirit, he always quickens by the same; he does not in this life kill our legal hopes and our carnal security, without by-and-by making us alive. You will tell me that the Lord has withdrawn from you; but, oh! what a multitude of promises there are for you! “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.” “If any walk in darkness and see no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord;” so that though you have lost the comfortable hope of his love, you are still to trust in him. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” said Job; and do you, though you are slain, still trust, for there is still ground for trust; no sinner was ever brought too low for God to bring him up again. Others have been as low as you are now. Remember Heman the Ezrahite, whose mournful notes we read just now in the eighty-eighth Psalm. What words are these: “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves... I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off?” Yet this man of God received comforts, after all, from the God of his salvation. You yourself are not brought so low as you would be if you had a still clearer view of your sins. Remember, God’s mercy is so great, that you may sooner drain the sea of its water, or deprive the sun of his light, or make space too narrow, than diminish the great mercy of God. So that though brought to the very last pinch, and dead like the free among the slain that go down into the pit, you may still find mercy in the Lord our God. Let me beg you never to be satisfied until you get a Savior. Do not be content with any comfort short of faith in Christ. Do recollect, dear friends,

that you must not be satisfied because you have good desires, or because you experience holy feelings. When friends say to you, "God has begun the good work in you, and you may be content, for he will carry it on;" remember, you can never be sure that God has begun the good work, till you have believed in Christ. Believe in Jesus Christ; that is, as far as you are concerned, the first clear proof that God has begun a saving work in you; and it is for you, though dead and ruined, though swooning and fainting, and unable to do anything as of yourself, to swoon into the arms of the Savior, to faint, as many a child has done, into its father's arms; to die into the bosom of the Savior, and lie buried in his grave. Oh! this is a happy, happy way of being nothing, that Christ may be all in all.

And now I close, for time fails us, by just noticing, that where God has thus killed and brought down, we may rest assured he will certainly bring up again.

Beloved friends, the Lord does not send his Holy Spirit to bring to a sense of their need those sinners whom he does not intend to save, for that were a waste of his divine energy. He leaves reprobates, for the most part, to their natural hardness and stolidity of heart, but those whom he deigns to make sensible of guilt, those whom he deigns to condemn in their consciences, and to write the sentence of death in their members, these he intends sooner or later to bring up again from their despondency. Why, it stands to reason that he will. "Ah!" said one good old divine once to a fainting sinner, "You cost Christ too much for him to let you perish; he bought you too dearly to let you be a castaway for ever." Remember, since you are his — and we have a comfortable hope that you are, because you sigh and cry, and have a blessed hunger and thirst after him — since you are his, I say, you are very precious in his sight, and he will not, therefore, suffer you to be lost. "Oh," says one, "can I be a child of God after all, and yet be brought so low as I have been?" Some months ago, there were two women who kept a shop, and they put all their money, some hundred pounds, in sovereigns, under the fender at night, in a bag, to save it from thieves. The girl cleared away the ashes, and of course, cleared away the sovereigns too, and they were swept into the dust-heap. Well, this gold might have said to itself, "Now I am going to the dust-heap; how worthless I am, because I am put here amongst the lowest dregs; here is a piece of old rag, and here a rotten mass of filth; I cannot be a gold sovereign or else I should not be cast here." Ah! but you see, when they came to rake the heap they raked the golden coins out again, the sovereigns were by-and-

bye discovered; they might be in the ashes, but they were not to lie there for ever. So you may be brought to feel you selves the lowest, the worst, and the most useless of all creatures, but if the Lord has set his love upon you, you are gold in his esteem, none the less because of the ashes and the dunghill upon which you may be cast, and he will yet bring you up again. Recollect, there may be a work of grace in your heart, and yet you may not know it. There are many pebbles in the bottom of a river which you cannot see, but they are there. There may be some degree of faith, and hope, and love, and yet your soul may be so much disturbed that you cannot as yet perceive it; or the Lord may be really bringing you up from the grave, and yet the muddiness of your thoughts and the darkness of your soul's eye may prevent your perceiving what the Lord is doing for you. Still, I repeat it, he *will* bring you up again. O let your faith seize hold on this comforting assurance. If it is not done yet, it will be in due time. "Well, how will it come?" says one; "how will the Lord give me comfort?" My dear friend, I do not know the manner of it. It may come suddenly; before this service is over you may feel all the joy that a believer can know. It may be that the Lord will reveal himself to you as you are walking home, or to-night while you are in prayer before you go to your rest. Possibly it will come gradually: first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the car.

There are some to whom the light of life comes as the light of the rising sun: first a glimmering twilight; then the ruddy hues upon the clouds, then a flood of light, and afterwards the sun has fully arisen. It may be so with you. But there is one thing I know, that when your hope does come, when God quickens you from your grave, it will be just at that moment when you are led to look away from your own feelings, your own doings, and your own willings, and to look to Christ alone. I heard the other day a trembling woman — I hope she will yet be rejoicing in the Lord — I heard her saying she was afraid she never should be saved, and I told her I was afraid so too, for she *would not* believe in Christ, but was always raising questions, and doubts, and peradventures. Well, she said, she did not know whether the Lord had begun a good work in her. I told her I did not know that either, and that I did not enquire about it; I knew what the gospel said, and that was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But she said, perhaps it was not God's time. Ah! I said, "To-day is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation." Ah! she said, but she could not believe. I asked her why she could not believe. Could she not believe what Christ said? Was he a liar? Could she dare to say that she could not believe her God? Well, she did not exactly mean that, but then there were her sins.

But, said I, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” Well, she said, she hoped she should have the strivings of the Spirit, and that one day she should get right. My sister, said I, I charge you before God do not get any hope out of that; your business is to come to Christ and to come to Christ *now*; but if you stop anywhere short of that, in any sort of feelings or experience, then you will never get to your journey’s end. A believing sinner’s business is with Jesus and not with the Spirit’s operations. The Spirit works salvation in him, but he is nowhere bidden to look to the Spirit for salvation. No man can come to the Father but by Christ, and no man can come to an acknowledgment of the Spirit’s operations but by a sight of Christ. I grant you that the Spirit brings us to the cross, but we do not know when we come that the Spirit is at work with us. By a mysterious force we come to Jesus, and then afterwards we look back, and say, “Why, it must have been the Spirit of God that drew me to Christ.” You are not however to begin with that, but you are to begin by looking at the cross.

Although I have been talking to you about how God wills to bring us down, I have not set up these feelings as a standard of experience, or as being the ground of our salvation. A sense of need is a sign of our salvation, for no soul ever will come to live through the life of Christ unless he has first been slain by the great sword of the law. No sinner ever comes empty-handed to Jesus till he has been knocked down and robbed of all the worthless trash which he prizes as jewels. But still, I say, for all this the thing which saves the soul is for that dead, helpless, swooning, feeble, lost, ruined soul, to look to him who hangs on yonder cross, where the just suffers for the unjust, that he may bring us to God. This is how the Lord brings us up again. I know there will be some who will say they have not felt all I have described to any great degree or extent. Remember, again, I do not set this up as a standard to keep you from Christ; I have been preaching thus, in order to catch you who do not come because you have terrors; not to frighten those who come without them. There are two sorts of you we have to deal with. Some of you say you cannot believe in Christ because you have such terrible convictions; you wish you had not felt them. And another class of you say, if you had these horrible terrors, you could believe in Christ. There is no pleasing either of you. Now, remember, you that have the convictions, the Lord who brings you low, will bring you up again; and you that have not the convictions, you still have this preached to you — “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Come to Jesus just as you are, you shall have such

conviction as the Lord sees fit for you. You shall, indeed, be led in the same way as others; though, being blind, you will not know for the time, that it is the same way. You will be killed, and you will be made alive; you will be emptied, and you will be filled; you will be made nothing, and Jesus shall be your all in all.

O that my Master would bless these few rambling remarks to some of you. I do not like drawing the bow at a venture; I cannot bear that metaphor, but I do love to draw the bow at a certainty, to smite some of you, and I would to God that the Lord would do that now. The Lord greatly blesses that class over which our dear sister, Mrs. Bartlett, presides, but there are still some in it who are unconverted; O that the Lord might bring some of them in to-night. You, young women, who do take an interest in the things of God, may the Lord now decide you. I want to speak personally and affectionately to you now, because you may be in the grave before another Sabbath-day. As I look around me here, I miss some of my congregation, and in such a large congregation as this, there are at least two who depart every week. I suppose, according to the natural order of things, two of you must die each week, and when I think of this solemn fact, I ask — where are the two? Where are the two who are to be the victims of death this week? “Perhaps they are at home, sick,” you say. Ah! well, perhaps also they are here in good, strong health. Prepare to meet your God, young men, for you are not too young to die! And you in the Sabbath-school; I am so pleased to hear of the boys being converted, and of the girls being brought in; but, O children, some of you may soon make a little hillock in the cemetery with your young bodies! May the Lord make you young Samuels. Remember, it was Samuel’s mother who penned this text; may you be led to feel your need of Jesus, and then to find him for the salvation of your soul. You who are diligent in business, but are not fervent in spirit, you will be busy buying and selling all the week, but oh! do not sell your souls; “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” You, grey heads, yonder, what a multitude of old men we always have in this assembly, and glad am I to see the fathers here, though I often wonder how aged Christians can be fed by such a child as I am. But still, those grey hairs only make a fool’s cap for you if you have grown old in sin as well as old in years. God help you, that you may yet be made babes in grace though you are on the very verge of the grave.

God add his blessing, but we will not separate till we have sung this one verse — and I beg none to sing it but those who deeply can feel it —

*“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid’st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!”*

THE SAINT'S HORROR AT THE SINNER'S HELL.

NO. 524

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 16TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Gather not my soul with sinners.” — Psalm 26:9.

WE must all be gathered in due course. When time shall have ripened the fruit, it must hang no longer upon the tree, but be gathered into the basket; when the summer's sun has perfectly matured the corn, the sickle must be brought forth, and the harvest must be reaped; to everything there is a season and an end. There shall be a gathering-time for every one of us. It may come to-morrow; it may be deferred another handful of years; it may come to us by the long process of consumption or decline; it may advance with more rapid footsteps, and we may in a moment be gathered to our people. Sooner or later, to use the expressive words of Job, the Almighty shall set his heart upon each of us, and gather unto himself our spirit and our breath. That gathering rests with God! — the prayer of the Psalmist implies it, and many Scriptures affirm it. As Young sings in his Night Thoughts —

“An angel's arm can't hurl me to the grave.”

Accidents are but God's arrangements; diseases are his decrees; fevers his servants, and plagues his messengers. Our mortality is immortal, till the Eternal wills its death. “Return, ye children of men” can be spoken by none but our heavenly Father, and when he gives the word, return we must without delay. I do not know, my brethren, seeing that our death is certain, and remains entirely in the hands of our gracious God, that there is any prayer which we need to offer concerning it, except, “Father, into thy

hands I commit my spirit,” and this brief sentence, “Gather not my soul with sinners.” Scarcely can I commend those who plead to be delivered from sudden death, for sudden death is sudden glory; hardly can I advise you to request a hasty departure; for flesh and blood shrink from speedy dissolution. Pray not for long life, nor for an early grave; cheerfully leave all these matters to the choice of infinite wisdom, and concentrate all your desires upon the one desire of the text. Filled with a holy horror of the hell of sinners, let us make most sure our calling to the heaven of the blessed. Let the fear of being cast forth with the withered branches increase our fruitfulness, and let our horror of the sinner’s character and doom lead us to cleave more closely to the Savior of souls.

We will divide our discourse thus: first, *the gathering*, and here let us behold a vision; next, *the prayer*, and here let us note an example; thirdly, *a fear*, and here let us observe a holy anxiety; and then fourthly, *an answer* yielding a consolation.

I. First, THE GATHERING. Let the man who hath his eyes open behold the gathering of sinners, and in the sanctuary of the Lord let him understand their end.

There have been many partial gatherings of the ungodly, all ending in sudden ruin and overthrow. Turn your eyes hither. Two hundred and fifty men have impudently taken censers into their hands, and have dishonored the Lord’s chosen servants, Moses and Aaron. Mark well their proud revilings of the Lord’s anointed. In the gainsaying of Korah they have all a part. The people hasten from their tabernacles, and they stand alone. It is but for a moment. See I the earth cleaveth asunder; they go down alive into the pit, and the earth closes her mouth upon them. My soul trembleth and hideth her face for fear, and my fainting heart groaneth out her desire — “Gather not my soul with sinners!”

Look yonder, my brethren, to the city of palm trees surrounded by its strong munitions. All the inhabitants are gathered together within it; from the top of the walls they mock the feeble band of silent Israelites, who for six days have marched round and round their city. The seventh day has come, and the rams’ horns give the signal of destruction; the Lord cometh forth from his rest, and at the terror of his rebuke the walls of Jericho fall flat to the ground. Now where are your boastings, O congregation of the wicked? The sword of Israel is bathed in your blood, O accursed sons of Canaan. As we hear the shriek of the slaughtered, and mark the smoke of

the city ascending up to heaven like the flame of Sodom of old, we reverently bow the knee unto Jehovah, and cry, "Gather not my soul with sinners."

Leaping over centuries, with weeping we behold the holy city, beautiful for situation, once the joy of the whole earth, but now forsaken of her God, and beleaguered by her foes. All the Jewish people have come together from the four winds of heaven: as the flesh is cast into the caldron, and the fire burneth fiercely, so are they gathered together for judgment. Well might their rejected Messiah weep over the devoted city as he remembered how often he would have gathered her children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and they would not. Now are they gathered in another manner, and the wings of eagles flutter over them, hastening for the prey. See yonder the Roman armies, and the mounds which they have cast up! Woe unto thee, O city of Zion, for the spoilers know no pity; they spare neither young nor old. "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck;" for the day of the Lord's vengeance is come, and the words of Moses are fulfilled, when he said — "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favor to the young... . And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee." Hark! the clarion summons the warrior to arms. The veterans of Vespasian and Titus dash to the assault. Where art thou now, O city polluted with the murder of prophets, and stained with the blood of the prophets' Lord? Thy walls protect not thy sons, they keep not the temple of thy glory. See! A soldier's ruthless hand hurls the red firebrand into the sacred precincts of the temple, and its smoke darkens the sky. Can ye walk those mouldering ruins, and behold the heaps of ashes mingled with burning flesh, the crimson streams of gore, and the deep pools of clotted blood? Can ye linger there where desolation holds her reign supreme, and refuse to see the justice of the God of Israel, or fail to breathe the humble prayer of the Psalmist, "Gather not my soul with sinners?" Wherever the enemies of God are gathered, there we have ere long, confusion, and tears, and death. In whatever place sinners may hold their counsels, when the Judge of all the earth cometh out against them, we soon see an Aceldama — a field of blood.

But, forgetting all these inferior gatherings, illustrious in horror though they be, my eye beholds a greater gathering which is proceeding every day to its completion. Every day the heavens and the earth hear the voice of God, saying, "Gather ye; gather ye my foes together, that I may utterly destroy them." "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." As the huntsman, when he goes forth to the battue, encompasses the beasts of the forest with an ever-narrowing ring of hunters, that he may exterminate them all in one great slaughter, so the God of justice has made a ring in his providence round about the sinful sons of men. Within that circle of divine power are imprisoned monarchs and peasants, peers and paupers; that ring encompasses all nations, polite or barbarous, civilised or rude. No impenitent sinner can break through the lines; as well might a worm escape from within a circle of flame. Every hour the lines grow narrower, and the multitudes of the Lord's enemies are driven into the center where his darts are flying, where his sharp arrows shall pierce them. I hear the baying of the dogs of death to-day, hounding the unbelieving to their doom. I see the heaps of slain, and mark the terrible arrows as they fly with unerring aim. Multitudes of sinners are scattered from the equator to the poles, but not one of them is able to escape the avenger's hand. High and haughty princes, boasting their imperial pomp, fall like antlered stags, smitten with the shafts of the Almighty; while their valiant warriors, like wild boars of the forest, perish upon the point of his glittering spear. The vision of the Apocalypse is no mere dream. He whose name is THE WORD OF GOD, shall tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God; and meanwhile, the angel standing in the sun crieth with a loud voice to all the fowls which fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather yourselves together into the supper of the great God: that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." At the remembrance of all this, we may well exclaim with Habakkuk, "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will cut them in pieces with his troops." O thou God of all grace, I pray thee, by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, in which I trust, "Gather not my soul with sinners." Let that providence which gathereth thy

people from among men, lay hold on me. Let thine angels who keep watch and ward about thy people, keep me from the snare of the fowler, and from the destruction which wasteth at noonday.

But the scene changes: we see no longer the assembling of the multitudes in the great valley of the shadow of death, but we track them further, till we find ourselves on the threshold of the abode of spirits. Ye have seen the prisoners in their cells, waiting for their trial at the next assize. The strong hand of law has laid them in durance, where they await the summons to appear before the judge. I pray you note the company, and before the trumpet announces the judge, see what a strange gathering the prison-house contains. Do you mark them? There is the murderer, with blood-red hand; there is he who smote his fellow to his wounding; yonder lies the wretch who perjured himself before God; and here the man who pilfered his neighbour's goods. However they differed from one another before, they are on a level in rank in this house of detention, and they all await one common gaol-delivery. It is no pleasant sight to visit these cells before the assize comes on; crime, although as yet uncondemned, is no comfortable vision. But what of earthly prisons? My heart sees a sight far more terrible

*“Look down, my soul, on hell’s domains,
That world of agony and pains!
What crowds are now associate there,
Of widely different character.
What wretched ghosts are met below,
Some once so great, so little now;
So gay, so sad, so rich, so poor;
Now scorn’d by those they scorn’d before.”*

Multitudes are gathered together in the state where souls abide until their final doom is pronounced both on their bodies and on their souls; a place of misery where not a drop of water cools their parched tongue; a state of doubt, and terror, and suspense; a place from which consolation is banished, where the “wrath to come,” perpetually afflicts them. There in captivity abide the formalist, the hypocrite, the profane, the licentious, the abandoned, those who despised God, and hated Christ, and turned away from the glory of his cross; there they are gathered, tens of thousands of them, at this day, waiting till the great assize shall sit. O God, “gather not my soul with sinners,” but let me be gathered with those whose spirits wait beneath the altar for their redemption, to wit, the resurrection of their

bodies. Gather me with those who cry day and night until God avenge his own elect. Gather me with the multitude of spirits who wait the coming of the Son of God from heaven, that their bliss may be complete.

But now, my eye, prophetic in the light of Scripture, sees another gathering. The trumpet has sounded, the prison doors are loosed, and the gates of death give way. They come, bodies and souls; souls from the place of waiting in the pit of hell; and bodies from their graves, from ocean, and from earth; from all the four winds of heaven, bodies and souls come together, and there they stand — an exceeding great army. This time it is not in the valley of suspense; but “multitudes, multitudes in the valley of *decision*.” “And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army; for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible: and who can abide it?” “Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.” “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” Oh! well may you and I pray that we may have a part in the first resurrection; upon such the second death hath no power.

Grant us, O Lord, that we may not be with the wicked, the rest of the dead, who rise not until after a thousand years are finished; but give thou us a portion among those whose iniquities are blotted out, who have not received the mark of the beast in their foreheads, who therefore live and reign with Christ a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4.) May we be gathered with the harvest of the Lord, when he that sits on the cloud shall reap it with his golden sickle; but this gathering of which my text speaks is not the harvest of the righteous, but the vintage of the wicked; when “the angel which had power over fire” shall cry, “Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and

gather the clusters of the vine of the earth: for her grapes are fully ripe." How dreadful that great wine-press of divine wrath which shall be trodden without the city, and how terrible that flow of blood, like a mighty stream of wine, so deep that it ran even unto the horses' bridles by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. "Gather not my soul with sinners," O God, in that tremendous day.

I need not stop to paint, for colors equal to its terrors I have none, that dreadful place where the last gathering shall be held; that great synagogue of Satan, the place appointed for unbelievers, and prepared for the devil and his angels; where "sullen moans and hollow groans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts" shall be their only music; where weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth shall be their perpetual occupation; where joy is a stranger, and hope unknown; where death itself would be a friend. No, I will not attempt to describe what our Savior veiled in words like these, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." "Outer darkness, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." We drop the curtain, hoping that you have seen enough to make you pray, "Gather not my soul with sinners." Dear brethren, when we recollect that that last gathering will be a perfect one, that there will be no sinner left with the saints; that, on the other hand, no saint will remain with sinners, when we recollect that it will be a final one, no re-distribution will ever be made, and that it will entail an everlasting separation, a great gulf being fixed, which none can cross, it remains for us to be solemnly anxious to be found on the right hand, and to put up, with vehemence, this prayer — "O Lord, gather not my soul with sinners."

II. Having thus shown the vision of the gathering, let me, with deep solemnity, conduct your minds for a little time to THE PRAYER ITSELF. I am sure we are all agreed about it, every one of us. Balaam, if he be here this morning, differs not from me. The worst and most abandoned wretch on earth agrees with David in this. Sinners do not wish to be gathered with sinners. Balaam's prayer is, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," which only differs in words from David's petition, "Gather not my soul with sinners." But then *the reasons* of the one prayer are very different in different persons. We would all like to be saved from hell, but then there is a difference in the reasons why we would so be delivered. The same prayer may be uttered by different lips; in the one it may be heard and accepted as spiritual prayer, and in the other it may be but the natural excitement produced by a selfish desire to avoid misery.

Now, I know why you would not wish to be gathered with sinners — those of you who are ungodly and impenitent — you dread the fire, the flames which no abatement know; you dread the wrath, the suffering, you dread the horrors of that world to come. Not so with the Christian, these he dreads as all men must, but he has a higher and a better reason for not wishing to be gathered with sinners. I tell you, sirs, if sinners could be gathered into heaven with their present character, the Christian's prayer would be what it now is — "Gather not my soul with sinners." If sin entailed happiness; if rebellion against God could give bliss, even then the Christian would scorn the happiness and avoid the bliss which sin affords; for his objection is not so much to hell, as to sinners themselves; his desire is to avoid the contamination and distraction of their company. Many of you will say, "Now I dislike the company of sinners;" indeed, most moral people dislike the society of *a certain class of sinners*. I suppose there is scarcely one here to-day who would wish to be found in the den of the burglar, where the conversation is concerning plunder and violence; you would not probably feel very easy in the haunt of the harlot, where licentious tongues utter flippantly lascivious words. You shun the house of the strange woman. The pothouse is not a favourite resort for you. You would not feel very much at ease at the bar of the gin palace; you would say of each of these — "This is no joy to me." Even those of you who are not renewed by Christ, despise vice when she walks abroad naked. I fear me ye cannot say as much when she puts on her silver slippers, and wraps about her shoulders her scarlet mantle. Sin in rags is not popular. Vice in sores and squalor tempts no one. In the grosser shapes, men hate the very fiend whom they love when it is refined and delicate in its form. I want to know whether you can say, "Gather not my soul with sinners," when you see the ungodly in their highdays and holidays? Do you not envy the fraudulent merchant counting his gold; his purse heavy with his gains, while he himself by his craft is beyond all challenge by the law? Do you not envy the giddy revellers, spending the night in the merry dance, laughing, making merry with wine, and smiling with thoughts of lust? Yonder voluptuary, entering the abode where virtue never finds a place, and indulging in pleasures unworthy to be named in this hallowed house, does he never excite your envy? I ask you, when you see the pleasures, the bright side, the honors, the emoluments, the gains, the merriments of sin, do ye then say, "Gather not my soul with sinners?" There is a class of sinners that some would wish to be gathered with, those easy souls who go on so swimmingly. They never have any trouble; conscience never pricks

them; business never goes wrong with them; they have no bands in their life, no bonds in their death; they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. They are like the green bay tree, which spreads on every side, until its boughs cover whole acres with their shade. These are the men who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Can we say when we look at these, when we gaze upon the bright side of the wicked, "Gather not my soul with sinners?" Remember, if we cannot do so without reservation, we really cannot pray the prayer at all; we ought to alter it, and put it, "Gather not my soul with openly reprobate sinners;" and then mark you, as there is only one place for all sorts of sinners, moral or immoral, apparently holy or profane, your prayer cannot be heard, for if you are gathered with sinners at all — with the best of sinners — you must be gathered with the worst of sinners too. I know, children of God, ye can offer the prayer as it stands, and say, "In all their glory and their pomp; in all their wealth, their peace, and their comfort, my soul abhors them, and I earnestly beseech thee, O Lord, by the blood of Jesus, 'Gather not my soul with sinners.'"

Brethren, why does the Christian pray this prayer? He prays it, first of all, because *as far as his acquaintance goes with sinners, even now he does not wish for their company*. The company of sinners in this world to the saint is a cause of uneasiness. We cannot be with them and feel ourselves perfectly at home. "My soul is among lions, even among them that are set on fire of hell." "Rid me from strange children." We are vexed with their conversation, even as Lot was with the language of the men of Sodom. We lay an embargo upon them, they cannot act as they would in our society, and they lay a restraint upon us, we cannot act as we would when we are with them. We feel an hindrance in our holy duties through dwelling in the tents of Kedar. When we would talk of God, we cannot in the midst of company to whom the very name of Jesus is a theme for jest. How can we well engage in family devotions when more than half the family are given up to the world? How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? You who sojourn in Mesech, you know how great a grief it is, what a damper it is to your spirituality, what a serious hindrance it is to your growth in grace. Besides, the company tempts believers to sin. Who can keep his garment pure when he travels with black companions? If I am condemned to walk continually in the midst of thorns and briars, it is strange if I do not mar my garments. Often our nearest friends get a hold upon our hearts, and

then, being enemies to God, they lead us to do things which we otherwise would never have dreamed of doing.

The company of the sinner is to the Christian a matter of real loss in another respect, for when God comes to punish a nation, the Christian has to suffer with the sinners of that nation. National judgments fall as well upon the holy as upon the profane, and hence, through being mingled with the ungodly of this world, the Christian is a sufferer by famine, war, or pestilence. Well may he, from the little taste he has known of their company, cry "Gather not my soul with sinners." Why, brethren, I will put you for a moment to the test — you shall be in the commercial room of an inn — you are on a journey, and you sit down to attend to your own business, or to await the train. Now, if two or three fast men come into the room, and they begin venting their filth and blasphemy, how do you feel? You do not wish to hear; you wish you were deaf. One of them cannot speak without larding his conversation with an outh. There is another, perhaps a man elevated above the situation which his education fits him to occupy, who, in his conversation utters the most abominable and atrocious language, and the others laugh at him. Before many minutes you will steal out of the room, for you cannot endure it. What must it be to be shut in with such persons for ever? On board a steam-boat, it may be, you fall into the middle of a little knot who are talking on some infidel subject in a manner far from palatable to you. Have you not wished yourself on shore, and have you not walked to the other end of the boat to be out of their way? I know you have felt that kind of thing. Your blood has chilled; horror has taken hold upon you, because of the wicked who keep not God's law. If such has been your experience, you can well understand the reason of the Psalmist's prayer, for much of such torment you could not bear.

Moreover, I do not know any class of sinners whose company a Christian would desire. I should not like to live with the most precise of hypocrites. What ugly company to keep! You cannot trust them anywhere — always hollow — always ready to deceive and to betray you. I would not choose to live with formalists, self-righteous people, because whenever they begin to talk about themselves and their own good deeds, they do, as it were, throw dirt upon the righteousness of Christ, which is our boast, and that is ill company for a Christian. The believer triumphs in the free grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, but the self-righteous man speaks only of his Church-goings and his Chapel-

goings, his fastings and his almsgivings, and the like. We cannot agree with the self-truster; we could almost as well associate with the profane as we could with the self righteous. As for blasphemers, we could not endure them a moment. Would you not as soon be shut up in a tiger's den, as with a cursing, swearing, thievish profligate? Who can endure the company of either a Voltaire or a Manning? Find out the miserly, the mean, the sneaking, the grasping — who likes to be with them? The angry, the petulant, who never try to check the unholy passion, one is always glad to be away from such folks; you are afraid lest you should be held responsible for their mad actions, and therefore if you must be with them, you are always ill at ease. With no sort of sinners can the child of God be hail-fellow. Lambs and wolves, doves and hawks, devils and angels, are not fit companions; and so through what little trial the righteous have had, they have learned that there is no sort of sinners that they would like to be shut up with for ever.

But then, we have other reasons. We know that when impenitent sinners are gathered at the last *their characters* will be the same. They were filthy here, they will be filthy still. Here on earth their sin was in the bud; in hell it will be full-blown. If they were bad here they will be worse there. Here they were restrained by providence, by company, by custom — there, there will be no restraints, and hell will be a world of sinners at large, a land of outlaws, a place where every man shall follow out his own heart's most horrible inclinations. Who would wish to be with them? Then again, the *place* where they will be gathered alarms us — the pit of hell, the abode of misery and wrath for ever — who would be gathered there? Then, their *occupation*. They spend their time in cursing God; in inventing and venting fresh blasphemies. They go from bad to worse; climbing down the awful ladder of detestable depravity. Who would wish to be with them?

Remember too, their *sufferings*; the pain of body and of soul they know, when God has cast both body and soul into hell. Who would wish to be with them? Recollect too, that they are *banished for ever from God*, and God is our sun, therefore they are in darkness; God is our life, therefore they are worse than dead; God is our joy, therefore they are wretched in the extreme. Why! this would be hell, if there were no other hell to a Christian, to be banished from his God. Moreover, they are *denied the joys of Christ's society*. No Savior's love for them, no blissful communion at his right hand, no living fountains of water to which the Lamb shall lead them. O my God, when I think of what the sinner is, and where he is, and

how he must be there for ever, shut out from thee, my soul may well pray with anguish that prayer, "Gather not my soul with sinners."

*"Thou lovely chief of all my joys,
Thou sovereign of my heart!
How could I bear to hear thy
voice Pronounce the sound
'Depart?' Oh wretched state of
deep despair, To see my God
remove,
And fix my doleful station where
I must not taste his love.
Jesus, I throw my arms around,
And hang upon thy breast;
Without a gracious smile from
thee My spirit cannot rest."*

III. But I am afraid I weary you, and therefore, dear friends, let me take you very briefly to the third point. There is in our text A FEAR, as if a whisper awakened the Psalmist's ear to trembling, "Perhaps, after all, you may be gathered with the wicked."

Now, that fear, although marred by unbelief, springs, in the main, from holy anxiety. Do you not think that some of us may well be the subjects of it? This holy anxiety may well arise if we recollect our *past sin*. Before we were converted we lived as others lived. The lusts of the flesh were ours. We indulged our members, we permitted sin to reign in our mortal bodies without restraint, and there will be times to the pardoned man, even though he has faith in Christ, when he will begin to think — "What if after all those sins should be remembered, and I should be left out of the catalogue of the saved?" Then again he recollects *his present backwardness*; and as the little apple on the tree, so sour and unripe, when it sees the crabs gathered is half afraid it may be gathered with them, so is he, with so little grace, so little love, he is afraid he shall be gathered with the ungodly. He recollects his own *unfruitfulness*, and as he sees the woodman going round the orchard, knocking off first this rotten bough, and then cutting off that other decayed branch, he thinks there is so little fruit on him, that perhaps he may be cut off too; and so, what with his past sin, his present backsliding, and unfruitfulness, he is half afraid he may yet have to suffer the doom of the wicked. And then, looking forward to the future, he recollects *his own weakness* and *the many temptations* that beset him, and he fears that he may fall after all, and become a prey to the enemy. With all

these things

before him, I wonder not that the poor plant, set yonder in the garden, is half afraid that it may be pulled up with the weeds and burned on yonder blazing fire in the corner of the garden. "Gather not my soul with sinners." What man is there among you who has not need sometimes to tremble for himself? If any of you can say you are always confident, it is more than I can say. I would to God I could always know myself saved and accepted in Christ, but there are times when a sense of sin within, and present evil and prevailing corruptions make the preacher feel that he is in jeopardy, and compel him to pray, as he does sometimes now, in fear and trembling, "O God, gather not my soul with sinners."

IV. And here comes in, to conclude, THE ANSWER TO THIS PRAYER, which is a word of consolation.

Brother, if you have prayed this prayer, and if your character be rightly described in the Psalm before us, be not afraid that you ever shall be gathered with sinners. Have you the two things that David had — the outward walking in integrity, and the inward trusting in the Lord? Do you endeavor to make your outward conduct and conversation conformable to the example of Christ? Would you scorn to be dishonest toward men, or to be undevout toward God? At the same time, are you resting upon Jesus Christ's sacrifice, and can you compass the altar of God with humble hope? If so, then rest assured, with the wicked you never shall be gathered, for there are one or two things which render that calamity impossible.

The first is this, that the rule of the gathering is *like to like*. "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them" — all the tares together — "but gather the wheat into my barn." It is not "Make a mixture of them; throw them together in a heap; put the corn and the tares in my garner." Oh, no: "Tares in bundles; wheat in sheaves." If then, thou art like God's people, thou shalt be with God's people; if thou hast their life within, their character without; if thou retest on their Savior; if thou lovest their God; if thou hast a longing towards their holiness, thou shalt be gathered with them — like to like.

There is another rule: *those who have been our proper comrades here are to be our companions hereafter*. God will be pleased to send us where we wish to go in this life; that is to say, if in this life I have loved the haunt of the sinner, if I have made the theater my sanctuary, if I have made the drinking house my abode of pleasure, if I have found my solace with the gambler, and my comfort with the debauchee, if I have lived merely for

business and for this world, and never for the next, then I shall go with my companions; I shall be sent where I used to go; being let go, I shall go to my own company among the lost. But, on the other hand, if I have loved God's house; if I can say with the Psalmist, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth;" if the excellent of the earth have been my companions, and the chosen of God have been my brethren, I shall not be separated from them; I shall have the same company in heaven that I have had on earth; if I have walked with God here, I shall reign with God there; if I have suffered with Christ here, I shall reign with Christ hereafter. That is another thing which prevents your being gathered with the wicked.

Again, you cannot be gathered with the wicked, for *you are too dearly bought*. Christ bought you with blood, and he will not cast you into the fire. It is a doctrine we never can hold, that Christ redeemed with his precious blood any that are damned in hell. We cannot conceive it possible that Christ should have stood their sponsor in suffering, and yet they should be punished too; that he should pay the debt, and then they should have to pay it also.

And again, *you are loved too much*. God the Eternal Father has loved you long and well, and proved that to you by his great gift and by his daily consideration and care of you; and it is not, therefore, possible that he should permit you, the darling of his heart, the child of his desire, a member of the mystical body of his only beloved Son, to perish for ever in Tophet.

Again that *new nature within you* will not let you be gathered with sinners. What does your new nature do — what must it do? It must love God. What! love God and be in hell! Your new nature must pray. What! pray in the pit! Your new nature must praise the God that created it. What! sing songs to the Divine Being amidst the howling of the damned! Impossible! If thou hast a new heart and a right spirit; if thy soul clings with both its hands to the cross of Christ; if thou lovest Jesus and longest to be like him, thou mayst have this fear, but it is a groundless one, for thou shalt never be gathered with sinners, but thy feet shall stand in the congregation of the righteous in the day when the wicked are cast away for ever.

I had hoped this morning so to have handled my text, that mayhap God might bless it to the sinner, and who can tell it may be so? Sinner, if it be a dreadful thing to be gathered with thee, what a frightful thing thy gathering

must be! My dear hearer, careless and thoughtless, this morning I have no fervid *words* with which to awake you; no earnest *tones* with which to startle you; but still, *from my soul* I do entreat you consider, that if it be a subject of horror to us to dwell with you for ever, it must be an awffil thing to be a sinner. And wilt thou be a sinner any longer? Wilt thou abide where thou now art? Alas! thou canst not save thyself; thou art hopelessly ruined; thou hast lost all power as well as all virtue; thou art as a dead thing, as a potter's vessel that is broken to shivers with a rod of iron. But there is one who can save thee, even Jesus, and his saving voice to thee this morning is, "Believe in me, and thou shalt be saved." To believe in him, is to believe that he can save thee, and therefore to trust. Dost thou not believe that of him who is God? Canst thou not believe that of him whose ways are not as thy ways, whose grace is boundless, and whose love is free! Wilt thou now believe that Christ *can* save thee, and that he *will* save thee? — and wilt thou now trust thyself to him to save thee? Say in thy heart, "Here, Lord, I give my soul up to thee to save it; I believe thou wilt and thou canst. Thy nature and thy name are love, and I trust thy name, I believe in thy goodness, I repose in thee." Sinner, you are saved; God has saved you. No soul ever so believed in Christ and yet was left unpardoned. Go thy way; be of good cheer, "Thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee." Rejoice thou in him evermore, for thou shalt never be gathered with sinners. May God give his blessing to you now, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

AM I SOUGHT OUT?

NO. 525

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 23RD,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” — Isaiah 62:12.

THE first meaning of our text is very clear. Here is a prophecy, that as Jerusalem, having been despoiled of her beauty by her enemies, was for a long time forsaken and worthy to be called, “A city which no man seeketh after,” so, in a brighter day, her glory shall return, she shall be an attraction to all lands, and the joy of the whole earth; multitudes of willing pilgrims shall seek her out that they may behold her beauty. She shall be a city greatly set by and greatly sought out by those who love the hallowed spots where the mighty deeds of the Lord were wrought, and the arm of Jehovah made bare. The text, doubtless, has a similar reference to the Church of God. During many centuries the Church of Christ was hidden — a thing obscure, despised, unknown, abhorred; she concealed herself in the catacombs; her followers were the poorest and most illiterate of men, proscribed by cruel laws, and hunted by ferocious foes. Although the royal bride of Christ, and destined to be the ruler of nations, she made no figure in the world’s eye; she was but a little stone cut out of the mountain without hands. But the day is already come in which multitudes seek the Church of Christ. Behold, they fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows! They ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. As time rolls on, and the millennial kingdom of Christ comes nearer and nearer, the Church of God shall be more and more sought out, and from the ancient east and the far-off west they shall come, multitudes beyond all count, saying, “Tell us where is the city of the Lord, the people of his love?” Though this, doubtless, is the primary meaning, I nevertheless believe that we may, without violence to the text, use it in another manner. In a fuller

and more spiritual sense the Church of God may well be called “Sought out;” and the like title may truthfully be applied to every single member of that dearly-loved and dearly-purchased family. All the children of God may take for their name and distinction the words, “Sought out.”

Without indulging in a longer preface, let us at once proceed to map out the plan of our present meditation. We intend to talk a little while upon *the natural condition implied*, and then upon *the surpassing grace revealed*; our third point will be *the distinguishing title justified*, and finally, *the special duty suggested*.

I. First, THE NATURAL CONDITION IMPLIED IN THE TITLE, “SOUGHT OUT.”

If the Church of God, my brethren, has been “*sought out*,” then it is clear enough that *originally it was lost* — lost like that woman’s piece of silver which she valued so much that she lit her candle and swept her house, and searched diligently until she found it. The tremendous fact of man’s utter ruin is the underlying cause of the necessity for grace to seek out its object. If the fall had not been so complete in its ruin, there had been no need to seek us, for we should have sought the Lord. This, however, is the gloomy truth, that we are altogether become abominable, and all flesh hath perverted its way. Of this fact there can be no doubt, for you and I, who have been saved by grace, know right well that *we* were lost; hopelessly and for ever lost, had not Jesus sought us out. Many of the chosen seed are suffered to indulge in sin until they are lost even to the presence of virtue and morality, lost to the hopes of the most earnest friends, and the most affectionate entreaties of anxious relatives. Lost we all were in our federal head, by imputation of his sin; lost, effectually by infusion of his corrupt nature; lost, afterwards, actually, by our practice; lost, manifestly, by an accumulation of evil habits, and the growing force of depraved appetites. We have, by nature, departed far from God, and, like the prodigal, have gone into a far country. We are comparable to that poor wretch who was possessed with a legion of devils, whom fetters could not bind, nor chains restrain. He who said, that by nature, man is half brute and half devil, was not far from the truth. O my brethren shall we ever know in this life how lost we were by nature? Until we can comprehend what “the wrath of God” means, by gazing steadfastly into the pit of hell; until we can understand the purity of God amid the perfection of heaven, and so can measure the awful distance between our depraved condition and the perfect holiness of Jehovah, we shall not know how lost we were. But we know

enough to make us shudder. Oh, when we saw, or thought we saw, the desperate evil of sin, then we cried out, "Lost! Lost! Lost!" with greater bitterness than he who sallows for his only son, even for his first-born. Oh, the horrors of that terribly truthful discovery which showed us *ourselves*. We felt in our conscience that we were lost to everything which could commend us to God, or could attract his regard; we knew that in ourselves there were no means of restoration to purity and happiness. We were utterly and entirely lost, and, as I said before, some of us lost with a vengeance, for our outward life had become a foul development of the filthy fountains within. Aliens, enemies, rebels, traitors, what shall we say more, no name is too vile for us. Had we been left to lie among the broken potsherds as worthless refuse, or had we been swept away with every unclean and loathsome thing, this had been our just desert. God could not have been too severe, even if the lowest pit of hell had been our portion.

And then, my brethren, we were so lost that *we did not seek the Lord*. Natural men have superficial and passing thoughts of seeking God, but they have no true hunger and thirst after him. Now and then a pang of conscience, a sickly wish after something better crosses the unrenewed mind; but as the smoke out of the chimney is blown away by the wind, so these hasty emotions are gone and forgotten. As the dew which trembles at early morn upon the hedgerow evaporates in the heat of the sun, so the best desires which unregenerate men can know are soon melted away, when once the sun of the world's temptation rises upon us. My brethren, we who know the Lord know that we had no serious effectual thoughts of seeking after God until He sought after us. We were wandering sheep, well skilled in straying, but without the will to return. When the Spirit of God came upon us, he found nothing in our hearts ready to work with him, but everything running in the opposite direction. Every imagination of the thought of our heart was only evil, and that continually. Those who repent and seek the Lord before his grace draws them to himself, must be of a different race from us, for we were far off, and loved the distance too well to dream of returning.

To descend still lower, my brethren, as we had no thought of coming to God, *so we never should have willed to return*. Left to ourselves, like the lost sheep, we should have wandered farther and farther, feeding upon yonder mountain of vanity, or skipping in the green valleys of sin; but back to God, to Christ, to heaven, we never could or should have come. As well might water labor to ascend like fire as for fallen humanity to long after

God. Wolves and tigers do not without miracle renounce their feasts of blood, nor will man refuse his natural food of sin. If there be any true desire in the human heart towards God and his Christ, it must have been implanted there by a divine power. God himself in his bounty must have placed it there, for from the soil of nature it never could have come — at least so we have found it in our own case, for to this day, though we are saved, we find that the natural motions of our heart are all *from* God — none of them *to* God, and though we are his children exalted above measure by his great grace, yet still the evil heart of unbelief *departeth from* the living God, and never doth it come toward him. O carnal mind, thou desperately evil thing, thou art not reconciled to God, nor indeed canst thou be! O God, thou giver of every good and perfect gift, hadst thou left us until our nature had spontaneously desired renewal, and our hearts had panted after thy salvation, thou wouldst have left us for ever, for we should have chosen the downward path, and after the lusts of the world we should have gone! The text, I think, implies all this, for God never works unnecessary wonders, and if we could have come to him, or should have come to him without his seeking us, doubtless he would have left us to that free will of which some boast so much. Brethren, we were lost, lost without a wish to return, and without a possibility of ever having such a wish.

Nay I must go further, our lost estate is strewn yet more clearly in the fact that, so far from seeking God, *we did not desire him to seek us*. Till he first inspired the wish to be found, we resisted his seekings. So far from asking him to visit us with his salvation, when he did come, we took up arms against our gracious friend. Well do I remember those early strivings of the Spirit with my youthful heart which I choked one after the other with a resolute determination. Well can I recollect those strong wrestlings, when it seemed as if the Spirit of God would separate me from my sins and I *must* lay hold on Christ, and yet, determined still to abide in sin and self-righteousness, I stood out against the Lord and would not have “that man” to reign over me. Ah! how long did Jesus stand and knock at our door, so long that he might well cry as he does in the Canticles, “My head is wet with dew and my locks with the drops of the night.” We would not let him in; instead of rising to open, we sought to fasten every bolt and to send every bar home, and we turned the horrible key of our self-will in the wards of the lock, with a “depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” Ah, my brethren, if he sought us out, it was not because we had

a will towards him, or because we were importunate in prayer; our will was his great opponent; we were desperately set on mischief, and if we had not been sought out by sovereign grace, saved we never should have been.

*“Twas thy love, O God, that knew
us, Earth’s foundations long
before: That same love to Jesus
drew us, By its sweet constraining
power,*

*And will keep us
Safely, now and evermore.”*

To complete the story of this our natural condition, I must add *that our being sought out, considering our condition, was one of the greatest wonders ever known or heard of.* I have heard this expressed in words occasionally; when a man has come to join the Church, he has said to me, “If any one had told me six months ago that I should make a profession of being a follower of Christ, I would have knocked him down. If any one had said to me ‘You will repent of sin, and seek and find a Savior,’ I should have laughed him to scorn — ‘I am no such fool,’ I should have said, as to become one of your canting hypocritical methodists; such a thing can never be.” And yet the thing did occur; and that soul which was once like the demoniac, full of devils, comes to sit clothed and in its right mind at the feet of the Savior, rejoicing in his power to save. In every one of us, if we have not put it into just such words, the grace which sought us has been quite as illustrious. What reason canst thou find why God should love thee? How canst thou shew any reason why he should follow thee in all thy wanderings, why he should stand out against thee in all thy determinations of self-destruction? Why was it that he should track thy devious footsteps and never leave thee until the predestinated moment came? How was it

that then he grappled with thee and overcame, and made thee willingly bow thy neck to his joyous yoke? Thou canst tell no reason; thou canst only clap thy hands in admiration and lift up thy heart in wonder and bless and praise the Lord that thy name is “Sought out.”

*“Twas all of thy grace we were brought to obey,
While thousands were suffer’d to go
The road which by nature we chose as our way,
Which leads to the region of woe.”*

Thus much then concerning our natural condition. You who know it, and have felt it, need not my words to teach you, but it is well for you to look

often to the hole of the pit whence ye were drawn, and the rock whence ye

were hewn; a sight of your first state will humble you and fill your heart with praise to the God of grace who has made you to differ.

II. Secondly, we have in the text SURPASSING GRACE REVEALED.

This grace lies in several particulars. First, *that they were sought out at all*. It is very wonderful grace on the part of God that he should plan a way of salvation, that he should prepare a great marriage supper and issue the invitation to all men to come and feast thereat. The gospel which says to men, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely," is a most gracious gospel; but there is something more gracious than this generous summons. One would have supposed that after the invitation had been freely given and the preparation for the feast had been generously made, that the Lord would leave men to come or not as they willed. It is grace enough, surely, for God to provide meat for the hungry; let them come and eat, and if they will not, let them starve. To prepare ointment for the wounded, is not that enough? If the sick will not accept the medicine, then let them perish for their ingratitude in rejecting the healing gift. Ah, but God's ways are not as our ways. Your bounty and mine would never dream of going any further. We never force our charity on unwilling recipients; we do not follow after diseased men and beg and pray them to be made whole; not we. We think our bounty large enough if we give to him that asketh of us, but to seek after pensioners, this we never did, and probably never shall do. But hear, O earth, and be astonished ye heavens! After the general proclamation of the gospel has been made and man has rejected it, after Christ has been offered to men and they have refused him, God's love does not stop there, but, determined to glorify his love, he then comes to seek out those who will not seek him. "If," saith he, "ye will not turn at my rebuke, if my invitation is trodden under foot, I will do more than this, I will come out in the splendor of my grace and the magnificence of my power, and I will deal with that will of yours and overcome it; I will touch that stubborn nature of yours and make you yield; 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' 'Thou shalt call me, my Father; and shalt not turn away from me.'" It is a marvel of marvels, that sinful man fleeing from his Maker, rejecting his creator's invitation, refusing to be blessed with the blessedness of God, is nevertheless with unparalleled perseverance and unexampled love sought out and made captive by Almighty love.

But this grace appears even more conspicuous if you consider *the persons sought out*. That any should be sought out is matchless grace, but that *we* should be sought, is grace beyond degree. My brother, my sister, I do not know what may have been your particular condition, but this I know, you will feel that there was ten times more reason that you should have been left out than that you should have been included in the purpose of grace. Often have I thought that I was the odd man. If in the muster-roll of eternal life there must be one left out, I should myself have made the selection of my own person as the one most worthy to have been disregarded. Why me, Lord? Why me?

*“Why was I made to hear thy voice,
 And enter where there’s room;
 While thousands make a wretched choice,
 And rather starve than come.”*

Does not the same thought arise in your mind? Is not your soul stirred with a holy and grateful wonder that *you* should have been sought out? And when, my brethren, I think of some in this place, some who once were in the harlot’s company, but who are sought out; some of you who once were plunged in drunkenness, how shall I sufficiently praise the Lord for you. Many of you on the Sabbath day never listened to the preached Word, but sought your own pleasure and followed your own business, but *you* are sought out? Many a tongue that sung the hymn just now once cursed and blasphemed God. Glory be to the grace which sought you out. Yes, though such were some of us, “we are washed, we are sanctified, we are cleansed;” and is not this a marvel that such as we are should have been sought out? If he had sought kings and princes we might have found a reason, but to seek us poor, obscure working men, illiterate, without ability, this is sovereign grace indeed! That he should seek the good, the moral, the excellent, we should not marvel at; but to seek us, the depraved, the wicked, the abandoned, how shall we glorify his name! Tell it in hell and let devils howl, publish it in heaven and let angels sing; chant it ye blood-washed ones before the eternal throne; he hath chosen the base things of this world and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are. This is a wonder of wonders, that we, even we, should bear the name of “Sought out.”

Nor must I fail to bring to your recollection, that the surpassing grace of God is seen very clearly in that *we were sought OUT*. The word “out,” conveys a mass of meaning. We were not only sought, but sought *out*. Men

go and *seek* for a thing which is lost upon the floor of the house, but in such a case there is only seeking, not seeking *out*. The loss is more perplexing, and the search more persevering when a thing is sought *out*. We were mingled with the mire; we were as when some precious piece of gold falls into the sewer, and men have to gather out and carefully inspect a heap of abominable filth, to turn it over, and over, and over, and continue to stir and rake, and search among the heap until the thing is found. Or, to use another figure, we were lost in a labyrinth; we wandered hither and thither, and when ministering mercy came after us, it did not find us at the first coming; it had to go to the right hand and to the left, and search hither and thither, and everywhere, to seek us out, for we were so desperately lost, and had got into such a strange position, that it did not seem possible that ever grace could come to us. And yet we were sought *out!* No gloom could hide us, no filthiness could conceal us, we were found. Glory be to divine grace, God the Holy Spirit found us! The lives of some of God's people, if they could be written, would make you marvel. The romance of divine grace is infinitely more interesting than the romance of imagination. We have known persons who have run into the arms of Christ while they were intending to run down to hell; some who no more dreamed of being saved than of being made princes, who strolled into the house of God from curiosity, and the ministers' finger, or the glance of his eye arrested them, and they felt the power of life divine; some who were rushing to the river to take away their own lives, but some text spoke to their conscience and arrested their guilty feet. Strange and marvellous are the ways which God has used to find his own. He would shake a whole nation with his strong right hand to find his own elect. He would shake all nations, and bring the whole world to unparalleled confusion before he would suffer one of the blood-bought pearls of his crown to be lost among the ruins of the fall. He must and will seek them out, as the shepherd seeketh out his sheep in the cloudy and dark day, bringing some of them down from the steep summit, others from the caverns among the crags; some from the river's brink, others from the flood itself — all must be brought into one place, where they shall form one fold, under one Shepherd.

One second will suffice to hint, dear brethren, that the grace of God is illustrious *in the divine agent by whom we are sought out*. The text, taken in its connection, tells us that we were sought out divinely. Saved souls are sought out by God himself, and omnipotence is strained; omniscience is fully exercised, every attribute of God is put to its sternest labor to seek

out lost souls. The most tremendous effort of divine strength we know to be the regeneration of man. To bring Christ from the dead made God's name to be right honorable for mighty power, but to raise his people from their graves is equally a work of stupendous power and grace. Dost thou ever think, Christian, who it was that came to seek thee? It was not the minister; he might have sought thee year after year, and never have found thee. Thy tearful mother, with her many prayers, would have missed thee. Thine anxious father, with his yearning bowels of compassion, would never have discovered thee. Those providences, which like great nets were seeking to entangle thee, would all have been broken by thy strong clashings after evil. Who was it sought thee out? None other than himself. The Great Shepberd could not trust his order-shepherds; he must himself come, and oh! if it had not been for those eyes of omniscience, he never would have seen thee; he never would have read thy history and known thy case: if it had not been for those arms of omnipotence, he never could have grasped thee; he never could have thrown thee on his shoulders and brought thee home rejoicing. Thou wast divinely sought. There is as much the impress of the finger of God upon a sought-out soul, as there is upon a newly-created world. You may see God's finger in the green mead studded with yellow flowers, in the flowing rills, and towering mounts, and in the bright lamps of heaven at eventide, but you shall see the whole hand of God most clearly when a new-born soul is led to seek after the Lord's salvation. Ye shall be called "the people sought out;" and this shall be the wonder of it, that ye were sought out in a divine fashion.

*“Love strong as death, nay, stronger,
 Love mightier than the grave;
 Broad as earth, and longer
 Than ocean's widest wave:
 This is the love that sought us,
 This is the love that bought us,
 This is the love that brought
 us,
 To gladdest day from saddest night,
 From deepest shame to glory bright,
 From depths of death to life's fair height.”*

Then, dear brethren, to close this part, remember that the glory of it is that *we were sought out effectually*. We are a people not sought out and then missed at the last. Almightyness and wisdom combined will make no failures. *I* may seek some of you in vain, as, alas, I have done; *I* may preach and preach agrain, as I do to-day, and yet, mayhap, you will all miss the

net; but when my Master comes out to fish for souls the net will soon be full, there is no failure in his case. All of us, dear brethren, who have been brought into union with Christ, know that we were brought because it was effectual grace that came to us. There is a grace which may be resisted, there are common strivings of the Spirit, against which a man may contend successfully, but when the Spirit puts out the fullness of his divine energy, with the intention to work a sure work, it can never be frustrated. In each of our cases there has been a divine intention, omnipotently, to constrain us to be saved, and that intention has been followed up by a divine action, which it was impossible for us to have effectually resisted, which, in fact, we did not and could not resist, because it charmed us into a complete subjection, and we yielded at once to its sway. This has taken place in every single heart, and this is the glory of the name "sought out" that we were not half sought out, we were not feebly and unsuccessfully sought, but we were effectually and completely sought out, and that is the reason why we are to-day heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

III. Let us notice, in the third place, The **DISTINGUISHING TITLE** **JUSITIFIED**. We are a people sought out. How were we sought out? Let us justify the name.

Brethren, we are sought out first of all *in the eternal purposes and the work of Christ*. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven was the commencement, the first overt act of seeking our souls. All that bloody pilgrimage of his, when hands and feet were bleeding, all that dreadful suffering of his upon the cross, was a seeking out of his people. Like some great pearl-diver, the Lord Jesus Christ stood upon the glorious cliff's of heaven, and plunged deep into the floods of sorrow and of sin that he might seek out the lost pearls. Virtually, our Lord did save all his people there and then. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." and he did save, by his death, all his chosen. Though not actually, they were virtually every one of them saved in that very hour when he bowed his head and said "It is finished." At that moment they were in his hands, they were united to his person in the divine decree. At that moment they stood in him,

*"Not as they stood in Adam's fall,
When sin and sorrow covered all;
But as they'll stand another day,
Fairer than sun's meridian ray."*

“He hath saved us” first, “and called us” afterwards, “with a holy calling.”

This seeking out, as far as we know it, began *with gracious words of mercy*. In the case of some, these were heard very early. A godly mother told us the truth with weeping, a holy father set us a good example; we were sought out by that little Bible we were taught to read, and that hymn-book which was put into our hands. We were sought out when we were taken to the House of God. The minister preached the gospel freely to all; he described our character, and affectionately bade us come to Jesus. We were sought out while the preacher called the Sabbath-breaker, while he called the hard-hearted, the hypocrite, the formalist, the abandoned, the profane. While he called each of these, according to our case we felt that he was calling us, and the eyes, of Jesus were looking on us, and his voice was bidding us repent and live. Sometimes we were specially sought out under the ministry, when the preacher was led to describe our case, painting it in glowing colors. We thought somebody had told him, he seemed to know us so well, to have read us through and through, and we went home to our chamber, moved, at least for a season, with a desire after God, for we had been sought out.

Nor did the Lord leave us only to the kind invitations of the ministry. *Afflictions sought us out*. The fever hunted us to the cross. When the cholera came, it carried a great whip in its hand to flog us to the Savior. We had serious losses, a decaying business, all which should have weaned us from the world. Our friends sickened; from their graves we heard the voice of invitation, “Come unto Christ and live.” We were disappointed in some of our fondest hopes, and our heart, riven for the time, yearned after a higher life and a deeper satisfaction. Affliction after affliction, and tribulation after tribulation, were the means which God used for seeking us out; and then came *visitations*, mysterious visitations. It was in the night season when all was still, we sat up in our bed, and solemn thoughts passed through us; the preacher’s words which we had heard years ago came back fresh as when we heard them for the first time; old texts of Scripture, the recollection of a mother’s tears, all these came upon us. Or it was in the midst of business, and we did not know how it was, but suddenly a deep calm came over us. We felt as if an unseen hand was drawing us to pray; we resisted the divine impulse, but we knew that it had been there. It came again and again, and often as we walked the streets we seemed attended by another soul than our own. It appeared to us, as if at times we were two men in one, and that new and better man wrestled with us like the angel

with Jacob, and at last by divine grace, overcame us, and brought us to repentance and humble faith. But after all, dear friends, these visitations, these providences, these preachings, and so on, would all have been nothing, if it had not been for the appointed time when *the Holy Spirit* came and sought us out. Can I ever forget that moment when the preacher's finger pointed to me, and he said "Young man, believe in Jesus Christ, believe in Jesus Christ *now*." It was not his voice alone that spoke to me, but the voice from the mysterious throne said, "Believe *now*;" and believe I did. I found no will to refuse. The thing I could not do before; the thing I did not understand till that moment, I both understood and did. I did believe in Jesus, and the burden rolled from off my galled shoulders, and the spirit was emancipated and free. O may that time come to you who have never yet been sought out. May the Spirit of God so touch you that you cannot resist him; so effectually move you, that you *must* yield subjection to the cross of Christ. In your cases as well as mine, beloved in the Lord Jesus, you will be led to see that it was the effectual power of God the Holy Ghost that really did bring you to Christ, so that the title is fully justified — "*Sought out*." There may be some persons who come to Christ of themselves, I do not believe there are, but I am not one of them. There may be some who keep to Christ by the power of their free will — I believe there is a whole denomination who profess to do so — but I can only say, their experience is the very reverse of what I have felt. I believe that those of whom we read in Christian biography, and in Scripture, owed their salvation to free, rich, and sovereign grace, so that the religion of these persons who come to Christ of their own free will is of modern invention, and I would not give a snap of the finger for the grace that springs from self, or another snap of my finger for the conversion which is the result of free will. May the Lord give us to be born *from above*, and if we have not a religion which is not wrought in us by the Spirit of God, the sooner we get rid of it the better, for then, perhaps, we shall go to him who can give us the true bread of heaven, that we may not be found empty at the last.

IV. Now I have dispatched these three matters and I come to the practical part of the subject, and may I have your earnest attention? There is a SPECIAL DUTY INCUMBENT UPON THOSE WHO WEAR THE TITLE, "SOUGHT OUT."

My brethren, if it be really so that you are such debtors to divine seeking, ought you not to spend your whole lifetime in seeking others out? If you

owe everything to divine grace and nothing to self, are you not under solemn obligation to be the Lord's for ever, and ought you not — not by proxy, but personally and individually every one of you — to seek out the rest of the Lord's people, that they like you may bear the title of a people sought out. I am earnest in the desire of inducing every member of this Church and of every other Church to be winners of souls. The preaching of the Gospel is God's grand instrument of mercy; that is his great magnet. Those of you who can use this holy weapon, do. You that have ability, and have talents, devote yourselves to God's cause. Give yourselves up to his ministry. I would to God there were more of those who are successful in professions, men who either in medicine or law would attain eminence, would consecrate their talents to the ministry; they need not fear that in giving themselves to God he will not take care of them, and as to honor, if it be found anywhere, it is the sure heritage of the faithful ambassador of Christ. If you have been sought out, my brother, I do not blush to recommend you to give up the most lucrative employment to seek out others. If you have the power to stir other's hearts, if God has given you the tongue of the eloquent, consecrate it neither to parliament nor to the bar, but devote it to the plucking of brands from the burning; become a herald of the cross, and let the whole world, as far as possible, hear from you the tidings of salvation.

The preaching of the gospel is not the only means; it is a way of seeking out most commonly used; but there are other methods which I will recommend to you this morning. We are not to preach merely to those who come to listen. We must carry the gospel to where men do not desire it. We should consider it our business to be generously impertinent; thrusting the gospel into men's way, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Let us hunt for souls, first of all, *by visitation*. There are thousands in London who never will be converted by the preaching of the gospel, for they never attend places of worship. Some of them do not know what sort of thing a religious service is. We may shudder when we say it; it is believed there are thousands in London who do not even know the name of Christ — living in what we call a Christian land, and yet they have not heard the name of Jesus. Thank God things are better than they were; but things are bad enough still. Brethren, you must go and see these things and mend them. To the lodging-houses, young men, you must carry the gospel, and to those thickly-peopled habitations, where every room contains a family, and not one room a Christian. I believe there is very much good to

be done by house-to-house visitation — not by City Missionaries and Bible-women only, may God speed that noble body of laborers — but by all of you, by you that have position in society among your neighbors; make yourselves free, and go and talk to them of Christ in the little houses that are near to you; as far as your time allows be a visitor, and if there be one dark part of the town known to you as the haunt of sinners, make it a point to use this agency of visitation from house-to-house. Let the lost sheep of Israel's house be sought out. Some will need special means, before ever they can be found and brought in. How does one's heart rejoice over the reformatories and the midnight meetings, over the attempts to bring that class of souls to Christ. I have often heard it said that few of the *converts* from those meetings hold on and prove sincere. It is a great falsehood — a very considerable portion are reformed, and mere *reformatations* are of little use but where *regeneration* is wrought, and these girls are pointed to a Savior, you will never find one of them go back. Has not God been pleased to give us in this Church scores of instances where those who were the decoyers for Satan are now the leaders of others to the Cross of Christ, and like Mary, love much because they have much forgiven. Seek them out. If there be any other class that is neglected, seek it out. If you happen to know any of the more degraded part of the population, who are only sought for by the policeman, and never hear a word of good advice, except from the stipendiary magistrate, do you seek *them* out. If Christ sought you out, the inference is strong that you ought to seek out others, and if special means be wanted, let special means be applied. You must be very kind; to broken hearts you must speak very gently. Their distance from God is a distance of fear. The gulf that separates them is despair. There are some such in this house, perhaps. Seek them out, and if you find them very desponding, writing bitter things against themselves, let love be shown them. Try if you can, to get the cords of affection around them, and so draw them to Christ. Do not turn from them, and say, "They are such miserable objects, so unbelieving; I will not look after them;" but the more you find they need a tender heart and a weeping eye to bring them to the Savior, the more do you carefully follow them till you bring them to him. You will find some who will want a world of perseverance. Perhaps your child has been for thirty years unconverted. Your prayers have been unheard till now, and the devil tempts you to give it up. Never do so. If you had to be sought so long — and some of you needed to be sought for fifty years before you were found — never give up a fellow-creature. Follow your child in all his ingratitude, pursue his

footsteps with your loving kindness, and never leave him until you have brought him at last to find joy where you found it — in the wounds of Jesus.

Let me beg you, where all other means fail, to seek men by *your prayers*. As long as a man has one other man to pray for him there is a hope of his salvation. If you in your daily supplications make mention of men — if you select special cases — if you bear their names before the Lord, you shall have the joy of seeing them turned from darkness to light, and they with you shall be a people “sought out.” If a word of mine shall stir up but one of you to seek the Lord’s hidden ones, my soul shall rejoice, and if every one of you shall register a vow in this house of prayer — “I will seek out some family to-day, and continue my work to-morrow, and the next day I will be seeking out others; I will not wait till they come to me to be taught, but go and seek them and compel them to come in that the house may be filled, that the Church of God may have its full complement of Christ’s chosen;” if you will do this, my soul shall be well content. If you have never been sought, then you will not seek others; if you have never tasted that the Lord is gracious, I shall not marvel that you neglect this work, but oh! by the hell from which you are delivered, by the heaven to which you are going, by the blood which redeemed you from death and hell, by that gracious Spirit which quickened you and still keeps you alive, by every glorious promise which stimulates you in your onward career, I pray you spend yourselves and be spent in seeking souls. Look at this great mass of habitations, this wilderness of human dwellings, if we do not work with all our might we can never hope to see the knowledge of the Lord covering this great world of London, let alone the greater world outside. O let us be up and doing, and let it be told in every house, in every alley, that Christians care for souls. If ye be the people sought out, go and seek others; tell them that “Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.”

NO ILLUSION.

NO. 526

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And wist not that it was true which was done by the angel,
but thought he saw vision.” — Acts 12:9.*

FANCY, not fact! a dream! a delusion! That would be the world's estimate of the most blessed Christian experience. “Fanaticism” is the name by which they call it. But call it by whatever name ye please, the grace that interposes and rescues a sinner from the law's threatenings, from Satan's tyranny, from the malice of men, and the fears of one's own heart, is matter of abundant joy. Then let it be witnessed by a life of undeviating principle and devoted service of God — sneer who may — suspect it who will — it is a noble triumph. Such triumphs of grace we have, among us; full many who can witness. Still, dear friends, not unfrequently does it happen, that you, whose salvation is our joy, of whom we speak with the utmost assurance, are yourselves in straits, exercised with fightings without and fears within; and you are unable to satisfy your own consciences that the work is divine. Observe now that Peter was brought out of prison by a great miracle, and yet it seemed to him as a vision or a dream. I need not recapitulate the circumstances. I have just read them in your hearing. This much I propose.

First, let me endeavor to *draw out some reflections from the narrative*; and then, secondly, I shall *take up the text itself and try to show you that there is no illusion, whatever you may think, in the mighty operations of the Lord.*

To begin: the first remark we think we are justified in making is this, that if ever our enemies can get hold of us, they will be quite sure to hold us as fast as they can. When Herod had been able to apprehend Peter, he was not content with ordinary means of keeping him in custody. He has Peter put into the strongest prison in Jerusalem; to make assurance doubly sure, he is

chained not to one soldier, but to two. He was too great a prize to be readily lost. He anticipated so much satisfaction to himself, from the applause of the people, for putting so eminent a servant of Christ as James to death, that he could not afford to lose an opportunity of getting further prey; so he seizes upon him who was accounted a pillar in the Church with singular avidity. Mark you, men and brethren, if by any fault of our own we ever fall into the hand of our enemies, we need expect no mercy from them. And if without fault we be delivered for a little season into their hands, we have good reason to cry aloud to God, for whoever may be spared, the Christian never is. Men will forgive a thousand faults in others, but they will magnify the most trivial offense in the true follower of Jesus. Nor do I very much regret this. Let it be so, and let it be a caution to us to walk very carefully before God in the land of the living. You young members of the Church, who are often engaged in your worldly calling, where a great number of persons are watching for your halting, let this be a special reason to walk very humbly before God. If you walk carelessly, remember the lynx-eyed world will soon see it, and then, with its hundred tongues, it will soon spread the story. You may say — “Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of Philistia rejoice.” But they will tell it. With many an addition of their own they will repeat the story. You shall hear them say — “Aha! Aha! So would we have it! All these Christians are inconsistent, they are all mere professors, they are hypocrites to a man, every one of them.” Thus will much damage be done to our good cause, and much insult offered to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ is in itself an offense to the world; let us take heed that we do not add any offense of our own. It is “to the Jew a stumblingblock;” let us mind that we put no stumblingblocks where there are enough already. “To the Greek it is foolishness;” let us not add our folly to give point to the scorn with which the worldly-wise deride the gospel. Oh, how jealous should we be of ourselves, for we serve a jealous God! How rigid should we be with our consciences, for we serve one whose name is “Holy, Holy, Holy!” Yes, in the presence of adversaries, who will misrepresent our best deeds, and torture our best endeavors into something selfish, impugning our motives where they cannot censure our actions, how circumspect should we be! We pilgrims travel as suspected persons through the world. Not only are we under surveillance, but there are more spies than we reckon of. The espionage is everywhere, at home and abroad. If we fall into their hands, we may sooner expect generosity from a wolf, or mercy from a fiend, than to find anything like patience with our

infirmities from the men of the world, or anything like the hiding of our iniquities from the men who spice their infidelity towards God with scandals against his people. The world is too much like the accursed Canaan, who pointed to his father's nakedness. We can only expect of our own brethren, the conduct of Shem and Japheth, who shall go backward to cast the mantle over us. Better far that we should so act and so live as to not even need this mantle of charity, but be able to say, with all humility, yet with holy courage — "Lord, thou knowest that in this thing I have not sinned, but have walked uprightly in thy ways." That is the first lesson which I feel bound to inculcate. "For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?"

The second lesson is this. When a case is put into God's hands, he will certainly manage it well, and he will interfere in sufficient time to bring his servants out of their distress. Peter's case was put into God's hands. The company that met at the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, were appealing to the great Advocate. If any man be in prison, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." With their humble prayers and tears they were pleading for their brother, whose valuable life they could ill afford to spare, for the infant Church needed the apostles at least for a season. I think I hear them pleading one after the other — "Lord, remember Peter! Thou knowest how we love him; our desires go up for him. James is dead. Alas! we took up his body and mourned him! Let not Peter be slain! Oh, take not thou the prop from under us! Remove not the pillar from the wall, nor the stone from its place." The Lord has heard their cries. Peter's cause is in his hand. He will interfere in due time. The assurance that prayer is heard is the earnest that prayer will be answered. The petition is accepted, though no answer has yet been received. Well, we can leave it there. But see, brethren, Peter has been lying in prison the whole week. The feast of unleavened bread is over, it is the last night, *the last night!* The evening has crept on; nay, the dark hours have set in; it is midnight. The sun will soon be rising — in a few more hours — and then where is Peter? Lord, if thou do not interfere, where is Peter? If thou come not now to help him his blood shall make the populace of Jerusalem glad while they gloat and delight in his slaughter! Yes but just at that last and darkest hour of the night, God's opportunity overtook man's extremity. A light shone in the dungeon. Peter was awakened. God never is before his time; nor is he ever too late; he comes just when he is needed. But see, there is Peter asleep! Peter is asleep, doing nothing, *doing*

nothing! Well, and the best thing for him too, for the case was put into God's hand. I ask you, dear friends, suppose Peter had been awake, what could he do? Had he been fretting and troubling himself, what good could he have done? Finding, therefore, that nothing remained for him, he just throws himself upon the mercy of God, shuts his eyes as peaceably as though he were to wake to-morrow to a wedding feast, and not to his own execution. Sleep on, blessed slumberer! Well might Herod envy thee that peace which his kingly robe could never give him. Thou sleepest, though thy hands be chained, for thy spirit is free; and it may be that in thy dreams thou art rejoicing "with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory." When the case is taken into God's hands, and you and I feel that we can do nothing for ourselves, we may take sleep in perfect quietude, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. While we sleep, his watchful eyes do keep their ceaseless guard. Jesus might seem on one occasion to be asleep, but you know where he slept — it was in the hinder-part of the ship. Why there? Methinks he slept with his hand on the tiller, so that the moment he awoke he might steer the vessel,

*"Though winds and waves assault thy keel,
 He doth preserve it, he doth steer —
 E'en when the bark seems most to reel."
 "Storms are the triumphs of his art,
 Sure he may close his eyes, but not his heart."*

God sleepeth never; he is ever on the watch for his people. "Well, but," saith one, "surely the Lord should have interfered before this time, for Peter is not only asleep, but he is bound — bound to two soldiers! How can he escape?" Ah! that word "How?" — *that word "How?"* What a deal of mischief it has done to faith! But, do you know that true faith has no such word in all her vocabulary? Faith never says "How?" God has said "It shall be," faith believes it *will* be. As to *how* it shall be, that is God's business, not mine. It is Unbelief that says "How? I do not see it. How?

How? How can it be?" Hush, Unbelief! The fetters shall drop off, gates shall open of their own accord. The case is in God's hand, man. If it were in man's hand it would fail, for cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh must crack; there must be impossibilities to humanity, but to the Deity impossibilities are nothing. Be thou quiet, for the case is with him; it may be the last moment, the apostle may be asleep, and he may be bound, but Peter must come out; for God has heard the prayer, and Peter shall be free.

Yet a third remark, we think, lies like a precious stone upon the very surface of this narrative; it is this, that when God shall come to deliver his people, all the circumstances which seem to go against their deliverance shall only tend to set forth the more his glory. What contempt *he* puts upon chains, prisons, cords, iron gates, wards — inner and outer wards — see how he breaks their bonds asunder, and casts their cords from him. I know of nothing that seems to illustrate more God's splendid triumph over man's cunning, than the resurrection of Christ. "His disciples will steal him away while men sleep." "Well," says Pilate, "ye have a watch, go and make it as sure as ye can." He trusted to men, who were sure to do the thing well — the men that hated him; they keep the watch, they roll the great stone, they seal it, they go home to their beds. Ah, men of the Sanhedrim, proud priests! ye have done the work, go ye to your rest, and say "This deceiver shall never shake the earth again, nor call us dumb dogs that cannot bark, nor tell us that we be blind leaders of the blind; he is buried, and the seal is on him."

*"Vain the watch, the stone, the seal,
Christ hath broke the gates of hell."*

See him rise! and as the angel sits down upon the stone, he seems, in quiet sarcasm, to say to priests, to earth, to hell, "Roll it back again if ye can, and seal it once more, for he is risen, and hath overcome the wiles of men." So, Christian, rest assured that everything that looks black to your gaze now, shall only make it the brighter when God delivers you. Every dark and bending line shall surely meet in the center of his love, and but the more express to your mind, his power, his wisdom, his faithfulness, his truth.

Furthermore, the whole story seems to teach us that no difficulty can ever occur which God cannot meet when he makes bare his arm. The chains are gone, the warders are passed, but there is that iron gate. Oh, that iron gate! I think there are some of you to-night that are troubled about it. God has been helping you; you have had faith up till now, but you have got to the iron gate. Oh! if you could, but pass that — it leadeth into the city — all would be well; but that iron gate! Some of you get dreading the iron gate a month before you get to it. You get fretting and troubling yourself for three months perhaps about the iron gate. You do for months, as those holy women did for hours, who went out at break of day to the sepulcher, and as they went along they said, "Who shall roll us away the stone?"

There was no stone to roll away! And when *you* go to this place, you will find that there is no iron gate there, or if there should be, it will open of its own accord. Oh, how often have we had to wonder at our own folly, and we have said, "Well, I will never do that again; I will never more borrow misery; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; I will never go out to get a loan of sorrow for to-morrow;" but alas! we have done it the next day.

Wait, wait, O Christian, on the Lord, and leave all anxiety about the iron gates. Since the day when thou didst believe in him and put thy soul into his hand by prayer, it has been God's cause, not thy cause; it has been God's work to deliver thee, and not thy work.

*"The gates of brass before him burst,
The iron fetters yield."*

There is yet this one further remark. See, beloved, see clearly, see indisputably — the omnipotence of prayer. If all those disciples had sworn an oath that they would get Peter free, they could not have accomplished it. What could they do? Herod has an army; the prison is strong; the guards are not to be bribed; the last night is come; what can they do? There was only one weapon they could use, and that was hanging at their girdles — the weapon of *all-prayer*. They told Jesus of it. When every other gate was shut, there was the gate to heaven open; so they sent messages up to him who is able to loose the prisoners, and to their own surprise Peter is loosed. Have not we, in this Church, often felt the power of prayer? I sometimes fear me, beloved, we are tagging here now — flagging in prayer. I may be permitted to say, there are some of you I do not see so often at prayer meetings as I could wish. It is a busy time of the year, I know, and therefore I make plenty of excuses for you; but when it was not so busy I did not see you! And then there are some who grow dull in their recollections of fact. At Park Street have not we had seasons when our hearts were hot within us, when we could not speak because we thought "Surely God is in this place!" It seemed an awful place to us; we were prevailing with God, we were drawing down the blessing, and that blessing has continued up till now as the result of earnest supplication. What simple prayers they were! Strangers that came in found much fault, but the Lord did not. There were often things said that were not very grammatical; but what mattered it if the heart was in the thing? We stormed heaven's gates and down came legions of mercies to us. We want more prayer, more prayer. I am always glad to hear that your special prayer-meetings, and your social assemblies for supplication are well attended, and that there is a

desire among the members to have such prayer-meetings often. I am sure the elders of the Church will join with me in advocating and encouraging them. We will lend the rooms connected with this Tabernacle, convinced that as we oftener meet together, and oftener supplicate the throne of grace, the blessing will come down. There are a few brethren who have met every morning for these last four years, or five years it may be; they meet now every morning, wet or dry, winter or summer, every morning in the chapel at Park Street, always praying for our prosperity. Their numbers are few to what they used to be. We have not got the fire now that we once had, I fear. May the Lord put the embers together and fan them with his breath and make them blaze again, until our ministry shall be with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and the multitudes shall hear the voice of God speaking in their hearts. Brethren, pray for us, pray for your children, your households; take everything to God in prayer, no matter how hard, how intricate, how difficult. If there be a knot you cannot untie, cut it with prayer. God knows how to deliver you when you cannot deliver yourself. Be much in supplication, for this will make you mighty, make you prevalent with men when you have prevailed with the Maker of men. Such the reflections that occur to us from the narrative.

II. But now I turn more closely to my text itself. When Peter came out of prison, his deliverance was so marvellous, that he did not know whether it was true or whether it was a vision. Like the Psalm which says, “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.” Thus when a sinner is saved, pardoned, justified, he is utterly astonished and thinks it cannot be true, because it is so good. The astonishment lies in this — “It cannot be true,” says he, “that I am saved. I! I! I! If it had been all the people in the world, I could have believed it, but can it be that *I* am delivered? How is it that he should have mercy upon *me*? I that was so lately in fetters; that a week ago could blaspheme; that a day or two ago could have talked all the idlest jests, and could have lived upon the foulest of earth’s pleasures; that I, *I* should be saved — delivered from sin, though so filthy; set free, though so fast bound!”

I must try to interpret this peculiar reflection — this dream-like feeling. The reality of God’s mercy is only apprehended by faith; and because faith has to do with things not seen, you are apt to throw suspicions on its evidence. You see no tangible instrumentality equal to the mighty task. Our ruin was, in some sense, effected by degrees. We can trace the course of evil. The soul of man is like a temple in ruins. The temple built for God has

become an abode for unclean spirits. God *suddenly* deserted it, but it *gradually* fell into its present dilapidation and uncleanness. The *eyes* that were once as lamps which hashed with light and love, have become contracted, and their habit now is to love darkness rather than light; the *tongue* that was once a fountain that did send forth sweet water, pure and refreshing, has become as a noxious spring whose bitter streams savor of enmity to God and envy of the brethren; the *heart* that was once as the holy place of all our frame, where the beauty of holiness reposed in heavenly calm, has now become the place of idols and the abode of secret abominations; the very *breath* that sent up its sacred incense in rich perfume, acceptable to God, has grown corrupt, and breathes out its baneful poison, and its foul impurities. Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Will he take up his abode with us? Shall the change be wrought in the twinkling of an eye? Does it suffice that the Word sown in weakness, springs up with power of the Holy Ghost? Man fallen may baffle us, but man redeemed is a mystery we cannot fathom. It seemeth ever to mere mortal sense as a vision, the dream of poets, or the work of imagination. But, beloved, why marvel? The angel of the covenant has descended from heaven to earth, and ye wist not it was he, till he loosed your bonds, broke up your path, or rather opened every door with the keys that hang at his girdle, and gave you knowledge of salvation by the remission of your sins. Then you thought it a vision, because you had not known redemption only that your own soul was redeemed; you had not understood salvation only that you were yourself redeemed; and that matchless secret of the new birth penetrated your understanding in the same hour that it was wrought upon your own heart. Thus it is commonly with us, brethren. We see, as a main fact, the downward course by which we corrupted our ways when we were dead in sin. But the hour we first believed, that blessed season when we were translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, seems like a vision to us.

Another reason why it appears so visionary to us is, because no forethought or intention of our own helped and availed. How, this is true with some of you in one way. Never were your purposes less inclined to seek the Lord than they were when he found you. Your plans were broken off before you were aware of it. You were asleep when the angel entered your cell; and you were dreaming of other things than those that were in store for you. Peradventure you dreamed that the bolts were not heavy, the bars were not thick, and the locks were not fast, and you might get up and

let yourself out whenever you liked. It was only when you were delivered that you saw how fast you had been held. The rescued soul alone can know how "Satan binds our captive minds fast in his slavish chains." And in yet another way some of us have proved the same. We had our schemes to get loose, and many a bitter day we had tried and toiled in vain, till at length we had fallen asleep in blank despair, dreaming of nothing but our fearful doom, when the deliverance came in such an unheard of manner, that we could scarcely persuade ourselves it could be true. And so it is, brethren, we never believe anything to be so real as what we see with our own eyes, and work with our own hands. And I suppose it is just the natural idea which flesh and blood is prone to take of the things of God. They seem more like a vision than the work of a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

And still, I scarcely think I have probed the matter to the bottom yet. The simplicity of God's method of grace has not ceased to be a marvel. The Jews seek after a sign; and there is something of the Jewish nature about us all. At least I find a host of exercised souls who are asking for signs. Well, and the Greeks, who are rather a refined class of unbelievers, they seek after wisdom; they want some extraordinary endowment. This craving has not died out among us. For the first, I hear one say, "I am afraid, sir, that my experience is only a dream. I want a sign to give me assurance." Let me tell you that simple faith gives clearer evidence than any fancy that could possess your mind. Are you still bound with the chain of your sins? Are you still shut up in the stronghold of unbelief? Have you never seen the key in the Savior's hand that opened the door to set you free? "Oh, yes," say you, "but I am afraid it was only a vision, for I am but a poor, helpless creature after all." And what else would you be? Never so safe as when you are emptied of all confidence in self. Paul could boast of extraordinary revelations, but the Lord sent him a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be puffed up by them. Then, again, there are those who show more anxiety after gifts than after graces; and to them all the mercy they have received seems but a vision, because they are not raised up above common mortals. After this extraordinary release of Peter, you do not find any display. The apostle was but a poor, trembling believer; he would not have Mary or the damsel Rhoda talk too loudly, or express their gladness too cheerfully: he beckoned them with his hand to hold their peace. He just declared how the Lord had brought him out, and then he departed and went into another place. Brethren, I would have you make your boast in the Lord, and speak of what he has done for your souls; but I would warn you not to vaunt

your experience, or attempt to magnify yourselves as if we, any of us, had herein matter for glory. The very manner of God's delivering grace is to hide pride from our eyes; and the reality is none the less palpable, because the angel did all for us to show his strength, and then withdrew from us that we should feel our own weakness.

Once again: the suddenness of this deliverance will surprise you. "So suddenly too!" It seems like a vision. We have often known persons suddenly renewed in heart that would not believe it. They knew it was so, but still, in thinking it over, it did seem as though it could not possibly be true that they were saved; they had to rub their eyes again to see whether they were not asleep and dreaming. It was much too good to be true and have happened all on a sudden thus. The greatness of the mercy has made them stagger. That God should just forgive them and let them into heaven would have been marvellous, but that he should make them his children, his sons, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ — this surpassed all belief. Their fears had got such hold of them that they were ready to die; but little prepared to be saved. Their convictions had been terrible, but now the joy is so excessive, they cannot think but what it must be all presumption, all a dream. Many and many have there been who have come to the pastor, and said, "Oh I had such joys! I did believe in Christ, I know I did; I cast myself wholly on him and I felt such a change, I became so different a person from what I had ever been before, but now I come to look back upon it, I cannot think it was true, it must have been a vision, it cannot possibly be a matter of fact."

Now, dear friends, lest you should give way to this apprehension too much, let me remind you that inasmuch as this is a great thing it is all the better evidence that it comes from God. So great a river may well have a rapid tide. So glaring a sun may well shine with uncommon splendor. The great God does not do little acts of grace. His works are all great, sought out of all them that fear him. Inasmuch as you confess that you are a great sinner, and therefore this is a surprising thing, let me remind you that this is the ordinary way in which God works to give great mercies to great sinners. He does not give his favors to men who think they deserve them; he searches the heart with a glance, and he abhors the proud. But to those who are made to feel that there is no good thing in them, and rest on his grace because they have nothing else on which to depend, the mercy comes, and the prisoners are loosed. Dear friends, do you not remember that the gospel that we preach is a very great gospel? Is it not called in

Scripture, "The great salvation?" Now when you find your salvation to be great, do not shrink back and say, "Oh, it cannot be genuine because it is great." It would not be the genuine gospel if it were little. If it were not a surprising wonderful thing, if it were not superlatively astonishing, it would not be the gospel. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are my thoughts above your thoughts, and my ways above your ways." Besides, remember my brethren, that Jesus died in pangs unutterable on the cross. Did he die there to buy farthing mercies, to purchase little favors for little sinners? The blood of bulls and goats might achieve some little, but the blood of him, who was the only begotten of the Father, cannot have been shed for trifles. Therefore the rather consider that this must have been true, because it is so great, so strange, so surpassing all your thoughts. God help you to say with the Apostle Peter, "Now I know that God hath sent his angel." Thus shalt thou know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel and hath delivered thee out of the hands of thy enemies and from all the expectation of thy doubts and fears." I will tell thee how to prove the reality of it; if thou shouldst fear that thy feelings have been all a dream, come with me hand in hand and let us go to make proof of our faith at the cross. You and I, a pair of sinners, full of sin, covered with the leprosy of it from head to foot, let us go and stand at Calvary's cross. There he hangs! His hands and feet are pierced; the blood distils. Jesus! for whom dost thou die? "For sinners;" saith he. Here are two, most gracious Master; remember us when thou comest into thy kingdom! I think I hear him say, "Ye shall be with me in Paradise," for never souls breathed that prayer in humble faith and were unheard. Jesu, we look to thy wounds, and they are clefts in the rock into which we fly like doves, or if we may not compare ourselves thereunto, we will fly as ravens, and we will hide till the tempest is overpast. Thy blood we trust to redeem us, thy merit to clothe us from head to foot, thy plea to preserve us, thy strong arm to keep us, thy love to give us life now and in eternity!

And now, before I close, let me tell you that the picture may be inverted. If there are those to whom reality seemeth to be a dream, what multitudes there are, on the other hand, to whom mere dreams appear to be real and true. Ah! such dreaming is the saddest thing I know; and about the hardest task it is that I ever tried, to awake such slumberers from their delusions. Hear me, ye that seek out your own inventions, yet submit not yourselves to the righteousness of God. Do ye believe in God? Ay, then the God ye

believe in is not the God who created heaven and earth, but the God of your own imagination. Do ye profess Christ? the Christ ye profess is not the Son of the Father, but the child of your own fancy. And do I hear you talk of your experience? Alas, then, it is not the witness of the Holy Spirit, but the incoherent ramblings of a delirious brain. O ye poor deluded souls, who put your thoughts for God's counsels, your devices for his decrees, and your efforts for his interposition; ye "shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite." Christians ye call yourselves to-day, but Christ shall say to you another day, "I never knew you." Ah, and true it is, for ye never knew him. Do ye dream of peace? without pardon it is a dream. Do ye dream of heaven? without holiness it is a dream. Do ye dream of joy's at God's right hand? but ye are not his people; ye have never renounced the world, overcome the wicked one, confessed the faith, and followed the Master in the regeneration, which is the earnest of a blessed resurrection. Oh, sirs, consider the words, I beseech you — "As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image."

Here are many, I dare say, who do not understand what I have been talking about; God give them understanding. Sinner, thou must either be in Christ, or perish. Remember, man, to-night there is one of two things for thee, either to be shut up in the prison of hell, or else to be delivered from the prison of sin. Thy destiny hangs here — salvation or damnation, life or death. Darest thou die, sinner, darest thou die? Darest thou die with thy sins about thee, like millstones strapped about thy neck — darest thou die? No! But when the time comes for thee to die, thou wilt say, "Now I cannot live, I must not live, and I dare not die." Wouldst thou be able to die peacefully, sinner, and to rise joyfully, and to reign for ever hereafter?

Trust Christ with thy soul and he will save thee. He, the Son of God, begotten of the Father; the man of Nazareth, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary; he, God over all, blessed for ever, and yet thy brother born to bear thy sin, he says, "Trust me and I will save thee." O may his electing love move the hand of his effectual grace to incline you now to trust in him, and that done, you are saved, and out of this house you may go a lawfully delivered captive, though perhaps you will scarcely know what it is, and you wist not whether it is true that is done unto you.

But it is true for all that. He that believeth on him is not condemned, and he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God. O that I might speak in God's name to some of you who perhaps may never hear my voice again. I will meet you, as the spirit said to Brutus, on the plains I will meet you another day, each one of you, and if you live and die without trusting in that Lord whose open wounds I have tried to set before your eyes, whose bleeding heart, streaming with his life blood, I have tried to set all warm before you — if you die without him, on your own heads be your destruction. Ye have heard the gospel, O that ye would turn at its rebuke! Trust Christ! The feeblest touch of the hem of his garment, a look to him and you are made whole. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so may he lift up the cross on high. O lift it up, my brother, you that know Christ. Christian men and women, lift up that cross in your families, It is mine to lift it up here, and to cry with the Hebrew prophet, "Look, look, and live!" Sin-bitten, covered with the wounds of sin; look! It is all he asks, and that he gives. "Look and live," was written in that book; and written as on the clouds of heaven, legible only by the light they give, stand the soul-quickenings words — "Believe and live." Leave your doings for Christ's doings, not your tears but Christ's tears, not your blood but his blood, not your groans but his groans, not your penance but his agonies. Come and rest in him, join with me in saying, from your heart,

*"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin."
My soul looks back to see
The burden thou didst bear
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.
Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse
removed,
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing his bleeding love."*

The Lord bless you, the God of heaven and earth bless you, from this time forth, and for ever. Amen.

THE RED HEIFER.

NO. 527

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 30TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“This is the ordinance of the law, which the Lord hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: and ye shall give her unto Eleazer the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face.” — Numbers 19:2, 3.

THE true heading of all the books of Moses is to be found in the words of Jesus, “Moses wrote of me.” Take the Lord Jesus Christ with you as a key, and how ever difficult the riddles of Leviticus or Numbers may at first sight appear, there is not one enigma in the whole collection which will not speedily open and yield instruction. To the Israelites themselves, these rites and ceremonies must have been rather an exercise of faith, than a means of instruction. “I cannot perfectly understand why this heifer is slain, or why yonder lamb is offered,” said the pious Israelite, “but though I cannot understand, I believe there is virtue in it all, and I reverently do, even to the smallest particular, that which God, through his servant Moses, has commanded me to do.” To us, the types are not a dark mystery to perplex our faith, but an open vision to delight our eyes. Having believed in Christ Jesus, having received him as the Father’s sent One, and being reconciled unto God by his death, we look back to the ceremonies of the old law as the patterns of heavenly things, to endeavor to discover some new light in which the Savior’s beauties may be set, and to behold him from some different point of view, so that we may love him the better, and may trust him the more.

Now, the particular point to which the red heifer referred, concerning Christ and his work, is just this — the provision which is made in Christ Jesus for the daily sins and failings of believers.

In order to bring out our point clearly, we shall remark, first, *that even true Israelites are in daily danger of defilement*; secondly, *that there is a provision made in the covenant of grace for the removal of the daily defilement of sin*; and thirdly, *that the red heifer most beautifully sets forth Christ as being the constant purification of his people, that they, having their consciences purged from dead works, may have power to worship acceptably the living and true God.*

I. It is undoubtedly true, that even THE TRUE ISRAELITE, THE TRUE BELIEVER IN CHRIST, IS THE SUBJECT OF DAILY DEFILEMENT.

My brethren, we who have believed in Christ are free from sin before the divine judgment seat. The moment that we believe in Christ, our sin is no longer ours; it was laid upon Christ, and cannot be in two places at one time; and therefore are we perfectly clean from sin before the eyes of a holy God. This is *justification*, full, complete, everlasting. But we are all aware, that in the matter of sanctification, we are not, as yet, delivered from evil. Sin dwelleth, though it reigneth not in our mortal bodies; and since there is sin within, there is the capability of the defilement of sin without. Who has lived for a single day in this base world, without discovering that in all his actions he commits sin, in everything to which he puts his hand, he receives, as well as imparts, some degree of defilement? How is it, my brethren, that this is the case? The answer is easy, and it is to be found in the chapter before us.

Some of our defilement arises from the fact, that *we do actually come into contact with sin*, here imaged in the corruption of death. Read the eleventh verse — “He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.” We actually touch that dead thing, sin, by overt acts of transgression. The best man living still pollutes himself with evil. We have met with a few vain and ignorant persons who have boasted that they were perfect, but we never believed in their perfection, except so far as to concede that they were perfect in self-conceit, in boastful arrogance, and infamous impudence. “If any man say he hath no sin, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him.” The best of men are men at the best, and while they are only men, they will still sin. We find the apostle Paul crying out because of corruption, and even using such strong language as this — “O

wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We are in close connection with sin, because sin is *in* ourselves. It has dyed us through and through, staining the very warp and woof of our nature, and until we lay aside these bodies, and are admitted to the Church of the first-born above, we shall never cease very close and intimate connection with sin. Hence, my brethren, we need to be constantly cleansed, because we are always defiling ourselves; in fact, are always defiled, because we are always touching the body of this death.

Moreover, we get defilement, not only from our own actual sins, but *from companionship with sinners*. You will read farther on in this chapter, "When a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean." The mere being with sinners defileth us. Christ could walk with publicans and sinners and yet incur no danger; the great physician could walk the lazar house of this world untainted by contagion, but this is not possible with us. Even if the most honest and laudable motives shall lead us into the company of the ungodly, though our only aim may be to bring them to Jesus, yet their unhallowed conversation will not only vex but defile. It is not possible to look upon another man's sin, even to look upon it with abhorrence, without receiving some degree of contamination, because the thought of evil is sin. Our hatred of evil always lacks in intensity — we do not detest it as we ought, and a failure here is a sin of omission which pollutes. You may say, you can go into evil company and get no defilement — my brother, I doubt it. It may be absolutely necessary for you in your calling, and more especially in your desire to bless others, to mingle with the ungodly, but you might as well attempt to carry fire in your bosom and not be burnt, or handle pitch and not be blackened therewith, as to dwell in the tents of Kedar without receiving uncleanness. This dusty world must leave some mark upon our white garments, let us travel as carefully as we may. "I am black because the sun hath looked upon me," must ever be the confession of the bride of Christ. This world is full of the spiritually dead, and since we live we must be often rendered unclean among the sinful, and hence we need a daily cleansing to fit us for daily fellowship with a holy God.

Reflect, dear brethren, again, that one reason why we are so constantly defiled, is *our want of watchfulness*. You will observe that everything in the tent of a dead man was defiled, except vessels that were covered over. Any vessel which was left open was at once unclean. You and I ought to cover up our hearts from the contamination of sin. It were well for us if we

kept our heart with all diligence, since out of it are the issues of life. Good Mr. Dyer says, "The Christian should lock up his heart in the morning, and give God the key, lest any evil should come in; and then when he unlocketh it at night, a sweet perfume of prayer will rise at eventide." But alas! we forget to lock up our hearts; we do not keep our graces covered up. I believe that a man might go into the most sinful places under heaven without receiving defilement, if he exercised a sufficient degree of watchfulness; but it is because we do not watch that the poisoned arrow wounds us. I noticed the other day an allegory of a candle in a lantern, with the motto, "One weak point is too much." An enemy outside the lantern tried to blow out the candle. He blew all around, but it was well-secured, until, at last, he found a single crack, and then through it he sent the destroying breath, and soon the flame of the candle was extinguished. This is what the devil doth with us. We may be guarded in nine points out of ten, but our strength is to be measured, mark you, by the strength of the weakest point, and the devil will find out, sooner or later, some crack through which he will attack us to our soul's evil. Watch, my brethren, watch carefully. It is because you and I fail here that we acquire this daily defilement, and need daily to be purified.

A yet more striking thought is suggested by this chapter: sin is so desperately evil, that *the very slightest sin defiles us*. He who touched a bone was unclean. It was not necessary to put your hand upon the clay-cold corpse to be defiled; the accidentally touching with the foot a bone carelessly thrown up by the grave-digger; even the touching it by the ploughman as he turned up his furrow, even this was sufficient to make him unclean. Sin is such an immeasurably vile and pestilent a thing, that the slightest iniquity makes the Christian foul — a thought, an imagination, the glancing of an eye. We may have shut out all the world from our closet, and yet find we have not shut out sin. We may make a covenant with our eyes, and with our hands, and with our feet, and with our lips, but still our wanton hearts will go after evil. We have heard of some perfumes of which it is said, that the thousandth part of a grain would leave a scent for ages in the place where it had been. And certainly it is so with sin; about its merest bone there is an eternal pest; one sin of thought would be enough to destroy for ever all communion with God. Therefore, brethren, we are defiled, and need to be daily cleansed.

I must not fail to remind you, also, that *sin, even when it is not seen, defiles*, for you will observe in the chapter that a man was defiled who

touched a grave. The bones might be buried deep down so that he could not discern them, and over those bones the grass might have grown in green hillocks, decked with a few sweet cowers, and yet, if the Israelite did but touch that grave with his foot, or with his hand, he was defiled. Oh, how many graves there are of sin — things that are fair to look upon, externally admirable, and internally abominable! Such a custom is tolerated, nay, it has become fast fixed in society, and who shall find fault with it? Yet, many of our customs are but the graves of sin, and many of our actions, which we think so admirable, have loathsome rottenness within. Too much, even of our sanctuary service, is comparable to a whitewashed sepulcher. Those sweet hymns, the unanimous and hearty shout of praise, the earnest prayer, the reverent deportment — all those, I say, may be but the whitewashed sepulcher; for our thoughts may be going abroad after all sorts of mischief, and so our very sanctuary services may be but the green sods which conceal the loathsomeness of sin. O dear friends, this is enough to startle us. We sin enough to our own knowledge, but how much of sin we commit of which we are not aware, who shall possibly tell? Sins unknown! I have often reminded you of the expression in the Greek liturgy, “thine unknown sufferings.” It is such a blessing that there are unknown sufferings for these unknown sins. We are ignorant of the heights and depths of Jesus’ love. Thank God that there is a vast atonement whose vast efficacy we must leave in ignorance, just as there are sins of ignorance utterly undiscoverable by us.

Only one more thought here. I would have you remark, dear friends, that the Jew was not only in danger of defilement in his tent and when he walked the roads, but he was *in danger in the open fields*; for you will observe, it says, that if he touched a body that had been slain in the open fields, or a bone, he should be unclean. For aught he knew, there might have been a battle there. Perhaps he thought, “Well? this is out of the way of men; I see no foot-print, no track here,” and he walks carelessly across the green fields, but, though he knows it not, there lies in his way the corpse of old who had been killed by misadventure, or murdered by his fellow in strife; he stumbles upon the body, and lo, he is unclean. You may go where you will, but you cannot escape from sin. If you take the Wings of the morning, and fly unto the uttermost parts of the sea, sin is there. If you make your bed in hell, it is there it reigns. If you seek the cover of midnight, is not midnight the very noon and carnival of evil? If you enter the Church of God, you shall find it there; high and low, rich and poor,

polite and uncivilised — ye shall search all ranks and positions of men, but sin is everywhere; and until we mount with eagles' wings to dwell before the eternal throne, we shall have to complain that we are daily in danger of defilement.

II. This brings us now to change the subject, by observing THAT A PURIFICATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED. A constant expiation is prepared. As Hart puts it: —

*“If guilt removed, return and remain,
Its power may be proved again and again.”*

The ransomed Church of God need daily to be washed in the fountain, and the mercy is that the precious blood shall never lose its power, but its constant efficacy shall abide till they are, every one of them, “Saved to sin no more.” Beloved, there is a propitiation provided for daily defilement, for first of all, *if it were not so, how melancholy were your case and mine!*

Suppose us to be Israelites, to be true believers, and then to have sinned, as we certainly should do, then, beloved, at once we should be cut off from all privileges. The unclean person had no right to go up to the house of the Lord; he had no participation in its solemn worship; for him there was no glory of sacred praise, and no prevalence of earnest prayer. You and I would have no right to Christ, no adoption, no justification, no sanctification, for the unclean person has no right to any of these. And as we should have no privileges, so we could have no communion with God. God cannot immediately commune except with perfectly holy beings. He does now commune with the imperfect, but then it is through a perfect Savior, and he cannot commune directly with you and me while sin abideth in us. He has to look upon us as purified through Christ Jesus, and being therefore wholly clean, or else it were not possible for him to walk with us, and to manifest himself to us. The ultimate result in the Israelites' case would have been death. You observe that he who did not purify himself was cut off from Israel; first, cut off by excommunication, so as no longer to be a sharer in the citizenship of Israel, and then probably cut off, either by the executioner, or else by the sudden judgment of God through plague, or fiery serpent, or some other terrible means. And certainly if you and I, though believers, could live for a season without being purified, carrying about with us still the daily defilement of sin, ere long it must end in spiritual death, and in utter destruction; but thanks be unto God, he has provided against these terrible consequences.

But think again, beloved, the Lord must have provided a daily cleansing for our daily defilement, for *if not, where were his wisdom, where his love?* He has provided for everything else. There is not a lack a saint can know, but God has furnished a supply. Out of the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus, our necessities are all supplied. But if this, this glaring, this soul-destroying need had not been provided for, how could we call him our Father and trust in him? How could we know him to be the only wise God, our Savior. A failure would have occurred in a most important point. Beloved, the love, the wisdom, the complete wisdom of God demands that there should be such a purification supplied.

The work of our Lord Jesus Christ assures us of this. What is there opened for the house of David, for sin, and for uncleanness? A cistern? A cistern that might be emptied, a waterpot, such as that which stood at Cana's marriage feast, and might be drained? No, there is a *fountain* open for sin and for uncleanness. We wash, the fountain flows; we wash again, the fountain flows still. From the great depths of the deity of Christ, the eternal merit of his passion comes everlastingly welling up. Wash! Wash! It is inexhaustible, for it is fountain-fullness. Is it not said in Scripture, "If any man sin, we have an advocate?" Why is Christ an advocate to-day? Only because we want an advocate every day. Does he not constantly intercede yonder before the eternal throne? Why does he do that? Because we want daily intercession. And it is because we are constantly sinning that he is constantly an advocate — constantly an intercessor. He himself has beautifully set forth this in the case of Peter: after Supper the Lord took a towel and girded himself, and then, taking his bason and his ewer, he went to Peter, and Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But Jesus told him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part, in me." He had been washed once. Peter was free from sin in the high sense of justification, but he needs the washing of purification. When Peter said, "Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my head and my hands," then Jesus replied, "He that *is washed*" — that he is who is pardoned — "needeth not, save to wash his feet, for he is clean every whit." The *feet* want constant washing. The daily defilement of our daily walk through an ungodly world brings upon us the daily necessity of being cleaned from fresh sin, and that the mighty Master supplies to us. Methinks I see him at this very day still girded with that towed, still with that bason and flowing water, going round to all his saints, coming round to us, brothers and sisters, and saying, "I have washed your

feet, I, your Master and your Lord, and ye are clean every whit.” There is a provision then; the work of Jesus Christ just meets the case.

Moreover, beloved, *the work of the Holy Spirit also meets the case*, for what is his business but constantly to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them unto us; constantly to quicken, to enlighten, and to comfort? Why all this but because we are constantly in need, perpetually being defiled, and therefore wanting perpetually to have the purification applied?

Best of all, *facts show that there is a purification for present, guilt*. The saints of old fell into sin, but they did not remain there. David cries “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Peter denies his Master, but he does not always remain a blaspheming, ungrateful coward. No, he comes back again to his Lord and Master, and makes the avowal, “Thou knowest; all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” You and I, I hope, can give a better proof still that *we have tried it ourselves*. We remember that dear hour when first we came to Christ. Oh, it was no fiction, no dream. We were weighed down with a thousand sins, but one look at Jesus took them all away; and since that time we have often been cast down. There may be some of you who escape from doubts and fears, if you do, I greatly envy you, but I think that most of us get at times in such a position that we cry with David, “My soul lies cleaving unto the dust.” You feel as if you dare not come into the Lord’s presence; you cannot hope that he will hear your prayer; you cannot grasp the promises, they seem too good for such as you; you cannot look up to Christ to call him brother; “Abbe, Father,” falters on your tongue; but, have you not known what it is to look to your Redeemer again just as you did at first? And then your love and joy have come back to you again once more, as if it had been a new conversion, and you have gone on your way rejoicing; you that yesterday were hanging your harp upon the willows and refusing to sing to the praise of your Lord.

My dear friends, if this were not a great truth, some of us would die in despair. I am sure if I might not still come to Jesus as a sinner and still rest in him, expecting to be cleansed from all defilement, I do not know that there would be anything in the Bible which could yield comfort to me. I must have a remedy as broad as the disease. I must have a supply as deep, as wide, as constant as my needs, and, thanks be unto God, here is just such a supply, for the foulest sin Jesus does take away, and when our hearts have backslidden from God he does bring us back. Why, some of

have appeared in our own consciences to have gone into the very belly of hell, and yet the Lord has brought us up again to the gates of heaven. Ah, it does not take many minutes to work this change. Sometimes I have felt all God's waves and billows rolling over me till I was ready to despair under a sense of my own unworthiness, and yet the next moment I have been able to read my title clear to mansions in the skies; and believing on Christ, I have had full fellowship with him. This is the power of purification; thus is it that the application of the precious blood of sprinkling always works, when faith, through the Holy Spirit, brings it to the conscience. May you and I know this by our daily constant experience of it, that there is a daily purification for daily defilement.

III. But now, beloved, I bring you to the chapter itself. THE RED HEIFER SETS FORTH, IN A MOST ADMIRABLE MANNER, THE DAILY PURIFICATION FOR DAILY SIN. It was a *heifer* — an unusual thing for a sacrifice to be a female; and we scarcely know why it should be in this case, unless indeed, to make the substitution more evident. This red heifer stood for all the house of Israel — for the whole Church of God; and the Church is always looked upon and considered in Scripture as being the spouse — the bride — always feminine. Perhaps, to make the substitution obvious and complete, to show that this heifer stood in the stead and place of the whole seed of Israel, it was chosen rather than the customary bullock. It was a *red* heifer. Some think because of its rarity, for it was very difficult to find one that was red without a single spot — for if there were one white or black hair it was always rejected: it must be wholly and entirely red — some think that this was to signify how unique and unrivalled is the person of Christ; how extraordinary, the only one of his Father, the only Redeemer of souls; of such matchless virtue, and of such glorious pedigree, that no angel can match with him, neither any of the sons of men for a moment be compared with him. Probably, however, the red was chosen only from its bringing to the mind of the Israelites the idea of blood, which was always associated with atonement, and putting away of sin. Surely, my brethren, when we think of Christ, we always associate him with the streaming gore, when we are under a sense of sin. At other times we think of him as white and ruddy, as perfection itself; but there is no point about Jesus which the trembling conscience loves to rest upon so much as that red crimson blood of his. We have heard complaints sometimes made of our theology, that there is too much blood in it. “The blood is the life thereof.” If there were no blood in our preaching, there were no life in it, no joy, no true power;

but it is just because we love to extol that precious blood, that God is pleased to honor the Word, and make it comfortable to saints, and make it the word of quickening to sinners. I am sure, dear brethren, sometimes when we have sung that verse —

*“His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o’er his body on the tree,”*

in the presence of that blood-red mantle, we have felt the next lines to be no imagination, but sober fact —

*“Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.”*

My Master, covered as to his face, with bloody sweat; with ruby drops of blood around his head; my Lord with his back like a river of gore, where the accursed whips have beaten him, his hands streaming with founts of crimson, and his feet flowing with rills of scarlet, and his side giving forth a rich cataract of his heart’s blood — he never seems so lovely as when thus I see him arrayed in “a vesture dipped in blood.” “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, *mighty to save*. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?” This is the glorious Savior, mighty to save, and never seen so mighty to save as when he is robed in crimson. Let it be the *red* heifer; it shall ever bring to the mind of the pious believer the remembrance of him who trod the winepress alone.

It was a heifer *without spot*. This denotes the perfection of Christ’s character — “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Born without any human defilement; conceived immaculately through the Holy Ghost — “that holy thing which is conceived in thee,” said the angel to the Virgin. Without any natural defilement such as we receive, he felt not the taint of original sin. Then the heifer must be without blemish. Our Christ, as he had no spot of original sin has no blemish of actual sin. “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” He became like unto us in all points, but always with this exception — “yet without sin.”

Observe that this red heifer was one *whereon never came yoke*. Perhaps this sets forth how willingly Christ came to die for us; not forced from heaven, but freely delivering himself for us all. “Lo, I come to do thy will; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O

God.” Not dragged to his death. “I lay down my life of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. No man taketh it from me.” The free Son of God wears no yoke, except that yoke which was easy to him, and that burden which was light, the yoke of love which constrained him to lay down his life for his people.

An interesting circumstance about this red heifer is, that it was not provided by the priests; it was not provided out of the usual funds of the sanctuary, nor yet by the princes, nor by any one person. *The children of Israel provided it.* What for? Why, that as they came out of their tents in the desert, or their houses in Jerusalem, and saw the priests leading the red heifer, every man, and every woman, and every child might say, “I have a share in that heifer, I have a share in that victim which is being lead out of the city to be consumed.” Brethren, I wish — oh! I would to God I dare *hope*, that every man and every woman here could say, “I have a share in Jesus Christ,” for that is the meaning of this national provision, to let us see how Christ shed his blood for all his people, and they have all a part and all an interest in him. If thou believest in him, though thou art the weakest of all his children, thou hast as good a share as the strongest. He is as much thy Christ as he is the Christ of an apostle, or of a martyr who went to heaven in a chariot of fire. I hope, brother, that thou seest this, and art assured that thou hast an interest in him.

As we noted what this victim was, there is yet to be observed *what was done with it.* Again, let me beg you to refer to your Bibles, to see what became of this red heifer.

First, *it was taken out of the camp.* Herein it was a picture of Christ. That he might sanctify his people with his own blood, he suffered without the camp. Without the camp was the place of uncleanness. There the lepers dwelt; there every defiled person was put in quarantine. Jesus Christ must be numbered with the transgressors, and must suffer upon Mount Calvary, outside the city gates, upon that general Tyburn of criminals, “the place of a skull.” The people of God are to be a separate people from all the rest of the world; they are not to be numbered with the dwellers in this world’s city; they are to be strangers, and pilgrims, and sojourners, as all their fathers were. Therefore, Christ, to set them an example of separation, suffers himself without the camp.

When taken without the camp, the red cow *was slain.* A *dying* Savior that takes away our sin. Brethren, we love Christ the risen one, we bless Christ

the living, pleading intercessor, but after all the purification to your conscience and to mine comes from the bleeding sacrifice. See him slain before our eyes. Let us sing with Watts —

*“My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.”*

When the heifer was slain, *Eleazar dipped his finger in the blood* as it flowed gurgling forth. He dipped his finger in the warm blood, and sprinkled it seven times before the door of the tabernacle. Seven is the number of perfection — to show that there was a perfect offering made by the sprinkling of the blood; even so, Jesus has perfectly presented his bloody sacrifice.

Now mark, all this does not purify. I am not yet come to that point. Atonement precedes purification: Christ must die and offer himself a victim, or else he cannot be the purifier. All this is necessary, but the vital part of the purification comes presently. They then took the body of the slain heifer, which was an unclean thing and made everybody unclean who touched it, and laid it upon a pile prepared for its burning. They consumed it utterly; its skin, its flesh, its blood, even to its dung, not a single thing must be left. This sets forth the pangs of the Savior, his great and terrible agony upon the cross, his real death, his real forsaking of God. It sets forth how God accounted him unclean, how he was compelled to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The heifer does not burn on the altar, it never smoked within the holy place as did the bullock which was God’s offering. This was a foul and guilty thing; the man who killed it became foul; he that gathered the ashes was unclean, and even the priest himself had to wash his garments. This sets forth how Christ was numbered with the transgressors, how the iniquity of his people was laid upon him, and how the Lord “made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” You will say, “A strange thing that those who touched the *sacrifice* should be made unclean.” Yes, but types like other emblems do not run upon all fours. Therefore you must look at it in the light intended, save that I may ask here who was it that put Christ to death? Were they not unclean? Were not the Roman soldiers unclean; that ribald mob who shouted, “Crucify him, crucify him” — those eyes that gloated themselves with the agonies of his tortured body? And are not you and I, who helped to put him to death — are not we ourselves

unclean? Nay, I go farther. If I to-day gather the ashes and bring them before you — if I seek to-day to be as the man who sprinkled that purifying water, yet am I not unclean? Do I not feel that even when I am speaking best of my Master, I am sinning still, for I cannot speak of him as I would. And, my brethren, what makes you feel so unclean as contact with Christ? Is it not true that the very same Christ who takes your sins away, first makes you feel your sins? “They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall weep and mourn for their sins.” The same Savior who takes tears away when we look to him by faith, first brings those tears to our eyes when we look and see him die. It was right, therefore, that he should first make those unclean who touched him, and then afterwards should make them clean through another touch of his purifying power.

When the whole was fully burnt, or while burning, we find *the priest threw in cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet*. What was this? According to Maimonides, the cedar wood was taken in logs and bound round with hyssop, and then afterwards the whole enveloped in scarlet; so what was seen by the people was the scarlet which was at once the emblem of sin and its punishment — “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Everything you see still continues of the red color, to set forth atonement for sin. Inside this scarlet there is the hyssop of faith, which gives efficacy to the offering in each individual, and still within this is the cedar wood that sent forth a sweet and fragrant smell, a perfect righteousness, giving acceptance to the whole. One delights to think of this, in connection with Christ, that, as there is a daily witness of our defilement, so there is a daily imputation of his perfect righteousness to us, so that we stand every day accepted in the beloved by a daily imputation, by which not only is daily sin covered, but daily righteousness given to us. We are, therefore, every day as much accepted as we shall be in that last great day when he shall receive us to his glory everlasting.

The pith of the matter lies in the last act, with the remains of the red cow. *The cinders of the wood, the ashes of the bones, and dung, and flesh of the heifer, were all gathered together, and carried away, and laid by in a clean place*. According to the Jews there was not another heifer killed for this purpose for a thousand years. They say, but then we have no reason to believe them, that there have never been but nine red heifers offered at all; one in the days of Moses, the next in Ezra’s time, and the other seven afterwards, and that when Messiah comes he is to offer the tenth, by which

they let out the secret that they do look upon the Messiah as coming in his own time to complete the type. Our own belief is that a red heifer was always found when ashes were wanted, and as there were hundreds and thousands of persons defiling themselves, the place where the ashes were kept was much frequented, and much of the purifying matter required. The ashes were to be put in a vessel with running water, and the water was sprinkled over the unclean person who touched a body or a bone. By this process the ashes would require to be renewed much oftener than once in a thousand years, in order that every one might have his portion. Does not this storing up suggest that there is a store of merit in Christ Jesus? There was not only enough to make us free from sin by justification, but there is a store of merit laid up that daily defilement may be removed as often as it comes.

*“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And, O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here’s pardon too.”*

From all the sins I ever shall commit there is a purification laid by to cleanse me. The seven times sprinkled blood has put these sins away before the judgment-seat of God, and the ashes which are laid by shall put my sin away from my conscience, purging it from dead works.

The ashes were to be *put with running water*. Running water is ever the sweet picture of the Holy Spirit — “He leadeth me beside still waters.” The Holy Spirit must take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us.

Purification is made in heaven by the finger of Christ — seven times he sprinkled his own blood, but on earth in our conscience it is made by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost must make Christ precious and efficacious to us. What is Christ on the cross? What is Christ in the grave? Nothing to any man till the Holy Spirit makes him Christ in the heart. You will hear many complain that there is no beauty in Christ that they should desire him; it is to them dull work to hear of Jesus. Ah! beloved, and well it may be; but when the running water comes, when the Spirit of God gives quickening and cleansing to the heart and makes us love things divine, then there is nothing so precious, so inexpressibly desirable, as the ashes of a slaughtered Savior.

Observe that it was applied *by hyssop*. The hyssop was dipped in water, and then the unclean was sprinkled. Hyssop is always a type of faith.

“Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.” Our faith, like a little sprig of hyssop, is dipped into the blood, or dipped into this cleansing water which flowed from the side of Jesus, and so the remedy is applied. Brother, believe in Jesus more fully than thou hast done, and thou wilt feel the power of his propitiation. He is God; he became man; he suffered: those sufferings are able to take away sin. Thou needest have no guilt on thy conscience, but be clean, rejoicing in him and accepted in the beloved. May the Lord give us to know more fully the mysteries of this red heifer and the joy of pardoned sin.

I will close by remarking, that if there be any believer here who has fallen into sin, if there be one who has lost the presence of the Lord, if you have grown cold and dead, if you are conscious of having backslidden, if you have begun to doubt whether you are a child of God at all, here is in Christ just what you want. Ah! but you say, you have fallen so often, sinned so constantly. Ay, but here are ashes for every day, cleansing for every hour, for every moment. Look upon your Lord and Savior. God is intending to forgive you not once only, but to cleanse you every day. He has taught you to forgive your brother not seven times, but seventy times seven, and do you think he will not do what he tells *you* to do? Ah! he will forgive you a countless number of times, yea, every day. If thou wilt seek daily cleansing in Christ, thou shalt have communion with him, thou shalt stand in his presence, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This is no privilege reserved for the few, for all of us have — every child of God has — an interest in this. Let us come therefore, boldly, and pray the Master now to apply again this purification of Christ, that we may again live near to God and delight ourselves in his society.

And as for you that have never believed in Jesus, let me remind you that this is not for you. You need to be washed for the first time in the blood. O soul! what a loathsome being thou art out of Christ! Why, thou art all over black from head to foot, and black within as well as without. What thou wantest first is washing in the blood, thou shalt have the washing of water, of which we speak, another day. The blood of Jesus can cleanse you from all sin. Trust to him and he shall save thee. Trust him now.

Come now. May the Spirit help thee to come that thou mayest be saved, both now and ever. Amen.

CHASTISEMENT — NOW AND AFTERWARDS.

NO. 528

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER
6TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” — Hebrews 12:11.

LAST Sabbath morning we tried to show you how the uncleanness of sin is removed. By the application of the blood of Christ *the guilt* of sin is cleansed; by the water which flowed with the blood from the side of Jesus *defilement* is taken away for ever. Our work this morning is to consider the destruction of *the power* of sin. This is a work which rests in the hand of God the Holy Ghost, and is not comprehended under the head of justification, but of sanctification. Beware, my brethren, lest ye mix these two different things. It is in the sense of *sanctification* that the trials and afflictions of this life have the blessed influence of purging us from sin. It were a very great error to imagine that affliction ever cleanseth us from the guilt of sin; for if we could be afflicted with all the pangs of the lost spirits in hell, and that for ever, not a single spot of sin would be washed away by all our miseries and tears. Nor are we saved from the pollution of sin by our trials; our conscience must be purged from dead works by the blood of Jesus alone. If the wedge of gold which Achan stole were accursed, you might have thrust it into the fire as many times as you would, but it would have been accursed still. There were fiery serpents which bit the children of Israel; their way was long, and their journey tedious, but yet I find that they needed the ashes of the red heifer, because that purification did for them

what affliction could not do. No amount of affliction can avail, either to take away the guilt or the defilement of sin. It is in this sense that Kent sings,

*“With afflictions he may scourge us,
Send a cross for every day,
Blast our gourds; but not to purge us
From our sins as some would say:
They were numbered
On the scapegoat’s head of old.”*

Yet, as we have said, if you separate between sanctification and justification, and make a clear distinction between the indwelling power of sin and the guilt of it, then you may clearly perceive the place which affliction holds. When the Holy Spirit acts as Christ’s representative, and sits as a refiner, his furnace is affliction; the trials and troubles through which we have to pass are the glowing coals which separate the precious from the vile. They are, through divine grace, the means of restraining and destroying in us the tremendous power of indwelling sin, until the day shall come when the blessed Spirit shall take away from us all corruption, and, consequently, we shall need no more affliction.

Coming at once to the text, we shall notice, first, the *outward appearance of our trials*, or SORE CHASTISEMENTS; secondly, *the result of our chastening*, or BLESSED FRUITFULNESS; and, thirdly, *the characters benefited by these exercises*, or FAVORED SONS.

I. First, we have very clearly in the text, SORE CHASTISEMENTS.

1. Keeping literally to the words of the text, we observe that *all which carnal reason can see of our present chastisement is but seeming*. “No chastisement for the present *seemeth* to be joyous, but grievous.” All that flesh and blood can discover of the quality of affliction, is but its outward superficial appearance. We are not able by the eye of reason to discover what is the real virtue of sanctified tribulation; this discernment is the privilege of faith. Brethren, how very apt we are to be deceived by seemings! Why, to our senses, even natural things are too high for us. The world *seems* to stand still, and yet we know, without any faith, that it is always moving. The sun *seems* to climb the heights of heaven, and then to descend and hide himself in the west, and yet we are sure that the sun is fixed in his sphere. When the sun is setting, he *seems* larger than when he

shone in his zenith, but we are well aware, in this case, that the seeming is not the truth, and that the sun is no broader at his setting than when he was shining in the highest heaven. Now, if even in natural things *the seeming* is not the truth, and the appearance is very often false, we may rest quite sure that though affliction seemeth to be one thing, it really is not what it seemeth to be. Understand, that all that you can know about trial, by mere carnal reason, is no more reliable than what you can discover by your feelings concerning the motion of the earth.

Nor, dear friends, are our seemings at all likely to be worth much, when you recollect that *our fear*, when we are under trouble, always darkens what little reason we have. I remember one so nervous, that when going up the Monument, he assured me that he felt it shake. It was his own shaking, not the shaking of the Monument; but he was fearful and timid at climbing to an unusual height. When you and I under trial get so afraid of this and afraid of that, that we cannot trust the eyesight of the flesh, we may rest assured of this, that “things are not what they seem.” Besides, we are very *unbelieving*, and you know how unbelief is apt always to exaggerate the black, and to diminish the bright. When Giant Despair had put his victims into the castle, he was wont to beat them with a crab-tree cudgel. Some of us have felt the weight of that crab-tree cudgel; sore are its blows. Lying in that dungeon, Christian began to think whether it were not better to destroy himself, though, poor silly man, all the while the key of promise was in his bosom, and he needed not to have lain rotting in that dungeon for a single hour. We cannot, therefore, expect with such a mischief-making propensity within us as our inclination to unbelief, that we can fairly judge what affliction means.

Added to this, over and above our unbelief, there is a vast amount of *ignorance*, and ignorance is always the mother of dismay and consternation. In the ignorant times in this country, men were always trembling at their own superstitions. If some old crone — perhaps some good old woman — sat by the fireside, they dreamed she had an evil eye; they thought that she might scatter plague among the sheep, or mildew over the corn. Afraid they were of the timid hare which crossed their path, or of the raven croaking in the old oak tree. The air was full of omens, and presages of ill. Even the insect that cried “tick” as it scratched the old decaying post, was a warning of death, and candles and coals, and all sorts of things alarmed them. It is just the same spiritually with us. We are ignorant of what God means, and so we say with Jacob, “All these things

are against me,” with about as much reason for saying so as our benighted ancestors had for being afraid of these omens and signs. We are profoundly ignorant, dear brethren, when we dream that we are most wise; and the best taught man among us, if he could compare the little that he does know with the tremendous mass which he does not know, would be surprised to find himself so great a fool. This mass of ignorance always becomes the fruitful parent of fears and doubts, and consequently our chastisements seem to be very sore to us.

Besides, dear friends, we are such *selfish* beings and so fond of ease, and are so unwilling to be cut and wounded with even God’s lances; we feel so afraid even of our heavenly Father’s hand if it should give us a blow, that our chastisements always seem to be more horrible than they are. You know, when a man resolves that he will endure an amputation, because he foresees that future good will come of it, even though it be a painful operation, he lies like a hero with scarce a groan or a tear; but another, careful of his flesh and timid of himself, is affrighted even at the sight of the knife, and crieth out when but the very slightest incision has been made, and scarce any pain has been felt. So it is with many of us. We are so jealous of our own ease and pleasure, that the moment we even see the rod we are affrighted and alarmed, and at the very first stroke of it, before it has made the flesh to tingle, we think it is utterly unbearable and that God intends to destroy us. What, then, with the clouds of fear, the dust of unbelief, the smoke of ignorance, and the mist of selfishness, it is little wonder that we do not perceive the truth, and thus “no chastisement *seemeth* to be joyous.”

2. The text shows us that *carnal reason judgeth afflictions only “for the present.”* “No chastisement *for the present* seemeth to be joyous.” It judges in the present light, which happens to be the very worst light in which to form a correct estimate. Suppose that I am under a great tribulation to-day — let it be a bodily affliction — the head is aching, the heart is palpitating, the *mind is agitated* and distracted, am I in a fit state then to judge the quality of affliction, with a distracted and addled brain? With the scales of the judgment lifted from their proper place, how can I sit and form a just idea of the wisdom of God in his dispensations? At such times *old sins* come up, and present passions become rebellious. How can I, when I have to contend with a thousand ancient sins and present temptations — how can I sit down properly and calmly, to judge what my affliction really is? I am compelled to judge of it only by a mere surface

glimpse. Besides, *Satan* very seldom forgets to roar on such occasions. That old cowardly villain seldom meddles with God's people when they can skilfully handle the shield of faith. He knows that we are more than a match for him when we are resting simply upon our God; but if he can only see a distracted brain, and sin pressing heavily upon us, and a mind beclouded, then it is that he comes in a tremendous fury, and hopes to make a full end of us. And if, added to all this, *God should hide his face* from us, and we should be in the dark; it is hard judging providences when it is dark, dark without and dark within, hell howling and earth shaking, while perhaps the wife is dying, the children weeping, property is flying, creditors are dunning, the mind vexed, and enemies slandering. When we

*“See every day new straits attend,
And wonder where the scene shall end,”*

is it a fit time to judge of God? Ought we not at such seasons, like Aaron, to hold our peace, because the word we shall speak is sure to be unwise. Had we not better bid carnal reason hold its decision, and wait for better times to come? “No chastisement *for this present* can seem joyous but grievous.”

3. This brings me to observe, that since carnal reason only sees the seeming of the thing, and sees even that in the pale light of the present, therefore, brethren, *affliction never seemeth to be joyous*. If affliction *seemed* to be joyous, would it be a chastisement at all? I ask you, would it not be a most *ridiculous* thing if a father should so chasten a child, that the child came down stairs laughing, and smiling, and rejoicing at the flogging. Joyous? Instead of being at all serviceable, would it not be utterly *useless*? What good could a chastisement have done if it was not felt? No smart? Then surely no benefit! It is the blueness of the wound, saith Solomon, which maketh the heart better; and so if the chastisement do not come home to the bone and flesh, distil the tear, and extort the cry, what good end can it have served? It might even work the other way, and be *hurtful*, for the child would surely think that the parent only played with it, and that disobedience was a trifle, if those very gentle blows were enough, with one or two soft chiding words, to express parental hatred of sin. If but the mockery of chastisement were given, the child would be hardened in sin, and even despise the authority which it ought to respect. My brethren, if God sent us trials such as we would wish for, they would be no trials. If they were chastisements that on the very surface seemed to be joyous, then

they were no chastisements. They would still be the sweets, the harmful sweets which children like to eat, until they turn their stomachs, and are overtaken with sickness.

Let us here note, that no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, in two or three respects. It never seems to be joyous *in the object of it*. You know the Lord always takes care when he does strike his people, to hit them in a tender place. When he comes forth to the work of image-breaking, he always dashes in pieces the most favourite image first. Look at David, how could the Lord have touched that man more to the quick than by touching him in his children? There is his daughter Tamar dishonored before his eyes. There is his son Ammon, who first commits incest, and afterwards falls by a brother's hand. There is a darling left; he has grown now to be a fine and comely person, there is not such another in all Israel — his hair is his glory; he is a man of great wit; he is his father's jewel. As you hear David cry, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!" you see most manifestly, that the chastening Father never sends afflictions which are joyous. He always strikes that object which is nearest to the heart, in order that the heart *may smart*.

Nor is it, my brethren, joyous *in the force of it*. "Oh," we are apt to think, "if the trial had not been quite so severe, the temptation so strong; if the difficulty had not been so great, I could have sustained it; but the north wind hath come down against me; the Lord hath broken me in pieces with a terrible hurricane." My dear friends, you must never expect to have the trial joyous in the force of it. God will put just so much bitters into the draught that they shall not tickle your appetite as some bitters do, but shall really fill you with loathing and real misery. He will do it efficiently and effectively in the force of it.

Again, no chastisement ever seems to be joyous as to *the time of it*. We always think it comes at the wrong season. "I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came," saith Job. And David has a complaint somewhat of the same kind. "In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." The time of our afflictions, if it were left to our choosing — well, I suppose we should never have any at all — but if we must have them, and had to choose the time, then they would be joyous, and so would lose their very meaning.

Certainly, brethren, they are very seldom joyous as to the *instrument*. Hear David. “It was not an enemy; then I could have borne it.” O yes, that is what we always think. “If it was not just that, I could have borne it. If I had been poor I could have borne *that*, but to be slandered I cannot endure. To have even lost my wife — ah! it would have been a dreadful blow! but I might have borne it — but to have lost that dear child — how can I ever rejoice again?” Have not you sometimes heard brethren speak so, when they did not know what they said, for God had sent them the very best affliction they could have. He turned over all the arrows in the quiver, and there was not one which would suit to wound thee with but just the one he used, and therefore that one he fitted to the string and sent it with just as much force as was required, and certainly no more. It all goes to prove this, that in no respect — neither in the object, nor the instrument, nor the time, nor the force of it, can an affliction ever seem to carnal reason to be joyous.

4. Nay more, dear brethren, the text assures us in the next place that *every affliction seemeth to be grievous*. Perhaps to the true Christian, who is much grown in grace, the most grievous part of the affliction is this. “Now,” saith he, “I cannot see the benefit of it, if I could I would rejoice. I do not see why this trouble was sent to me. Instead of doing good, it really seems to do harm.” “Such a brother has been taken away just in the midst of his usefulness;” cries the bereaved friend. A wife says, “My dear husband was called away just when the children needed most his care.” And ourselves say, “Here am I, laid aside upon a bed of sickness just when the Church wants me, just when I proceeded most triumphantly in a career of usefulness.” This is always grievous to the Christian because he cannot see, though indeed it ought not to be grievous on that account, since he should never expect to see, but should walk by faith and not by sight. You know, brethren, sometimes our afflictions come upon us like ferocious assailants; first of all they *impede* our running — we cannot serve God as much as we like while we are under affliction; we feel as if our usefulness has been greatly and grievously hindered by our bodily sickness or temporal cares. “I could have given my whole heart and both my hands to serve my God if it had not been for these distractions.” Nay, the assailant not only hinders us, but sometimes he cries, “*Stop!*” and we are obliged to halt altogether. There is a pulling-up time, the man tosses on his bed when he would be toiling in the vineyard. A sister sometimes has to be weeping at home when she would be comforting others’ hearts. We come to a dead

stand, and we are apt to say, “Is this joyous to me to have my feet fast in the stocks?” Sometimes the assailant even *knocks us down*; trial comes so heavily upon us, that we cannot stand. Faith reels, hope dies, murmuring and discontent trip up our heels, and we say, “What! is this joyous? Is there any good in this? Where can be the benefit of an affliction, which through the infirmity of my flesh drives me to evil, and developes the devil that is in me? Can there be any good in this?” Nay, sometimes it not only knocks us down, but *wounds* us. Ah! there are many Christians who in their afflictions have received serious wounds, for they have spoken against the Lord, their impatience has prevailed, and much of their experience has turned out to be a mere figment. Nay, there are some Christians who are even killed by their affliction. I do not mean that the spiritual seed within them ever dies. God forbid! But I mean that the joy and apparent life of their religion seem as if they had expired, and for a moment they cannot think they are Christians at all, and are led to think that they were never bought with blood, and never were in the covenant, for the blows of affliction have killed them utterly.

Ah, my brethren, it is hard to see that such a trial is right. Things are grievous indeed when it comes to this point, when not only the temporal, but even the spiritual gets marred; when the fine gold becomes dimmed and the glory departeth; when the crown of beauty, once upon our head, is cast down in the mire, and we ourselves become like a wild bull in a net, kicking against the Lord; having our soul not as a weaned child, but one that is weaning, petulant, and full of all manner of ill humours and bad tempers, and yet this is often the experience of God’s people, and therefore to them it is that it will always seem grievous.

5. But now let me add, and then I have done with the first head, that all this is only *seeming*. Do let me keep you to this, all this is only seeming. Faith triumphs in trial. When reason is sent into the backgronud and has her feet made fast in the stocks, then faith comes in and cries, “I will sing of mercy and of judgment. Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.” Faith pulls the black mask from the face of trouble, and discovers the angel beneath. Faith looks up at the cloud, and says —

**“Tis big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on my head.”**

There is a subject for song even in the smarts of the rod. For, first, the trial is *not as heavy as it might have been*; next, the trouble is *not so severe as it ought to have been*, and certainly the affliction is *not so terrible as the*

burden which others have to carry. Faith sees that in her worst sorrow there is nothing penal; there is not a drop of God's wrath in it; it is all sent in love. Faith sees love in the heart of an angry God. Faith says of her grief, "Why this is a badge of honor, for it is the child that must have the rod," and she sings of the sweet result of her sorrows, because they work her lasting good. Nay more, says Faith, "These light afflictions which are but for a moment do work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." So Faith sits down on the black throne, out of which she has expelled reason and carnal sense, and she begins to the praise of divine wisdom, to lift up her voice in a joyous song. Well, brethren, that is the first point; I have been rather too long upon it, perhaps, but I could not help it.

II. We have spoken of sore afflictions; well, now, next we have BLESSED FRUIT-BEARING.

I want you to notice the word which goes before the fruit-bearing part of the text. "No chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; *nevertheless.*" Now what does that mean? It gives me my first point under the second head, that *this fruit-bearing is not natural* — it is not the natural effect of affliction. You will see a man take a mass of metal. It appears to you very pure, and very beautiful to look upon. It is alloyed. He puts it into his refining pot, he heats the coals, he begins to stir it; you will say to him, "Why, what are you doing? You are spoiling that precious metal. See how foul is the surface! What a scum floats up." The natural effect of the fire is to make the scum shew itself. A hand, a skillful hand is needed, for the fire cannot do the refiner's work — he himself must skim the base metal off the top. Affliction only makes the sin rise to the surface, it makes the devil in us come up; it makes us, while we are boiling in affliction, worse than we were before; it is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, and of our blessed Lord and Master, when he sees it on the top, then to skim it off. The affliction does not do us any good in itself; the natural fruit of affliction is rebellion. If God chastens me, can I love him for that? Not naturally. If he smite me, for that can I yield him homage? No, naturally I rebel against him, and I say, "Who art thou that thou shouldst smite me thus, and what have I done that I should be tormented by thee?" To kiss the hand which smites, is something more than nature, it is grace; and the apostle seems to hint at this, when he says, "Nevertheless." Oh, dear friends, no more could we be purged by affliction than could the sea be made pure by being stirred up with storm. I have looked sometimes at

the waves when they seemed a delightfully pure blue, and then, after a tremendous storm, the deep has been moved from the very bottom, and its waves are thick and foul with sand and sea-weed. Trials breed discontent, anger, envy, rebellion, enmity, murmuring, and a thousand other ills; but God overruleth and makes the very thing which would make Christians worse, to minister unto their growth in holiness and spirituality. It is not the natural fruit of affliction, but the supernatural use to which God turns it, in bringing good out of evil. Note that.

And, then, observe, dear friends, that *this fruit is not instantaneous*. “Nevertheless,” what is the next word? “Afterwards.” Many believers are deeply grieved, because they do not at once feel that they have been profited by their afflictions. Well, you do not expect to see apples or plums on a tree which you have planted but a week. Only little children put their seeds into their flower-garden, and then expect to see them grow into plants in an hour. I would have you look for *very* speedy fruit, but not *too* speedy fruit, for sometimes the good of our troubles may not come to us for years afterwards, when, perhaps, getting into a somewhat similar experience, we are helped to bear it by the remembrance of having endured the like ten or twenty years ago. It is “nevertheless *afterwards*.” The good of trouble is not generally while we are in trouble, but when we get out of trouble. Yet, on the other hand, it sometimes happeneth that God can give us the jewels even before we leave Egypt, so that we can march out of the house of bondage with golden earrings hanging at our ears, and covered with all manner of ornaments. For the most part however, “it is nevertheless *afterwards*.”

Well now, you will note in the text a sort of gradation with regard to what affliction does afterwards. *It brings forth fruit*; that is one step. That fruit is the fruit of righteousness, here is an advance. That righteous fruit is peaceable, this is best of all. First, affliction really does to the Christian, when the time comes, bring forth fruit. This is the object of Christ in sending it. In his sweet prayer for the elect, he prayed that his people might bring forth fruit. He said, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit.” He assured them that every branch of the true vine that brought forth fruit, would be purged, that it might bring forth more fruit. So far as this world is concerned, God getteth his glory out of us, not by our being Christians, but by our being fruitful Christians; and the end and object of divine husbandry is to make our branches hang down with fruit. Blessed is that chastening which being fruitful in us makes us also fruitful.

It brings forth the fruit of *righteousness*; not natural, and therefore impure fruit, but fruit such as God himself may accept — holiness, purity, patience, joy, faith, love, and every Christian grace. It does not make the Christian more righteous in the sense of justification, for he is completely so in Christ; but it makes him more apparently so in the eyes of onlookers, while he, through his experience, exhibits more of the character of his Lord.

Note again, that this righteous fruit is *peaceable*. None so happy as tried Christians, *afterwards*. No calm more deep than that which precedes a storm. There is a lull in the atmosphere after the hurricane which is not known at other times. Who has not seen clear shinings after rain? God giveth sweet banquets to his children after the battle. It is after the rod that he gives the honeycomb; after climbing the Hill Difficulty, we sit down in the arbour to rest; after passing the wilderness we come to the House Beautiful; after we have gone down the Valley of Humiliation, after we have fought with Apollyon, the shining one appears to us and gives us the branch which heals us. It is always “afterwards” with the Christian. He has his best things last, and he must be expecting, therefore, to have his worst things first. It is always “afterwards.” Still, when it does come, it is peace, sweet, deep peace. Oh! what a delightful sensation it is, after long illness, once more to walk abroad; though perhaps, you are still pale to look upon, and feeble in body, you walk out of doors and breathe the air again; you can feel your blood leap in your veins, and every bone seems to sing out because of the mercy of God. Such is the peace which follows long and sharp affliction. Our enemies are drowned in the Red Sea: then is the time to go forth with timbrel and dance. Our sorrows have left a silver line of holy light behind them, and our spirit is as calm as a summer’s eve.

III. And now for the third point, and that is, FAVORED SONS.

“Nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them which are exercised thereby.” I will venture to say this, that it does not yield peaceable fruit to everybody, nay, that it does not yield peaceable fruit to every “son” either. It is not every Christian who gets a blessing from affliction, at least not from every affliction that he has. I conceive that the last words are inserted by way of distinction, and of real difference — “those that are exercised thereby.” You know, brethren, there are some of the Lord’s children who, when they get a trouble, are not exercised by it, because they run away from it. They imagine and employ rash means of

avoiding it; they use subterfuges in order to escape from it; they are not exercised thereby. Their Father holds the rod over them, and they run away from his hand. Perhaps they get a tingling smart as they run, far worse than if they had stopped; they may get a sorry cuff from his hand, but they are not exercised by it. There are others who, when under trouble, are callous and do not yield; they bear it as a stone would bear it; they learn the Stoics' art; the Lord may give or take away, they are equally senseless; they look upon it as the work of blind fate, not as the fruit of that blessed predestination which is ruled by a Father's hand, and so they are like the bullock, which rather kicks against the pricks than yield to the driver. They get no benefit from tribulation; it never enters into them, they are not exercised by it. Now, you know what the word "exercised" means. In the Greek gymnasium, the training master would challenge the youths to meet him in combat. He knew how to strike, to guard, to wrestle. Many severe blows the young combatants received from him, but this was a part of their education, preparing them at some future time to appear publicly in the games. He who shirked the trial and declined the encounter with the trainer, received no good from him, even though he would probably be thoroughly well flogged for his cowardice. The youth whose athletic frame was prepared for future struggles, was he who stepped forth boldly *to be exercised* by his master. If you see afflictions come, and sit down impatiently, and will not be exercised by your trials, then you do not get the peaceable fruit of righteousness; but if, like a man, you say, "Now is my time of trial, I will play the man; wake up my faith to meet the foe; take hold of God; stand with firm foot and slip not; let all my graces be aroused, for here is something to be exercised upon;" it is then that a man's bone, and sinew, and muscle, all grow stronger. We know that those who strive for the mastery, keep under their body, in order that they may come prepared in the day of contest, and so must the Christian use his afflictions, exercise himself by them to the keeping down of the flesh to the conquest of his evil desires, that he may be as strong as if his flesh were iron, and his muscles hardened steel.

You ask me, what in the Christian is exercised by affliction? Everything new-born in the Christian is exercised. The new-born seed is exercised by affliction, and that filial spirit which springs from it. There is sonship in every believer in Christ, that is exercised; and the *spirit* of sonship, and *the graces* of sonship all are tried; in fact, affliction, when it does us most good, exercises all the man, sets every power to work, strains his patience,

tests his faith, proves his love, develops his fears, glorifies his hopes, and whatsoever other power there be in his spiritual manhood, it exerciseth all to the very uttermost point, and it maketh every part grow stronger and nearer to perfection, and so the peaceable fruits of righteousness are yielded to those “that are exercised thereby.” Mark that distinction, because we are not all thus favored. We are all sons and shall all have to bear the trial, yet we may not all be exercised by it. Let us pray God to give us to be exercised by affliction when we do get it, that so we may possess the practical benefit of it.

I have done when I have added three practical reflections. First, *see the happy estate of a Christian*. His worst things are good things, his smarts are his joys, his losses are his gains. Did you ever hear of a man who got his health by being sick? that is a Christian. He gets rich by his losses, he rises by his falls, he goes on by being pushed back, he lives by dying, he grows by being diminished, and becomes full by being emptied. Well, if the bad things work him so much good, what must his best things do? If his dark nights are as bright as the world’s days, what shall be his days? If even his starlight is more splendid than the sun, what must his sunlight be? If he can sing in dungeon, how sweetly will he sing in heaven! If he can praise the Lord in the fire, how will he praise him before the eternal throne! If even a thorn in the flesh only drives him to his God, brethren, where will the angel-convoy carry him? If evil be good to him, what will the overflowing goodness of God be to him in another world? Who would not be a Christian? Who would not know the transcendent riches of the believer’s heritage?

Secondly, *see where the believer’s hope mainly lies*; it does not lie in the seeming. He may seem to be rich, or seem to be poor, seem to be sick, or seem to be in health, he looks upon all that as the seeming. He notices that the thing seen is the thing that *seemeth*, but the thing that is believed is the thing that *is*. He knows that what his eye catches is only the surface, what his finger touches is only the exterior; but what his heart believeth, that is the depth, the substance, the reality. So, brethren, he finds all his joy in the “nevertheless afterwards.” Sometimes he is in great trouble, dark trouble, and the devil tempts him, but he spells that word over, and repeats it, “Never-the-less, I am very poor, but I shall never-the-less, obtain heaven for ever. I am very weak, but never-the-less, I shall be where the inhabitant is never sick. The devil has beaten me, I am on the ground, and he has his foot on my neck, and says he will make an end of me, but I have, never-

the-less, eternal security in Christ.” Never-the-less, not a grain — not an atom the less, in fact, he throws the never-the-less into an ever-the-more; he believes he shall have ever-the-more of bliss, and so, looking to the afterwards, he rejoiceth in tribulation, for tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. Why, the Christian often learns his best lessons about heaven by contrast. If a man should give me a black book printed in the old black letter, and should say, “You want to know about happiness, that book is written about misery, learn from the opposite;” I would thank him just as much for that as if the book were on happiness. So the believer takes his daily trials and reads them the opposite way. Trial comes to him and says, “Your hope is dry.” “My hope is not dry,” says he. “While I have a trial I have a ground of hope.” “Thy God has forsaken thee,” says tribulation. “My God has not forsaken me,” says he, “for he says, in the world ye shall have tribulation, and I have it. I have a letter from God in a black envelope, but, as long as it came from him I do not mind what kind of envelope it comes in. He has not forgotten me — has not given me up — he is still gracious to me.” And so the Christian begins to think about heaven, “For,” says he, “this is the place of work, that is the place of rest; this is the place of sorrow, that is the place of joy; here is defeat, there is triumph; here is shame, there glory; here it is being despised, there it is being honored; here it is the hiding my Father’s face, there it is the glory of a presence; here it is absence in the body, there it is presence with the Lord; here weeping, and groaning, and sighing, there the song of triumph; here death — death to my friends and death to myself, there the happy union of immortal spirits in immortality.” So he learns to sing not of the seeming but of the “nevertheless afterwards,” with sweet hope, as his harp of many golden strings.

Lastly, brethren, *afterwards is just the point where the unconverted feel the pinch.* “Nevertheless afterwards.” I walk round your gardens: you are rich. How beautifully they are laid out! What rare flowers! what luxuries! And as I look at them all, if I remember that you will die, I say to myself, “Nevertheless afterwards.” This poor man who has a paradise on earth, can have no paradise in the world to come.” Do I see you riding gaily along the street? you have abundance of wealth and honor, but you are without God and without Christ; then I see close behind you a grim executioner, bearing this motto, “Nevertheless afterwards.” You wear a smiling face this morning, for though you have neither riches nor honor, still you are young, and have health and beauty, and are looking out on the pleasures of this

world, I want you to take a telescope in your hand and look a little further — “*Nevertheless afterwards!*” You are thinking about this present life, and hoping you will prosper in it, and hitherto you have not wanted any religion — you say you have been happy enough without Christ, and you dare say you will get on without him, but I want you to remember “*nevertheless afterwards.*” When you come to die, when you stand before an angry God, when you rise amid the terrors of the day of judgment, when you have to meet the open book and the burning eyes of the great Judge, when you hear the sentence. “Come, ye blessed,” or “Depart, ye cursed,” you will think of “*Nevertheless afterwards.*” I would ye would bring these eternal things before your mind and reckon with your conscience concerning them. Soul, if thy joy be in earth and thy trust in self, thou mayst spread thyself like a green bay tree, thou mayst become as a bullock fattened for the slaughter, but nevertheless afterwards, beware lest he tear thee in pieces and there be none to deliver. Believe thou in Christ. Trust thy soul with him, and then whatever is to come afterwards, whatever “*Nevertheless afterwards*” may come, thou mayst always be sure of this, that there is for thee an eternal and exceeding weight of glory. May my Master give you an interest in that “*Nevertheless afterwards,*” and then I shall not fret, nor will you either if you have to have an interest in the rod of the covenant which is for the present, at least in seeming, not joyous but grievous.

THE CEDARS OF LEBANON.

NO. 529

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER
13TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon,
which he hath planted.” — Psalm 104:16.*

IF Solomon were here this morning, who spoke of all trees, from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar that is in Lebanon, he would greatly instruct us in the natural history of the cedar, and, at the same time, uttering similitudes and proverbs of wisdom, he would give us apples of gold in baskets of silver. But since the Lord Jesus Christ has said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,” we can dispense with the company of Solomon; for if Christ be present, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. Solomon probably would confine his remarks simply to the physical conformation and botany of the wonderful tree; but our Lord, I trust, will speak to our hearts this morning, concerning those who are “planted in the courts of the Lord,” and therefore flourish like cedars. May our communications this morn be blessed to us while we talk of those trees of the Lord, those plants of his own right hand planting which grow in the garden of the Lord.

I shall have to say some things this morning which are not for beginners in the gospel school; I shall have to handle some lofty matters which belong to the more advanced of the Lord’s family; for Lebanon is a high hill, and the ascent thereto is very craggy, and the pathway to the summit is not for the feet of babes, it is rather fit for those lion-like men, those men of experience, who, by reason of use, have had their feet made like hind’s feet that they may stand on their high places. Follow me as I may be led of the Spirit to climb that arduous pathway. Let us stand this morning, under the

venerable shadow of those ancient cedars which, to this very day, are the Lord's witnesses, and are as aforetime full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon, which the Lord hath planted.

There are three things I shall bring before your attention this morning, in the cedars of Lebanon. First of all, *the absence of all human dependence*; secondly, *the presence of divine culture*; thirdly, *the fullness of vital principle*.

You may not see all this at first, but remember that our translation is not exactly correct. You will observe that the word "sap," is inserted in italics; it is not there in the Hebrew. "The trees of the Lord are full," or rather, which gives the meaning clearly, "The trees of the Lord are satiated — are satisfied — the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted."

I. That rendering of the text gives me my first point. We see in yonder venerable trees, crowning the ridge of the Libanus range, THE ABSENCE OF ALL HUMAN CULTURE.

1. Note first, that these trees are peculiarly the Lord's trees, because *they owe their planting entirely to him*. "The cedars of Lebanon, which *he* hath planted." No diligent hand delved the soil; no careful husbandman dropped in the fruitful cone. How those ancient giants of the grove came there no tongue can tell; it must be left among the mysteries. Perhaps the waters of the tremendous deluge washed up the cones, and laid them safely upon the ledge of rock at the top of the hill, and there they sprouted and grew. That would be but a surmise. We must leave the early planting of those mighty trees among the secrets which belong unto God. Certain it is that they owe nothing to men, that there is not a tree of Lebanon of which we may not safely say, "This is one of the cedars which *the Lord hath planted*." Beloved, it is quite true of every child of God. The Lord uses instrumentality, but the instrument has no real power except as God puts power into it. If we have been converted, we were not converted of ourselves, of the energy of our own free will. We are not self-planted, but God-planted. If we have been turned from nature's darkness to marvellous light, it was not through the oratory or eloquence of the minister, if so, our religion would be in vain. It was God whose fiat said, "Let the light be," and light was; who said, "Let that dried branch be planted in my garden," and planted we were, and grow we must and shall while he supports us. The mysterious finger of the Divine Spirit dropped the living seed into a heart which he had himself prepared for its reception, and there it sprang

up and continued to grow from the tender shoot, until it towered aloft as a goodly cedar of mighty girth. Every true heir of heaven, like the cedar, owns the Great Husbandman as his planter.

2. As I look upon those noble trees, I note that *they are not dependant upon man for their watering*. Yonder trees in the plain are fertilized by little canals running at their roots, and therefore are they green; but these on the top of Lebanon, who shall find a stream for them? Who shall bring the rivers of water to their feet? How shall the gardener empty his bucket, that they may drink? Nay, there they stand on the lofty rock, unmoistened by human irrigation; and yet your heavenly Father supplieth them. The clouds, those wandering cisterns of the sky, arrested by their branches, hover round them, and at last pour down in deluges the fructifying rain; or the ledges of the rock retain the streamlets which trickle from Lebanon's snowy peaks, and then the roots of the cedar drink up the nourishment which they require; but man has nought to do with it. Man's culture withers in the plain below; when autumn comes, the fields are all dry and parched. Man only preserves to himself a little spot of green, by perpetually using the processes of irrigation, but these cedars owe not a single drop to the power and energy of man. Well, now, so is it to the Christian who has learned to live by faith; he can say —

*“My trust is in the Lord alone,
My rock and refuge in his throne;
In all my fears, in all my straits,
My soul on his salvation waits.”*

He is independent of man, even in temporal things, because he has learned to trust in his God. He believes the promise — “Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure,” and the bread and the water are sure to him. In spirituals, though he uses the means, though he loves the pastor after God's own heart, though he loves the pastures where he feeds and is made to lie down, yet still he sings, “*The Lord* is my shepherd, therefore I shall not want. *He* leadeth me beside the still waters, *he* maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” On no priest does he rely, on no persuasions of eloquent tongues does he depend, but for his full and his continued maintenance he looks to the Lord his God, and to Him alone. The dew of heaven is his portion, and the God of heaven is his fountain. Every Christian thus is a tree of the Lord, in his planting and in his watering.

3. Furthermore, if your eye looks attentively at yonder cedars, you will see that *no mortal might protects them*. They are planted on a mountain ridge no less than six thousand feet above the level of the sea. The snow frequently lies upon their branches in enormous masses. They are in the most exposed position conceivable. When the cedurs were as yet but young, the browsing goat might have destroyed them. As they grew up, the heavy falls of snow must have completely buried the young trees. Afterwards they were subjected to many dangers. Up there the lightnings are at home; there the callow tempests try their young wings. Lebanon's towering peaks must be a frequent mark for the thunderbolts of God, and sometimes when the time has come, the voice of the Lord, that maketh the hinds to calve, also rends the cedars of Lebanon, and the hoary prince of the forest bows humbly at the touch of the scepter of his King. These trees owe nothing for their preservation from storm, wind, and tempest, to man. There is no hedge set about them; there are no means used to shore up the limbs as they begin to drop by weight; man doth not even keep the goat from them. They are left there unprotected in the pitiless storm and terrible blast, and yet the veterans survive. The cedars of Lebanon have not all fallen even beneath the insatiable axe of man, still they stand — God's trees, kept and preserved by him, and by him alone. It is precisely the same with the Christian. He is not a hot-house plant, sheltered from temptation; he does not live in a world of holy and hallowed influence, preserving him from sin, he stands in the most exposed position, on yonder bare rock, where winds of mysterious Satanic influence, and dreadful earthquakes of his own doubts and fears, where terrific thunderbolts from God's right-hand, the thunderbolts of desertion and stern affliction all come against him; he has no shelter, no protection, except this, that the broad wings of the Eternal God always cover the cedars which he himself has planted. Oh, it is magnificent to think how the Christian bears up; weak, feeble, less than nothing in himself, yet so mighty that all hell cannot crush him, and the united hosts of the world, the flesh, and the devil, cannot prevail against him. Methinks I hear the cedars, as the trees of the wood clap their hands, shouting aloud — "In all these things we are more than conquerors," as they remember lightning, and snow, and storm; and so with the cedars of the Lord, when tribulation, and trial, and distress come upon them — "We are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us." Brethren, forget not that our refuge is in the Lord alone.

4. Fourthly, *as to their inspection* — they also preserve a sublime indifference to human gaze. Perhaps for thousands of years they may not have been looked upon by human eye at all. Moses desired to see “that goodly land and Lebanon.” David often saw them, and he sang of that handful of corn whose fruit shall shake like Lebanon. But I can not find that the cedars have become a whit more green now that they are visited by pilgrims, nor, on the other hand, that they lose anything of their verdure because the evil eye of man may have glaned upon them. Solomon spoke of one who was “excellent as the cedars.” Sacred to God, they stand high up in lonely grandeur, indifferent to mortal judgement. When the virgin snows of Lebanon were untouched by man’s polluted foot, and the Eternal walked in tempest, stepping from crag to crag; or when in the cool eventide the Unseen One trod their hallowed aisles, these trees were God’s trees, and God’s trees alone, stretching out their broad branches for him to gaze upon, quite content if at high noon, or in the deep gloom of midnight the Great Planter in solitary glory looked down upon them. It is just so with the Christian. He stands, like the cedars, in a conspicuous position, but he courts not observation. He is like a city set upon a hill, yet still consciously he walks *before the Lord* in the land of the living. He owes nothing to the smiles of men, and he cares as little for their frowns. I mean that true believer who has so grown in faith that he no longer leans upon an arm of flesh, but understands how to stand upright; I mean that advanced Christian who has not one foot upon the sea and the other on the land, but hath put both his feet on the rock of ages, and lets earth reel if it will, and bids the storms come and the winds blow, unmoved, possessing a deep calm within, because *he looks to God*. This is his joy and his only joy, “Thou God seest me, my Father who is in heaven knows my need, *he* looks upon me and regards me.” Out upon the piety which depends upon the public eye. Away, away, away with the religion that needs to be watched and guarded lest it desert the standard. I am not to have religion like a dog-collar, which I may slip off and on and feel glad to be rid of it; it must be part and parcel of my being. My religion must be a thing which lives in the notice of God, in my closet, and in my secret heart; a religion which I only bring into public because I cannot leave it behind. It must not be the Pharisees paint and tinsel which he puts on in the public place, and privately laughs at when he gets alone. Ah, my brethren, we want to be like the cedars, caring only for God, minding little whether we are praised or blamed by any of human shape. If you cannot feel it sufficient honor to be known of him who seeth in secret, you have need to begin to live aright.

5. Nor have we finished here the glorious independence of the cedar. I would I had a tongue to tell it all out, it is a theme for poet or bard. We want a Coleridge or a Milton to sing the majesty of those grand old trees in their solitary glory. Note that *their exultation is all for God* and not for man. When the fig-tree yieldeth its figs, it may well say, "Thanks to the cultivator who has taken so much care of me." When the vine giveth up her luscious clusters she has to thank the vine-dresser who has used the pruning knife. When ye walk your gardens, all your plants praise you as well as God, because of your care for them. But what saith the cedar? Who hath planted the cedars, or who hath watered them? Who hath pruned them — who hath hedged them about and kept them in the day of storm? The Lord, even the Lord alone hath been everything unto the cedars, and, therefore, David very sweetly puts it in one of the last Psalms, "Praise ye the Lord, fruitful trees and all cedars." The cedars have not a green leaf to magnify man with, nor a single cone with which to make him proud. The cedar's silent song is, "Let Jehovah, God of Israel, be praised, and when we fall let our riven timbers build a temple to his praise, for unto him, and unto him alone we grow." They fell, you know, many of them beneath the axe of Hiram, and floated on the sea to Joppa, and then again were carried to Jerusalem; but it was that they might make the holy place, and build the pillars of the temple of God. So, Christians, is it with you. There is nothing in you that can magnify man. If you understand yourselves aright you give unto the Lord glory and strength, for your only thanks are due to him, your praise, your gratitude shall ascend to Him who chose you ere ever the earth was; to Him who bought you with his precious blood; to Him who quickens and preserves you by his Spirit; and when you die this is your hope and joy, that ye shall be pillars in the temple of your God, and go no more out for ever. Ye are the Lord's trees from first to last; if you know yourselves aright the Author and Finisher of your Faith is your Divine Redeemer.

6. I do not know that there is a cedar upon Lebanon which is not also *independent of man in its expectations*. They never expect to be fenced about and hedged; they never reckon upon being preserved and watered by man. We have many schemes, but I have heard of none for preserving the cedars. Speculations are rife every day, and one would scarcely be astonished by a projected railroad to the moon; but yet I have never heard of any one who has attempted to purchase the cedars of Lebanon, to preserve them, or make them his private property. Arab and Turk do their

best to ruin the whole grove, but yet there they stand expecting as little from man as they have ever received from him, giving him their shadow, yielding him their fragrance, but getting nothing and expecting nothing from him in return. That is your case, O Christian. You are to live expecting nothing from man, and you shall never be disappointed; you are to live looking upon the Lord alone, and there again disappointment shall never come. You are to understand that one of God's objects with you is to knock away every prop from you, to take away every buttress, and to make you lean upon God alone. There is the round world, what bears it up? He hangeth the world upon nothing. If you are what you should be you are just like that earth — you have no visible support — there is nothing upon which you can depend that the carnal eye can see; but yet as the earth moveth not and falleth not from her orbit, so you, by the power of faith, shall be maintained and kept just where you are. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that wait on the Lord shall not want any good thing." It is a life's work to learn independence of the creature, and almost another life's work to learn dependence upon the Creator. To wean us from the breasts of this world is a long and painful process; to get us clean rid of that walking by sight, which is the disease of man, and to bring us to walk by faith in the Spirit, which is the glory of a Christian, this is a work well worthy of a God, and blessed is the man who has this work to a great extent accomplished in himself. I do feel, brethren, more and more, that my soul must wait only upon the Lord, and that my expectation must be from him alone. You too, must come here, and learn that the Lord will provide, but it is only in the mount of the Lord that this sweet truth can be seen.

II. Now for the next point. The cedars of Lebanon are a GLORIOUS DISPLAY OF DIVINE CARE.

1. First, *in the abundance of their supply*. No river, as I have observed, rolls at their feet; no canals keep their leaf from withering; man uses no labor, and employs no skill to irrigate the steeps of Lebanon, and yet do the cedars want? Look at them; stand under their shadow, and see if they want any good thing. The text tells us, that so far from wanting, they are saturated — "The trees of the Lord are full." Man's trees may sometimes be ready to perish for lack of moisture, they may be frostbitten and their shoots may be nipped, but the trees of the Lord are full, there is never any want there; there is no want to them that fear him. Dear friends, those believers who have learned most to live by faith, possess the richest part of the land of promise. Other believers live in the land of Egypt, and are often

making bricks without straw, but these dwell in the land which floweth with milk and honey. They have passed the wilderness, and having believed, they have entered into *rest*. The lot of the truly full-grown believer who stays himself upon his God alone, is well set forth in the promise, "His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the earth." He has his troubles, but faith makes them light; he has his wants, but faith never permits him to call them wants, for they are always supplied before the necessity begins to pinch him. Other men may, with all their watching and wisdom, come to nothing; they may rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, and yet be poor; but they who stay upon God in temporals and spirituals, if heaven should shake, and if the pillars of the earth should be moved, and the sea should be dried up, yet their place of defense shall be munitions of rocks, "their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure." See this on a large scale in the case of our dear brother Muller's institution, at Bristol. We often see institutions sending out fresh begging appeals, there is some new claim upon their funds; the Lancashire distress has turned aside very much contribution from this object, and that society. Of course it is so, these societies usually lean on man, and rest upon an arm of flesh; but our Bristol brother, by prayer and faith makes known his wants unto God, and when does he want for any good thing? When needs he issue a begging appeal? Verily, I do believe that if all England were in famine, the orphan-house at Bristol would have sufficient. Whatever may happen, the Lord has promised to hear prayer, and he will honor faith: the cedars of Lebanon shall be full if all the trees of the plain be famished. I would to God we could exhibit still more and more of the same principle of faith in the conduct of our college; and in that case, too, I am persuaded that whatever may occur, and whatever may happen, as that is God's work, it never can lack. My confidence in that matter is in my God. I am glad that so many of the Lord's people are made the instruments to supply the wants of the college, but still I look far higher. Sometimes when friends say, "Mention it to the people," I do not like to do it, lest I should lean too much on you. God's own work shall be carried on by God's own means; and I am sure he will send what it requires, and in a way which shall be for the glory of his name. They are happy — I am a witness that they are — brethren, they are well supplied, who, like the cedars, exhibit divine culture and independence of man.

2. Again, note concerning these cedars that they are not only well supplied, but *they are always green*. Other trees refreshed with rivers, if they have

the whole Nile at their roots, must drop their leaves once every year at the command of winter, and then they stretch out their bare limbs, as if they prayed for the return of spring. The oaks of Bashan languish, the fig tree casteth her leaves, the ash and the elm are ashamed, but thou, O cedar, thou livest in perpetual spring; the green lawns of thine horizontal branches fail not even in the year of drought. The birds *always* sing in her branches, and the storks make their nests in due season among her boughs. Dear brethren, it is so with the man who lives upon Christ alone. He has not the changes of other men; he has his trials, but he sings through them. The reason why many of us sink so low in spirit and hang our harps on the willows, is only this — want of faith. But if

***“Our faith is in the Lord alone,
Our rock and refuge is his throne,”***

then we can say with Habakkuk, “Though the fig tree shall not blossom,” and so on, “yet will I rejoice in the Lord.” Let our faith be vigorous and unstaggering, let us be planted up there where God has put us, on the rocky side of Lebanon, in the midst of all kinds of difficulties and dangers, yet our leaf shall be always green, and we shall not know when drought cometh.

3. Observe *the grandeur and size of these trees*. I have found upon reference to Mr. Thompson’s work, “The Laud and the book,” that several of the trees measure forty-one feet in girth, so that they are real giants of the forest. Think of it and admire — never watered by man, never cared for by him, depending upon God and upon God alone, and yet they have grown to the height of one hundred feet, and forty feet in girth. Ah! and what magnificent Christians those are who come to rest upon God alone. You think, perhaps, that they having so little supply from second causes, would be feeble, but, dear brethren, it is often that supply from beneath which makes us feeble. I believe it is our riches which make us poor, and our strength which makes us weak, for when I am weak then am I strong, when I am brought down to feel that all the creatures put together could not help me the turn of a penny, when I know that all my power and wisdom and strength is not worth so much as a rusty nail, if I put it altogether and strain it to the utmost, O then it is so blessed to get a grip of God, to strike one’s root down to the heart of the rock of ages, and to rest alone on Him. The best Christians, the most splendid specimens of divine husbandry, are those who are most delivered from confidence in the

creature. You shall read all biographies, and you shall find in proportion as men become little in self and little in creature love and creature trust, they become great and mighty in their doings for the Lord.

4. Note next, *the fragrance* of these venerable trees. Hosea speaks of the smell of Lebanon, and we know that cedar wood was among the aromatic substances burned upon the altar of the sanctuary. Travellers tell us that when they stand under the cedars of Lebanon the smell is most delightful, the fragrant cedar wood perfumes all the air. Now few of men's trees do that; some of them do; the citron, and the orange, and lemon, load the air with sweets, but many others, cultivate them as we may, and nurture with the greatest care, never can or will perfume the air. How sweetly do God's trees sweeten all about them. If your piety comes from God, and if you wait in spirit upon God, and lean only upon him, there will be about you such a sweet fragrance that you shall be acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus and acceptable to your brethren, and even an ungodly world shall perceive that there is in you the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed. No man will yield so delightful a perfume as the man who is much with Christ. The scented piece of clay declared that it owed its perfume to sleeping with a rose, and if we have learned to rest upon the bosom of the Savior, if we have taught our soul to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him," our companionship and confidence in God will yield a sweet fragrance both to our words, to our actions, and to everything to which we set our hands.

5. Attentively think upon *the perpetuity of these cedars*. Do you remember how carnal men said, concerning certain works of faith which we ourselves attempted, "Ah, well, it may be all very well, it will last for a time, it is a sort of spurt of enthusiasm; it will last for a time, and then die out like the wick of a candle." Societies that are blessed with patrons, and vice-presidents, and secretaries, and directors, and subscribers, and that use flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, those will get on; there is something to look at there; there is something tangible; but a scheme which lives only upon God! The business man says, "I do not see it; I look at the pounds, shillings, and pence; I have not learned to look at things unseen, I cannot confide in these visionary ideas." Now, every year somebody has said, "Muller, of Bristol, will come to nothing, Mr. So-and-so has died, that old gentleman who used to give him two thousand pounds and three thousand pounds a-year. Now he is dead, now it will come to an end, and cannot keep on." After his death somebody else was going to die,

and that somebody died, but the orphans were still fed and housed. Even at this moment, the men of sight are prophesying evil against that marvel of faith. In the same way they might tremble for the cedars, and talk thus.

Now, here are these cedars of God upon the top of Lebanon, with nobody to take care of them, they will surely be destroyed. What! no society pledged to guarantee their preservation! Why, there will not be one of them left in three weeks; they will be cut down for the sake of their timber, or carried off piecemeal by tourists. Ah! but my dear brethren, there are some of those cedars that can be reckoned to be at the very least three thousand five hundred years old, and some of them are older doubtless; but we cannot, of course, except by cutting them down, discover their precise age by counting the rings. But there they stand, and have stood all those hundreds and thousands of years with no ranger of the forest to look after them, but just God himself to be the husbandman and keeper of them all.

Depend upon it, Christian, if thou retest upon God, thy simple faith is a principle which thou mayst use, not only for ten or twenty years, but all thy threescore years and ten; it serves thee in thy youth to be thy joy: it shall serve thee in thine old age to be thy staff. If thou couldst outlive Methuselah, yet still thou shouldst find that God would keep the cedars full, and preserve thee among them safely even to the end.

6. I conclude this head by noticing that these cedars *are very venerable*. A traveler declares that often as he has stayed beneath their shadow, he has never done so without feeling a solemn awe. Mr. Thompson has slept under their shade on one or two occasions, and as he has looked up and seen the stars, and sometimes climbed up the cedars, and marked how they spread out all their branches horizontally, making a series of green lawns one above another, he says he has never gazed upon them without feeling there was something holy in the spot. The mountain tribes treat them with superstitious reverence, calling them saints, and giving to each a name. They command, for their antiquity and glory, the veneration of man. Scarcely could even the brute pass them, one would think, without looking up with something of respect. It is most evidently so with the Christian who lives wholly upon God. Your common sort of Christians who have very little faith, and live by feelings — your ordinary sort of Christians who live half by faith and half by works, mere professors who have never entered into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, and think all I am talking about to be mere mysticism; these, I say, who do not understand the word “faith” to be so broad that it encompasses the whole

of human life, so deep that it penetrates to the depths of the heart, and yet so high that hope cannot desire anything greater than faith can give — those who have not learned faith fully, have no respect from among men, but those who can act upon the supernatural principle of depending upon God, sooner or later will get the respect even of the most careless. The day is coming when these cedars of God shall be honored in the eyes of the most ungodly — in that great day when the wicked shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt, then these cedars of God shall have their time of honor, and the whole world shall know them to be plants of the Lord's right hand planting. I leave that point; I would, dear friends, that you and I knew more and more what it was to live upon the Lord alone. I believe it is the safest way of life and I am certain it is the happiest. Let the cedar's lot be my lot, let me have my God to be my sole stay and my support, and I shall be rich to all the intents of bliss.

III. Now for the third and last point. Taking the text as it stands, and reading it, “The trees of the Lord are full of sap,” which, although it is not in the original, is not after all a violence to it. It is not a literal translation, but still it is a free translation that does not violate the sense of the Hebrew. Taking our version, I get my third particular, **FULNESS OF LIVING PRINCIPLE.**

1. “The trees of the Lord are full of sap,” of which, I shall notice first, that this is *vitally necessary*. Without sap, the cedar is no tree, it becomes a dead post, and nothing more; sap is needful to make it flourish and exist. Without the life of God in the heart, a man is no Christian; he may attend his Church twice every Sabbath, or he may go to Chapel; he may read his Bible regularly and have family prayers in his house; he may subscribe his guineas to all sorts of societies; he may be very kind to the poor; he may be one whose outward life and conversation are quite beyond rebuke, and yet, unless he has been born again, and has been made a partaker of the mysterious Spirit of the living God, he is not one of the Lord's trees. Vitality is essential to a Christian. We call not dead ones sons, and if you have not been quickened, you cannot be children of God. It is not likely that Christ is married to a dead corpse; and if you have not been quickened by divine grace, you are not his bride, nor even a member of his spouse. The body always ejects dead substances; with great pain and difficulty, a decayed bone is pushed out from the flesh, through an ulcer, perhaps — but out it must come; even so, there are no dead members of Christ's body — painfully would the body strive to eject such a member. There must be

life — a vital principle infused into us by God the Holy Ghost. The trees of the Lord are, without exception, full of sap.

2. Next, *essentially mysterious*. I do not understand the sap — I suppose the botanist may. The sap is the blood of the tree, and in the tree there is a circulation very much like the circulation of the blood through our veins and heart. But who understands the circulation of the blood — it is a great mystery — by what force it rises, and by what power it descends again. Who shall tell how that river of life is guided? It is a divine mystery. So is it with the life within us — it is a greater mystery still. You may discover the sea, and understand it, but never the life of God in a Christian. This is God himself in a Christian, God infused into the Christian's soul as a divine principle. How shall I set this forth? Regeneration is the Holy Ghost coming into a man, and becoming that man's life; and the life in a believer afterwards feeds upon the flesh and blood of Christ; like sustaining like, divine life being sustained by divine food. Do you know anything about this mystery — "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Every one who is a tree of the Lord must be full of this essential mystery — "The trees of the Lord are full of sap."

3. Thirdly, it is *radically secret*; note that. Who knows how the roots get their sap? They go searching through the soil with their little spongioles, looking after that food which is exactly suitable to the constitution of the tree. But how they transmute the mineral into the vegetable, how they suck out the various gasses, or draw out the particles they need, who can tell? Now our root is Christ, our life is hid in him. This is the secret of the Lord. The radix of the Christian is as secret as the life itself. Who can comprehend the mystery of the life within the believer, and the root of that life, that vital union with Christ, that reception of divine grace may, of his very soul out of the wounds of the Savior, who shall explain this? Only this we must say, however grace flows there from Jesus, it must be there, and it must come from Christ, for all the trees of the Lord are full of sap.

4. Then, again, it is *permanently active*. In the Christian the divine life is always active — not in fruit-bearing, but in some operation within. The sap in the cedar never lies still. The sap in common trees is still in the winter, and if you cut a tree in the early spring, as I unfortunately did, then the sap comes streaming down in great white streams from the wound you have

made, because the sap has begun to flow. The tree should be cut at some other period of the year, but the cedar always has its sap active; perforate it when you may, a gum begins to exude at all times. So is it with the Christian. His *graces*, are not every one of them in activity, but the *life* is always in activity. My hand is not always moving, but *my blood* is. I am not always working for God, but my heart is always living upon God. The essential life of the Christian never dies — never ceases from being in active operation. There is a seed in him which cannot sin, because it is born of God, but which must still go towards holiness, because it comes from God. I do not understand this permanent activity, but still, I know it is in every one of you, if you are Christians, for “the trees of the Lord are full of sap.”

5. I shall almost have finished, when I notice in the next place that it is *externally operative*. A traveler tells us that in the wood bark, and even the cones of the cedar there is an abundance of resin. They are saturated with it so that he says he can scarcely touch one of the cedars of Lebanon without having the turpentine or resin of them upon his hands. That is always the way with a truly healthy Christian, his grace is externally manifested. There is the inner life within, it is active, and by-and-bye when it is in a right state, it saturates everything. You talk with the gracious man, he cannot help talking about Christ; you go into his house, you will soon see that a Christian lives there; you notice his actions and you will see he has been with Jesus. He is so full of sap that the sap must come out. He has so much of the divine life within, that the holy oil and divine balsam must flow from him. I am afraid this cannot be said of all of us, it is because we get to be dependent upon man, and not on God, and therefore have little of this sap but if we are independent of man, and live wholly upon God, we shall be so full of sap that every part of us will betray our piety.

6. And then let me say lastly, that this sap is *abundantly to be desired*. Oh, when I think what glory a full-grown Christian brings to God, what honor the faith of a believer puts upon Jesus, when I think what a knowledge of God and divine things an advanced believer possesses, when I contemplate his own joy and peace of mind, I could wish that every one of you, (though it is well to be hyssops on God’s wall,) could be cedars upon God’s Lebanon. Oh that we would grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There is something of the sap in us, let us pray for more. We do live upon Christ. If our hearts do not awfully deceive us, you and I can say —

*“On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”*

The Lord knows our hearts, and he himself knows that we can say as Peter did, “Lord, thou knowest all things — thou knowest that I love thee.” But oh, is there one among you that is content with himself? I am not, I am ashamed of myself, forgetting the things that are behind, I would press forward to that which is before; not as though I had already obtained, either were already perfect. Ah, brethren, there is such a height of glorious independence of man, and a confident dependence upon God, and there is such a blessed internal joy and peace, such a divine fullness of sap which we may yet have, that I pray you none of you rest till you obtain it to the praise and the glory of his grace, who hath made you accepted in the Beloved.

Sinner, that which I have been holding up as the strength and beauty of a Christian, must be life to you. Come, every man, and trust in the Lord, for if you trust in him, you shall never be confounded. The Lord add now a blessing upon you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

THE CHIEF OF SINNERS.

NO. 530

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Sinners; of whom I am chief.” — 1 Timothy 1:15.

WHO among all the Scriptural writers can compare with Paul in the fullness of his testimony to the grace of God? Upon the doctrines of grace, upon the experience of grace, upon everything that has to do with the exceeding abundant grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul is the mighty master and the great teacher. If it were right to look at him from an exclusively human point of view, and speak of his genius rather than his inspiration, I might say of him that so mighty, so clear, so eloquent a teacher of truth has never existed since the days of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though Augustine was a particularly bright star, and Calvin in after generations rivalled, if he did not even excel Augustine, Paul far excels both in the brilliancy with which he exhibits every quality of grace, and grace in everything that has a good quality. Or, to use another figure, Paul towers aloft above them all in the great mountain range, lofty though full many of their summits be. One reason for his clearness about grace was, that he was himself a very pattern and model of its power. In him God had expressly, as much as in any other man, and perhaps more, shown forth the super-abundant power of his love in passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and in making the very man who had been a ringleader of mischief, to become the leader of the hosts of the Lord. Paul calls himself in our text the chief of sinners. It is possible that he literally exceeded every other sinner, dared more, and sunk deeper in crime than any of his fellows among the sons of men. If so, let no man that lives despair of mercy. If the gate of heaven is wide enough for the chief of sinners to go through, then there must in that respect be room enough for those who must be less than the chief, who, though very great, yet cannot be quite so great as he. I say, though I hardly think so, that it is just possible that, taking certain circumstances into consideration, Paul really was in such sense the very

chief of sinners. And yet I hardly think so, because he himself in another place calls himself less than the least of all saints, which was the modest apprehension of one who in another place affirmed that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles. Might it not then rather have been that his deep view of his own sinfulness, his clear sense of his guilt, made him consider himself to be the chief of sinners, though, probably, there have been tens of thousands even greater than he?

To-night my business is *to find out the chief of sinners, and endeavor to describe them*; and then, *to enquire how it is that so often the very chief of sinners are saved.*

I. First, dear friends, as Saul hunted out believers, I have, to-night, TO TRY AND HUNT OUT THE CHIEF OF SINNERS.

Now who are they? They come under various characters, and may be classified in different lists. We will begin with *those who directly oppose themselves to God and to his Christ*. These are chief among sinners. Paul did join their ranks. He set himself determinately against the name of Christ, and thought with himself that he ought to do very much against that name. Now those who directly attack the person of God come, first, under the head of *blasphemers*. Paul says he was such. He had, no doubt, used expressions quite as strong as those sometimes used by unbelieving Jews, when they are much irritated by Christians. He had said some foul things about the *impostor crucified* upon Mount Calvary, things, perhaps, more vile than he ever cared to remember, much less to repeat. He had been exceeding mad, and when men are mad they say exceedingly mad things. He had been a blasphemer, and a blasphemer challenges the vengeance of the Almighty with no common effrontery. Have I one here whose mouth is foul with oaths? Has there strayed into this house of prayer to-night, one who has cursed God, and dared in his angry moments to lift his puny hand of rebellion, and imprecate a curse from the Most High? Have I the misfortune — nay, I will not call it so — have I the hopeful privilege of talking to one who has spoken against Jesus of Nazareth, and who is determined to quench his religion, or to oppose it to the utmost of his power? Is it so? Then indeed, friend, thou art one of the chief of sinners, and I am glad that thou art here, that I may tell thee that there is mercy even for such as thou art, for “all manner of sin *and blasphemy* shall be forgiven unto men.” No matter how often or how foully thou hast cursed the Most High, and damned thyself, he will not damn thee if thou wilt turn

from the error of thy ways, and seek mercy through the blood of him whom thou hast despised.

Others come under the same class. For instance, we must here put the *infidel*, for although his words may not take the form of blasphemy, yet the very thought that there is no God is blasphemy, and he that dares to vent that thought is not only a fool, but one of the chief of sinners. And so thou hast tried to stultify thy conscience and to silence its monitions by pretending to believe that there is no God! Thon hast tried to rake up the stale arguments of Tom Paine and of Voltaire, and thou hast chuckled when one who called himself a bishop of God's heritage dared to vent some strong things against the Book of his divine inspiration. Thou knowest in thy heart that there is a God. Thy conscience tells thee that he is a just God. Thou expectest to be punished for thy sins. That start the other night when thou wert alone, that cold shiver when some one spoke of death — all these prove that thy infidelity is not so stout and brave a thing as thou hast dreamed it was. A poor, craven, cowardly thing it is, that turns pale at a sick-bed, and flies, with coward paleness on its cheek, when once it thinks of judgment to come. Oh! if thou be here, thou Atheist, thou Deist, thou disbeliever in Christ Jesus, thou art the chief of sinners, and I am glad thou art here that I may tell thee that a God of love waits to embrace thee, and that he still declares this to be true, that he is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him. Fling down thy weapons, man! Thou canst not fight the Most High! End this unequal quarrel. Have neither truce nor parley, but consider how thou mayest be at peace with him. The hand of his love is stretched out to accept the hand of thy submission. Oh! be thou reconciled to God through the death of his Son.

And here I ought to put down *those who hold views derogatory of the Deity and the person of Christ*. Faithfulness to you, my hearers, compels me to put down the *Socinian*; I will not call him Unitarian, for we all hold the unity or the Godhead. Trinitarians, but Unitarians are we still. Far otherwise the Socinian and the Arian — I put them down here — the men who say that Christ is not God, that the Redeemer of the world was but the son of Mary, that he who walked the waters of the deep, chained the winds, cast out evil spirits, and made even Hades startle with his voice when the soul of Lazarus came back — that he was but a prophet, a creature, a mere man! Surely, sir, thou art the chief of sinners to have talked thus of him who is “very God of very God,” the express image of his

Father's person! But even to thee is Jesus gracious, and he bids thee still believe in him. Thou shalt bow the knee to him one day, and worship him, for "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Bow thy knee now, and kiss the Son lest he be angry and thou perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. He bids thee come to him, then will he blot out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities. The chief of sinners, we are sure, are found among those who directly attack the person of Jehovah's Christ, yet even to these is the gospel of salvation sent.

Another group of princes and peers in the realm of evil may be described as *those who attack Christ's people, and who seek to pervert them from the right way*. This sin pressed heavily upon the conscience of Paul. He had not only put them in prison, which was bad enough, but he had taken the saints into the synagogue, and probably they had been beaten before the assembly, and compelled to blaspheme. You, perhaps, know what that means — compel them to blaspheme. The Roman way of doing it was to say, "Curse Christ." Often and often did the Roman Emperor command the martyrs to curse Christ, and you remember Polycarp's answer — "How can I curse him? Sixty years have I known him; he never did me a displeasure, and I cannot and I will not curse him." Then the whip was applied, or the hand was held over burning coals, or the flesh was pinched with hot irons, and then the question was put again — "Will you curse Christ now?" Paul says that he, though probably using milder means, compelled the professor of Christ's faith to blaspheme. And there may be some such here — the husband who persecutes his wife for Christ's sake; the father who charges his child, upon his obedience, never to go to the sanctuary of the Lord again; the master who plagues his servant, mocks and jeers, and can never be content, except when he is saying hard things against him. Have I not many here who still practice the device of cruel mockings? You abhor Christ and his people; you fight against God in his little ones. Beware! beware! for this is a high sin! Nothing puts a man on his mettle like meddling with his children, "Touch me if you will," the father says, "if you are a man, smite me if you dare;" but touch his children, and the blood is in his cheek and the mettle is up, and there is no knowing what a man will do when he sees the offspring of his own bowels ill-treated. So God will avenge his own elect that cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them. To you who thus rank with the chief of sinners, I say that Paul the persecutor "obtained mercy," and so may you.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom” persecutors rank among the chief.

There is another group whom you will all allow to be of the chief of sinners

— *those who have sinned foully in the world's esteem*; violating the instincts of nature, and outraging the common sense of morality and decency. It scarcely needs that I should mention the harlot that infests the streets, and pollutes society; or that worse wretch, the whoremonger, who first leads her astray. I speak plain words, such as I find in Scripture. Such God shall judge when he cometh at the last day, for this temptation is a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord shall fall into it. This crying sin of our land needs to be sternly rebuked. Other sins are without the body, but this pollutes both body and soul, and often sendeth down to generations yet unborn a horrid curse, at the very thought of which the soul is sick! Of all sins, young man, young woman, take care that ye stand aloof from this! Pass not by the house of the strange woman if thou lovest thy life, for her gates lead down to death, even to the chambers of the damned! Yet, glory be to divine grace, there is mercy, mercy for such, and multitudes of these chief of sinners have become as the very brightest stars in heaven; snatched by the strong arm of Jesus from the miry clay, and out of that horrible pit; clothed and in their right mind, they have gone to sit at the feet of Jesus, to sing of redeeming love. There was that Mary, that Mary whom Jesus had forgiven. Well might she love much! and many a loving spirit do I know, and there are some very dear to God's Church here, who love their Lord, and often shame some of us who stand more prominent than they who once drank deep of that bitter cup, and once went to the very depths of that sin. Publish it in your streets! Tell it wherever ye meet with the most loathsome and most defiled, Jesus is able to save to the uttermost. He was the friend of publicans and sinners. “This man receiveth sinners,” is Jesus Christ's motto. Other men reject the sinner; they turn aside from her; woe unto her if she come between the wind and their nobility; but “*this man receiveth sinners*” — receiveth them to his heart and to his bosom, to his kingdom and to his throne. Ye chief of sinners, rejoice that if ye believe in Jesus there is mercy for you!

And surely I may find another class of the chief of sinners among *those who have become not only adepts themselves, but the tutors to others in this school of evil*. Satan has a university, and there are many who have fairly won their diplomas as first-class professors therein. They have

learned to sin with a high hand and with an outstretched arm, until they not only sin themselves, but delight in the sins of others. Have we not seen the old drunkard, and how he gloats when he sees another man won to the army of the bestial! Have you not seen the eyes of some base old demon in a country village twinkle when he sees that fair-haired boy for the first time pander to the infamous customs in which he has long revelled? Have we not known some of those foul-mouthed masters of all baseness, whose very talk is enough to make a whole parish sick with the pestilence of vice

— men that you had better go over hedge and ditch seventy miles than meet! There are such. You have seen them, I dare say. And, mark you, *when that being is a woman*, if anything it is worse then! The softer sex, usually by far more apt to teach, instils the secret vice of evil, and wraps it up in insidious enchantments, by reason of which many a strong man hath fallen when Delilah hath been his charmed inveigler and tutor in sin! I may not, oh! I hope I may not have one such being within earshot now; yet, it is hardly possible, amidst the thousands that this house now contains, but what there must be some of you who roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel, and talk of it with a gusto till you tickle the fancies of others, and lead them into defilements which otherwise they never might have touched — artfully concealing the book while putting the bait in the young man’s way, and thrusting the knowledge of new vices upon those who should have shunned them! Oh! ye are the chief of sinners with a vengeance, and hung up like liaman upon the lofty gallows, shall ye be for everlasting execration if ye repent not! Yet, O sovereign grace! how can I tell thy heights? O sea of love, how can I ever fathom thy depths! There is even mercy proclaimed for such. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel? Why will ye perish?

***“While the lamp holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return.”***

I find no exception in the offer of mercy, you are included in the invitation of welcome, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” “Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wook though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.” Here is a full, a free, a perfect, and a complete pardon for all your past offenses.

Though I have not yet finished the list, I would rather change the note for a minute. I have another class of the chief of sinners to find out. I, myself, belong to them, and I therefore speak with feeling. In this section we

include *those who have had much light, and yet have sinned against it; who have been taught better, who have had a knowledge of the way of truth, and yet have turned aside to crooked paths.* To have been nursed upon the lap of piety, and dandled upon the knee of Christian affection, is no small privilege. To be lighted to one's cradle by the lamps of the sanctuary, and to be hushed to sleep with lullaby in which the name of Jesus comes as a sweet refrain — this involves an awful responsibility. No man can go to hell over a mother's tears, without accumulated vengeance. No son can rebel against a father's affectionate and tearful admonitions, without perishing ten times more frightfully than as if he had never been thus privileged. Ah! my hearers, alas! alas! for the hardness of your hearts — there are many such here now. I would charitably suppose that very few of you belong to the other classes I have been speaking of, but the great mass of you who are unconverted belong to this class. Dost thou remember young man, how thy mother put her arms around thy neck, and wooed thee to turn to Christ? Do you remember that little Bible when you first went to school, and that verse she inscribed as a motto — she watered it with her tears as she wrote it. Do you recollect those letters she addressed to you? She is now in heaven, is she? Then let them be the more sacred to your recollection. And do you remember that Sunday-school teacher? Was he not a father to you? Was not that excellent woman who used to adjure you to turn from the error of your ways, a very mother to you in Israel? Do you not remember, young women, some of you, the earnest exhortations that my beloved sister, Mrs. Bartlett, has addressed to you? If ever there was a woman that could, under God, move the heart and soul, she is that woman; and yet, there are some of you that listen to her voice, and yet you are unconverted! You have the light shining upon your eye-balls, and yet they are sightless still! You live in the land of mercy, where its bell summonses you to come to its assembly of grace, but yet you will not come! You have the light, but you shut your eyes against it! Remember, young man, when you sin you sin with seven-fold atrocity, because you know better; nay, seventy sins are rolled into one in your sin of daring deliberate wilfulness. Within that egg of sin there sleeps the seed of your greater damnation, because you know the right, and yet you choose the evil. Have I not now the privilege of speaking to some whose old familiar associations are awakened up by these feeble glances at your life-story? Do you not feel just now as if you were kneeling down again in that little room, and heard the native accents of your mother's prayer, while your lips hardly refrain from repeating afresh the words of your own prayer which she taught your

lips to frame before she put you to your rest? Do you not remember it? And do you not remember sometimes when your conscience was awakened, and your heart was almost broken, and your soul said, "I could almost be a Christian," but you excused yourself with a frivolous delay — "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee?" But, alas! that *convenient season* has never yet come. And your conscience grows seared. Drugged with the opiates of sin, you grow less and less tender of the affectionate appeal. Woe worth the day of your visitation, for it shall be cloudy indeed, unless ye turn at the voice of reproof. But to you, O chief of sinners, is the word of this salvation sent.

There are those, too, who sit under an earnest ministry, and yet go on in sin — they surely belong to the class of chief sinners. O, my hearers, how I would to God that I could be as earnest with you as I want to be. The Lord knows there are times when I am not in the pulpit, when I feel that I could weep you to a Savior; but sometimes when standing here the influence of this mighty throng seems rather to distract me, than to bring my whole soul into play; and yet, the Lord knoweth how earnestly I long for you in the bowels of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God as far as I have known it. I have failed in knowledge, but never in honesty; yet, I know there are some of you who come here and yet you live in sin. The world says, "So-and-So goes to Spurgeon's Tabernacle," and they expect you to be better for going there, and yet they say, "Ah, how they drink!" or, "Hear how they will swear!" Where are you? You used to have your shop open on the Sunday morning, but it is shut now. I am glad you have got as far as that; still let me tell you, you only compound with sin and make a covenant with hell, if you outwardly pay respect to the Sabbath, and secretly indulge in other profanities. Drunkenness may destroy you without Sabbath-breaking. It is not giving up one sin, it is giving up the whole. It is not the barter of one sin for another, to your own quiet conscience, which will satisfy justice or rescue you from destruction. Man, there must be a divorce between thee and thy sins; not a mere separation for a season, but a clear divorce. Cut off the right arm; pluck out the right eye, and cast them from thee, or else thou canst not enter into eternal life. Are there not some of you who have for years listened to my ministry, and yet you are none the better, and some of you are rather the worse, I fear. You are getting gospel-hardened by it all. Well, there is mercy for you yet. You are the chief of sinners, but the red flag is not run up yet: the white flag still floats mast-high — the flag of

invitation — the flag of love — the flag of mercy. Come to it; come to Jesus now; you may never have another invitation. Soon may this tongue be cold in death, or your ears may be deaf for ever, like clay-cold marble. Turn ye, at this rebuke, for if after being often reprov'd, ye harden your necks, ye shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. To you, even to me chief of sinners, is the word of this salvation sent.

Drawing the bow at a venture, there is another class I would single out, *those who are gifted from their childhood with a tender conscience*. There are men who seem to be born without a conscience. So hard and dull of impression are they, that if they have any faculty of distinguishing between good and evil, it is as though they had eyes and saw not, and ears but they hear not; and does it ever speak, the voice is so weak, you can never hear it; but there are those, on the other hand, who have naturally a quick understanding, a delicate sensitiveness, a ready perception of right and wrong, a strong and vigorous conscience. They never do sin without being aware of what they are doing, and they are troubled, and pestered, as they say, about it. They cannot sleep at night after they have been committing any serious breach of propriety. Even when they are walking the streets, or when they are busy, they are quickly startled at the recoil of their own transgressions, and oftentimes there is a certain uneasiness and fretfulness which comes over them, because they are conscious that they are not pursuing the right course. Now, if you are gifted with this tender conscience, and yet you constantly violate it, and directly act in the face of your own convictions, you are the chief of sinners; but still, still Paul the chief of sinners found mercy, and so may you.

Yet again: if you have had warning in sickness, and especially if on your sick bed you have vowed unto the Lord that you would turn to him, then you that are covenant-breakers, *you that violate vows made to the Most High*, you must also be put among the first and foremost of transgressors. When the cholera was here some nine years ago, you vowed that if God would spare you things should be different. He did spare you, but things are no better now than they were before. When the fever prostrated you, what promises you made, and where are they now? Thou hast lied unto the Eternal God! Is it little for thee that thou shouldst have promised and not have paid — have vowed unto him and not performed? Now, sinner, thou art a liar, as well as aught besides; thou art a rogue, a dishonest one against God, with whom the compact was made; but the invitation is still freely

tendered unto thee: come unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in him, and thou shalt be made whole.

The chief of sinners comprises so numerous a body, I believe every one of us must come in the list in some shape or other, and I know this — if ever you and I are saved, if God shall give us very great mercy, we shall feel that we were the greatest sinners. When Paul saw how kindly his Master treated him, it seemed to break his heart — “What! did I ever curse that Christ who has blessed me? He that is so rich in lovingkindness, did I ever spurn him?” Verily now I do think I have had the blackest sight of sin when I have had the brightest sight of mercy. When my dear Lord and Master has privileged me, by allowing me to come near him in prayer, and I have felt his love shed abroad in my heart, I have felt as if I could bring imprecations upon myself for ever having been a traitor to him. What! could I spit in thy face, my Redeemer and my Lord? Could I ever crown thy head with thorns, which now it shall be my life’s task to crown with jewels? What! didst thou love me so; didst thou forgive me so, and could I ever speak against thee? It is great mercy that sets forth our great sin, for we only come to reckon ourselves the chief of sinners when we see the great love of God. So then, without amplifying any longer, I will put the invitation thus: whoever among you has sinned against the Most High, you are all on a level, and the invitation of mercy is put to you, each and all, and this is the gospel, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.” May you be led to believe, and to profess your faith according to God’s way.

II. Well, now, but a few minutes remain to me, and I will endeavor to be brief while I try to answer the question, WHY THESE WHO ARE PROVERBIALY THE CHIEF OF SINNERS ARE VERY FREQUENTLY SAVED.

One reason is *to illustrate divine sovereignty*. There is no jewel of his crown of which God is more jealous than his sovereignty. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Now, when he saves the harlot, when he calls the persecutor by sovereign grace, then all men see that this is the finger of God, and that he dispenses his love and kindness according to the purposes of his own absolute and uncontrollable will. He chooses the chief of sinners, that he may show to all men that he will take the base things of the world, and the things which are not, and things which are despised, to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh may glory in his presence.

Another reason is, *that he may show his great power*. Oh! how hell is made angry when some great champion falls! When their Goliaths are brought down, how the Philistines take to their heels! How heaven rings with songs when some chief of sinners becomes a trophy of the divine power! And how men talk, with glib tongues, of the great and mighty deeds of God, when the drunkard, and the swearer, and the prostitute are washed and made saints! What a noise it made at Elstow, when they said at the public-house on the green — “You know John Bunyan?” “Oh! yes, we know him; you mean the fellow that was always first at a game of tip-cat — he that could always drink the longest, oh, yes, we know him.” “Well, do you know, he was preaching over at Bedford yesterday.” “What!” says one, “preaching at Bedford? I would as soon have thought of the devil preaching as John Bunyan! What a wonderful thing the Gospel must be, to change such a man as that!” And yet it was true, and John Bunyan, who frequented the ale-house, knew more about the county-jail, and more about the Celestial City that is on the other side the flood, than most men of his times. It shows the power and the sovereignty of God when such men are saved.

And next, *how it shows his grace!* When I have sometimes sat to see enquirers, I have seen a number come in one after the other that have been born and brought up in the midst of piety, and I have blessed God for them; but, by-and-by there has come in one whose tale has been terrible to tell, and it was not easily told, but with many sighs, and sobs, and tears, yet, when it was disclosed, there have sat two weeping together — I scarcely know which wept the most — one wept because of grace illustrated in him, and the other because he saw in another the grace which he had tasted for himself. Oh! when great sinners tell out their tales, they are so straightforward, so explicit! There is no muddle about it, no questions about when they were converted, or how, but there they are.

They say — “Ah! sir, it must be divine; such a change has been wrought in me, that nothing could have thus turned the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove, but the grace of God.” In great sinners, then, the grace of God is made conspicuous.

Again; great sinners are very frequently galled by God *for the purpose of attracting others*. You know that when some great transgressor finds mercy, straightway many hearts say — “Ah! then there is mercy for me. I am glad, I am very glad that there was a Manasseh, that there was David, that there was a Saul of Tarsus, and I am glad they are in the Bible. The

wicked cut the stories out, and they laugh at us, and say, "These are your saints!" Ah! we can bear that, while we can say — "No, this is what they were by nature, but they were saved, for all that, by the distinguishing grace of God, who saves men through faith, and not by their works." Now, I believe that that case of David has been a solace to thousands, if not to millions. The hurt he did in his lifetime was certainly very great, but the incalculable benefit which has flown to the universal Church from the penitential Psalms, puts altogether into the shade the damage which the fall of David did to the Church in his own time. Not that there is less shame to the sinner, but that there is more glory to the Savior, where sin abounded in the first instance, and grace did much more abound in the sequel. We can well bear this spot, for the sake of the light which comes from that sun. Sinners, all of you, if you would put yourselves among the little ones, if your lives have never been grossly vile (I am glad if they have not) but let the fact that the great sinner enters, and is washed, attract you. I have heard it said of the elephant, that sometimes before he crosses a bridge he puts his trunk, and perhaps one foot, upon it; he wants to know if it is quite safe, for he is not going to trust his bulky body to things that were built only for horses and men. Well, after he has tried it, if he finds it strong enough, away he goes, and his great carcass is carried right across the stream. Now, suppose you and I sat on the other side, and said we were afraid the bridge would not bear us! Why, how absurd our unbelief would be. So when you see a great elephantine sinner, like the apostle Paul, go lumbering over the bridge of mercy, and not a timber creaks, and the bridge does not even strain under the load; why, then methinks, you may come rushing in a crowd, and say — "It will bear us, if it will bear him; it will carry us across, if it can take the chief of sinners to heaven!"

And then, dear friends, the saving of the chief of sinners is useful, *because, when they are saved they generally make the most fiery zealots against sin.* Have we not a proverb that "The burnt child dreads the fire?" I noticed my host, on one preaching excursion, particularly anxious about my candle. Now, as everybody ought to know how careful I am, I was a little surprised, and I put the question to him why he should be so wonderfully particular. "I had my house burned down once, sir," said he. That explained it all. No man so much afraid of fire as he, and they who have been in sin, and know the mischief of it, protest against it the most loudly. They can speak experimentally. They talk of what they have tasted and handled to their own smart and ruin! Oh! what revenge there seems to be

in the apostle's heart against his sin! He seems to bring out the great battle-axes and weapons of war against it, and wherever he can see sin he smites right and left — anywhere. Persecution, death, martyrdom — all these are nothing to him if he can but get a blow at sin. He always seems to have the gun charged to the muzzle, and no devil comes in his way but what he has a shot at him. There are no ramparts or hellish bulwarks but what Paul thinks he must take them, whether they are in Asia, or Italy, or Spain, this great knight-errant of the cross is everywhere the great antagonist of sin, and so must those always be who are saved out of great iniquity.

And then, again, *they always make the most zealous saints*. I have said, and it will come true, though I am no prophet nor the son of a prophet — I have said that the Lord will deliver this city and deliver this age, not by ministers from colleges — not by the sons of gentlemen or the inheritors of titles; but the men who will yet shake London, and bring about a religious revival, will come from St. Giles's, and from Whitechapel, from the slums, and from the dens and kens of infamy. God will take such men by-and-by, and he is beginning to work it. There are one or two names that will come to your recollection — illustrious names in connection with the preaching in theatres: God will raise up more such, and you shall see that when human wisdom and creature devices have done their utmost to make the Church of God the dull lethargic thing it now is, God, in the plenitude of his might, will raise up some who have tasted that he is gracious, and have drunk deeply of the cup of his love, that will turn the world upside down. It is all an idle and a wicked tale, that our places of worship in the City of London cannot be supported. I see them building new places in the suburbs, and leaving the City itself destitute of the means of grace. Were the right men found, the churches in the City of London might be as crowded as those in the suburbs. Only put into their pulpits men who know the guilt of sin, and who know that gospel in which is revealed the righteousness of God; men who know and preach Christ, then the effect would be palpable. Give us the men who do not talk as botanists might do upon botany, when they had not seen a flower, or as some might speak of various lands who have never traveled a league; but give us men who know experimentally those things that they labor to teach, and let their tongues be set on fire of the Holy Ghost, and ye shall then see London as full of the glory of the Lord as was Jerusalem of old. May this come to pass; may it begin to come to pass to-night. May the Lord find out, as he moves among this mass, some stray, strange being that has given himself up to

desperation, to work mischief with both his hands, and may he say to him to-night, "I have need of thee, and I will have thee." Oh, mighty grace, do it to-night! He will have thee, man! Thy will must be subdued; thy pride must come down; that proud temper of thine shall yield. "I am thy Master; I made thee; I bought thee with my blood, and dost thou think I will lose thee? I am mighty to save, dost thou think that thou canst overcome me? I came forth on purpose to redeem thee! Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" O that the Lord would speak thus personally to some individual now!

And now, I have done when I have just put this before you. My hearers, here is life and death. If you despise Christ, there is death for you; if you turn aside from the love and mercy which streams from the wounds of Jesus, the angry God shall find you in your sin, and cut you in pieces, and there is none that can deliver you. If you go on in your sin, you will soon meet with death. But a few Sundays ago, we had to mark how sudden death thinned our ranks. Sometimes it is a working man. There was one, you know, some weeks ago, who lost his life in building the great bridge at Blackfriars, who was often a hearer here; and there is scarcely a day passes but we hear of some one gone out of this great assembly. We are going one after another; and the pastor will go soon, but perhaps ere he goes he may see many of you carried to your graves — he cannot tell. But, oh! wherefore will ye remain without God and without Christ? If you had a lease of your lives you might go on in sin until the lease was out; but even then you would be foolish to be enemies to God, and enemies to yourselves so long. But as you may die to-day, God help you to repent to-night. On the other hand, I set mercy before you; no man can say he has not been invited; no soul can say that I did not set the gate wide open enough. You are without excuse in the day of judgment. When the trumpet peals through heaven and earth, and awakes the slumbering dead — when Christ shall come in the clouds to judge the earth, I must give an account of the gospel I have preached to you to-night. I would to God I could preach it better, but I cannot. You know what it is. You are without excuse. You have been invited; you have been entreated; you have been bidden to come to the marriage-supper. All things are ready; the oxen and the fatlings are killed; come to the supper. Ye that are in the highways and hedges, we would compel you to come in, that God's house may be filled. Come. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of

life freely.” But if you come not, I must be a swift witness against you at the last. I am clear of your blood; I am clear of the blood of you all.

God save you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

THE WARRANT OF FAITH.

NO. 531

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER
20TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name
of his Son Jesus Christ.” — 1 John 3:23.*

THE old law shines in terrible glory with its ten commandments. There are some who love that law so much, that they cannot pass over a Sabbath without its being read in their hearing, accompanied by the mournful petition, “Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.” Nay, some are so foolish as to enter into a covenant for their children, that “they shall keep all God’s holy commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life.” Thus they early wear a yoke which neither they nor their fathers can bear, and daily groaning under its awful weight, they labor after righteousness where it never can be found. Over the tables of the law in every Church, I would have conspicuously printed these gospel words, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” The true believer has learned to look away from the killing ordinances of the old law. He understands that “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” He therefore turns with loathing from all trust in his own obedience to the ten commands, and lays hold with joy upon the hope set before him in the one commandment contained in my text, “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.”

We sing, and sing rightly too —

*“My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the law,”*

for from the law death cometh and not life, misery and not comfort. “To convince and to condemn is all the law can do.” O, when will all professors, and especially all professed ministers of Christ, learn the difference between the law and the gospel? Most of them make a mingle-mangle, and serve out deadly potions to the people, often containing but one ounce of gospel to a pound of law, whereas, but even a grain of law is enough to spoil the whole thing. It must be gospel, and gospel only. “If it be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, then it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work.”

The Christian then, turning his attention to the one command of the gospel, is very anxious to know first, *what is the matter of the believing here intended*; and secondly, *what is the sinner’s warrant for so believing in Christ*, nor will he fail to consider *the mandate of the gospel*.

I. First then, THE MATTER OF BELIEVING, or what is it that a man is to believe in order to eternal life. Is it the Athanasian creed? Is it true, that if a man does not hold that confession whole and entire, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly? We leave those to decide who are learned in matters of bigotry. Is it any particular form of doctrine? Is it the Calvinistic or the Arminian scheme? For our own part we are quite content with our text — believing on “his Son Jesus Christ.” That faith which saves the soul is believing on a person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life.

To speak more at large of the things which are to be believed in order to justification by faith, they all relate to the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must believe him to be God’s Son — so the text puts it — “His Son.” We must grasp with strong confidence the great fact that he is God: for nothing short of a divine Savior can ever deliver us from the infinite wrath of God. He who rejects the true and proper Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth, is not saved, and cannot be, for he believes not on Jesus as God’s Son. Furthermore, we must accept this Son of God as “Jesus,” the Savior. We must believe that Jesus Christ the Son of God, became man out of infinite love to man, that he might save his people from their sins, according to that worthy saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” even the chief. We must look upon Jesus as “Christ,” the anointed of the Father, sent into this world on salvation’s errand, not that sinners might save themselves, but that he, being mighty to save, might bring many

sons unto glory. We must believe that Jesus Christ, coming into the world to save sinners, did really effect his mission; that the precious blood which is shed upon Calvary is almighty to atone for sin, and therefore, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, since the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. We must heartily accept the great doctrine of the atonement — regarding Jesus as standing in the room, place, and stead of sinful men, bearing for them the terror of the law's curse until justice was satisfied and could demand no more.

Moreover, we should rejoice that as Jesus Christ, by his dying, put away for ever the sin of his people, so by his living he gave unto those who trust in him a perfect righteousness, in which, despite their own sins, they are "accepted in the beloved." We are also taught, that if we heartily trust our soul with Christ, our sins, through his blood, are forgiven, and his righteousness is imputed to us. The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer's hands. Faith must act in this wise: "I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and therefore, sinner though I be, I rest myself on him; I know that his righteousness justifies the ungodly; I, therefore, though ungodly, trust in him to be my righteousness; I know that his precious blood in heaven prevails with God on the behalf of them that come unto him; and since I come unto him, I know by faith that I have an interest in his perpetual intercession."

Now, I have enlarged the one thought of believing on God's Son Jesus Christ. Brethren, I would not darken counsel by words without knowledge. "Believing" is most clearly explained by that simple word "trust." Believing is partly the intellectual operation of receiving divine truths, but the essence of it lies in relying upon those truths. I believe that, although I cannot swim, yonder friendly plank will support me in the flood — I grasp it, and am saved: the grasp is faith. I am promised by a generous friend that if I draw upon his banker, he will supply all my needs — I joyously confide in him, and as often as I am in want I go to the bank, and am enriched: my going to the bank is faith. Thus faith is accepting God's great promise, contained in the person of his Son. It is taking God at his word, and trusting in Jesus Christ as being my salvation, although I am utterly unworthy of his regard. Sinner, if thou takest Christ to be thy Savior this day, thou art justified; though thou be the biggest blasphemer and persecutor out of hell, if thou darest to trust Christ with thy salvation, that faith of thine saves thee; though thy whole life may have been as black, and

foul, and devilish as thou couldst have made it yet if thou wilt honor God by believing Christ is able to forgive such a wretch as thou art, and wilt now trust in Jesus' precious blood, thou art saved from divine wrath.

II. The WARRANT OF BELIEVING is the point upon which I shall spend my time and strength this morning. According to my text, the warrant for a man to believe is the *commandment* of God. This is the commandment, that ye "believe on his Son Jesus Christ."

Self-righteousness will always find a lodging somewhere or other. Drive it, my brethren, out of the ground of our confidence; let the sinner see that he cannot rest on his good works, then, as foxes will have holes, this self-righteousness will find a refuge for itself in the warrant of our faith in Christ. It reasons thus: "You are not saved by what you do but by what Christ did; but then, you have no right to trust in Christ unless there is something good in you which shall entitle you to trust in him." Now, this legal reasoning I oppose. I believe such teaching to contain in it the essence of Popish self-righteousness. The warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is not in himself in any sense or in any manner, but in the fact that he is commanded there and then to believe on Jesus Christ. Some preachers in the Puritanic times, whose shoe latches I am not worthy to unloose, erred much in this matter. I refer not merely to Alleyne and Baxter, who are far better preachers of the law than of the gospel, but I include men far sounder in the faith than they, such as Rogers of Dedham, Shepherd, the author of "The Sound Believer," and especially the American, Thomas Hooker, who has written a book upon qualifications for coming to Christ. These excellent men had a fear of preaching the gospel to any except those whom they styled "sensible sinners," and consequently kept hundreds of their hearers sitting in darkness when they might have rejoiced in the light. They preached repentance and hatred of sin as the warrant of a sinner's trusting to Christ. According to them, a sinner might reason thus — "I possess such-and-such a degree of sensibility on account of sin, therefore I have a right to trust in Christ." Now, I venture to affirm that such reasoning is seasoned with fatal error. Whoever preaches in this fashion may preach much of the gospel, but the whole gospel of the free grace of God in its fullness he has yet to learn. In our own day certain preachers assure us that a man must be regenerated before we may bid him believe in Jesus Christ; some degree of a work of grace in the heart being, in their judgment, the only warrant to believe. This also is false. It takes away a

gospel for sinners and offers us a gospel for saints. It is anything but a ministry of free grace.

Others say that the warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is his election. Now, as his election cannot possibly be known by any man until he has believed, this is virtually preaching that nobody has any known warrant for believing at all. If I cannot possibly know my election before I believe — and yet the minister tells me that I may only believe upon the ground of my election — how am I ever to believe at all? Election brings me faith, and faith is the evidence of my election; but to say that my faith is to depend upon my knowledge of my election which I cannot get without faith, is to talk egregious nonsense.

I lay down this morning with great boldness — because I know and am well persuaded that what I speak is the mind of the Spirit — this doctrine that the sole and only warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus is found in the gospel itself and in the command which accompanies that gospel, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” I shall deal with that matter first of all, *negatively*, and then, *positively*.

1. First, **NEGATIVELY**; and here my first observation is that any other way of preaching the gospel-warrant is *absurd*. If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. But you will tell me that I ought to preach it only to those who repent of their sins. Very well, but since true repentance of sin is the work of the Spirit, any man who has repentance is most certainly saved, because evangelical repentance never can exist in an unrenewed soul. Where there is repentance there is faith already, for they never can be separated. So, then, I am only to preach faith to those who have it. Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners. “Nay,” saith one, “but we mean that a man must have some good desires towards Christ before he has any warrant to believe in Jesus.” Friend, do you not know that all good desires have some degree of holiness in them? But if a sinner hath any degree of true holiness in him it must be the work of the Spirit, for true holiness never exists in the carnal mind, therefore, that man is already renewed, and therefore saved. Are we to go running up and down the world, proclaiming life to the living, casting

bread to those who are fed already, and holding up Christ on the pole of the gospel to those who are already healed? My brethren, where is our inducement to labor where our efforts are so little needed? If I am to preach Christ to those who have no goodness, who have nothing in them that qualifies them for mercy, then I feel I have a gospel so divine that I would proclaim it with my last breath, crying aloud, that “Jesus came into the world to save *sinner*s” — sinners as sinners, not as penitent sinners or as awakened sinners, but sinners as sinners, sinners “of whom I am chief.”

Secondly, to tell the sinner that he is to believe on Christ because of some warrant in himself, is *legal*, I dare to say it — legal. Though this method is generally adopted by the higher school of Calvinists, they are herein unsound, uncalvinistic, and legal; it is strange that they who are so bold defenders of free grace should make common cause with Baxterians and Pelagians. I lay it down to be legal for this reason: if I believe in Jesus Christ because I feel a genuine repentance of sin, and therefore have a warrant for my faith, do you not perceive that the first and true ground of my confidence is the fact that I have repented of sin? If I believe in Jesus because I have convictions and a spirit of prayer, then evidently the first and the most important fact is not Christ, but my possession of repentance, conviction, and prayer, so that really my hope hinges upon my having repented; and if this be not legal I do not know what is. Put it lower. My opponents will say, “The sinner must have an awakened conscience before he is warranted to believe on Christ.” Well, then, if I trust Christ to save me because I have an awakened conscience, I say again, the most important part of the whole transaction is the alarm of my conscience, and my real trust hangs there. If I lean on Christ because I feel this and that, then I am leaning on my feelings and not on Christ alone, and this is legal indeed. Nay, even if desires after Christ are to be my warrant for believing, if I am to believe in Jesus not because he bids me, but because I feel some desires after him, you will again with half an eye perceive that the most important source of my comfort must be my own desires. So that we shall be always looking within. “Do I really desire? If I do, then Christ can save me; if I do not, then he cannot.” And so my desire overrides Christ and his grace. Away with such legality from the earth!

Again, any other way of preaching than that of bidding the sinner believe because God commands him to believe, is a *boasting* way of faith. For if my warrant to trust in Jesus be found in my experience, my loathings of sin, or my longings after Christ, then all these good things of mine are a

legitimate ground of boasting, because though Christ may save me, yet these were the wedding-dress which fitted me to come to Christ. If these be indispensable pre-requisites and conditions, then the man who has them may truly and justly say, "Christ did save me, but I had the pre-requisites and conditions first, and therefore let these share the praise." See, my brethren, those who have a faith which rests upon their own experience, what are they as a rule? Mark them, and you will perceive much censorious bitterness in them, prompting them to set up their own experience as the standard of saintship, which may assuredly make us suspicious whether they ever were humbled in a gospel manner at all, so as to see that their own best feelings, and best repentances, and best experiences in themselves are nothing more nor less than filthy rags in the sight of God. My dear brethren, when we tell a sinner that foul and filthy as he is, without any preparation or qualification, he is to take Jesus Christ to be his all in all, finding in him all that he can ever need, when we dare on the spot to bid the jailor just startled out of sleep, "Believe in Jesus," we leave no room for self-glorification, all must be of grace. When we find the lame man lying at the temple gates, we do not bid him strengthen his own legs, or feel some life in them, but we bid him in the name of Jesus rise up and walk; surely here when God the Spirit owns the Word, all boasting is excluded. Whether I rely on my experience or my good works makes little difference, for either of these reliances will lead to boasting since they are both legal. Law and boasting are twin brothers, but free grace and gratitude always go together.

Any other warrant for believing on Jesus than that which is presented in the gospel is *changeable*. See, brethren, if my warrant to believe in Christ lies in my meltings of heart and my experiences, then if to-day I have a melting heart and I can pour my soul out before the Lord, I have a warrant to believe in Christ. But to-morrow (who does not know this?) to-morrow my heart may be as hard as a stone, so that I can neither feel nor pray. Then, according to the qualification-theory, I have no right to trust in Christ, my warrant is clean gone from me. According to the doctrine of final perseverance, the Christian's faith is continual, if so the warrant of his faith must be always the same, or else he has sometimes an unwarranted faith which is absurd; it follows from this that the abiding warrant of faith must lie in some immutable truth. Since everything within changes more frequently than ever does an English sky, if my warrant to believe in Christ be based within, it must change every hour; consequently I am lost and

saved alternately. Brethren, can these things be so? For my part I want a sure and immutable warrant for my faith; I want a warrant to believe in Jesus which will serve me when the devil's blasphemy comes pouring into my ears like a flood; I want a warrant to believe which will serve me when my lustings and corruptions appear in terrible array, and make me cry out, "O wretched man that I am." I want a warrant to believe in Christ which will comfort me when I have no good frames and holy feelings, when I am dead as a stone and my spirit lies cleaving to the dust. Such an unfailing warrant to belief in Jesus is found in this precious truth, that his gracious commandment and not my variable experience, is my title to believe on his Son Jesus Christ.

Again, my brethren, any other warrant is utterly *incomprehensible*. Multitudes of my brethren preach an impossible salvation. How often do poor sinners hunger and thirst to know the way of salvation, and there is no available salvation preached to them. Personally, I do not remember to have been told from the pulpit to believe in Jesus as a sinner. I heard much of feelings which I thought I could never get, and frames after which I longed; but I found no peace until a true, free grace message came to me, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." See, my brethren, if convictions of soul are necessary qualifications for Christ, we ought to know to an ounce how much of these qualifications are needed. If you tell a poor sinner that there is a certain amount of humblings, and tremblings, and convictions, and heart-searchings to be felt, in order that he may be warranted to come to Christ, I demand of all legal-gospellers distinct information as to the manner and exact degree of preparation required. Brethren, you will find when these gentlemen are pushed into a corner, they will not agree, but will every one give a different standard, according to his own judgment. One will say the sinner must have months of law work; another, that he only needs good desires; and some will demand that he possess the graces of the Spirit — such as humility, godly sorrow, and love to holiness. You will get no clear answer from them. If the sinner's warrant to come is found in the gospel itself, the matter is clear and plain; but what a roundabout plan is that compound of law and gospel against which I contend! And let me ask you, my brethren, whether such an incomprehensible gospel would do for a dying man? There he lies in the agonies of death. He tells me that he has no good thought or feeling, and asks what he must do to be saved. There is but a step between him and death — another five minutes and that man's soul may be in hell. What am

I to tell him? Am I to be an hour explaining to him the preparation required before he may come to Christ? Brethren, I dare not. But I tell him, "Believe, brother, even though it be the eleventh hour; trust thy soul with Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." There is the same gospel for a living man as for a dying man. The thief on the cross may have had some experience, but I do not find him pleading it; he turns his eye to Jesus, saying, "Lord, remember me!" How prompt is the reply, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He may have had longing desires, he may have had deep convictions, but I am quite sure he did not say, "Lord, I dare not ask thee to remember me, because I do not feel I have repented enough. I dare not trust thee, because I have not been shaken over hell's mouth." No, no, no; he looked to Jesus as he was, and Jesus responded to his believing prayer. It must be so with you, my brethren, for any other plan but that of a sinner's coming to Christ *as a sinner*, and resting on Jesus just as he is, is utterly incomprehensible, or, if it is to be explained at all, will require a day or two to explain it in; and that cannot be the gospel which the apostles preached to dying men.

Yet again, I believe that the preaching of alarms of conscience and repentance as qualifications for Christ, is *unacceptable* to the awakened sinner. I will introduce one, as Saltmarsh does in his "Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely to the Chief of Sinners." Here is a poor brother who dares not believe in Jesus. I will suppose him to have attended a ministry where the preaching is "If you have felt this, if you have felt that, then you may believe." When you went to your minister in trouble, what did he say to you? "He asked me whether I felt my need of Christ, I told him I did not think I did, at least I did not feel my need enough. He told me that I ought to meditate upon the guilt of sin, and consider the dreadful character of the wrath to come, and I might in this way feel my need more." Did you do so? "I did; but it seemed to me as if while I meditated upon the terrors of judgment, my heart grew harder instead of softer, and I seemed to be desperately set, and resolved in a kind of despair to go on in my ways; yet, sometimes I did have some humblings and some meltings of heart." What did your minister tell you to do to get comfort then? "He said I ought to pray much." Did you pray? "I told him I could not pray; that I was such a sinner that it was of no use for me to hope for an answer if I could." What did he say then? "He told me I ought to lay hold upon the promises." Yes, did you do so? "No; I told him I could not lay hold upon the promises; that I could not see they were meant for me, for I was not the character

intended; and that I could only find threatenings in the Word of God for such as I was." What did he say then? "He told me to be diligent in the use of the means, and to attend his ministry." What did you say to that? "I told him I was diligent, but that what I wanted was not means, I wanted to get my sins pardoned and forgiven." What did he say then? "Why, he said that I had better persevere and wait patiently for the Lord; I told him that I was in such a horror of great darkness, that my soul chose strangling rather than life. Well then, he said, he thought I must already be truly penitent, and was therefore safe, and that sooner or later I should have hope. But I told him, a mere hope was not enough for me, I could not be safe while sin lay so heavy upon me. He asked me whether I had not desires after Christ. I said I had, but they were merely selfish, carnal desires; that I sometimes thought I had desires, but they were only legal. He said if I had a desire to have a desire, it was God's work, and I was saved. That did prop me up for a time, sir, but I went down again, for that did not do for me, I wanted something solid to rest on." And sinner, how is it now with you; where are you now? "Well, sir, I scarce know where I am, but I pray you, tell me what I must do?" Brethren, my reply is prompt and plain; hear it. Poor soul, I have no questions to ask you; I have no advice to give you, except this, God's command to you is, whatever you may be, trust to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Will you do it or no? If he rejects that, I must leave him; I have no more to say to him; I am clear of his blood, and on him the sentence comes, "He that believeth not shall be damned." But you will find in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, that when you begin to talk to the sinner, not about his repentings and his desirings, but about Christ, and tell him that he need not fear the law, for Christ has satisfied it; that he need not fear an angry God, for God is not angry with believers; tell him that all manner of iniquity was cast into the Red Sea of Jesus' blood, and, like the Egyptians, drowned there for ever; tell him that no matter however vile and wicked he may have been, "Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him; "and tell him that he has a right to come, be he who he may, or what he may, because God bids him come; and you will find that the suitability of such a gospel to the sinner's case, will prove a sweet inducement in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to lead that sinner to lay hold on Jesus Christ. O my brethren, I am ashamed of myself when I think of the way in which I have sometimes talked to awakened sinners. I am persuaded that the only true remedy for a broken heart is Jesus Christ's most precious blood. Some surgeons keep a wound open too long; they keep cutting, and cutting, and cutting, till they cut

away as much sound flesh as proud flesh. Better by half heal it, heal it at once, for Jesus Christ was not sent to keep open the wounds, but to bind up the broken in heart. To you, then, sinners of every sort and hue, black, hard-hearted, insensible, impenitent, even to you is the gospel sent, for “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” even the chief.

I might here pause, surely, but I must add yet one other point upon this negative mode of reasoning. Any other warrant for the sinner’s faith than the gospel itself, is *false* and *dangerous*.

It is *false*, my brethren, it is as false as God is true, that anything in a sinner can be his warrant for believing in Jesus. The whole tenour and run of the gospel is clean contrary to it. It must be false, because there is nothing in a sinner until he believes which can be a warrant for his believing. If you tell me that a sinner has any good thing in him before he believes, I reply, impossible — “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” All the repentings, and humblings, and convictions that a sinner has before faith, must be, according to Scripture, displeasing to God. Do not tell me that his heart is broken; if it is only broken by carnal means, and trusts in its brokenness, it needs to be broken over again. Do not tell me he has been led to hate his sin; I tell you he does not hate his sin, he only hates hell.

There cannot be a true and real hatred of sin where there is not faith in Jesus. All the sinner knows and feels before faith is only an addition to his other sins, and how can sin which deserves wrath be a warrant for an act which is the work of the Holy Spirit?

How *dangerous* is the sentiment I am opposing. My hearers, it may be so mischievous as to have misled some of you. I solemnly warn you, though you have been professors of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for twenty years, if your reason for believing in Christ lies in this, that you have felt the terrors of the law; that you have been alarmed, and have been convinced; if your own experience be your warrant for believing in Christ, it is a false reason, and you are really relying upon your experience and not upon Christ: and mark you, if you rely upon your frames and feelings, nay, if you rely upon your communion with Christ, in any degree whatever, you are as certainly a lost sinner as though you relied upon oaths and blasphemies; you shall no more be able to enter heaven, even by the works of the Spirit

— and this is using strong language — than by your own works; for Christ, and Christ alone, is the foundation, and “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Take care of resting in

your own experience. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled, and everything that getteth into Christ's place, however dear to thee, and however precious in itself, must be broken in pieces, and like the dust of the golden calf, must be strewed upon the water, and thou wilt be made sorrowfully to drink of it, because thou madest it thy trust. I believe that the tendency of that preaching which puts the warrant for faith anywhere but in the gospel command, is to vex the true penitent, and to console the hypocrite; the tendency of it is to make the poor soul which really repents, feel that he must not believe in Christ, because he sees so much of his own hardness of heart. The more spiritual a man is, the more unspiritual he sees himself to be; and the more penitent a man is, the more impenitent he discovers himself to be. Often the most penitent men are those who think themselves the most impenitent; and if I am to preach the gospel to the penitent and not to every sinner, as a sinner, then those penitent persons, who, according to my opponents, have the most right to believe, are the very persons who will never dare to touch it, because they are conscious of their own impenitence and want of all qualification for Christ. Sinners, let me address you with words of life: Jesus wants nothing of you, nothing whatsoever, nothing done, nothing felt; he gives both work and feeling. Ragged, penniless, just as ye are, lost, forsaken, desolate, with no good feelings, and no good hopes, still Jesus comes to you, and in these words of pity he addresses you, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." If thou believest in him thou shalt never be confounded.

2. But now, POSITIVELY, and as the negative part has been positive enough, we will be brief here. The gospel command is a sufficient warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus Christ. The *words of our text* imply this — "This is the commandment." My brethren, do you want any warrant for doing a thing better than God's command to do it? The children of Israel borrowed jewels of silver and jewels of gold from the Egyptians. Many, as they read the Bible, find fault with this transaction; but, to my mind, if God bade them do it, that was enough of justification for them. Very well; if God bid thee believe — if this be his commandment that thou believe — canst thou want a better warrant? I say, is there any necessity for any other. Surely the Lord's Word is enough.

Brethren, the command to believe in Christ must be the sinner's warrant, if you consider the nature of our commission. How runs it? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It ought to run, according to the other plan, "preach the gospel to every regenerate person,

to every convinced sinner, to every sensible soul.” But it is not so; it is to “every creature.” But unless the warrant be a something in which every creature can take a share, there is no such thing as consistently preaching it to *every creature*. Then how is it put? — “He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” Where is there a word about the pre-requisites for believing. Surely the man could not be damned for not doing what he would not have been warranted in doing. Our preaching, on the theory of qualifications, should not be, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” but “Qualify yourselves for faith, be sensible of your sin, be regenerated, get marks and evidences, and then believe.” Why, surely, if I am not to sow the good seed on the stony places and among the thorns, I had better give up being a sower, and take to ploughing, or some other work. When the apostles went to Macedonia or Achaia, they ought not to have commenced with preaching Christ; they should have preached up qualifications, emotions and sensations, if these are the preparations for Jesus, but I find that Paul, whenever he stands up, has nothing to preach but “Christ, and him crucified.” Repentance is preached as a gift from the exalted Savior, but it is never as the cause or preparation for believing on Jesus. These two graces are born together, and live with a common life — beware of making one a foundation for the other. I would like to carry one of those who only preach to sensible sinners, and set him down in the capital of the kingdom of Dahomey. There are no sensible sinners there! Look at them, with their mouths stained with human blood, with their bodies smeared all over with the gore of their immolated victims — how will the preacher find any qualification there? I know not what he could say, but I know what my message would be. My word would run thus — “Men and brethren, God, who made the heavens and the earth; hath sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to suffer for our sins, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” If Christ crucified did not shake the kingdom of Dahomey, it would be its first failure. When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, you remember that they were months and months teaching the poor Greenlander about the Godhead, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of sin and the law, and no converts were forthcoming. But one day, by accident, one of the Greenlanders happening to read that passage, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God,” asked the meaning, and the missionary, hardly thinking him advanced enough to understand the gospel, nevertheless ventured to explain it to

him, and the man became converted, and hundreds of his countrymen received the Word. Naturally enough, they said to the missionaries, “Why did not you tell us this before? We knew all about there being a God, and that did us no good; why did not you come and tell us to believe in Jesus Christ before?” O my brethren, this is God’s weapon, God’s method; this is the great battering-ram which will shake the gates of hell; and we must see to it, that it be brought into daily use.

I have tried, on the positive side, to show that a free-grace warrant is consistent with the text — that it accords with apostolic custom, and is, indeed, absolutely necessary, seeing the condition in which sinners are placed. But, my brethren, to preach Christ to sinners, as sinners, must be right; for all the former acts of God are to sinners, as sinners. Whom did God elect? Sinners. He loved us with a great love, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. How did he redeem them? Did he redeem them as saints? No; for while we were yet enemies, he reconciled us unto God by the death of his Son. Christ never shed his blood for the good that is in us, but for the sin that is in us. “He laid down his life for our sins,” says the apostle. If, then, in election and redemption, we find God dealing with sinners, as sinners, it is a marring and nullifying of the whole plan if the gospel is to be preached to men as anything else but sinners.

Again, it is inconsistent with the character of God to suppose that he comes forth and proclaims, “If, O my fallen creatures, if you qualify yourselves for my mercy, I will save you; if you will feel holy emotions — if you will be conscious of sacred desires after me, then the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse you.” There would be little which is godlike in that. But when he comes out with pardons full and free, and saith, “Yea, when ye lay in your blood, I said unto you Live” — when he comes to you, his enemy and rebellious subject, and yet cries, “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities.” Why, this is divine. You know what David said, “I have sinned.” What did Nathan say? “The Lord has put away thy sin, thou shalt not die,” and that is the message of the gospel to a sinner as a sinner. “The Lord has put away thy sin; Christ has suffered; he has brought in perfect righteousness; take him, trust him, and ye shall live.” May that message come home to you this morning, my beloved.

I have read with some degree of attention a book to which I owe much for this present discourse — a book, by Abraham Booth, called “Glad Tidings

to Perishing Sinners.” I have never heard any one cast a suspicion upon Abraham Booth’s soundness; on the contrary, he has been generally considered as one of the most orthodox of the divines of the last generation. If you want my views in full, read his book. If you need something more, let me say, among all the bad things which his revilers have laid to his door, I have never heard any one blame William Huntingdon for not being high enough in doctrine. Now, William Huntingdon prefaced in his lifetime a book by Saltmarsh, with which he was greatly pleased; and the marrow of its teaching is just this, in his own words, “The only ground for any to believe is, he is faithful that hath promised, not anything in themselves, for this is the commandment, That ye believe on his Son Jesus Christ.” Now, if William Huntingdon himself printed such a book as that, I marvel how the followers of either William Huntingdon or Abraham Booth, how men calling themselves Calvinistic divines and high Calvinists, can advocate what is not free grace, but a legal, graceless system of qualifications and preparations. I might here quote Crisp, who is pat to the point and a high doctrine man too. I mention neither Booth nor Huntingdon as authorities upon the subject, to the law and to the testimony we must go; but I do mention them to show that men holding strong views on election and predestination yet did see it to be consistent to preach the gospel to sinners as sinners — nay, felt that it was inconsistent to preach the gospel in any other way.

I shall only add, that the blessings which flow from preaching, Christ to sinners as sinners, are of such a character as prove it to be right. Do you not see that this *levels us all*? We have the same warrant for believing, and no one can exalt himself above his fellow.

Then, my brethren, how it inspires men with hope and confidence; *it forbids despair*. No man can despair if this be true; or if he do, it is a wicked, unreasonable despair, because if he has been never so bad, yet God commands him to believe. What room can there be for despondency? Surely if anything could cut off Giant Despair’s head, Christ preached to sinners is the sharp two-edged sword to do it.

Again, how it *makes a man live close to Christ*! If I am to come to Christ as a sinner every day, and I must do so, for the Word saith, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him;” if every day I am to come to Christ as a sinner, why then, how paltry all my doings look! what utter contempt it casts upon all my fine virtues, my preachings, my

prayings, and all that comes of my flesh! and though it leads me to seek after purity and holiness, yet it teaches me to live on Christ and not on them, and so it keeps me at the fountain head.

My time flies, and I must leave the last head, just to add, sinner, whoever thou mayst be, God now commands thee to believe in Jesus Christ. This is his commandment: he does not command thee to feel anything, or be anything, to prepare thyself for this. Now, art thou willing to incur the great guilt of making God a liar? Surely thou wilt shrink from that: then dare to believe. Thou canst not say, "I have no right:" you have a perfect right to do what God tells you to do. You cannot tell me you are not fit; there is no fitness wanted, the command is given and it is yours to obey, not to dispute. You cannot say it does not come to you — it is preached to every creature under heaven; and now soul, it is so pleasant a thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ that I would fain persuade myself thou needest no persuading. It is so delightful a thing to accept a perfect salvation, to be saved by precious blood, and to be married to so bright a Savior, that I would fain hope the Holy Spirit has led thee to cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER.

NO. 532

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER
27TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.” —
Psalm 65:11.*

POSSIBLY objections might have been raised to a day of thanksgiving for the abundant harvest if it had been ordered or suggested by Government. Certain brethren are so exceedingly tender in their consciences upon the point of connection between Church and State, that they would have thought it almost a reason for not being thankful at all if the Government had recommended them to celebrate a day of public thanksgiving.

Although I have no love to the unscriptural union of Church and State, I should on this occasion have hailed an official request for a national recognition of the special goodness of God. However, none of us can feel any objection arising in our minds if it be now agreed that *to-day* we will praise our ever-bounteous Lord, and as an assembly record our gratitude to the God of the harvest. We are probably the largest assembly of Christian people in the world, and it is well that we should set the example to the smaller Churches. Doubtless many other believers will follow in our track, and so a public thanksgiving will become general throughout the country. I hope to see every congregation in the land raising a special offering unto the Lord, to be devoted either to his Church, to the poor, to missions, or some other holy end. Yes, I would have every Christian offer willingly unto the Lord as a token of his gratitude to the God of providence. I had almost forgotten that to-day we have to ask your contributions for the support of two ministers of our own body, laboring in Germany; it is well that it so happens, because it furnishes an object for the practical expression of the thanks which we feel to Almighty God;

while as

the sum required for this object will at once be raised, our beloved college will be a worthy object for friends at a distance to assist with their free-will offerings.

Without any preface, we will divide our text as it divides itself. Here we have *crowning mercies calling for crowning gratitude*; and in the same verse, *paths of fatness, which should be to us ways of delight*. When we have talked upon these two points, we may meditate for a few moments upon the whole subject, and endeavor, as God shall help us, to see what duties it suggests.

I. First of all, we have here CROWNING MERCIES, SUGGESTING SPECIAL AND CROWNING THANKSGIVING.

All the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us; both when we sleep and when we wake, his mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave off shining, but our God will never cease to cheer his children with his love. Like a river his lovingkindness is always flowing, with a fullness inexhaustible as his own nature, which is its source. Like the atmosphere which always surrounds the earth, and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all his creatures; in it, as in their element they live, and move, and have their being. Yet as the sun on summer days appears to gladden us with beams more warm and bright than at other times, and as rivers are at certain seasons swollen with the rain, and as the atmosphere itself on occasions is fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than heretofore, so is it with the mercy of God: it hath its golden hours, its days of overflow, when the Lord magnifieth his grace and lifteth high his love before the sons of men.

If we begin with the blessings of the nether springs, we must not forget that for the race of man *the joyous days of harvest* are a special season of excessive favor. It is the glory of autumn that the ripe gifts of providence are then abundantly bestowed; it is the mellow season of realization, whereas all before was but hope and expectation. Great is the joy of harvest. Happy are the reapers who fill their arms with the liberality of heaven. The Psalmist tells us that the harvest is the crowning of the year. What if I compare the opening spring to the proclamation of a new prince, the latest born of Father Time? With the musical voices of birds, and the joyfal lowing of herds, a new era of fertility is ushered in. Every verdant meadow and every leaping brook hears the joyful proclamation and feels a new life within. The little hills rejoice on every side; they shout for joy;

they

also sing. Throughout the warm months of summer the royal year is robing itself in beauty, and adorning itself in sumptuous array. What with the plates of ivory, yielded by the lilies, the rubies of the rose, the emeralds of the meads, and all manner of fair colors from the many flowers, we may well say, that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." No studs of silver or rows of jewels can vie with the ornaments of the year. No garments of needlework of divers colors can match the glorious vesture of Time's reigning son. But the moment of the coronation, when earth feels most the sway of the year, is in the fullness of autumn. Then when the fields are covered with a cloth of gold, and fruits are glowing with the rich hues of ripeness, and the leaves are burnished with inimitable perfection of tint and shade, then with a coronal of divine goodness, amidst the glad shouts of toiling swains, and the songs of rejoicing maidens, the year is crowned. Upon a throne of golden corn, with the peaceful sickle for his scepter, sits the crowned year bearing the goodness of the Lord as a coronet upon his placid brow. Or, what if we compare the year to a conqueror, striving at first with stern winter, wrestling hard against all his boisterous attacks, at last joyfully conquering in the fair days of spring; riding in triumph throughout the summer along a pathway strewn with flowers, and at last mounting the throne, amidst the festivities of harvest, while the Lord in lovingkindness puts a diadem of beauty and goodness upon its head?

*“Cheerfulness and holy pleasure
Well become our happy isle,
When our God in copious measure
Deigns to bless us with his smile;
Joyful, then, all people come,
Celebrate the harvest home.”*

We may forget the harvest, living as we do, so far from rural labors, but those who have to watch the corn as it springs up, and track it through all its numberless dangers, until the blade becomes the full corn in the ear, cannot, surely, forget the wonderful goodness and mercy of God when they see the harvest safely stored. My brethren, if we require any considerations to excite us to gratitude, let us think for a moment of the effect upon our country of *a total failure* of the crops. Suppose to-day it were reported that as yet the corn was not carried, that the continued showers had made it sprout and grow till there was no hope of its being of any further use, and that it might as well be left in the fields. What dismay

would that message carry into every cottage! Who among us could contemplate the future without dismay? All faces would gather blackness. All classes would sorrow, and even the throne itself might fitly be covered with sackcloth at the news. At this day the kingdom of Egypt sits trembling. The rejoicing and abounding land trembles for her sons. The Nile has swollen beyond its proper limit, the waters continue still to rise, and a few more days must see the fields covered with devastating floods. If it be so, alas for that land, in other years so favored as to have given us the proverb of "Corn in Egypt." My brethren, should we not rejoice that this is not our case, and that our happy land rejoices in plenty? If the plant had utterly failed, and the seed had rotted under the clods, we should have been quick enough to murmur; how is it that we are so slow to praise? Take a lower view of the matter, suppose even a *partial scarcity*; at this juncture, when one arm of our industry is paralysed, how serious would have been this calamity! With a staple commodity withdrawn from us, with the daily peril of war at our gates, it would have been a fearful trial to have suffered scarcity of bread. Shall we not bless and praise our covenant God who permits not the appointed weeks of harvest to fail? Sing together all ye to whom bread is the staff of life, and rejoice before him who loadeth you with benefits. We have none of us any adequate idea of *the amount of happiness* conferred upon a nation by a luxuriant crop. Every man in the land is the richer for it. To the poor man the difference is of the utmost importance. His three shillings are now worth four; there is more bread for the children, or more money for clothes. Millions are benefitted by God's once opening his liberal hand. When the Hebrews went through the desert, there were but some two or three millions of them, and yet they sang sweetly of him who fed his chosen people; in our own land alone we have ten times the number, have we no hallowed music for the God of the whole earth? Reflect upon the amazing population of our enormous city — consider the immense mount of poverty — think how greatly at one stroke that poverty has been relieved! A generous contribution, equal to that made for the Lancashire distress, would be but as the drop of a bucket to the relief afforded by a fall in the price of bread. Let us not despise the bounty of God because this great boon comes in a natural way. If every morning when we awoke we saw fresh loaves of bread put into our cupboard, or the morning's meal set out upon the table, we should think it a miracle; but if our God blesses our own exertions and prospers our own toil to the same end, is it not equally as much a ground for praising and blessing his name? I would I had this morning the tongue of the eloquent,

or even my own usual strength, to excite you to gratitude, by the spectacle of the multitudes of beings whom God has made happy by the fruit of the field. My sickness to-day, makes my thoughts wander and unfits me for so noble a theme, yet my soul pants to set your hearts on a blaze. O for heaven's own fire to kindle your hearts. O come, let us worship and bow down, let us exalt the Lord our God, and come into his presence with the voice of joy and thanksgiving.

But how shall we give crowning thanksgiving for this crowning mercy of the year? We can do it, dear friends, by the *inward emotions of gratitude*. Let our hearts be warmed; let our spirits remember, meditate, and think upon this goodness of the Lord. Meditation upon this mercy may tend to nourish in you the tenderest feelings of affection, and your souls will be knit to the Father of spirits, who pitieth his children. Again, *praise him with your lips*; let psalms and hymns employ your tongues to-day: and to-morrow, when we meet together at the prayer-meeting, let us turn it rather into a praise-meeting, and let us laud and magnify his name from whose bounty all this goodness flows. But I think, also, we should thank him by *our gifts*. The Jews of old never tasted the fruit either of the barley or of the wheat-harvest, till they had sanctified it to the Lord by the feast of ingatherings. There was, early in the season, the barley-harvest. One sheaf of this barley was taken and waved before the Lord with special sacrifices, and then afterwards the people feasted. Fifty days afterwards came the wheat-harvest, when two loaves, made of the new flour, were offered before the Lord in sacrifice, together with burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, meat-offerings, drink-offerings, and abundant sacrifices of thanksgivings, to show that the people's thankfulness was not stinted or mean. No man ate either of the ears, or grain, or corn ground and made into bread, until first of all he had sanctified his substance by the dedication of somewhat unto the Lord. And shall we do less than the Jew? Shall he, for types and shadows, express his gratitude in a solid manner, and shall not we? Did he offer unto the Lord whom he scarce knew, and bow before that Most High God who hid his face amidst the smoke of burning rams and bullocks? and shall not we who see the glory of the Lord in the face of Christ Jesus come unto him and bring to him our offerings? The Old Testament ordinance was, "Ye shall not come before the Lord empty;" and let that be the ordillance of to-day. Let us come into his presenoe, each man bearing his offering of thanksgiving unto the Lord. But enough concerning this particular harvest. It has been a crowning mercy this year, so that the other

version of our text might aptly be applied as a description of 1863, "Thou crownest the year of thy goodness."

Furthermore, beloved, we have heard of heavenly harvests, the outflowings of the upper springs, which, in days of yore, awakened the Church of God to loudest praise. There was the harvest of Pentecost. Christ having been sown in the ground like a grain of wheat, sprang up from it, and in his resurrection and ascension was like the waved sheaf before the Lord. Let us never forget that resurrection which crowned the year of God's redeemed with goodness. It was a terrible year indeed; it began in the howling tempests of Christ's poverty, and want, and shame, and suffering, and death; it seemed to have no spring and no summer, but yet it was crowned with an abundant harvest when Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Fifty days after the resurrection came the Pentecost. The barley-harvest had been passed wherein the wave-sheaf was offered; then came the days of wheat-harvest. Peter, and the eleven that were with him, became the reapers, and three thousand souls fell beneath the gospel sickle; there was great joy in the city of Jerusalem that day — nay, all the saints who heard thereof were glad, and heaven itself, catching the divine enthusiasm, rang with harvest joy. It is recorded that the saints ate their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. Pentecost was a crowning mercy, and it was remembered by the saints with crowning thanks.

May I not say that we have had the like crowning mercy shown to this our highly-favored land, in *the revivals* which a few years ago were so plentiful among us, and which even now hover over our heads. The Spirit of the Lord suddenly fell upon many a city and village: where the gospel had been preached with dull and heavy tones, suddenly the minister began to glow — the cords which bound his tongue were snapped, and, like a seraph full of heavenly fire, he began to tell of the love of Jesus. Souls were moved as the trees of the wood are moved in the wind; spirits long dead in sin's tremendous sepulcher, woke up at the quickening breath; they stood upon their feet as a great army — they praised the Lord. Other towns and other villages received the like Pentecostal shower, and we had hoped — O that our hopes had been realised — that all England would have been filled with the same divine enthusiasm, and that the effects would have continued among us. To a great extent the revival has departed, and many of our Churches are more stolid and cold than ever; and our denomination — never too zealous, seldom guilty of excessive heat, seems to have now, I think, as little earnest life as it ever had. Back to their old beds of slumber

— back again to their old dens of routine — downward again to Laodicean lukewarmness have they stolen. Their goodness was as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth away. O that the Lord would once again crown the year with his goodness, and send us revivals from the right hand of the Most High.

Here it is, O well-beloved flock of my care and love, that I ask your gratitude, mainly and chiefly. My brethren, how the Lord has cheered and comforted our hearts, while he has crowned our years with his goodness. Here these ten years have I, as he has enabled me, preached the gospel among you. We have seen no excitement, no stirrings of an unwarranted fanaticism; no wild-fires have been kindled, and yet see how the multitude have listened to the gospel with unceasing attention; and the surging crowds at yonder doors prove that, as in the days of John the Baptist, so it is now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and every man presseth into it. As for conversions, has not the Lord been pleased to give them to us as constantly as the sun rises in his place? Scarce a sermon without the benediction of the Most High — many of them preached in weakness, which none of you have known but the speaker, preached at times with throbs of heart and partings of anguish, which have made the preacher go home mourning that he ever preached at all; and yet success has come, and souls have been saved, and the preacher's heart has been made to sing for joy, for the seed rots not, the furrows are good, the field has been well prepared, and where the seed falls it brings forth a hundredfold, to the praise and honor of the Most High. Brethren, we must not forget this; we might have preached for nought; we might have ploughed the thankless rock and gathered no sheaves. Why then doth he bless us? Is it our worthiness? Ah, no. Is it for ought in the preacher or in the hearers? God forbid that we should think such a thing; it has been the sovereign mercy of God which has prospered his own truth among us, and shall we not for this praise and bless his name?

If we, as a church, do not continue to be as prayerful and as earnest as we have been, the Lord may justly make us like Shiloh, which he deserted, until it became a desolation where not one stone was left upon another. Nay, I venture to say, if we do not progress in earnestness; if you, my hearers, do not become more than ever devoted to the Lord's cause; if there be not more and more of an earnest missionary spirit stirred up and nurtured among us, we may expect the Lord to turn away from us, and find another people who shall more worthily repay his favors. Who knoweth

but ye may have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Perhaps the Lord intends, by some of you, to save multitudes of souls, to stir up his Churches, and to awaken the slumbering spirit of religion. Will ye prove unworthy? Will ye say, "I pray thee have me excused." Will ye not rather, in looking back upon the plentiful harvest of souls reaped in this place, consider that you are in debt to God, and therefore give to him the fullest consecration that believers can offer, because of the crowning mercies which we as a Church receive. "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness."

Beloved, one more remark here. We are looking forward to a time when this world's year shall be crowned with God's goodness in the highest and most boundless sense. Centuries are flying, and yet the darkness lingers; time grows old, and yet the idols sit upon their thrones. Christ reigns not yet; his unsuffering kingdom has not come; the sceptres are still in the hands of despots, and slaves still fret in iron bonds. In vain, in vain, O earth, hast thou expected brighter days, for still the thick and heavy night rests o'er thy sons. But the day *shall* come — and the signs of its coming are increasing in their brightness — the day *shall* come when the harvest of the world shall be reaped. Christ has not died in vain; he redeemed the world with his blood, and the whole world he will have. From eastern coast to western, Christ must reign; yet will the seed of the woman chase the powers of darkness back to their evil habitations; yet shall he pierce the crooked serpent, and cut leviathan that is in the depths of the sea; yet shall the trumpet ring, and the multitudes represented in him when he rose as the great wave-sheaf, shall rise from the dead from land and sea; and yet, in the day of his appearing, shall the kings of the earth yield up their sovereignty, and all nations shall call him blessed. Tarry awhile, beloved, wait ye yet a little season, and when ye shall hear the shout, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," then shall ye know that he crowneth the year with his goodness.

II. But we must leave this point, and turn to the next. PATHS OF FATNESS SHOULD BE WAYS OF DUTY. "And thy paths drop fatness."

When the conqueror journeys through the nations, his paths drop blood; fire and vapor of smoke are in his track, and tears, and groans, and sighs attend him. But where the Lord journeys, his "paths drop fatness." When the kings of old made a progress through their dominions, they caused a famine wherever they tarried; for the greedy courtiers who swarmed in

their camp devoured all things like locusts, and were as greedily ravenous as palmer-worms and caterpillars. But where the great King of kings journeys, he enriches the land; his “paths drop fatness.” By a bold Hebrew metaphor — and the Hebrew poetry certainly seems to be the most sublime in its conceptions — the clouds are represented as the chariots of God — “He maketh the clouds his chariot:” and as the Lord Jehovah rides upon the heavens in the greatness of his strength, and in his excellency on the sky, the rains drop down upon the lands, and so the wheel-tracks of Jehovah are marked by the fatness which makes glad the earth: Happy, happy are the people who worship such a God, whose coming is ever a coming of goodness and of grace to his creatures.

We see, then, dear friends, that *in providence*, wherever the Lord comes, his “paths drop fatness.” He may sometimes seem to pinch his people and bring them into want, but if there be not a fatness of outward good, there will be a fatness of inward mercy. Even the trials which the Lord scatters like coals of fire in his path, do but burn up the weeds and warm the heart of the soil. Do but trust the Lord, and appeal to him in all your straits and difficulties, and you shall find that when he cometh forth out of his hiding-place for your help, his paths shall drop fatness; your poverty shall be removed, and your dejection of spirit shall be cheered.

Beloved, we believe that our text has a fullness of meaning if it be viewed in a spiritual sense: “His paths drop fatness.” *In the use of the means*, the sinner will find God’s paths drop with fatness. Art thou hungry and thirsty? Does thy soul faint within thee? Art thou longing to be satisfied with favor? Then, sinner, wait upon the Lord, and hearken diligently unto the message of his gospel; be thou constantly searching the Scriptures, or listening to his truth as it is proclaimed in thine ears. Especially, sinner, remember that the ways of the Lord are to be seen in the person of Christ. Go to those hands which are the trackways of divine justice; go to those feet which are the pathways of infinite love; explore that side where deep affection dwells, and you shall find fatness of mercy dropping there. No sinner ever did come to God and was sent empty away. You may attend the means, I grant you, and yet find no comfort, for means are not always God’s paths; but you cannot come to Christ, you cannot rest in him and be disappointed. Trust in him at all times, and however deep your poverty, it shall have a superabundant supply. “His paths drop fatness.”

You also who are his people, I know that sometimes your souls grow faint. Weary with the wilderness, worn with its cares, torn with its briars, you come up to the house of God, and oh, if you come there to see your Master, and not merely to join in the routine of service; if you come there seeking after him, and panting for him as the hart panteth for the water brooks, you will find that the commonest services — poor though be the minister, and plain the place, and simple the people; though the music may have but little charm for the ear of taste, and the words of the speaker may have none of the trappings of oratory, yet sweet to you shall be the worship of God's house, and you shall find that "his paths drop fatness." So, too, in the use of those precious ordinances — Baptism and the Lord's Supper. You that know the truth, and are made free by it, shall find that those paths drop fatness. I believe many of you are lean and starved, because you are not obedient to your Lord's command in Baptism. You know what he bids you do, but you stand back from it. You comprehend your duty, and perhaps you say you are Baptists in principle, forgetting that this very principle of yours is that which will condemn you unless you carry it out. In keeping that commandment there is a great reward; and many besides the Ethiopian noble of queen Candace's empire, have gone on their way rejoicing from the baptismal stream. It is peculiarly so at the Lord's Table. I would not give up the Lord's Supper as a means of grace for ought that could be devised. To the godless it must ever be a condemnation; but to the saint of God who cometh there, desiring to be fed with the flesh of Christ, it becomes a feast indeed. I do trust, dear friends, that in a very short time we shall celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sabbath-day. I am convinced that a weekly celebration is Scriptural, and I see more and more the need of it. I think it is an ordinance to which we ought not to prescribe our own times and our own seasons, where the Word of God is so very express and so plain. Such was apostolic custom; search for yourselves and see. Indeed, if there were no apostolic precedent, methinks the sweetness of the service and the delightful nature of the ordinance might suggest to Christians that it was well to have it frequently. We cannot be satisfied once a month with communion with Christ, and methinks we hardly ought to be satisfied with the sign itself so seldom. God's paths drop fatness: happy are they who diligently walk in them.

Beloved, the Lord has other paths besides those of the open means of grace, and these too drop fatness. Especially let me mention to you the *path of prayer*. No believer ever says, "My leanness, my leanness; woe

unto me," who is much in the closet. Starving souls generally live at a distance from the mercy-seat. Close access to God in wrestling prayer is sure to make the believer strong — if not happy. The nearest place to the gate of heaven is the throne of the heavenly grace. Much alone, and you will have much assurance; little alone with God, your religion will be very shallow; you shall have many doubts and fears, and but little of the joy of the Lord. Let us see to it, beloved, that since the soul-enriching path of prayer is open to the very weakest saint; since no high attainments are required; since you are not bidden to come because you are an advanced saint, but freely invited if you be a saint at all, let us see to it, I say, that we be often in the way of private devotion. Be much on your knees, for so Elijah drew the rain upon famished Israel's fields.

The like, certainly, I may say of the secret path of *communion*. Oh! the delights which are to be had by that man who has fellowship with Christ! Earth hath no words which can set forth the holy mirth of the soul that leans on Jesus' bosom. Few Christians understand it, they live in the lowlands and seldom climb to the top of Nebo; they live outside; they come not into the holy place; they take not up the privilege of priesthood. At a distance they see the sacrifice, but they sit not down with the priest to eat thereof, and to enjoy the fat of the burnt offering. Brother, sister, sit thou ever under the shadow of Jesus; come up to that palm-tree, and take hold of the branches thereof; let thy beloved be unto thee as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, and thou shalt find a never-failing fruit, which shall ever be sweet unto thy taste.

I must not forget that the path of *faith*, too, is a path that drops fatness. It is a strange path — few walk in it, even of professors; but they who in temporals and in spirituals have learned to lean on God alone, shall find it a path of fatness. As we spoke the other morning concerning the cedars up there upon that stormy ridge, unwatered by a single river, and yet always green, so shall the Christian be who lives alone upon his God. Wait thou only upon God; let thine expectation be from him. The young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but thou shalt not want any good thing, for the paths of the Lord shall drop fatness to thee.

O my dear hearers, I would to God the Lord would come into the midst of our Churches and congregations by *his Spirit*, then would his path drop fatness. We have a multitude of complaints at different times of the dulness and lethargy of the Churches; but what we need is more of the presence of

the Holy Spirit — more of the holy baptism of his sacred influences. In a very quaint sermon by Matthew Wilkes, I remember he said that ministers were like pens — some of them were common goose-quills, writing very heavily, and often requiring nibbing; others of them, he said — the college men — were like steel-pens, and while they could make good fine up-strokes, they could not make such heavy downstrokes as some of the quills could; but, he said, neither the one pen nor the other could do anything without ink; and therefore, he said, our ministers want more ink. The ink is the Holy Spirit — “written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.” And so, Mr. Wilkes suggested that people, instead of finding fault with the minister, would do well to pray, “Lord, give him more ink — give him more ink!” There was much in that prayer, for we need often to be dipped in that ink, or else we cannot make a mark on your hearts. However experienced we may be in saved service, you and I cannot serve God effectually, nor see any power resting on our ministry, except as we get more of the Spirit of the living God. I would that the Churches laid to heart more and more the real need of the times. We have been building hosts of chapels lately, and raising thousands of pounds, and because there were revivals, and we hear of them every now and then, we have been thinking that we are in a good state. Now, I venture to say that all our denominations are in a bad state. There is one which I mention with profound respect, whose statistics cause me sincere sorrow. I believe that in that large, wealthy, and most earnest body of Christians, the wesleyans, the clear increase of all the Wesleyan Chapels in the whole metropolis, including a wide district around London, for the whole of this year, is far from equal to the annual increase of this one Church. If I am not mistaken, the increase throughout the whole of the United Kingdom is about four thousand five hundred, being scarcely two per cent. upon the whole body. If our Baptist denomination could have as good and clear statistics, I exceedingly much question whether we should be found, taking the whole of us together, to be in a much better state. The fact is, denominations, when they are poor and despised, and live upon God, and are all earnest, always increase and have many conversions; but we are getting all of us so respectable, building fine chapels, and looking after schools and all sorts of things, and the Spirit of God is departing from us, we are losing the divine anointing and the blessed unction — we are congratulating ourselves upon an enlightenment which does not exist, and upon an advancement that is all moonshine. Look at the journals for last week, and see with horror a picture of superstition worthy of the dark ages exhibited in a country

village, where, to my knowledge, there is both an Independent and Baptist Chapel, and yet the people believe in witchcraft still! Is this, is this the effect of religion? Why, our places of worship do not operate as they should upon the people. They are, in most places, mere clubs where good people spend their Sundays, but the outlying mass is not touched. We have lost the old fire to a great extent, the divine enthusiasm, the Pentecostal furor; that sacred flame of the first apostles, which is so much needed if ever we are to startle a dying world, is almost extinct. And in this place, where God has favored us with much of his presence, we are getting into very much the same condition. How many of you who once were earnest are now as cold as slabs of ice! Some of you do hardly anything for my Lord and Master. Converted, I trust, you are, but where is your first love? Where is the love of your espousals which made some of you talk of Jesus by day, and dream of him by night? O for a return to God's paths — O for a revival once again in the midst of the Churches. Ten years ago we could speak honestly that the Churches were almost dead, but I think they are worse now, because they have cherished the idea that they are not so dead as they were. We are as bad as ever; with a name to live, whereas we are dead. O that some trumpet voice could wake our sleeping Churches once again. Can ye live without souls saved? If ye can, I cannot. Can ye live without London being enlightened with the light of God? If ye can so live, I pray my Master let me die. Can ye bear to fight and win no victories? to sow, and reap no harvests? Brethren, if ye are right, ye cannot endure it, but ye must endure it till the Lord comes forth. Let us pray therefore with might and main, with a holy violence which will take no denial, let us pray the Lord to come forth out of his hiding-place, for his "paths drop fatness," and there is fatness to be found nowhere else besides.

III. And now I close. The whole subject seems to give us one or two suggestions as to matters of duty. "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." One suggestion is this: some of you in this house are strangers to God, you have been living as his enemies, and you will probably die so. But what a blessing it would be if a part of the crown of this year should be your conversion! "The harvest is past and the summer is ended, and ye are not saved." But oh, what a joy, if this very day you should turn unto God and live! Remember, the way of salvation was freely proclaimed last Sabbath morning, it runs in this style — "This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Soul, if this day thou trustest in Christ, it shall be thy spiritual birthday, it shall be unto thee the beginning

of days; emancipated from thy chains, delivered from the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, thou shalt be the Lord's free man. What sayest thou? O that the Spirit of God would bring thee this day to turn unto him with full purpose of heart.

Another suggestion. Would not the Lord crown this year with his goodness if he would move some of you to do more for him than you have ever done before? Cannot you think of some new thing that you have forgotten, but which is in the power of your hand? Can you not do it for Christ to-day? — some fresh soul you have never conversed with, some fresh means of usefulness you have never attempted?

And lastly, would not it be well for us if the Lord would crown this year with his goodness by making us begin from this day to be more prayerful? Let our prayer meetings have more at them, and let everyone in his closet pray more for the preacher, pray more for the Church. Let us, everyone of us, give our hearts anew to Christ. What say you to-day, to renew your consecration vow? Let us say to him, "Here, Lord, I give myself away to thee once more. Thou hast bought me with thy blood, accept me over again; from this good hour I will begin a new life for a second time if thy Spirit be with me. Help me, Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake." Amen.

THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH, OR THE EARNEST ENQUIRER.

NO. 533

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 4TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” — Matthew 12:42.

OUR Savior, in this chapter, administered a rebuke to two sorts of people. He reproved those who hear the gospel, but who are not brought to humiliation and repentance; he rebuked them by the example of the Ninevites, who, having but one short and terrible warning from the prophet Jonah, clothed themselves in sackcloth, turned unto God in penitence, and so preserved their city. He then rebukes another class — those who have not curiosity enough to care to hear the gospel, or who, if they hear it, give it no attention, as though it were not worthy of human thought. First, he rebukes those who hear and despise the Word, and then those who are of so stolid a heart as to refuse to give it an honest and candid hearing; these are shamed by the example of this Queen of the South, who came from the uttermost parts of the earth, enticed by fame to listen to the wisdom of King Solomon. He declares that her hallowed curiosity which led her to journey so far to profit by the wisdom of a man, will, in the day of judgment, condemn us, if we refuse to hear the voice of the Son of God, and are not moved to enquire concerning the heavenly wisdom which he reveals.

Will you kindly open your Bibles at the tenth chapter of the First of Kings, for I shall have constantly to refer to the historical narrative in order to bring out in full relief the conduct of the ancient queen. O that the Spirit of God may convince some of you of sin, by the example of that wise-hearted woman!

The three points we shall consider this morning, with regard to the Queen of Sheba, are these: first, let us *commend her for the possession of an enquiring spirit*; then let us observe *how she conducted her enquiry*; and, in closing, let us remark *the result of an enquiry so well conducted*.

I. First, LET US COMMEND HER FOR HER ENQUIRING SPIRIT. In this point she will rise up in judgment against many here present.

She was a queen. Queens have many cares, multitudes of occupations and engagements, but she neither considered it beneath her dignity to search into the wisdom of Solomon, nor a waste of valuable time to journey to his dominions. How many offer the vain excuse that they cannot give due attention to the religion of Jesus Christ for want of time; they have a large family, or a very difficult business to manage. This woman rebukes such, for she left her kingdom, and threw off the cares of State to take a long journey, that she might listen to the royal sage. How much the rather ought men even to be willing, if it were absolutely necessary (and I believe it never is), even to neglect their business for a season, that they might find out the way of salvation for their souls. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And, on the other hand, of what account would be his loss, though he should lose his all, if he did but find his soul, and were saved at the last? You cannot say, any of you, hence-forward, that you have an excuse in the shortness of your time, or in the difficulties of your position; if the Queen of the South can come to Solomon, you also can consider the teaching of Christ.

Her royal court was, doubtless, *already stored with wisdom*. The princes of the eastern realms were always careful to gather to themselves a band of wise men, who found in their patronage both subsistence and honor. In the court of so great a lover of learning as was the Queen of Sheba, there would certainly be a little congress of magi and wise men, but yet she was not content with what she knew already, she was determined to search after this divine wisdom, of which she had heard the fame. In this she rebukes those of you who think you know enough; who suppose that your own home-spun intelligence will suffice, without sitting at the feet of Jesus.

If you dream that human wisdom can be a sufficient light without receiving the brighter beams of revelation; if you say, "These things are for the unintelligent and for the poor, we will not listen to them," this queen, whose Court was full of wisdom, and yet who leaves it all to find the wisdom which God had given to Solomon, rebukes you. The wisdom of Jesus Christ as much surpasses all human knowledge as the sun outshines a candle. Comparison there can be none, contrast there is much. He who will not come to the fountain which brims with wisdom, but trusts to his own leaking cisterns, shall wake up too late to find himself a fool.

Consider, too, that the queen *came from a very great distance* to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The journey from Arabia Felix, or from Abyssinia, whichever the country may have been, was a long and dangerous one — a much more serious matter than it would be in these times; and performed by the slow process of the camel-back, the journey must have occupied a very long season. Coming, as Matthew says, "from the uttermost parts of the earth," there were doubtless mountains to be climbed, if not seas to be navigated, and deserts to be crossed; but none of these difficulties could keep her back. She hears of wisdom, and wisdom she will have. So she boldly ventures upon the journey with her numerous train, no matter how far she may have to travel. Very many have the gospel brought to their doors, and yet will not leave their chimney-corners to listen to it. We have thousands in London who have but to walk across the street and hear the Word, and yet they lie about at home; and there are hundreds of others who when they do come, are inattentive under the ministry, or, if they listen, pay no more real attention to it than though it were some old worn-out story which it is a respectable custom to hear, but which could not possibly be of any service to them. The Queen of Sheba, toiling across the desert, of the weaker sex though she was, shall rise up in judgment against those who neglect the great salvation and treat the Savior as though it were nothing to them that Jesus should die.

Do not forget, too, that this woman was *a foreigner* to Solomon, and that *she had a religion already* — probably one of the older forms of idolatry, perhaps the Sabeian worship of the sun. Now, many persons argue in these times, "Would you have me change my religion?" It is supposed to be an impertinence to imagine that a Roman Catholic could give any considerations to the claims of the religion of free grace; or that men belonging to another Church should listen with anything like candid attention to a doctrine at variance with that which they have heard from

their youth. "Would you have me change my religion?" Yes, that I would, if your religion is false. If your religion has not changed you, I would that you would change your religion, for a religion which does not renew a man's character and make him holy — which does not change his confidence, and make him rest upon Christ — a religion which does not make altogether a new man of him, from top to bottom, is a religion of no value, and the sooner he gives it up the better. Because my mother or my grandmother happened to be blind, why am I to be blind too, if there is sight to be had? Suppose they dragged a heavy chain behind them all their days, am I to drag the same, because, forsooth, I sprang, of their loins?

Hereditary godliness, if it be not personal godliness, is ever a thing of small value; but hereditary ungodliness is a most damnable heritage — get rid of it, I pray you. Remember to your own master, you stand or fall on your own account. Each soul enters through the gate of life alone; and through the iron gate of death it departs alone; every man should search in solitary earnestness, apart from all the rest of the world, to know what the truth is, and knowing it, it is his to come out alone on the Lord's side. Yes, we would have you give attention to the things of God, even though you should have been brought up in other customs, and should have honestly espoused another form of religion. Prove the spirits whether they be of God. If your soul has been deceived, there is yet time to be set right. God help you, that you may find out the truth.

It is worthy of observation, that this woman coming from afar, *made a journey which cost her very much expense*. She came with a great train, with camels bearing spices and very much good and precious stones. She looked upon the treasures of her kingdom as only valuable, because they would admit her into the presence of the keeper of the storehouse of wisdom. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ asks nothing of men except their hearts. He doth not sell the truth to any of them, but gives it freely without money and without price. And what if men will not have it, if they refuse to lend their ears, and to give their thoughts to divine things, shall they not be utterly inexcusable when this heathen queen shall rise up and shall declare that she gave her rubies and her pearls, her spices and her camels to King Solomon, that she might learn his human wisdom? O sirs, should we lose the light of our eyes and the use of our limbs, yet were it better to enter into life blind and lame, than having those eyes and limbs to be cast into hell fire. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life;" and if he would give all that for his temporal life, oh! how much more

costly is the spiritual life, and how cheap were the price if he could give a thousand martyrdoms to redeem his soul. But nothing of this kind is asked; the gospel presents freely to every needy soul just that which he requires. It cries — “He that hath no money, let him come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” O my dear hearers, if you have refused the invitation of Christ’s gospel, well may you tremble at the thought, that the Queen of Sheba shall rise up in judgment against you.

Note that this queen had *received no invitation*; King Solomon never bade her come; she came unsought for, unexpected. You have been bidden to come — hundreds of times in this house of prayer has the voice been heard crying, “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” Even you who are strangers to this house, in every corner of the streets of this city, may hear the invitation of Christ. The Bible, which is God’s written invitation, is in all your houses, and ye may search it if you will. Therefore, if you, followed with invitations, and urged with line upon line and precept upon precept, will not come when God’s providence brings the gospel to your very gates, if you will not seek King Jesus, then shall ye be condemned indeed, by this Queen of Sheba. *Little had she ever heard of Solomon*, remember that — nothing but a rumor of his fame. Some of his ships which went to Tarshish for gold, had probably been driven by stress of weather to the Abyssinian coast, or possibly that may have been the way from the head of the Red Sea round to the Indies, where probably Tarshish was situated, and so they made a common practice of calling at one of the ports of Southern Arabia or Abyssinia. From these sailors her subjects had heard strange stories of the mighty king. They had heard of his throne of gold and ivory, of the glory of his army, and the multitude of his chariots; above all, they had heard something concerning the temple and his God. She, influenced merely by rumor, comes that distance. Well, but we, we have a sure word of testimony brought to us by prophets and priests innumerable, we have it here in this book, written by the divine finger and stamped with the eternal seal. We, ourselves, know that there is wisdom in Christ, our own consciences tell us that he is no deceiver; that his gospel is most true and precious. What fools are we, what fools twice told, if, with this certainty of gaining so much, we yet shrink from the glorious adventure, and will not go to him who will give us wisdom and eternal life.

One might continue thus to show the excellence of this woman’s enquiring spirit, but we have only space to notice that *the object which she journeyed after was vastly inferior to that which is proposed to our enquiry*. We bid

the careless soul bethink himself of the Son of God; she went that distance to see a son of man, a mere man, who, with all his wisdom was a fool. She journeyed all that way to see one who was wise himself, but who had power to impart but a very small portion of his wisdom, whereas we invite the sinner to come to one who is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; we tell him that all Christ hath he is ready to bestow, that his abundance is only an abundance for others, and his fullness is that out of which all of us have received. She went to hear a man who had wisdom: we bid you come to one who *is* wisdom, wisdom itself consolidated. Talk ye of the royalty of Solomon? — we invite you to a greater king than he, who is Lord of heaven, and earth, and hell. Speak ye of his riches? — we tell you of one who hath unspeakable riches of grace and glory. True, she *might* gain by the journey, it was but a probability, but whosoever cometh to Christ, becomes rich to all the intents of bliss. No soul ever trafficked with our Solomon without being at once enriched; if he came empty-handed, poor, feeble, naked, and sinful, to accept from our Jesus his great salvation, he was never sent away empty. Ye that despise the gospel, who go in and out of the place of worship as those doors turn upon their hinges, take heed, lest this Queen of the South rise up in judgment against you to condemn you.

II. Let us observe to this queen's worthy commendation, HOW SHE CONDUCTED THE ENQUIRY.

Observe that she did it *in person*. She did not depute an ambassador to go and search into the matter, but personally, and on her own account, she set out to see Solomon himself. Was it not the Duke of Wellington who, on one occasion rebuked one of his officers for railing against the Bible, by asking him if he had ever read it, and when the other frankly confessed he had not, showed him how base it was to find fault with that which he did not understand? Most persons who object to the religion of Christ have never investigated it. This I am sure of, no man has ever had an intelligent idea of the person of the Savior, of the graciousness of his work, who ever could think or speak against him afterwards. Watts is correct when he says:

*“His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love him too.”*

To know, to comprehend the character and office and work of Jesus Christ is the road to obtaining an earnest faith in him and love towards him; nor

can I think that any man did ever honestly enquire at the hand of Christ what that gracious mystery is that he came to teach, without receiving from him a gracious smile of encouragement. Whosoever will be converted let him become as a little child, and becoming as a little child, and sitting at the feet of Jesus, he shall get the treatment of all other little children, he shall hear the Master say, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." The honest seeker after the Lord Jesus, who personally draws near in earnest prayer and humble entreaty shall find peace and good.

Remark, in the next place, that *the queen went first of all to Solomon. She went, and she went to Solomon.* The way to learn the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to go to *him*. Some people want to begin at the doctrine of election, and so they stumble at the stumbling-stone. Some must learn first of all where predestination meets free will, and if they cannot see that, they turn aside with disgust. Others would remove the difficulties of the Pentateuch, or solve the problems of geology; but if they were wise, they would go at once to the Master himself. I find not that she enquired of the butlers, of Adoniram who was over the tribute, or even of the king's mighty men, the Cherethites and Pelethites, but she sought for Solomon; from his own lips, from him immediately and directly she will get the resolution of her knotty questions, and understand his wisdom. Go thou to God, poor soul, in Christ Jesus. Straightforward makes the best runner; there are things which will puzzle thee, there are depths too deep for thee, but go thou to God in Christ Jesus hanging upon yonder cross, reflect upon the mystery of his great atonement, and yield thy faith up to it and thou shalt then begin to understand the wisdom of our mighty Solomon. If you cannot comprehend all teaching, may the Spirit enable you to grasp his person, and it is enough.

When she had obtained an audience of the king, observe what she did: "*She told him all that was in her heart.*" This is the way to know the Lord; tell him all that is in your heart; your doubts, your fears, your hardness of heart and impenitence; confess the whole. That man is near to knowing Christ who begins to know himself; and he who will tell out as much as he knoweth of his own corruption and depravity, and sinfulness and necessities, and inabilities, shall soon have a gracious answer of peace.

Tarry not because thy heart is vile, it is viler than thou thinkest it is, but go with it just as it is, and tell Jesus all. Art thou like the woman with the issue of blood? I pray thee tell him all the truth, and he will say, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Why dost thou try to hide anything from omniscience.

He knows the corners of thy heart, the deep places and the dark places thereof are in his hands. If thou shouldst tell him he will know no more, wherefore then dost thou hesitate? Tear off the veil from thy heart, and then thou shalt find mercy.

Moreover, *she proposed to Solomon her hard questions*. I do not know what they were, and I do not particularly care. The Jewish rabbis have invented a few very stupid ones, which they say were her hard questions. But I know if you come to our Solomon, to Christ, these will be your hard questions, “My Lord, how can mercy and justice kiss each other? How can God forgive sin and yet punish it?” Jesus will point you to his wounded hands and feet, he will tell you of his great atonement, how by a substitution God is dreadful in his justice and boundless in his love. Then you will put to him the question, “How can a sinful creature be accepted in the sight of a holy God?” He will tell you of his righteousness, and you will see how, covered with the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer, a sinful soul is as acceptable before the Lord as though it had never offended. You will say to him, “Canst thou tell me, Jesus, how it is that a weak soul with no power, shall yet be able to fight with the devil and overcome the world, the flesh and the devil?” And Jesus will answer, “My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength shall be perfect in thy weakness,” and so, all the knotty questions will be answered. Nay, if you are puzzled about electing love, or aught else in Scripture, if you will tell him all that is in your heart, and be willing to learn from him, there is no hard question which your soul can suggest, but Jesus Christ will answer it.

This good woman, in pursuing her enquiry, *listened carefully to what Solomon told her*. It is said, he told her all her questions. Oh! there is a blessed communion between Christ and a trembling soul. If you will tell him all your failings, he will tell you all his merit; if you will tell him your weakness, he will tell you all his strength; if you will tell him your distance from God, he will tell you his nearness to God; if you will show him how hard your heart is, he will tell you how his heart was broken that you might live. Be not afraid, only make a clear revelation to him and trust in him, and he will make a sweet revelation to you.

When she had gone thus far, she went on to notice everything in connection with Solomon. The Queen of Sheba saw “the wisdom of Solomon; and *the house that he had built*.” She did not notice the house *first*, you see, she went to Solomon first. A seeking soul goes to Christ

first, tells him her heart, learns the love of Jesus, and then afterwards sets to work to learn everything else about Jesus. Now, it is very pleasant to a seeking soul to find out *the house* which Christ has built — his glorious Church built of costly stones purchased by his own blood; built of great stones — great sinners made into great trophies of his love; made of hewn stones, stones hewn out of the quarry of sin, cut and shaped by his own grace to lie in our predestined niche for ever. It is a glorious thing to understand Christ's Church, to know the foundations of it, laid in the covenant of grace; the pinnacles of it towering to the highest heaven; the great Master who reigns in it, Jesus Christ, who is head over all things to his Church — her glorious windows letting in light through the ordinances and the preaching of the Word — her doors that admit in the saints — her gates of brass and bars of steel shutting out the devils of hell and all the thieves and robbers that would break in. There is enough to occupy a soul for years in understanding the house which Jesus hath built.

Then she observed "*the meat of his table.*" "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Oh! how ravishing to a poor soul to discover that Christ, who is our life, is also the staff of life: "I am that living bread. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead; he that eateth of the bread that I shall give him, shall never hunger and shall never thirst." Oh, the meat of his table; what luxuries! Men, indeed, did eat angels' food, but —

*"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace and dying love."*

What sweet food — what satisfying food — what abundant food — what constant provisions — what rare provisions, too! In the same book of Kings you will find how many fallow-deer and roebucks, and bushels of fine corn, and fat oxen and birds, King Solomon had to put upon his table every day; but my Lord and Master places the infinite treasures of his own person upon his table every day, and sends out the summons to his children

— "All things are ready; my oxen and fatlings are killed; come ye to the supper." Happy soul, that knows concerning the meat of his table!

She looked next to "*the sitting of his servants.*" All his saints are in thy hands — they sat down at thy feet? See how we sit to learn at the feet of Jesus — how we sit to commune at the feet of Jesus, as Mary did — nay, how some of the servants to-day are setting up yonder in glory — nay, all of them are there — for he hath raised us up together and made us sit

together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Oh, if the soul ever comes to know what “sitting in heavenly places” means — what being in heaven means, while we are on earth, then the sitting of the servants will be a marvel.

And the next was “*his ministers.*” Well, and Christ hath ministers everywhere. Streams and tempests are his servants — clouds and darkness are his slaves. “Remember that omnipotence hath servants everywhere.” Think of his ministers that are in heaven — “He maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire.” And then there are his ministers here on earth, who may be called *his cupbearers*. There are those whom he has called out from among men, and gifted to preach the Word, who take the cup of salvation in their hands, and bear it to fainting souls, and in the name of Jesus act as his *butlers*; for so it is in the margin; like good stewards bringing out of his treasury things new and old. There is a near connection between faithful ministers and Christ; for when John saw Christ, he walked among the candlesticks — that is, in the Churches; but he had the stars in his right hand. So are his ministers ever there, and thus their being taught and owned of the Lord, is a subject worthy of wonder. Happy soul that has learned to see the beauty of Christ in his ministers and cupbearers. *And their apparel* — ah! here is a subject! Why, this is the apparel of all his saints — the white linen of the righteousness of Christ; and then those priestly garments with which he girds his people, so that they, as the high priest of old, make music as they walk, while the sweet bells of faith, and the pomegranates of good works sweetly smite together and give forth golden notes. “Her clothing shall be of wrought gold,” says the sweet psalmist, when he sings of the Church. “She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.” Now such is the apparel of every child of God, and it is little wonder if an enquiring soul like the Queen of Sheba should be made to marvel at it.

There remained one thing more — the most wonderful of all — it was “*his ascent to the house of the Lord,*” the gigantic viaduct from the palace to the temple. She looked at that. “Why,” she said, “I never thought that such a valley could be bridged, I never dreamed that ever two such mountains as those, so wide apart, could be brought so close together.” As she saw the king and his royal train walk along the viaduct, her soul was utterly astonished. Methinks I see my King’s ascent to the house of the Lord. There was the mountain of our fall and ruin, and yonder the great mountain of God’s love and a valley of divine justice went between. Jesus Christ has

built a noble viaduct; he first trod it himself, opening for us a new and living way of access between man and God; he himself ascends up on high, with trumpets' joyful sound, and opens the gate of heaven to all believers, by thus making an ascent to the house of the Lord. You and I may ascend unto his holy hill, may climb to the seventh heaven, and sit down with Christ upon his throne, even as he has overcome and has sat down with the Father upon his throne. Oh, glorious ascent to the house of the Lord! I think the Septuagint version reads it, "*And his thank-offerings in the house of the Lord.*" Well, that is the same thing; because our Savior's sacrifice is the living way by which we ascend into the holy hill of the Lord. If nothing else can fill one with wonder, we must be amazed even in eternity, to think of his matchless offering. He gave his body to be wrung with anguish, and his soul to be torn with grief; "who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." The first-born sons of light desire in vain to know the depth of this love, they cannot reach the mystery, the length and height of this glorious ascent to the house of the Lord.

Do note that she did not begin with all this. You see she began with Solomon. She did not begin with the ascent to the house of the Lord, much less with the ministers and butlers, — she began with the king himself. Sinner, begin with Jesus; let thy first enquiry be, "Is there balm in Gilead? is there a physician there?" Let your cry be that of the startled jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" Like him, obey the apostolic injunction, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." May the Holy Spirit bring you to this, and then afterwards he shall lead you into all truth; he shall take the keys, and open room after room, and cabinet after cabinet, and casket after casket, till he has shown you all the crown jewels, and revealed to you the regalia of the King of kings, and let you into the secret of the heart of God in Christ Jesus your Lord. Only be willing, like the Queen of Sheba, to search; for, if not, her wisdom in her enquiry shall rise up in judgment against you to condemn you.

III. And now, thirdly, let us note THE RESULT OF OUR ENQUIRY.

The first result was *a confession of faith*. "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land, of thy acts and of thy wisdom." She did not hold her tongue and go slinking back to Abyssinia without a single word of confession, but having tested and being convinced, she could not refuse giving her testimony to the truth of the rumor. Soul, if thou shalt come to

Jesus Christ, and try him when thou shalt have joy and peace in believing, thou wilt say it was a true report. Why, I have seen hundreds and thousands who have given their hearts to Jesus, but I never did see one that said he was disappointed in it, never met with one who said Jesus Christ was less than he was declared to be. I remember when first these eyes beheld him, when the burden slipped from off my heavy-laden shoulders, and I was free, why, I thought this, that all the preachers I had ever heard had not half preached, they had not half told the beauty of my Lord and Master. So good! so generous! so gracious! so willing to forgive! It seemed to me as if they had almost slandered him; they painted his likeness doubtless as well as they could, but it was a mere smudge compared with the matchless beauties of his face. You that have ever seen him will say the same. I go back many a time to my home, mourning that I cannot preach my Master even as I myself know him, and what I know of him is so little compared with the matchlessness of his grace. Would that I knew him more, and that I could tell it out better. Instead of thinking that your trust in Christ has been an unprofitable speculation, you will exclaim with joy, "The half has not been told me." She expressed then her faith in Solomon; and oh, if you have any faith and have found him to be true, out with it; be not secret believers, but stand forward for your Lord and Master.

Next she made *a confession of her unbelief*. "Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard." "I did not believe it," said she, "until I came and saw." It is the way with you. We have to cry, "Who hath believed our report?" Men will not readily believe upon report, but when you once come and try it, you will think, "How could I have doubted, how could I ever have been unbelieving." God forgives your unbelief, but you will never forgive yourselves. You will say, methinks, even in heaven, "How could I have been so foolish as to doubt the message which came to me from the Most High." Does not faith always lead to a sense of unbelief, and when most of all we have learned not to stagger, is it not then we discover more and more how vile a thing it is to doubt the word of the Most High?

Having done this, she declared that *her anticipations were exceeded*. Upon that we will say no more, and only add that next she *spoke a kind word for his servants* — "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom." Why she thought that every little page in Solomon's court was more honored than she was.

She was a queen, but then she was a queen of a distant land, and so she seems to have drunk in the spirit of David when he said, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." She seemed almost willing to give up Sheba, and all its spices and its gold, if she might but be a maid of honor in the court of king Solomon. I am sure that is the way with any of us who have ever been to Jesus. How we love his people! You are no lover of Christ if you do not love his children. As soon as ever the heart is given to the master of the house it is given to the children of the house. Love Christ and you will soon love all that love him. Do you not, dear friends, esteem the people of God to be the excellent of the earth? Are they not all your delight? Time was, if they dropped into your house, you looked at the clock for fear they should talk too long upon religious subjects; but now, if they will but talk of your Master, they may stop all night if they like. Now you feel it so pleasant to speak of his name, that if you meet a Christian you feel a love to him; and if he is despised and his character is slandered, you feel you must stand up for him. I know some of you wish you could always be in God's house. There are some children of God in this place who are here whenever the door is opened, who wish there were seven Sundays in the week, that they could always sit and hear the name of Jesus and see his minister, and rejoice that sometimes the cupbearer bringeth forth the spiced wine of the Lord's pomegranate and bids his children drink of it even to the full.

This good woman next *blessed Solomon's God* in these beautiful words — "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king to do judgment and justice." She blessed his God. So we are drawn to a sweet union of heart to God through a knowledge of Christ, and as our love flows downward from Christ to his people, so it goes upward from Christ to his Father. You will notice that she avowed her love to him because of his everlasting love to his people. Notice, she does not say anything about Abyssinia — she is thinking about Israel, about the chosen. She sees distinguishing, discriminating, electing love, and she perceives the everlastingness of this love — "Because he loved Israel *for ever*, therefore he has made thee king." O brethren and sisters, may we so grow in grace that we may love the Father because he hath made Christ to be the anointed for this reason, because he loved his Church and gave his Son for it, that he might cleanse it from all sin by his own precious blood.

Once more, she then did what was the best proof of her truthfulness, *she gave to Solomon of her treasures* — “She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.” And so souls that know the beauty of Christ give him all they have. There are no such spices as those which come from newly-converted souls. Nothing gives Christ greater delight than the love of his people. We think our love to be a very poor and common thing, but he does not think so — he has set such a store by us that he gave his heart’s blood to redeem us, and now he looks upon us as being worth the price he paid. He never will think that he had a bad bargain of it, and so he looks upon every grain of our love as being even choicer spices than archangels before the throne can render to him in their songs. What are we doing for Christ? Are we bringing him our talents of gold? Perhaps you have not one hundred and twenty, but if you have one bring that; you have not very much spices, but bring what ye have — your silent, earnest prayers, your holy, consistent life, the words you sometimes speak for Christ, the training up of your children, the feeding of his poor, the clothing of the naked, the visitation of the sick, the comforting of his mourners, the winning of his wanderers, the restoring of his backsliders, the saving of his blood-bought souls — all these shall be like camels laden with spices, an acceptable gift to the Most High.

When she had done this, *Solomon made her a present of his royal bounty*. She lost nothing she gave all she had, and then Solomon gave her quite as much again, for I will be bound to say King Solomon would not be outdone in generosity, such a noble-hearted prince as he, and so rich. I tell you Jesus Christ will never be in your debt. Oh, it is a great gain to give to Christ; we give him pence and he gives us pounds; we give him years of labor and he gives us an eternity of rest; we give him days of patient endurance and he gives us ages of joyous honor; we give him a little suffering and he gives us great rewards. “I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Besides what he gives us in the covenant of grace, you note, he does for us what Solomon did for her, *he gives us all that is in our heart*, all that we can desire. What a King is our Savior, who will not let his people have one ungratified wish, if that wish is a good one! Knock and the gate shall open. “Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it,” saith the Lord. “According to your faith so be it done unto you.” “Whatsoever ye

ask in prayer believe that ye have it, and ye shall have it.” What precious promises, and all these are given to those who come with a humble enquiry, willing to get Christ first and then to get the rest afterwards.

Well, beloved, we are told that this Queen *went home to her nation*, and tradition says, that she was the means of *proselytizing* the Abyssinian people. I do not know whether that was true or not. It is remarkable that in the apostles’ days, there should have been an eunuch, a man of great authority under Candace, Queen of Ethiopia — it looks as if there may have lingered something of the divine light in this woman’s dominions right on to the day of the Savior, so that there was found another queen there at that time, and another noble personage who would come all that distance to Jerusalem for to worship. Well, whether she did so not, I know what you ought to do; if you have come to King Solomon, and searched and found for yourselves, go and spread the fame of it; talk about him everywhere. It was the fame of him that first brought you: increase that fame and others will come. Talk of him when thou stayest in thine house and when thou goest by the way, when thou sittest down and when thou risest up; count no place to be an unfit place to talk of Jesus; bear him in thy bosom in thy business; carry him in thy heart in thy pleasures; wear his name as a frontlet between thine eyes, and write it on the door-posts of thy house, for he is worthy for whom thou shalt do this. His name shall be remembered as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him — yea, all men shall call him blessed, all kings shall fall down before him; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts, the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Amen and amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, were ended; and so shall ours be, too, when that consummation shall have really taken place.

THE MIGHTY POWER WHICH CREATES AND SUSTAINS FAITH.

NO. 534

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 11TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” — Ephesians 1:19-23.

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all our heart is one of the simplest things imaginable. To trust Christ, to depend upon his power and faithfulness, is such a childlike act that one sees no extraordinary difficulty in it. Yet, to bring the human mind to exercise simple faith in Jesus is a work of the most astounding power. To bring down the pride of man, to subjugate his will and to captivate his passions, so that he shall cheerfully accept that which God presents to him in the person of Christ Jesus, is a labor worthy of a God. How strangely vile are they who cannot be brought to know their own mercies, except by an omnipotent power. The blessed Spirit of God is always the secret Author of faith; it is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Our text twice over uses the strongest words which could be employed to set forth the Almighty power exhibited in bringing a

soul to believe in Jesus, and in bringing that believing soul onward till it ascends to heaven. You will carefully notice we have first of all this expression, “The

exceeding greatness of his power;” and then we have on the other side of the word “Believe,” lest it should escape anyhow from the sacred barrier, these words, “According to the working of his mighty power.” Now, the first expression is a very amazing one. It might be read thus: “The superexcellent, sublime, overcoming, or triumphing greatness of his power;” and the other is even more singular: it is a Hebrew mode of speech forced to do duty in the Greek tongue: “The effectual working of the might of his strength:” or “The energy of the force of his power,” — some such strong expression as that. As if the apostle was not content to say, “You believe through the power of God,” nor “through the greatness of that power,” but “through the *exceeding* greatness of his power,” and not satisfied with declaring that the salvation of man is the fruit of God’s might, he must needs put it, his mighty power: nay, as if that were not enough, he writes, the energy, the efficacious activity of the power of that might. No amount of straining at the passage can ever get rid of the grand doctrine which it contains, namely, that the bringing of a soul to simple faith in Jesus, and the maintenance of that soul in the life of faith, displays an exercise of omnipotence such as God alone could put forth.

Nor need we, dear friends, be at all surprised at this, when we recollect what the work of salvation really is. Be it never forgotten by us that the salvation of a soul is *a creation*. Now, no man has ever been able to create a fly, nor even a single molecule of matter. Man knows how to fashion created substance into divers forms; but to create the minutest atom, is utterly beyond his might. Jehovah alone creates. “All things were created by him and for him.” No human or angelic power can intrude upon this glorious province of divine power; creation is God’s own domain. Now, in every Christian there is an absolute creation — “Created anew in Christ Jesus.” “The new man, after God, is created in righteousness.” “Regeneration is not the reforming of principles which were there before, but the implantation of a something which had no existence; it is the putting into a man of a new thing called the Spirit, the new man — the creation not of a soul, but of a principle higher still — as much higher than the soul, as the soul is higher than the body. Since the life and principle created are the most glorious of all God’s works, being in fact a part of the divine nature itself, I may say most boldly, that in the bringing of any man to believe in Christ, there is us true and proper a manifestation of creating power, as when God made the heavens and the earth.

Further than this, there is more than creation — there is *destruction*. No man can destroy anything. Since the world began, not a single particle of matter has ever been annihilated. You may cast matter into the depths of the sea, but there it is; it still exists. Cast it into the fire, and the fire consumes it: but either in the ash or in the smoke, every atom survives. Fire does not destroy a single particle. There is as much matter in the world now as when God first spoke it out of nothing. It is as great an exercise of divinity to destroy as it is to create.

**“Know that the Lord is God alone —
He can create and he destroy.”**

In the regeneration of every soul there is a destruction as well as a creation. The old man has to be destroyed — the stony heart has to be taken away out of our flesh; and though this is not done in all of us — nay, nor in any of us completely — yet the day shall come when sin shall be utterly destroyed, both root and branch, and all evil principles shall be torn up by the roots, and, like our sins, they shall cease to be, so that if they were searched for they could not be found. When the morning stars sang together because a world was made, creation was their one theme. God made the world out of nothing. That was an easy task, compared with making a new heart and a right spirit, for “nothing” at least could not oppose God: “nothing” could not stand out against him; but here, in salvation, God had to deal with an opposing something which he has to fight with and to destroy; and when that has been reduced and overcome, then comes in the creating power by which we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus; so that it is a double miracle, something more than creation: it is creation and destruction combined.

The work of salvation is most truly a *transformation*. “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” You who have been made anew in Christ Jesus, know in your own hearts how great that transformation is. The wolf, with all its bloodthirsty tendencies, feeds quietly with all the amiable gentleness of the lamb; the lion eats straw like the ox; the desert becomes a garden, and the dry land springs of water; nay, what is more wonderful still, stones of the brook become children unto Abraham. The Lord takes the man who is like the leopard, covered with spots, and cleanses him till he is whiter than snow. He takes the Ethiopian, black as night, and doth but touch him with the matchless blood of Jesus, and he becomes altogether fair and lovely. None of the fanciful transformations of which

Ovid sang of old, could ever rival the matchless work of God when he displays his power upon the human mind. Oh, what a difference between a sinner and a saint, between “dead in trespasses and sins,” and quickened by divine grace! If God should speak to Niagara, and bid its floods in their tremendous leap suddenly stand still, that were a trifling demonstration of power compared with the staying of a desperate human will. If he should suddenly speak to the broad Atlantic, and bid it be wrapped in flames, we should not even then, see such a manifestation of his greatness as when he commands the human heart, and makes it submissive to his love.

Remember, too, as if this were not enough, that the conversion of a soul is constantly compared to *quicken*ing — the quickening of the dead. How great the miracle when the dry bones in Ezekiel’s vision suddenly became a great army! greater still is the transcendent work of night when dead souls are quickened, and made to serve the living God. Indeed it is not only the first act of conversion which displays divine power, but the whole of the Christian’s career, until he comes to perfection, is a clear display of the same. The spiritual life may be likened unto *the burning* bush which Moses saw in Horeb; it burnt, but it was not consumed. Such is the Christian — like a bush, he is most fitting fuel for the flame; yet the flame does not hurt him. It kindles about him, but he is not destroyed. Or the Christian life may be likened to *walking upon water*. As Peter trod the waves and did not sink so long as his faith looked to Jesus, so the believer every day, in every footstep that he takes is a living miracle. Faith, too, in its life may be compared to *flying* — “They shall mount up on wings as eagles.” “I bear you as upon eagles’ wings.” The believer every day takes venturesome flights into the atmosphere of heaven, rises above the world, leaves its cares and its wants beneath his feet, and that too with no other wings but those of faith and love. Herein is a continued and splendid miracle of the divine power.

But to come to our text — laying it down, then, as being most certain that the work of the conversion and sanctification of a believer is an amazing display of divine might, we have in the text given to us a most singular analogy. The apostle declares to us by the Holy Ghost that the very same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead and exalted him to the highest heaven is seen in the conversion and preservation of every individual believer.

Now, we shall first *notice the analogy*; secondly, we shall *consider the reason of it*; and thirdly, we shall observe the *inferences which come from it*.

I. First of all, we shall consider THE ANALOGY WHICH THE APOSTLE HERE POINTS OUT.

Conceive that you hold a great pair of golden compasses. You are to put one foot of the compass here upon the grave of Christ; you are to open those compasses till you reach Christ ascending up into heaven. Widen them again, and again, and again, till you put down the other foot of the compass where Christ is head over all things to the Church, which is his fullness. Now, can you imagine such a stretch as that? You have to conceive of the power by which the dead body of Christ is brought to all that pre-eminence of honor, and then to remember that just such power is seen in you if you are a believer.

In examining the wonderful picture before us, we begin with Christ in the grave, by noticing that it was in Christ's case *a real death*. Those loving hands have taken him down from the cross; those weeping eyes have let fall hallowed drops upon his face. Tenderly have the women wrapped him about with spices and fine linen, and now he is about to be put into the tomb. He is assuredly dead. The pericardium of the heart has been pierced; blood and water have both freely flowed. Lift up the pierced hand and it falls at once to his side. The lids of yon eyes, so red with weeping, do but cover eyes glazed with death. The foot has no power of motion. Take up the corpse, ye loving bearers, carry it and put it into the tomb — this is no trance, but a most certain death. So is it with us; by nature we are really dead. We were dead in trespasses and sins. Try to stir the natural man to spiritual action, and you cannot do it. Lift up his hand to good works, he has no power to perform them. Try to make the feet run in the ways of righteousness; they will not move an inch. The fact is that *the heart* is dead. The living pulse of spiritual life which was in our parent Adam has long ago ceased. Neither can the eye perceive any beauty in Immanuel, nor can the nostril discover the fragrance of the Lord's sweet spices, nor can the ear hear the voice of the Beloved. The man is absolutely and entirely dead as to anything like spiritual life. There he lays in the grave of his corruption, and must lay there and rot too, unless divine grace shall interpose.

In Christ's case, he was not only dead, but as the text tells us, he was *among the dead*. "He hath raised up Jesus Christ *from the dead*." Do notice that. He lay for some time sleeping among those who dwelt in the tomb — among the dead. Three days and nights he is a denizen of the lonely shades; he was numbered among the victims of death's dart. "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Such were some of us — we were among the dead — and "were by nature the children of wrath," even as others. In the case of some of us, our outward life was just that of other ungodly men. Were they drunkards? so were we. Were they immoral? so were we. Did they have the delights of the flesh? so did we. Did they follow the desires of the mind? so did we. Were they hard-hearted, and impenitent, and unbelieving? so were we. Whatever may be said of any ungodly man, may be said of at least some of those whom God has quickened by his divine power. We, like Jesus, were reckoned among the dead. If you had seen his corpse, you would have discovered no difference between it and the body of another, save only that he saw no corruption. Dear brethren, in this our case is lower than that of our Lord, for we did see corruption; the old man is "corrupt" according to the deceitful lusts." Yea, more, we were "children that are corrupters," and in nothing did we differ from others, save that the Lord had predestinated that no bands of death should hold us for ever, for he was determined to save and to bring us to his right hand.

Come with me again to the new tomb in the garden. Will that sleeper ever rise? Will that hallowed tomb ever be burst? No, never while time and eternity shall last, unless God shall interfere. Here comes a *heavenly messenger*. His face is like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers do quake and become as dead men. So, when the time comes, in God's great power, he sends his messenger: it is no angelic spirit whose face is like lightning but it is some humble minister of Christ, who, nevertheless, is clothed with power. He hath in his mouth a sharp two-edged sword, and when he speaks of Christ, for fear of him sins tremble, and the prejudices and enmities of men's hearts become as dead men. The divine power is seen all the more in the fact that the messenger in the second case is an earthen vessel, a poor creature of flesh and blood. There is a divine mandate for our resurrection, as much as for that of Jesus Christ.

There came with that messenger a *mysterious life*. You cannot see it, but inside that tomb a spirit has fallen upon those once bleeding limbs, and

entered that lifeless corpse; the eye shall soon see the light, for the hands are already unwinding the napkin from the brow; the cerements are unbound, one by one; the feet are free, and the whole frame is clear of every incumbrance. No one saw the life come back. If any one had watched that corpse, they could not have seen the vital spark of heavenly flame return to its proper altar. No, it was a mysterious thing. Ah! there was a time with us when the messenger of God came, but *he* could not quicken us; he could only make the keepers shake and tremble; but a mysterious life from God the Holy Ghost fell into our souls, and we were as we never were before. We trembled with a new fear, rejoiced with a new joy, believed with a fresh confidence, and hoped with a divine hope. We lived! And oh! can we ever forget the moment when first we began to live unto God? Divine Spirit, thou didst it. Let all the glory be unto thy name.

Then came an *earthquake*, by which the stone was rolled away, showing that the power put forth was enough to shake the earth, and to make all the elements obedient. Surely when God shakes but common dust and clay, and rock, and stone, we wonder, and men stand in awe; but when he rends the harder marble of our hearts, and moves the grosser cast and heavier earth of our spirits, there is reason to praise and bless his name.

The stone being removed, *forth came the Savior*. He was free; *raised up no more to die*; he stood erect, beheld by his followers, who, alas! did not know him. And even so we, when the divine life has come, and the divine energy has burst our tomb, come forth to a new life — no more to die; then men of the world know us not, because they knew *him* not; they misunderstand our motives, they misrepresent our actions, they contort our words, because now we have a life of which they are not the subjects, and have come into a resurrection-state to which they are utter strangers.

You see the parallel holds. We, too, in the same manner as Christ was raised from the dead, have been made to live in newness of life, even as the Master himself said, “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.”

Please to note here, dearly beloved friends, that in the resurrection of Christ, as in our salvation, there was put forth nothing short of a *divine power*. It was not angelic or arch-angelic, much less was it human. What shall we say of those who think that conversion is wrought by the free will of man — who ascribe man’s salvation to his own betterness of disposition, or to his willingness to accept that which God presents to him?

Beloved, when we shall see the dead in the graves rise therefrom by their own power, then expect to see ungodly sinners turn to Christ. It is not the ministry, it is not the Word preached, nor the Word heard in itself; all the power proceeds from the Holy Ghost.

Observe again, that this power was *irresistible*. All the soldiers and the high priests could not keep the body of Christ in the tomb. Death himself could not hold Christ in his bonds. When the life-pangs first began to move in Jesus, he could no longer be holden of death. Then was death swallowed up in victory. The Father brought forth his begotten Son, and said, "Let all the angels of God worship him." He was the first begotten from the dead. Irresistible is the power put forth, too, in the Christian. No sin, no corruption, no temptation, no devils in hell, nor sinners upon earth can ever stay the hand of God's grace when it intends to convert a man. If God says, "Thou shalt," man shall not say, "I will not," or, if he do, as the trees of the wood before the hurricane are torn up by the roots, so shall the human will give place to the irresistible power of grace.

Observe, too, that the power which raised Christ from the dead was *glorious*. It reflected great honor upon God and brought great dismay upon the hosts of evil. So there is great glory to God in the conversion of every sinner.

Lastly, it was *everlasting power*. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." So we, being raised from the dead, go not back to our dead works nor to our old corruptions, but we live unto God. Because he lives we live also, for we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. The parallel will hold in every point, however minute. "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

You see I have not stretched the compasses half-way yet. We have only proceeded so far as to see Christ raised from the dead; but the power exhibited in the Christian goes farther than this — it goes onward to the ASCENSION. If you will carefully read the story of the ascension, you will notice first that Christ's ascension was *contrary to nature*. How should the body of a man without any means be borne upward into the air? "While he blessed them he was taken out of their sight." So the Christian's rising above the world, his breathing another atmosphere, is clean contrary to nature. How would you wonder if you saw a man suddenly rise up into the sky? Wonder more when you see a Christian rise above temptation,

worldliness, and sin; when you discover him forsaking those things which once were his delight, and mounting towards heaven.

You will observe again, that the disciples *could not long see the rising Savior*. “A cloud received him out of their sight.” So in our case, too, if we rise as we should rise, if the Spirit of God worketh in us all the good pleasure of his will, men will soon lose sight of us. They will not understand us; they will be certain to run hither and thither, wondering at this and marvelling at that; they will call us mad, fanatical, wild and enthusiastic, and I know not what. And we, on our part, must not wonder at it, for now we look down and wonder at them as much as they wonder at us. They think it strange that we should be looking for unseen things, and hoping for that which we see not. We, on the other hand, look down upon them, and wonder how it is that they can heap together things of clay, and find a living joy in dying things, and fix eternal hopes on shadows that are soon — so soon — to melt away for ever.

Jesus Christ continued to ascend by that same divine power, until he had reached the seat of heaven above; he was gone, really gone from earth altogether. Such is the Christian’s life. He continues to ascend, the Lord makes him dead to the world, and the carnal multitude know him no more. Where his treasure is his heart is also. He is risen with Christ, and his affection is set on things above, not on things on the earth.

See, beloved, we have stretched our compass somewhat wide now, when we say that there is as much divine power seen in raising the Christian above the world, as in raising Christ from the grave into heaven. But that is not all. When the Master had come to heaven, we are told in the text, that he was made *to sit down at the right hand of God*. Sitting at the right hand implies *honor, pleasure, and power*. Conceive the change! “He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” They spat in his face and bowed the knee, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews.” He hath sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. He was full of misery: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” said he. The ploughers made deep furrows upon his back, and his visage was more marred than that of any man. But now his joy is full; he is at the right hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore. He was a worm and no man — the despised of the people. “All they that see me laugh me to scorn.” They shake the head; they thrust out the lip, saying, “He trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in

him.” But see him now! He hath sat down for ever at the right hand of God, even the Father. Note the change from depths of reproach to heights of glory; from fearful deeps of sorrow to glorious summits of bliss; from weakness, shame, and suffering, to strength, and majesty, and dominion, and glory. Such is the change in the Christian — just such a change. You, too, what were you? Were you worthy to have been cast upon a dunghill? Nay, scarcely fit for that; you were like salt which had lost its savor, neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, and God and man might have cast you out; you were utterly worthless and fit for nought. As for suffering, ah, how were your bones broken by convictions of sin! The sorrows of death compassed you, and the pains of hell get hold upon you, for the arrows of God stuck fast in your loins, and the sword of God pierced to the dividing asunder of your soul and spirit. As for power, what power had you? You could not lift a finger; you could not pray; you could not believe; and yet, where are you now? Why, if you know where you are, you are this day as a believer sitting down at the right hand of God — God’s beloved one, ministered unto of angels — God’s Son, endowed with power and made to sit and reign together with the Lord Jesus Christ. All that sitting at the right hand of God can mean in respect to the man Christ Jesus, it means in respect to every believer. For the apostle Paul writes concerning man in Christ Jesus, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor.” At the right hand of God is the believer’s place at this very day. May an act of faith give you a sweet enjoyment of it.

But note next, that Christ was not only put at God’s right hand, but he had a complete triumph given — *far above all principalities and powers*, that neither good angels have eminence compared with him, nor evil angels any power in contrast with him. It is not only said that he was above them, but *far* above them. And so is the believer. As for evil angels, the Lord shall tread Satan under your feet shortly; as for holy angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of

salvation?" so that we, in the person of our Lord, are far above all principalities and powers.

You will not fail to observe that he has also universal dominion, Follow the passage — "*And hath put all things under his feet.*" And so hath the Lord put all things under his people's feet. Their sins and corruptions, their sorrows and afflictions, this world and the world to come, are all made subject unto us, when he makes us kings and priests, that we may reign for ever. Nay, as if this were not enough, Christ is then honored with a gracious headship. He is made to be head over all things to his Church, and he is made the fulnees of that Church for "He filleth all in all." But, as if the believer must be made like his Lord even here, observe that if Christ filleth all in all, the Church is his fullness. In Christ, the Church is the head of the universe under God. For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.

I do not know whether I have brought forth the parallel completely. If you view our Lord as descending in his agony never so deep, and then behold him in his glory never so high; if by combining judgment and imagination, hope and fear, you can get some glimmering of a thought of how low the Savior went, and how loftily he climbed, then you may transfer that to your own state, for the same power is at work to-day, has been at work, and will be at work in you, to lift you up from equal depths to equal heights, that in all things you may be like unto Christ; and having been like him numbered with the transgressors, you may like him obtain the lot and the heritage to reign for ever and ever at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

I cannot speak on such a topic as this — it o'ermasters me: it is by far too grand for my limited gifts of utterance, but I trust not too great for human delectation. We can delight in it, and suck honey, marrow, and fatness from it.

II. Now we must note, in the second place, THE REASON OF THIS.

Why does God put forth as much power towards every Christian as he did in his beloved Son? Well, my brethren, I believe the reason is not only that

the same power was required, and that by this means he getteth great glory, but the reason is this — *union*. It lays in the word — union. There must be the same divine power in the member that there is in the head, or else where is the union? If we are one with Christ, members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, there must be a likeness. Note, first, that *there cannot be a body at all* — I mean not a true living body — unless the members are of the same nature as the head. If you could conceive a human head joined to bestial limbs, you would at once understand that you were not looking upon a natural body. If here were a dog's foot, and there a lion's mane, and yet a man's eyes and a human brow, you could never conceive of it as a body of God's creation; you would look upon it as a strange monstrosity, a thing to be put out of sight, or to be shown for fools to gaze at as a nine day's wonder; but certainly not as a thing to display divine wisdom and power. Nebuchadnezzar's dream, you remember, had an image, of which the "Head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." Do you think that the person of Christ is to be so odd a medley? Our head, we know, is like much fine gold. Thanks be unto God, we are well persuaded that a body of God's making will be of the same material all the way through. He will not have, I say, a perfectly glorious head allied to members in which the divine energy has never been seen. The same power which sparkles about the head must shine in the members, or else it cannot be a body constituted according to the analogy of nature, or according to the usual methods of the Divine Worker.

This is not the most forcible mode of putting it. Let us notice that if all the members were not like the head and did not display the same power *it would not be glorious to God*. Some of the old tapestries were made at different times and in different pieces, and occasionally the remark is heard, "That part of the battle-scene must have been wrought by a different needle from the other. You can see here an abundance, and there a deficiency of skill; that corner of the picture has been executed by a far inferior hand. Now, suppose in this great tapestry which God is working — the great needlework of his love and power — the mystical person of Christ — that we should say, "The head has been wrought, we can see, by a divine hand; that glorious brow, those fire-darting eyes, those honey-dropping lips are of God, but that hand is by another and an inferior artist, and that foot is far from perfect in workmanship." Why, it would not be glorious to our Great Artist; but when the whole picture is by himself we see that he did

not begin what he could not finish, and that he had not inserted a single thread of inferior value.

Note again, that *it would not be glorious to our head*. I saw the other day, a cathedral window in the process of being filled with the richest stained glass. Methinks the great person of Christ may be compared to that great cathedral window. The artists had put in the head of the chief figure in the most beautiful glass that ever human skill could make, or human gold could purchase; I have not seen it since, but imagine for an instant that the workers afterwards found that their money failed them, and they were obliged to fill in the panes with common glass. There is the window, there is nothing but a head in noble colors, and the rest is, perhaps, white glass, or some poor ordinary blue and yellow. It is never finished. What an unhappy thing, for who will care to see the head? It has lost its fullness.

There is the head, but it is strangely circumstanced. If you complete it with anything inferior, you mar and spoil it; it is the head of an imperfect piece of workmanship. But, dear friends, when all the rest of the picture shall have been wrought out with just the same costly material as the first part, then the head itself shall be placed in a worthy position, and shall derive glory as well as confer glory upon the body. Ye can read this parable without an interpreter.

I must add, that if anything, the power manifested in the member should be greater than that manifested in the head — *If anything, it should be greater*. A marble palace is to be built. Well, now, if they build (and oh, how many people do this kind of thing in their houses) the front with costly stone, and then erect the back with common stock bricks; if the pinnacles be made to soar with rich Carrara to the skies, and then down in the walls common stone is seen, everybody says, “This was done to save money.” But if the whole structure throughout, from top to bottom, is of the same kind, then it reflects much honor upon the great builder, and declares the wealth which he was able to expend upon the structure. But suppose that some of the blocks of marble used in the foundation have lain in a very dark quarry, and have been subject to damaging influences, so that they have lost their gloss and polish, then surely they will want more polishing, more workmanship, to make them look like that bright cornerstone, that noble pinnacle which is brought out with shoutings. Christ Jesus was in his nature *fit*, without any preparing, to be a part of the great temple of God.

We in our nature were unfit; and so, if anything, the power should be greater; but we are constrained to rejoice that we find in Scripture that it is

just the same power which lifted the man Christ Jesus to the throne of God, which now shall lift each one of us to live and reign with him.

Moreover, to conclude this point, the loving promise of our Lord will never be fulfilled (and he will never be contented unless it be), unless his people do have the same power spent upon them as he has. What is his prayer? "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory;" and then he adds, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." You know how the union stands — "I in them, and thou in me." We must be like our Head. Is he crowned — we must be crowned too. He is a good husband; he will enjoy nothing without his spouse. When she was poor, he became poor for her sake; when she was despised, he was spit upon too; and now that he is in heaven, he must have her there. If he sits on a throne, she must have a throne too; if he has fullness of joy, and honor, and glory for ever — then so must she. He will not be in heaven, and leave her behind; and he will not enjoy a single privilege of heaven, without her being a sharer with him. For all this reason, then you see it is clear why there should be the same power in the believer as there was in Christ.

III. Well, WHAT ARE THE INFERENCES FROM ALL THIS. Two or three — they will only be hinted at, so do not grow weary.

The first inference is this — *what a marvellous thing a Christian is.* A marvellous personage am I if I am a believer in Christ. I am by doubting and fearing led to look down upon myself as despicable, but when I reflect that the Eternal has put his graving-tool upon me — nay, that he has exerted the whole of his omnipotence in me, and will continue to exert it till he brings me to himself — Lord, what is man! How strangely honored! How near hast thou brought him to thyself, so that now there is no creature between God and man! God first man as a creature far distant but yet second, as an adopted and regenerated being, brought as near to God as a son is brought to a father; and who shall tell how near this may be? Lord, what a mighty thing can thy grace make out of that poor crawling worm called man! How hast thou exalted him, and make him to be higher even than principalities and powers! Let us love and bless God who has done thus much for us.

Then, secondly, *why should I doubt God's power for others?* If God has put forth so much power to save me, cannot he save anyone? The might which brought Christ from the dead and took him to heaven is such a

tremendous power that it surely can bring the drunkard, the harlot, the blasphemer to Christ. Let me pray, then, for the chief of sinners; let me encourage the vilest of the vile to believe in Jesus, for there is ability in Christ to save just such.

Again, *why should I ever have any doubts about my ultimate security?* Is this irresistible power engaged to save me? Then I must be saved. Does the devil vow that he will destroy me? Do my corruptions threaten to overwhelm me? Who can stay Omnipotence? Who shall come into the struggle with the Most High, or match himself with the Eternal? Aha! aha! ye enemies of my soul; I laugh ye to scorn. If God be with us, who can be against us?

And lastly, *how doleful the state of those who are not converted.* See where you lie; so dead, so helpless, so ruined, so undone, needing nothing less than this eternal power to save you from the wrath to come! Ah, indeed I know this to be the case with many present here. Our preaching does you very little good. You come here in the morning, and I know what you do in the afternoon. You would not be absent from listening to the morning's sermon, nor would you be absent from the evening's pleasure; and when the Bible and the hymn book have been put up, the newspaper will take the place. There are some who sit under our earnest appeals (and thank God they are earnest and often prevalent), and yet they are as unmoved as slabs of marble when oil runs down them. In a state of death and ruin are you. I see no human power can help you; in vain the minister, in vain the preaching; your damnation is sure, you will go down to hell and perish, and that without mercy. Yet fain would I hope that God would have pity upon you yet. Still Christ is lifted up, and, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." If you can now believe in Christ, the mighty power of God is working in you. Trust him now, and you give the best evidence that Jesus' irresistible might has been displayed upon you, as it was upon the person of the King of kings. The Lord bless you with his mercy, for Christ's sake. Amen.

BEN-HADAD'S ESCAPE — AN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR SINNERS.

NO. 535

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 11TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And his servants said unto him, behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, is he yet alive? he is my brother. Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot. And Ben-hadad said unto him, the cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.” — 1 Kings 20:31-34.

ALTHOUGH the manners and customs of warfare were exceedingly rough and cruel in those primitive ages, yet it appears that the kings of Israel gained a name for being merciful. I do not find recorded in Scripture any particularly merciful acts of theirs, and I should conclude that the kings of other countries must have been very ferocious, if the kings of Israel

were at all merciful. Ancient records and memorial slabs record tortures so horrible, that you could not listen — if I were to describe them — although

they were the common barbarities with which Assyrian and Babylonian victors concluded their wars. It seems that the kings of the house of Israel did not go to the lengths of savage cruelty usual among their neighbors. Upon which we are led to remark, that where the true worship of God does not make men what they should be, yet it betters them in some respects. The kings of Israel were all idolaters, but yet the presence of a little salt, a few of the godly in the land, had an effect upon the state; and the situation of the little kingdom of Judah, close at their elbow, with its temple and its prophets, influenced the manners and customs of the people, so that “the kings of the house of Israel were merciful kings,” and this not because they feared God themselves, but because there were others who did, and whose influence and example, perhaps, unconsciously, softened public sentiment, and mitigated the ruthless ferocity of war. Is this nothing! Is it not a high honor to the seven thousand who bowed not the knee to Baal, that in this respect they made Baal’s worshippers bow to them? Little do we know how much of the apparent morality of this country is due to the real religion which we have in our lan. There are thousands of men in London who would open their shops tonight, if it were not for the influence of those who fear the Lord; their shops are closed, not because they take any interest in the Christian’s day of rest, but out of respect to custom. Sins, which now hide their heads under the veil of night, would stalk through our streets with barefaced impudence, if once Christianity were withdrawn. Bad as the customs of trade are, without the purifying power of the godly they would be infinitely worse. The whole fabric of our commerce, politics and war, is manifestly affected for the better by our religion. Let those, then, who do not feel its power, yet at least think well of it, from this fact — that it is a blessing to our country; and while other nations have been rent with civil war, while revolution has followed revolution, and class has been set against class, the religion of Jesus Christ has made our land a happy land, and a land, after all, in which there is more generous benevolence towards the needy, and more mutual sympathy, than in any other kingdom or even in any republic beneath the sky. Thank God for true religion! Even if it does not convert a man, yet its presence in his neighborhood tends to sober him, and to keep him from running into so great an excess of riot. This, however, is but by-the-bye; I plunge now at once into the subject before me.

My soul to-night yearneth, as it did last Thursday night, to induce some timid, seeking soul, to make a venture of it, and to come boldly to Christ

to-night. Last Thursday night, you remember, we spoke of Esther, and how she said, "I will go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish." We tried to urge those of you who were then present to do the same. We reminded you that though it was contrary to law, yet it was not contrary to gospel, and we therefore bade you come, just as you were, into the presence of the Great King; promising, on his behalf, that he would stretch out the golden scepter to you. To-night our line of things is precisely the same. Our object is the same, and we pray that we may have a greater blessing than we did then.

There are three things in the text: first, *mercy's report*; secondly, *misery's resolve*; and thirdly, *misery's reception*.

I. First, then, MERCY'S REPORT.

Down there is a dark cellar; in an inner chamber, shut out from the light of day, with, perhaps, only a fire or a candle to light him — we see the fugitive King. He who came up from Syria with a hundred and fifty thousand men at his feet, now returns with but a handful of men left. He had sworn in his audacity that he would take away Samaria by handfuls, that he would bring so many men that each one should require to take but a handful, and the whole city of Samaria should be cast to the winds. The king of Israel had simply replied, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." There sits Ben-hadad. He reminds me of Napoleon after the flight from Waterloo, sitting down by the fire in a peasant's cot, his boots and his grey coat covered with mire, and his face full of dark anxiety and gloomy fears — a man of iron, but a man of iron rusted and worn by adversities. There sits Ben-hadad; but he is not like Napoleon, for his soul is cowed, and broken, and humbled, and subdued. He who bragged so loudly is now a pitiful spectacle of meanness and dismay. His servants whisper around the fallen king, and their most assuring word is a humbling one, "The kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings." This is a sweet note to poor Ben-hadad's ear. The boastful king, who never dreamed of mercy to others, is now glad to have half a chance of mercy for himself.

But I come to you to-night, not to whisper mercy. I come to you, who have defied God and have been his enemies, but who now are broken beneath his power, and my voice is no timid whisper made up of mingled hope and fear. As ambassador from the God of Israel. I proclaim the fullness of his mercy.

Thus runneth mercy's report. First, *there is mercy*. It is God's essential attribute, and he can never cease to be merciful. As long as he is God, mercy will be one trait in his divine character. A God unmerciful were not the God of revelation. *There is mercy yet*. He has already opened bags of mercy, and scattered the golden treasure lavishly among the forlorn beggars at his footstool; but there are bags untied yet, sealed up still with the red seal of the covenant; bags of mercy, I say, yet unused. You have not exhausted the lovingkindness of Jehovah. You have required much, you have pressed the exchequer of God's mercy to a great extent, but its coffers are deep as the sea, nay, deep as the gates of hell.

***“Deep as your helpless miseries are,
And boundless as your sins.”***

Mercy is not dead; it liveth still — yea, liveth in its ancient strength, and riches of glory. Mercy is not drained; it floweth evermore towards the sons of men. There is mercy; there is mercy yet.

My proclamation certifies to thee, O trembling heart, *that this mercy is tender mercy*. Thy bones are broken to-night, thy heart is wounded, thy spirits are dried up, and thou art ready to despair; but I tell thee that God has tender mercy for such as thou art. As I sat in the hospital, yesterday, and saw the many cases of maimed limbs and gushing wounds, I could but think how tender the nurses ought to be, and how downy should be the surgeon's finger as he set the broken bone or bound up the sore. Doubtless there are some persons who have iron hands and hard hearts, and so, while they are bone-setting or binding up wounds, they do it roughly, and cause the patient much pain. But, O sinner, therein is the tender mercy of our God set forth, which, like a day spring from on high, hath visited us; “a bruised reed will he not break, nor quench the smoking flax.” He crowneth us with lovingkindnesses, and with tender mercies; he bindeth up the broken in heart, and healeth all their wounds. Like as a mother comforteth her children, even so doth the Lord comfort his people, and like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. My Lord is as gracious in the manner of his mercy as in the matter of it. Glory be to his name! O sinner, come to the gentle Jesus and live.

There is great mercy. There is nothing little in my God; his mercy is like himself — it is infinite. You cannot measure it. You may mount in the balloon of your imagination, but you cannot reach to the firmament of his mercy. “As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his

thoughts above your thoughts, and his ways above your ways.” Your sin is of great measure, but there is no measure to his grace. His mercy is so great that it forgives great sins to great sinners, after great lengths of time, and then gives great favors and great privileges, and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great heaven of the great God. As John Bunyan well says — “It must be great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will never serve my turn.” Dost thou feel that, burdened conscience, dost thou feel that? In God there is great mercy for the harlot, for the drunkard, for the thief, for the whoremonger, for the adulterer, and such like. Here is great mercy, which, like a great flood bursting upwards, shall cover the highest mountains of your sins. The bath of blood is opened for crimson stains; the physician died to heal the foulest disease, and he lives as intercessor, to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.

Hear me again, O troubled conscience, the mercy of my Lord *is rich mercy*. Some things are great, but have little efficacy in them, like wine mingled with water, they cannot revive the fainting; but every drop of the mercy of my God is worth a heaven. Let but a drop of this mercy fall upon a soul, and it shall be enough to save it. It is rich, unutterably rich mercy. When you get this mercy it will be a cordial to your drooping spirits; it shall be a golden ointment to your bleeding wounds; it shall be a heavenly bandage to your broken bones; it shall be a royal chariot for your weary feet; it shall be a bosom of love for your trembling heart. It is rich mercy. I cannot tell you what the mercy of God would not do; nor can I tell you all that it would do. I cannot tell you what it would not do, for I know of no good thing which it would refuse. I cannot tell you all it would do for the catalogue is too long, and Watts did not exaggerate, when he said —

***“But O! Eternity’s too short
To utter half its praise.”***

Mercy, rich mercy! The Lord does not give away halfpence in the streets; he does not open his door and throw out bones half-picked, and broken crusts, and dry, stale meat; but he opens the door, and bids his heralds cry, “My oxen and my fatlings are killed, come ye to the supper! “He does not distribute pebble-stones, but diamonds and gems of priceless cost; bought, not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus. Nay, so rich is this mercy, that heaven had only one Koh-i-noor, one “mountain of light,” and God gave that; that diamond, that glittering diamond — his Only-Begotten Son — that it might sparkle with

light upon the bosom of forgiven sinners. O the depths of the mercy and goodness of the Lord!

But our proclamation is not concluded yet; in fact we have but begun. There is in God, according to the express word of Scripture, *manifold mercy*. What a fine word that is! Do you understand it? *Many-fold* mercy! Here I open one fold of it, and I find remission for transgressions past; I open another, and I find pardon for sins to come. I open the next, and I find constraining mercy to lead me into the paths of righteousness. Nay, I find that the folds are more than I can count; I cannot possibly reckon up the innumerable mercies which are wrapped up one within another. As John Bunyan says, all the flowers in God's garden are double; there is no single mercy; nay, they are not only double flowers, but they are manifold flowers. There are many flowers upon one stalk, and many flowers in one flower. You shall think you have but one mercy, but you shall find it to be a whole flock of mercies. Our beloved is unto us a bundle of myrrh, a cluster of camphire. When you lay hold upon one golden link of the chain of grace, you pull, pull, pull, but lo! as long as your hand can draw there are fresh "linked sweetnesses" of love still to come. Manifold mercies! Like the drops of a lustre, which reflect a rainbow of colors when the sun is glittering upon them, and each one, when turned in different ways, from its prismatic form shows all the varieties of color, so the mercy of God is one and yet many, the same yet ever changing, a combination of all the beauties of love blended harmoniously together. You have only to look at mercy in that light, and that light, and that light, to see how rich, how manifold it is. Poor sinner, does not this talk suit you? Why, if there are many folds, there is a fold for you; and if your case seems to be an extraordinary one, and you have manifold sins, and manifold sorrows, here are manifold mercies to suit you. Perhaps your mercy is in the last fold, and the devil wants to prevent its being opened, but God never had a mercy yet which he did not, sooner or later, give to the one for whom he had predestinated it; and he will give mercy yet to you.

Notice further, that as it is manifold mercy, *so it is abounding mercy*. The farther we go down the stream of mercy the deeper it becomes, and the broader it grows. God's mercy, instead of being exhausted by all he has given away, is still as fresh as ever. I say, soul, God has given away enough mercy to save millions of spirits who are now in heaven, and yet he has as much mercy now as when he began. His giving doth by no means impoverish him. I suppose that the shining of the sun, though the fact

cannot be seen by us, does diminish the store of light in that great luminary, but it is not so with the shining of God's mercy. I suppose that when I breathe the air, though none can tell it, there is so much less of good oxygen for others to breathe; but when I breathe God's mercy, there is just as much left as there was before. If you take a cupful of water out of the ocean, you cannot see the difference, but there certainly is that cupful less in the sea; but when you take what mercy you will out of this divine seaful, this shoreless oceanful of mercy, there is just as much left as when you first came. You see then, O sinner, that the Lord hath super-abounding mercy, and therefore, if your sin has gone on multiplying, his mercy has done the same. The mathematician will tell you that numbers, in the process of multiplication, will mount to figures so vast, that only the calculating machine can give what the number will be, and even then, when the figures stand in a long row, man may look at them, but he will have no idea of what the figures mean. But if you had a calculating-machine, and all the calculating-machines that ever were, put together, you could not calculate the extent of the super-abounding mercy of God in Christ Jesus, enough for every seeking soul for ever.

Poor, trembling soul, let the silver trumpet ring this good news in thine ears that this is mercy *which will never leave thee*. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." If you get mercy to-night, you have obtained mercy for ever. If mercy be thy friend this evening, mercy will be with thee in temptation to keep thee from yielding; with thee in thy troubles, to prevent thee from sinking under them; mercy will be with thee living, to be the light and life of thy countenance; and mercy will be with thee dying, to be the joy of thy soul in thy last moments. "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." You shall have ranks and files of mercies, before and behind, and on every side of you. You shall have the mercy which endureth for ever. I cannot think what Arminians make of that Psalm — "His mercy endureth for ever." They think that we can exhaust God's mercy, that a child of God once saved can yet lose the mercy of God by his sin. Beloved, let us never indulge such a thought; for the God who began to be merciful to us will be merciful to us even unto the end, and that end shall be without end.

Sinner, hast thou heard this proclamation? It is not yet finished. Let me tell thee that *the mercy of God flows freely*. It wants no money and no price from thee, no fitness of frames and feelings, no preparation of good works or penitence. Free as the brook which leaps from the mountain-side, at

which every weary traveler may drink, so free is the mercy of God. Free as the sun that shineth, and gilds the mountain's brow, and makes glad the valleys without fee or reward, so free is the mercy of God to every needy sinner. Free as the air which belts the earth and penetrates the peasant's cottage as well as the royal palace without purchase or premium, so free is the mercy of God in Christ. It tarrieth not for thee; it cometh to thee as thou art. It waylayeth thee in love; it meeteth thee in tenderness. Ask not how thou shalt get it. Thou needest not climb to heaven, nor descend to hell for it; the word is nigh thee; on thy lip, and in thy heart; if thou believest on the Lord Jesus with thy heart, and with thy mouth makest confession of him, thou shalt be saved. If, as guilty, thou wilt accept the great atonement, and be washed therein, rejoice O heaven, and sing O earth, for the sinner is saved; saved through abounding mercy. It is mercy fresh and strong to-night; mercy ready for thee while that clock is ticking; mercy which has followed thee to this thy eleventh hour, and waiteth for thee on the borders of the grave. It is mercy which will not easily take a denial of thee, but pleads with thee now to-night. Sinner, may the Spirit of God come forth with that energy which raised Jesus from the dead, and make thee say, "Lord, I would be saved by thy mercy; God be merciful to me a sinner."

This is mercy's report. O that my lips could tell it better! God open your ears to hear it and to believe it. Pause a moment that those in whom the Holy Ghost is working may breathe a silent prayer, and then let us advance to the second head.

II. MISERY'S RESOLVE.

You will come with me into that inner chamber, and look at Ben-hadad for a moment. Where art thou now, Ben-hadad? Where are thy legions now? Where now the flaunting banners — the proud glory of Syria? Thou art broken in pieces — broken as a ship when the rough north wind hath cast aside her mast, and shattered all her sails. Where art thou now? "Mock not at my misery:" the king replies, "I have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful — if I sit here I shall be slain by some fierce trooper — I will bestir myself; something must be done; I will get me unto the king of Israel." Note then, first, that *Ben-hadad saw the necessity of direct and immediate action*. Misery, where art thou? In yonder sinner hast thou taken up thy lodging-place? I would fain do thee service, and therefore will I speak. Sinner, if thou sit still, thou must die. Thou art like the prodigal;

thy money is spent; thou hast wasted thy substance in riotous living; thou hast fed the swine, and thou hast tried to feed on their husks, but thou canst not fill thy belly therewith. If thou stayest amongst those swine-troughs, thou wilt die — thou wilt perish of hunger; even now thy gaunt limbs stare at thee, and thy bare bones rebuke thee. Man, it is time for thee to say, “I will arise; I will arise.” O my hearers, I fear that a deadly sleep has fallen upon some of you. You are in sin, and you know it, but you take no action about it. The trembling of the jailer when he said, “What must I *do* to be saved?” has not seized hold on you. You are in the Enchanted Ground, and, like Heedless and Too-bold, you are asleep upon the seats of the arbour, and when shaken in your slumber, you dreamily mutter, “A little more sleep; a little more slumber; a little more folding of the hands.” Oh, if you knew how near you are to the gates of death! I feel with trembling that my speech is prophetic to some one here. If thou knewest, O immortal soul, how soon the curtain shall be drawn; how in a moment thou shalt see the now-invisible God face to face, thou wouldst shake like an aspen leaf in thy seat to-night. As the Lord my God liveth, there is but a step betwixt thee and death. “Set thine house in order; for thou must die, and not live.” May the Holy Ghost bestir you to take direct action! immediate action!! There is no time to waste; the sun has gone down, and it may never rise on you again. The harvest is past and the summer is ended, and you are not saved. For you there will be no beaming spring, no blooming summer of next year; but the cold sod shall cover you, and the daisy shall bloom above your grave. “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” Thus saith the Lord unto you: “Because I will do this, consider your ways.”

*“Haste, traveler, haste; the night comes on,
And many a shining hour is gone;
The storm is gathering in the west,
And thou far off from home and rest:*

*Haste, traveler, haste.”
Then linger not in all the plain,
Flee for thy life, the mountain gain;
Look not behind, make no delay,*

*O speed thee — speed thee on thy way:
 Haste, traveler, haste.
 Poor, lost benighted soul, art thou
 Willing to find salvation now?
 There yet is hope, hear mercy's call, —
 Truth, life, light, way, in Christ is all:
 Haste to him, haste.*

If thou art what I take thee to be to-night — one sent here that God may save thee — thou wilt to-night begin to cry unto God, and wilt tonight seek him who looseth the seven stars, and turneth the shadow of death into the mourning. Do thou, soul, to-night, lay hold upon the hem of Jesus' garment, and make a covenant with him that thou mayst be saved.

Come again with me down into that dreary vault, and we will see Benhadad again. *He is at his toilet.* Let us not intrude upon the king at his toilet. Sure he is putting on his imperial purple, and placing his crown upon his head, is he not? Ah! a strange dressing-room this, and a singular toilet. He hath a rope, such a rope as men hang dogs withal, and he puts it upon his neck; and as for his loins, the dainty garments of Egyptian fine linen are all laid aside, and he wraps himself about with a piece of an old sack, and then he scatters ashes upon himself. Fit toilet for a vanquished supplicant! Ah, sinner, sinner, there is wisdom here. If thou wouldst come before God in Christ, betake thee to thy toilet; not to trim thyself, not to make thyself dainty and fair; not to perfume thyself with choice essences of self-righteousness; not to gird thyself with sumptuous apparel. No, no. In your case the words of Isaiah have a spiritual meaning — “In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers. * * The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.” The finery is all gone — not a rag left — not an ornament spared. Sinner, it is so with thee! Thy proper array is the sackcloth of repentance and the rope of acknowledgment that thou deservest to die. Arouse thee, man, I say, and let this be the first act thou doest: confess that thou art vile. Come! Off with that fine garment; I know you have been to Church twice every Sabbath-day for the last few years, but away with that, away with that; trust not to that. I know that you were sprinkled in your infancy, and

have been confirmed since; but trust not in these observances, for all such confidence shall be but as a phantom and a dream of the night. I know that you have attended this Tabernacle ever since it was built, and listened to our ministry for years; but boast not of that; away with that as a ground of trust; pull off that garment. You have never failed in business; you have brought up your children well; you never swear; you were never a drunkard; midnight orgies never saw you mixed up in them; this is well, but I pray thee, put not on this as thy proper dress: the proper dress for a sinner to go to Christ in, is sackcloth and the rope. “Well,” says one, “I never will acknowledge that I deserve to be damned!” Then you never will be saved. “Well,” says another, “I never will take the language of a great sinner upon my lips.” Then you shall never be saved; for unless you are willing to confess that God may justly damn you, God will never save you; but if you feel in your heart to-night, that if he sends your soul to hell, his righteous law approves it well; if you wonder how it is that you are not in the pit, and marvel why such mercy should have been shown to you, come, brother, come; come as you are, for you wear the true court-dress of a sinner. When a beggar goes out to beg at the door, should he put on a new black coat, and a clean white cravat, and kid gloves. Nay, verily, let him clothe himself in tatters — the more rents he has the better — for tatters are the livery of a beggar, and rags are the court-dress of a mendicant. So, come in your sins; come in your doubts; come in your hardness of heart; come in your impenitence; come in your deadness; come in your lethargy; come as you are — foul, vile, filthy, waiting for no amendment, but with a rope upon your neck, and a garment of sackcloth about your loins; come now, come now; God help you to come.

***“Come, needy and guilty;
Come, loathsome and
bare; Though leprous and
filthy; Come just as you
are.”***

We will follow Ben-hadad, *and hear the king at his prayers*. He has come before the king of Israel, and he has a petition to offer. What will it be? Bring the big book; turn to the collect for Quinquagesima Sunday — will not that suit him? Will not our beautiful liturgy serve his turn? No, no; living souls must have living words, and their own words too, for I cannot adopt another man’s petition, they must be my own children, sprung from my own loins. The dead soul may parrot out a printed prayer, but the living soul pants to be rid of such tag-rags such bondage. The living spirit can no

more be content with a mere form of prayer, than the blazing, flaming comet could be chained, belted, and held fast in prison. It must have words of its own. Well, but it will be a very fine extemporary prayer, will it not — five-and-twenty minutes' long, an orthodox, Nonconformist supplication? Oh, dear no! These long, dry, prosy prayers suit dead souls, but living souls want something more burning, more full of fire. When they come before the Lord, they cannot pray in that fashion, but this is the way — “Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, *I pray thee, let me live.*” Ah! that is the sinner's prayer — “Thy servant saith, *I pray thee, let me live.*” Why, there is not one awakened person here who cannot pray such a prayer as that! That suits the clown in his roughness, and it may suit, and must suit the peer in his politeness. However dull the intellect this prayer can be understood; and however high the perceptions, this prayer can reach our desires to the full extent — “Thy servant saith, *I pray thee, let me live.*” John, John, pray in this form — “Thy servant John saith, *I pray thee, let me live.*” Jane, put it so — “Thy servant Jane saith, *I pray thee, let me live.*” Ah! that is the sort of prayer — “God be merciful to me a sinner.” If a man should meet you in the street as you walked along and should say, “If you please, sir, wait a minute,” and should then draw out of his pocket a long roll, and proceed to read to you a fine, well-written oration; well, however beautifully it might be put together, he might have a quotation from the “Rambler,” or sentences like those of the flowing Addison, but you would say, “Ay, ay, but I have not time to listen to that, sir.” But suppose that as you were going along, a man came to you and said, “Sir, I am starving; I pray you for God's sake help me” — then you know what you are at, and if your hand does not go into your purse very soon, it is only because you may suspect him of being an impostor — but you know that this is the kind of language which moves the human heart? How does your child come to you when he wants anything? Does he open a big book, and begin reading, “My dear, esteemed, and venerated parent in the effulgence of thy parental beneficence?” Nothing of the kind. He says — “Father, my clothes are worn out, please buy me a new coat,” or else he says — “I am hungry, let me have something to eat.” That is the way to pray, and there is no prayer which God accepts but that kind of prayer — right straight from the heart, and right straight to God's heart. We miss the mark when we go about to gather gaudy words. What! gaudy words on the lips of a poor sinner! Fine phrases from a rebel! There is more true eloquence in “God be merciful to me a sinner,” than in all the books of devotion which bishops, and archbishops, and divines ever compiled. “Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, *I*

pray thee, let me live.” I feel inclined to stop and ask you to bow your heads in your pews, and pray that prayer — “O God, thy servant saith, I pray thee, let me live, O cut me not down as a cumberer of the ground, but let me live; I am dead in trespasses and sins, quicken me, O Lord, and let me live; and when thou comest to slay the wicked on the earth, I pray thee, let me live; and when thou shalt destroy the ungodly, and sweep them with the besom of destruction into the pit that is bottomless, I pray thee, let me live.” You see there is not a word of merit; there is nothing about what man has done; Ben-hadad only calls himself a servant. “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” Thy servant saith, I pray thee, let me live.” He does not ask for honor, or wealth, or station.

***“Wealth and honor I disdain,
Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain;
These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ, or else I die.”***

Christ, Christ, Christ; give me Christ! “Thy servant saith, I pray thee, let me live.”

Well now, we have gone as far as we ought to do, I suppose, in intruding on the king’s privacy, but I wish he would let me look in his right hand. I wonder what that is which he carries there? He has doubtless there some warrant for his prayer, some ground for expecting that he will find grace in the sight of his enemy. Let us open his hand. What is it? Why, I can hardly see it, it is so little. Let us bring it to the light and look at it. Yes, I see it, *it is only a little “peradventure.”* It says — “Peradventure he may save thy life.” That is all — a little “peradventure,” and yet, with nothing but this to carry in his hands, he ventured to go, with the rope upon his neck, to the king of Israel. Sinner, I will give thee something more than that to go with. I should not like to go into the Bank of England with only a peradventure in my hand, with a note saying, that peradventure the cashier would give me ten ponnnds. I am afraid, I am afraid that my peradventure would not be good for much. But I should not mind going there with a promissory note signed with a good name. Sinner, here is a promise for thee. Here is one. “Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord” — there is the signature — “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” That is better than *“peradventure,”* is it not? Here is another — “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” Is not that better than *“peradventure?”* Here is another — “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall

be forgiven unto men.” Surely that is better than “peradventure.” Here is another — “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Is not that better than “peradventure?” Go then, soul, go to the King, and you shall meet with a gracious reception.

III. The third head is MISERY’S RECEPTION.

We have been with Ben-hadad in the vault, and now we will go with him to the palace. He marches along, doleful and dolorous all the way, till he gets into the presence of the king. His servants, who are round about him, are all straining their ears to catch a word from the king, and the first word they get is *a kind enquiry* — “Is he yet alive?” Ah! there was something in that; and so if you are coming to the king, my Lord begins to say — “What, sinner, are you yet alive? Why, that is the wretch who thought he would blow his brains out, is he yet alive? Why, that is the sinner who ran his body into such an excess of sin that he well-nigh killed himself; is he yet alive? What, that sinner who for years never had a good thought, is there a tear in his eye to-night? Does he begin to live? Is he yet alive? That man who has heard sermon after sermon, and never felt under one, does he begin to feel to-night? Is he yet alive? What, that man who despised a mother’s prayers, and rejected a father’s intercessions; the man who has been at sea, and shipwreck has not softened him; who has had the yellow fever in the West Indies, and that has not brought him down — what, does he begin to feel to-night? Is there some motion of the Spirit in him? Are there some yearnings after God? Is he yet alive?” See how kind is the enquiry. My Master seems to look out of my eyes to-night, and as he weeps over you he cries — “How can I give thee up, Ephraim? How can I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I set thee as Admah? How shall I make thee as Zeboim? My bowels are moved, my repentings are kindled together; I will not destroy him, for I am God, and not man.”

The next word of the king of Israel is suggestive, “*He is my brother.*” I think I see the gleam of pleasure which went over the poor courtiers faces as they heard it. If the king had said some hard word, they might have heard it with grief, but when he said — “He is my brother,” they whispered to one another — “My brother? My brother Ben-hadad? Why, that vile Ben-hadad had threatened this king with all sorts of mischief. He deserved nothing but death in return.” When the Israelitish king was in great necessities, Ben-hadad sent to demand of him his wife, and his children,

and all that he had, and when the king volunteered to acknowledge that Ben-hadad was his sovereign lord, and that they were his, Ben-hadad ordered him to send immediately the best of his wives, and the goodliest of his children, and when the King would not do that, Ben-hadad said — “The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.” Hear the boaster, how dare he use such insulting language to the king of Israel? And yet here is this king of Israel now saving — “*He is my brother!*” What, brother to such a scoundrel, such a braggart, such a tyrant, such a thief, such a rapacious robber, who would rake the whole world and spoil a man’s house, and rob his bed — brother to him? Yes, says Ahab, “He is my brother.” Well, I do not admire that in the king of Israel, but I do admire it in my Lord Jesus, that he should turn round to a black sinner, and say, “He is my brother; I his elder brother am; he is a child of God, accented in the Beloved; he is heir of God, and joint heir with me of all things.” Well, trembling, quickened sinner, what do you think of this, that Jesus Christ is your brother? Have you no love towards him? Why surely if thou art a convinced and awakened sinner, the thought of thine adoption into the Lord’s family, of thy being the brother of Christ, will make the tears roll down thy cheeks, and thou wilt say, “How could I have offended against such a Lord? Lord, let me live for my brother’s sake.”

The next thing the king of Israel did was to *take Ben-hadad up into his chariot*. Ahab lets his bragging adversary ride with him in his carriage. And Jesus will take you up into his Church, nay, into his heart, into the chariot of his grace, and you shall ride with him even through the streets of heaven, amidst universal acclamations.

He did one thing more, *he made a covenant with him*. God makes a covenant with sinners in the person of Christ. He gave Him to be a covenant for the people, a leader and commander to the people, and those hearts who are led by grace to accept of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, know that this is the result of a covenant made before the world began by God with elect sinners in the person of Christ Jesus. O sinner, such is the infinite mercy of God, that the very thought of it should make thee weep. I have known the time when I thought God would never have mercy on me, and yet the thought of his love to other people would bring the tears to my eyes. I could not help saying once, I remember, that I would love God even if he damned me, because he was so gracious to others. Something of that emotion ought to be in your soul, and if there be, then methinks, it must be

a work of grace. If thou beginnest to be in love with the mercy of God, it is because the mercy of God is in love with thee. O poor soul, mercy is to be had for the asking. It is to be had on no terms and no conditions except these — “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” Trust Jesus; trust Jesus just as you are for everything, and *you are saved*; and we will meet again in that land where they wear no sackcloth on their loins, nor ropes upon their necks, but where their heads are crowned with immortal honor, and their bodies are robed in immortality. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Look to him, all ye ends of the earth, look to him and live. The Lord enable you to do so, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH.

NO. 536

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 25TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Whereas the Lord was there.” — Ezekiel 35:10.

HEREIN lay the special security of the chosen land. The Edomites saw the whole country of Israel and Judah left desolate; Babylonians and Chaldeans had carried away the people, and ravaged the land, therefore the proud inhabitants of the city in the rock said — “These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it.” The dukes of Edom counted upon an easy conquest, and such, indeed, the Holy Land would have proved, had there not been one great difficulty — quite unknown to them — *“The Lord was there.”* Jehovah himself was still in possession, even though his rebellious people had been carried into captivity. HE would never brook that the Idumean should hold Jehovah’s land in possession, and with despiteful hearts cast it out for a prey. From this one incident we gather that whatever may be the machinations and devices of the enemies of God’s people, though there be nothing else to thwart them, there is this as an effectual barrier — the saints are God’s heritage, and the Lord is there, to guard and hold his own. The book of Ezekiel, if you will notice, concludes with these blessed words, as the name of the great city of the latter days. When all conflicts shall be ended, when the scattered shall be gathered, when the tabernacle of the Lord shall be among them; then this which is Zion’s bulwark to-day, shall be her everlasting glory.

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH — *“The Lord is there.”*

As Palestine was preserved from the enmity of Mount Seir by the presence of the great Jehovah, so the Church, and each separate member of it, is constantly kept by the power of a present God, despite the rage of

adversaries. In enlarging upon this cheering truth, I shall invite you to notice *the Church as a despised people, constantly triumphant*; next, we will observe *the Christian, in his opposed life, perpetually victorious*; thirdly, *a desolate soul graciously delivered from Satan*; and lastly, *a ruined and depraved earth, resplendent with perfect beauty* — and all because “The Lord was there.”

I. Consider, then, A DESPISED PEOPLE CONSTANTLY TRIUMPHANT, BECAUSE “THE LORD WAS THERE.”

“Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated.” Here election divides two races for ever. Since that hour, the rejected have always displayed a deadly hatred towards the elected. The seed of the profane Esau, who sold his birthright, have in all generations maintained perpetual strife against the children of the accepted Jacob, upon whom the Lord has looked with the eyes of discriminating grace. The prophet Obadiah denounces a curse upon Edom for their violence to their brother Jacob — “In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldst thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.” An eternal enmity is put between the serpent and the woman — between his seed and her seed. This was evidenced at the beginning of human history, in the case of Cain and Abel; and the story of the great battle of Armageddon, when Gog and Magog shall be utterly overthrown, will stand upon the last page of the world’s story as a sure proof that the old enmity is as hot as ever.

The people of God have always been, in every age, a hated and despised people. This may be seen if you will notice a few facts.

1. *The adversariness of God’s Israel have often thought in their hearts that they would utterly destroy them.* When Israel dwelt in Egypt, and the single household began to be a great nation, Pharaoh said unto his people “Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply.” Hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field, was tried until their lives were made bitter; but the tyrant’s purpose was not

accomplished, for the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. Then spake the king unto the midwives — “If it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.” O deep-laid scheme of a cruel and wily despot! Now he thinks that the work is surely done; the Nile will be covered with the dead bodies of Israel’s sons, and Egypt will know no fear from her bondslaves. Little did he dream that the midwives would violate his orders, and far less that from the river which he worshipped would spring the man who would make the fields of Zoan mourn, and avenge upon the first-born of Egypt the slaughter of Israel’s sons. As it was fabled of Hercules that, while a babe in his cradle, he strangled with his infant hands the serpents which came to destroy him, so was it with the chosen nation, while yet feeble as a child in Egypt, it was more than a match for the craft and malice of the dragon, for “the Lord was there.”

In after years a Pharoah, of like spirit, grievously oppressed the people until Jehovah brought them forth with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. They had scarcely been free more than a few hours they had gone but a few furlongs from Egypt, when the heart of Pharoah was hardened, and he said, “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them.” Behold the hosts of Israel, they are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in, the Red Sea rolls before them. Now Pharoah, now mayest thou destroy them at a blow! How is the prey snatched from the hand of the mighty! How gloriously is captivity led captive! The sea divides, the waters stand upright like an heap, and the chosen people of God are led through the deep as through a wilderness, for the Lord was there. After-years present us with numberless occasions in which the people who bore the oracles of God were in imminent peril, and were miraculously preserved by her great King. Well did the Psalmist sing, “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” To single out one case among many, let us remember the boastings and the shame of Sennacherib. The great king has taken the defenced cities of Judah, and sent his foul-mouthed servant, Rab-shakeh, to demand the surrender of Jerusalem, that he may carry away all the people of the land. Hezekiah comforts the minds of the people, saying, “The Lord will deliver us.” Rab-shakeh writes a blasphemous letter, and cries to the people on the wall, “Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, the lord

will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" Thus he boasts against the living God, and counts upon the ready possession of the Holy City. And what happeneth? He had calculated that his ferocious troops would cut to pieces the insignificant armies of Hezekiah; he looked upon Jerusalem as a cauldron, and all the inhabitants thereof as the pieces of flesh that are boiled therein — but he forgot that *the Lord was there*; he knew not Jehovah-shammah; little dreamed he of the secret reason why the virgin daughter of Zion despised him and laughed him to scorn. But when the hook was in his nose, when the thousands of his troops had fallen like leaves in autumn, and when he himself was smitten by his own sons in the house of Nisroch, his god, then all the nations knew that God was great, and greatly to be feared in the mountain of his holiness. Had not the Lord been on Judah's side, she would have been as stubble to the fire; but the Lord was there, and her foe could not prevail. Fly on still in your vision of the Lord's marvellous works, till you come to the Church of God properly so called. How easy it seemed to Herod to destroy once for all the followers of Jesus! They are but a handful. He will take James to begin with, and Peter shall follow. The apostles shall be the first-fruits of the bloody harvest which he means to reap. Aha! Aha! foolish Herod, a greater Herod than thou art sought to destroy him who was King of the Jews. In his blind fury he smote all the young children of Bethlehem, but the new-born prince escaped the murderous sword, and so shall this young child, the new-formed Church, escape out of thy wolfish fangs; she shall fly to the uttermost ends of the earth and shall be free; her word shall go forth throughout every land and people. Need I say that you have but to change name and circumstances, and this story may be repeated thousands of times. During the first centuries, the dragon incessantly persecuted the woman: "The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the women, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood." One of the Roman emperors set up a monument, "In the memory of a destroyed superstition called Christianity." But was our holy religion destroyed? Could the dragon prevail against the remnant which kept the commandment of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ? Behold the multitudes who this day bow the knees at the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Diocletian dyed the earth red with the blood of saints, and if it had not been that *the Lord was there*, certainly the Roman sword must have cut off forever the woman's seed. But why do I linger here? all ages and all lands witness to the same struggle. Our own country, at the Reformation, is a clear instance. Mary hunted out the saints of God; as the blood-hound tracks the fugitive slave, so she tracked the faithful wherever they were hidden; but the stakes of Smithfield and the dungeons of the Lollards' Tower were not sufficient to destroy the people of God. And Elizabeth, equally bloody against those who followed the Lord fully, having set up a semi-papistical hierarchy, sought to parry Puritans out of the land. Her successors followed in her steps, but neither the hangman's rope, nor loathsome dungeons, nor the dragoons of Claverhouse, nor fines, nor banishment, nor death, could destroy the separated Church of God, for her God was her refuge and high tower. How came it, let us ask, that all the regal and priestly power was foiled, and could not stand against the people scattered and peeled? How did this anvil break so many hammers? How could this earthwork stand against the fire of such well-manned batteries? Was there any human force in the Church capable of resisting these bloody persecutions? Brethren, there was none but this — *Jehovah-Shammah*, "the Lord was there." The Lord being there, immortality, nay, eternity was in the Church. God is eternal, he is in the Church, and his Church is immortal too. Who shall quench immortality? Where is the sword that can snap the links of eternity? When God the Immortal shall bow his head to weakness, when age shall palsy his arm, and death shall send his terrible shaft into his heart, then may the Church of God be destroyed; but not till then, because "the Lord is there."

2. The enemies of the Church have frequently shown their scorn of her by *the ridicule which they have cast upon her attacks*. When the Church defies the world, the proud servants of Satan are filled with derision. Even as Midian rested in unguarded security fearless of Gideon and his three hundred men, comparing him to a poor barley-cake, which they could eat at once if it were not unworthy of their notice, so the ungodly condemn the zeal of the godly. But as the cake of barley-bread fell upon the tent of Midian and smote it that it lay along, even so the Church is more than conqueror. How loudly did Goliath mock at David. How he cursed him by his gods — "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of heaven, and to the beasts of the field." But Goliath falls like a tottering tower headlong upon the ground. His own sword slays him, and the

despised David bears the monster's head triumphantly in his hand. So, doubtless, in apostolic times, the world ridiculed the armies of the Lord. "These poor men!" said kings and princes, and they smiled in royal scorn of the mendicant band, "what kingdom can they set up?" "Unlearned and ignorant men!" muttered the philosophers, as they cast their mantles about them, and mocked at the strange doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. "This handful of weaklings," said the commander of the legions of Rome, "This handful! a miserable eleven, what can they do against innumerable priests and worshippers supported by the eagles of universal empire?" "Aha! aha!" said the world, "was anything ever so despicable, so fanatical, so foolish! Eleven fishermen! Get ye back to your nets and to your boats; go back to the lake of Gennesaret, transform the fishes into men, and then come back, and think to turn us from the ancient gods of our fathers into worshippers of the crucified man of Nazareth." Yet for all their wisdom, their laughter was ill-spent, for *the Lord was there*, and therefore the attacks of the brave twelve were followed by speedy victory. Wherever they marched they cast down the idols' temples, nay, they hurled the gods themselves to the moles and to the bats, and the few, the ignorant, the poor, the weak, in the course of a few score years had cast the pomps of priesthood, the pride of philosophy, and even the might of kings, from the abodes of their glory, and trodden them like mire in the streets, because Jehovah-Shammah, "the Lord was there."

How constantly has the world ridiculed the Church in every effort she has put forth for her own enlargement. "What do these feeble Jews." said Sanballat and Tobiah — "will they fortify themselves, will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish; even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." But they built the wall and the timbers were fixed in their places. How vexed must Tobiah and Sanballat have been when they saw the city rising upon its heap. The like has been the case in all time. To quote a modern instance of what has ever been the case — Sydney Smith said when Carey talked of evangelizing India, that a consecrated cobbler was going out to preach the Gospel to educated and enlightened Hindoos, but the consecrated cobbler took his post and digged in India a well of which thousands shall yet drink. That man of God has placed the battering-ram of the Gospel in such a position, that ere long the hoary bastions of idolatry will tremble, and the world shall see that the weakness of God is stronger than man. It is really an absurd thing for us to talk about overcoming the world, and converting the

heathen, and comforting God's people, and enlarging the borders of the Church. It is, I say, an absurd thing if we talk so in our own strength, but it is not absurd when this little word comes in — "Whereas the Lord was there." Then we have Omnipotence in our midst; if God be there, the Church has God's omnipotence; and little do our enemies know our might. Omnipotence walks forth, in the youthful David to fight Goliath, Omnipotence goes forth in the consecrated cobbler to fight with Juggernaut and the gods of the heathen; and feeble though the Church may be to this day, unlearned, and to a great extent still made up of the poor of this world, yet the day shall come when the earth shall know that the Church-is mightier than the mightiest of her foes, because Jehovah-Shammah, "the Lord is there."

3. Let me again remind you that the world's estimation of the Church has frequently been seen in the way in which *it will mock at all her teachings*. The wise men of this world have always something far superior to anything that the Bible can reveal. Even bishops make great discoveries, and find out that perfect wisdom has made very many blunders in the book of Exodus. New theologians are every now and then starting most remarkable schemes of doctrine — their own wood, hay, and stubble being, in their own opinion, infinitely superior to the gold and the silver, and precious stones of inspiration. Well, they may go on and tell us still that the gospel is a vulgar thing, and only fit for the poor; they may assure us that it will suit very well the uneducated masses, but the intellectual and enlightened few want something better. Ah! we can well endure their boastings, for the doctrines of grace are the loftiest of all philosophy and the most intellectual of all teachings — because Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is in them; and where God is, there is perfect wisdom; where God is, there is incomprehensible knowledge. The sum total of all human knowledge is but as a drop of the bucket compared with the wisdom of God; and the wisdom of God is in and with the teachings of his Church, wherever Jesus Christ is lifted up. He is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and therefore in answer to the world's vauntings against our folly, we reply, "Ay, but the foolishness of God is wiser than man," and, in Scripture, "Jehovah-Shammah," the Lord is there.

4. Do they not, also, very frequently *cast in our teeth our trials*. They will say of the Christian, "Where is he now?" When Israel's hills were desolate then Edom said, "Where is their God?" The sons of Esau boasted and said, "Let us go up and take possession." It is ever the part of the ungodly,

when they find a Christian in distress, to say, "Where is thy God? God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him." Ay, and we should have been swallowed up quickly by our fierce foes only that, in the uorst moments of the Church, God is there. If she be in prison, God is there; at the stakes where her martyrs burn, God is there; the silenced ministers may have to conceal themselves in the caves and dens of the earth, but God is there.

Tried though the Christian be, God is with him in the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar can cast in but three, he cannot, however, cast out the fourth; where the Church shall be Christ shall walk the coals with his people, and they shall come out of their trials triumphant, for God is there. Where God is, there is everlasting love, where God abideth; there is immutable affection; and, therefore, let this be our connfort, God is with thee, Israel, passing through the fire.

Beloved, the world shows its dis-esteem of us by *the way in which it often treats the Christian*. It sees him poor and naked, and miserable, and therefore pushes him about as though he were a beggar and not one of the blood royal. Little do they know that however poor the Christian may be *the Lord is there*. The image of Jesus Christ is in every Christian's face, but specially in the face of a poor believer; the Holy Ghost dwells in that body, however clothed with rags, however emaciated by hunger and disease. You remember the other day that certain young men treated rudely a pale-faced person whom they saw sitting in the railway carriage — pushed him about, struck him, and so forth, and went to their homes, no doubt, boasting of the way in which they treated a poor fool who had not the spirit, as they would say, to defend himself. To their consternation it turned out to be a peer of the realm whom they had thus ill-treated, and then how small they seemed, what abject apologies they offered. Ah, it was quite a different thing then, they would not have pushed *his grace*, his lordship, the duke.

Oh if they had known it, they thought him only some common man. And so now-a-days the world elbows the Christian, pushes him, strikes him; but when it finds out what a Christian is then how small their mirth will seem — they would not have done it if they had known who it was; they knew not the Lord of glory, and if they knew not him, how shall they know his people? Let it ever be recollected, that wherever there is a true Christian there is glory, because God is there, and God is never apart from his own glory. The very honor, and dignity, and majesty of Deity itself, guards every follower of the Savior, however much he may be despised among men.

O for a celestial tongue to set forth the honor and safety of the chosen people, an honor which streams from the presence of God as light pours from the sun! You will see how it is. There was a little flock: a multitude of ravening wolves all hungry and athirst for blood came howling on; they rushed to the very edge of the fold, they were about to leap in and suck the blood of the sheep, but suddenly they started back like whipped curs. See how they turn tail and take to flight, for lo a mysterious one lifts his hand over the fold; a voice cries, "Get ye gone!" and back they go — they little dreamed that the Lord was there; had they known it they would scarcely have attempted a task so impossible as the destruction of a people who had God in the midst of them and therefore could not be moved.

II. But I must leave this for want of time and introduce THE OPPOSED AND YET A CONQUEROR. Moses saw at the back of the desert a bush burning. It was nothing but a bush, the fire was real, the fire was quite capable of consuming the bush in but the twinkling of an eye, and yet though the bush burned with fire it was not consumed. It is such a sight as this that I bid you now look upon for a few moments, my beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ — a Christian man constantly opposed and yet perpetually preserved because the Lord is there. The very moment that a Christian is born again, Satan seeks to destroy him. The early *convictions* of a new-born soul are always the subject of Satanic attack. Frequently the devil will employ our old companions to laugh us out of our fears — "Come along, old fellow," they will say, "do not give way to this melancholy misery; there is a first-class play to-night — come and see it. We shall meet at the tavern — we will have merriment, and a rare time of it." Satan hopes, that with the laugh, the jeer, the jest and merriment, he will destroy utterly all convictions of sin; little does he dream that *the Lord is there*, and where God sends the arrow home, no devil can ever draw it out. Where the Lord convicts of sin, it is not possible that those convictions should be staunch, except by a Savior's wounds. If we should attempt to blow out a candle, the candle was lit by human power, and human power may put it out. But he were the greatest of fools who should try to blow out the sun; for he alone who kindled its matchless rays, can ever quench them. If then the convictions of sin be natural; and come from man, man may destroy them; but if the sun-light of God has risen in a human heart, no power, human or satanic, shall ever be able to destroy the glorious day which the day-star foretells. If I attempt to stop in its course a stone which has been slung from human hand, I may, perhaps, accomplish

my purpose, but who is he that could interpose to stop a meteor as it flashes across the sky? Who shall cast a bridle about the neck of the planet as it flies in its tremendous pathway? who shall bind it fast in its place, or thrust a bit into its jaws? If God be in the thing, it must traverse its destined pathway, spite of opposition. So, beloved, where the Lord begins a true heart-breaking and real conviction of sin, it cannot be destroyed. Why? Because Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there.

Then, as the fiend has tried to destroy conviction, he will next shoot his arrows against our *faith*. Poor, feeble follower of Jesus, he will worry thee. "Oh," saith he, "he is but a little one, I will encounter him in full fury, I will strike him to the ground and spill his soul." But the faith which God gives to us overcometh the world — yea, and overcome the old dragon too. It is a faith which lives under pressure and load; mountains may be piled upon it, but it breathes under the terrific weight. It lives in the midst of death, swallowing up death in victory. It defies the power of hell's fiery darts; they are not only turned aside, but they are quenched upon the shield of faith. Satan may throw all sorts of accusations in our pathway, but faith dies to the Advocate. He may strike us many a cowardly blow, with fierce temptations, such as suit our former state and the corruptions of our flesh, but if God be in our faith, and he is in it, if it be real and genuine, "more is he that is for us than all they that be against us." There shall be this ever for our preservation, — "the Lord is there."

Beloved, have not you always found that not only your faith but all *your good works* are the subjects of Satan's attacks? I never yet had a virtue or possessed a grace but what it was sure to be the target for hellish bullets, whether it was hope bright and sparkling, or love warm and fervent, or patience all enduring, or zeal flaming like coals of fire, the old enemy of everything that is good has tried if he could destroy or mar it. And why is it that anything virtuous or lovely survives in you? There can be no reason given to this, but "God is there." God dwells in his people. Every good thing which springeth up in the human heart is an emanation from the indwelling Deity, and being such the destroyer may vent his malice upon it, but as the waves are broken against the rocks, so shall his cruel spite be broken against the power of the most high God — God is in it.

Note, beloved, how sedulously Satan aims against *the perseverance* of God's people. They will never hold on their way saith he. You and I have thought *we* never should. Sometimes we have sat down and become weary

in well-doing, — the troubles of the way, our non-successes, our frequent sorrows, perhaps the backsliding of our heart from God — all these have made us say, “I shall never reach my journey’s end and see my God with acceptance.” And yet you have not fallen from grace yet, not yet have you disgraced your character, not yet gone back to your old lusts. Old Adam has given you many a grip in the side, as though he would tear the heart out of you, but you have held on your way despite all that he could do. How is this? Why, God was in you, and if he had not been there, then indeed had you been a prey unto your adversaries. I went last week into the lighthouse at Holyhead and marked the lights that warn the mariner crossing the sea, or guide him in time of storm into the haven. I noticed in the second story of the lighthouse many large vats filled with oil laid up in store that the lamps might be constantly trimmed for months to come, and I compared that in my own mind to that gracious provision of divine grace which the Lord lays up in store for his people. The lamps would go out but Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there — we have the all-sufficiency of God laying up a store of oil, that so our lights may be always trimmed. A Christian is something like an express train. On some of our railroads you know there are express trains which do not stop to take water, the water lies in a trench in the middle between the rails, and as the train runs it sucks up its own supply of cold water, and so continues its course without a pause. Our God in grace has forestalled our needs, he prepares supplies for his own people, so that without their stopping to seek the streams of creature-confidence, sometimes without the use of means he is pleased to speed them on their pathway towards heaven, fed by a divine arrangement of grace. O it is blessed to think that if God be there, everything a Christian can want for his final persevering, for his eternal life, is ready at hand.

I have no doubt, beloved, we shall find that when we come to die, *our dying confidence* will be the object of the enmity of all the powers of hell. Perhaps Jordan will overflow her banks, and Satan will issue his command, “Come hither, principalities and powers, here is the man that we could not overturn in life, let us at last overthrow him in death.” Perhaps like John Knox, you may have your blackest day at the last, but oh! thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have no fear for our dying confidence, for “God is there,” even *there* where the billows are the most tempestuous and the water is most chill; we shall feel the bottom and know that it is good, our feet shall stand upon the rock of ages even in our dying moments. Beloved, from the first of a Christian’s

life to the last, the only reason why he does not perish is because "*the Lord is there.*" How often has the devil reckoned without his host. He has thought "Surely I shall destroy and devour that lamb" — so indeed he would have done if it had belonged to anybody else, but seeing it belonged to the Lord, the Lord was there to protect it, to pluck it out of the jaw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, and to preserve it even to the end. I think, my soul, thou hast learned never to love anything of which thou canst not say, "The Lord is there." If you have a grace, a virtue, a good work, a prayer, and the Lord is not in it, away with it, away with it; but if you have the feeblest prayer that ever was prayed, and the faintest hope that ever gladdened a man, yet if God be in it never give it up, for where there is God there is something firmer than adamant, and the axes of your adversaries shall have their edges turned against it.

III. Now, with greater brevity still, I come to dwell upon the third point, which was this — A DESOLATE SOUL, NOT DESTROYED, BECAUSE GOD IS THERE.

I wish I could convey, by my words, some little inkling of my own joy of heart, while I was thinking over the third part of my subject. I thought of *the dead sinner*; but an elect sinner, and the devil, like the sons of Edom, said, "I shall have that dead sinner, I shall have him." "My purpose is," says Satan, "that he shall dwell for ever with me, in misery extreme. I have laid hold upon him," says he, "and he hath made a league with hell. He is mine, he is mine for ever." But stop, stop, the Lord was there before the devil.

Does the devil purpose? Ah, but God's *purpose* is older than the devil's purpose. Does the sinner make a covenant? Ay, but then, God's *covenant* was made before that sinner was born, and what is the devil's purpose compared with God's purpose? You see God is there before him — "Whereas the Lord was there." "I have purposed saith the Lord, to make that sinner my child, a new heart also will I give him, and a right spirit will I put within him. I will sprinkle clean water upon him, and he shall be clean; from all his filthiness will I cleanse them." Satan, thou art deceived, the purpose of God is before thee. "Ah, but," said Satan, "he is mine, I will have him, I will go and take possession, he is mine;" and so he is about to enter the vineyard, and take possession of the vines of sour grapes, when lo! some one meets him on the threshold, and says, "What dost thou here?" "I am come to take possession," saith he. "Take possession," saith Christ, "I have a *claim* upon this vineyard, I bought it and paid for it with drops of blood; what dost thou here? Thou sayest, 'I

will possess this

land,' whereas the Lord was there:" and he shows the fiend the print of the nails, and points him to his wounded side, and says, "Whatever thy claim may be, mine is a higher claim; I bought, I paid for, I have the acceptance from the divine hand, and this vessel of mercy was mine, mine long before thou couldst have any claim upon it." "Yes, yes," says the devil, "but I have been providing for this soul that it shall lie in hell for ever. I have determined to put such-and-such temptations in its pathway that it may go on step by step till it makes its bed in hell." "Ah!" but saith the Lord, "I have been before thee; if thou hast a providence so have I, and my *providence* is older than thine. I have watched this man from the cradle even until now, and even when thou hast been leading him astray further and further from me; I have overruled it all to bring him nearer and nearer to the predestined spot, and to the appointed moment, when the eternal council shall be fulfilled that man shall be turned from darkness to light." Satan no doubt, thinks he lays his plans very prettily; there is only this to deceive his calculations and baffle his designs — "Whereas the Lord was there." Perhaps the evil one led you here this morning to ridicule the gospel, but the Lord may be in it, and you may be brought to his feet. I have known the devil lead men into sin, and yet the very sin has been blessed of God to their conviction and conversion. I remember one whose life had been eminently moral before, who was self-righteous, but the devil led him into a trap, and his fall opened his eyes to see the depravity of his heart, and so the devil had his head cut off with his own sword — he was taken in his own net. Beloved, whatever Satan may do in providence, God is the master of providence, and he is waiting to be gracious still. But the devil will say, "Ay, but I have him — I have got him now. I have put into his thoughts and into his mind all manner of falsehood and he is mine." "Nay," saith Christ, "but the Lord is there. He knows *the gospel*; to-day is the gospel preached in his ears — believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Ay," saith the devil, "he may *know* it, but I have the power over him, I have my hand upon the bit and the bridle — I will manage and control him." Nay, but I trust the Lord will say to elect souls who are here this morning — "Nay, but I have *the power* over thee. The Spirit of God shall go with the word, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God." And then shall it be said once more, "The dead soul had almost gone to hell, but it could not go, for the Lord was there in the road to stop him in his ruinous career."

Do I address a backslider — one who used to be a member of a Christian Church, but who has gone back to the world? Ah, poor soul, if you ever were a child of God, you will come back yet; you will never live at ease — you cannot live happily, I know. You will not live to your life's end what you now are, for if the Lord is in you, the devil may get you to give up the means of grace; he may lead you to attend the public house; he may tempt you to forget the Sabbath and to become as vile as other men; but if God be there, he will be cheated of his prey yet. At the last moment, if never before, I pray that thou mayest hear the voice that saith, "Return, return." O that you would hear it this morning! Come, backslider, God hath not cast you away; having loved you with an everlasting love, he has not forgotten you. Come to his feet, confess your wanderings and offenses and now again enter into his family, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and fullness of glory. Thou canst not be ruined, for "the Lord is there;" thou shalt be saved, for "the Lord is there," and will not leave thee nor forsake thee.

IV. And now lastly — and this is but a hint. The same, dear friends, is true with regard to THE ENTIRE WORLD. The world cannot be destroyed, because "Jehovah is there." This world once shone, like its sister stars, bright and fair, but a sad shadow of eclipse was thrown upon it — it became swathed in the mists of sin, and though the glory of the Lord hath risen upon it, yet still much of the gloom and the thick darkness continues. Shall that darkness cover all the nation? Shall the light become dim for ever? No, no; "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Shall its groans and travails end in nothing? No, no; the day cometh when "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The signs we sometimes think portend the speedy coming of the Son of Man, "when he shall stand in the latter day" upon Mount Olivet, and reign with all his ancients gloriously; then shall it be seen that since God in all ages was in the world with patriarchs and prophets, with Christ and his apostles, and with his Church throughout all time, there always was a reason why the world should yet be saved; why there should be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Despair not for the world, beloved; work on and hope on, pray on and expect every blessing, for God is in the earth still, and therefore it can never be the devil's globe, it can never be wholly given up to the enemy of Jehovah-Shammah, "the Lord is there."

Now I do not know whither the Great Master is about to conduct some of you. You are perhaps, be about to journey across the sea. You may have some of you to go to a bed of sickness, but remember I give you this for your cordial — “The Lord is there.” It may be, brother, you are appointed unto death, you are come to the borders of the dark valley; or else, bereavement will befall you, and you will have to visit and re-visit the grave with children, and friends, and relatives. Do remember *the Lord is there*.

Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead, I’ll follow where he goes. Anywhere with Jesus! Anywhere with Jesus! Nowhere would I be without him, but if he saith, “I am with thee,” then will I neither fear the floods nor the fires, nor death, nor life, things present, or things to come. This shall be my joyous trust and boast — “The Lord is there.” God bless you; and in the school, the College, and our beloved classes, may it be said, “the Lord is there.” Amen.

ENCOURAGE YOUR MINISTER.

NO. 537

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 18TH,
1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT CORNWALL ROAD CHAPEL, BAYSWATER.

“Encourage him.” — Deuteronomy 1:38.

MOSES could not conduct the people into the promised land. Nor can the law bring any man to heaven. The law may lead a man out of the Egypt of his sin, and it may bring him into the wilderness of conviction; there it may provide him with food, and nourish him with some little comfort, but the law can never give rest to the spirit. Into Canaan Moses can never conduct the Israel of God. This was left for Joshua, whose name, you know, is but another form of the name Jesus. As Joshua alone could drive the Canaanites out of the land, and give a portion to all the seed of Israel, so Jesus alone can give rest unto the heirs of heaven. Moses cannot do it. He may see the promised land, but he can never enter it. Legal convictions may be accompanied with some desires towards divine things, ay, and some apprehensions of their sweetness too; but the ultimate enjoyment, the rest which remaineth for the people of God, can only come to the believer through Jesus Christ. See here the weakness of the law. It is not able to bring us to our rest. “By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” Fly then, to Jesus; for he is the Captain of our salvation, by whom our foes shall be subdued, and our everlasting inheritance secured.

It is not, however, my purpose to explore the *mystic* truth which is couched beneath; I confine myself this morning to the *moral* on the surface. Joshua was a young man in comparison with Moses. He was about to undertake the onerous task of commanding a great people. He had moreover the difficult enterprise of leading them into the promised land, and chasing out the nations which possessed it. The Lord commanded

Moses, therefore to encourage him, that in the prospect of great labor he might not be dismayed. This teaches us, I think, that GOD, EVEN OUR GOD, IS GRACIOUSLY CONSIDERATE OF HIS SERVANTS, and would have them well fitted for high enterprise with good courage. He doth not send them as a tyrant would send a soldier upon an errand for which he is not capable; nor does he afterwards withhold his succor, forgetful of the straits to which they may be reduced; but he is very careful of his servants, and will not let one of them perish. He counts them as the apple of his eye, keeps them at all hours, and defends them from all dangers. Why is this? The Lord our God hath strong reasons for being thus considerate of his servants. Are they not *his children*? Is he not their Father? Doth he not love them? If all human loves could be put together, they would scarce make a drop in a bucket, compared with the ocean of love which God the Father hath towards his children. All mothers' loves, all the loves of friends, of brothers and of sisters, of husbands and of wives, if all piled together, would be a molehill, compared with the towering mountain of the divine love which God the Father hath towards his chosen. We are — and there is no other figure which sets forth the whole length and breadth of that love — we are as dear to God as his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ is

***“So dear, so very dear, to God I cannot dearer be;
The love wherewith he loves his Son, such is his love for me.”***

“As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you,” said Christ. Now, none of us would send a child of ours upon a difficult enterprise, without being anxious for his welfare. We would not put him upon a trial beyond his strength, without at the same time guaranteeing to stand at his side, and make his strength equal to his day. Moreover, the Father *himself is concerned as to his honor in all that they do*. If any servant of God shall fall, then God's name is despised. The daughters of Philistia rejoice, and the inhabitants of Ekron triumph. “Aha! aha!” they say, “so we would have it! God's servants are put to the rout; Jehovah was not able to give them victory. They trusted in him, and they were confounded. They rested upon him, and they fell to the ground.” Think not that the heavenly Father will ever permit this to be said. Will he ever send forth his servants to let them fall by the hand of the adversary? He is too jealous of his great name. His honor is too much concerned ever to permit this. Ye feeble ones, to whom God hath given to do or to suffer for his name's sake, rest assured that he hath his eye upon you now. He cannot leave you, unless he can cease to be

“God over all, blessed for ever.” He cannot forget you, for his heart of love can never change, and the relationship which he has towards you can never be dissolved. Beloved, *God the Father* careth for his children, because they are his children, and because his honor is concerned in them. How sweet the thought, if I fail, God fails; if I succeed, being God’s sent servant, God hath all the honor. Could I lean on him and fail, then to that degree God’s purpose is not fulfilled, God’s promise is not kept, God’s nature is not glorified. Oh, when ye can fall back on the name, the renown, the very character of God; when ye can say, as Moses said upon the Mount, “What wilt thou do for thy great name?” When ye can plead as Luther did, “Lord, this is no quarrel of mine, it is thine. Thou knowest thou didst put me to speak against thy foes, and now if thou leave me, where is thy truth? “When ye can plead with God in this way, surely he will give you a rescue. Ye cannot fail when your cause is God’s cause.

Nor is the Divine Father alone concerned. Is not the *Son of God* concerned in the welfare of his brethren? He hath *bought them with his blood*. That which a man dearly purchases he will highly prize. If he did not, it would be as much as to confess that he had paid too costly a sum for what he bought. Ye are bought with a price. A price it was tremendous enough; the King of Glory gave his heart’s blood to redeem poor worms like ourselves, but he will never confess that he gave too much for us. In love he will esteem the purchase equal to the price he paid. The love and the price are both infinite. As he looks upon any one of his people, he says, “There is my purchase,” and he values you not so much for what you are intrinsically worth, as because he sees the drops of his own blood upon you. “There,” says he is the travail of my soul; there is the divine satisfaction my Father gives me for the sufferings I endured.” Think you that when he thus values his servants he will leave them without his help? It cannot be. Moreover *our blessed Lord has passed through precisely those very troubles* to which he calls his people. “We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” The thorn in your foot pierced his heel before it touched you. The sorrow which sends the tears gushing from your eye has first of all swollen his heart.

***“In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part.”***

“In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.” If you have been widowed yourself you feel a compassion for those who are brought into the like state, to which others who have never passed through it are strangers. Were you ever a fatherless child, I know you will love orphans. Now our Lord and Master was forsaken of his Father. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” saith he. He hath gone all the length of human grief, and therefore it is not possible that he should be inconsiderate concerning any one of his beloved.

Do you not know, to crown this point, that every believer is actually *a part of Christ*? We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Were the poor servants of God at Damascus persecuted? Christ suffered. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?” To this very day our Head is in sympathy with us.

***“He feels at his heart all our sighs and our groans,
For we are most near him his flesh and his bones.”***

Do you think the Head will not care for the members? Shall I let my finger fester uncared for, until it needs to be cut away from mortification? Not while my brain can think, or my tongue can speak. And Jesus, so long as he can see his people, and his tongue can make any intercession, will not let even the meanest member of his mystical body suffer for lack of supplies. Even as God cared for Joshua, so doth Christ care for you this morning, beloved member of the body of Christ.

Is not this sufficient argument — the Father’s interest and the Son’s? If not, remember *the most blessed Spirit. He dwells in all the people of God.* How can he dwell in them and not be mindful of them? We forget the sick and the poor because, they live in a back street, and we do not pass thereby; but you could not have poverty pining in your own house, methinks, without readiness to relieve it. You would not have sickness lying in your own chamber without showing sympathy. Now our body is the house of the Holy Ghost. He dwells in the body as in a temple, and do you think that he will see his people languish for lack of grace while he is present with them. Can it be that he will walk in them and see them famish, perceive their lacks and destitution, and not supply their wants? Dream not so hardly of the tender and blessed Spirit, whose name is “the Comforter.” Be it never forgotten that *it is his office to supply the wants of God’s people.* It is the Holy Spirit’s business to see after the saints. “If I go away,” said Jesus, “I will send the Comforter unto you.” So long as they

had the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the disciples could want for nothing. As long as he had a crust of bread, they had half. If he had a place where to lay his head at any time given him by charity, they should rest with him. "Where I am there shall also my servant be," was Christ's loving rule. When he went away, then they were left like orphans until the Spirit of God came as another Comforter, "who should abide with them for ever." Dost thou think that the Holy Spirit will neglect his office? O thou weak and trembling believer, dost thou imagine that God the Holy Ghost will be negligent of his sacred trust? Canst thou suppose that he has undertaken what he cannot or will not perform? Now if it be his business to work in thee, to strengthen thee, to illuminate thee, to comfort thee, dost thou suppose he has forgotten thee? Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over by my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." Thou art near to him; now his eyes are upon thee. Like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth thee; and like as a mother tenderly fondleth her suckling, even so the Lord loveth thee; the bowels of his love are yearning over thee, pitying thy sufferings, ready to help thee in thy distresses. Trust thou in him, and he will surely encourage thee, and thy fears exchanged for faith, thou shalt triumph over every foe, and realize every promise.

Observe well *how far* the tender consideration of God for his servants extends! He not only considers their outward state, and the absolute interests of their condition, but he remembers their spirits, and loves to see them of good courage. Some people think it a small thing for a believer to be full of doubts and fears, but I do not think so. I perceive from this text that my Master would not have you entangled with fears. He would have you without carefulness, without doubt, without sorrow; he says, "Encourage him" — as much as if he had told Moses that it was an important thing for his servant Joshua to have his courage duly sustained. My Master does not think so lightly of your unbelief as you do. You are desponding this morning; well, this is a grievous matter. My Lord loveth not to see your countenance sad. It was a law, you remember, of Ahasuerus, that no one should come into the king's court dressed in mourning; but it is not the law of my Master, for you may come mourning as you are; but still he would have you put off those rags and that sackcloth, for surely there is much reason to rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord

always. Be of good courage; wait on the Lord, for he will renew your strength.

The Christian man must have his spirits sustained, in order that he may glorify the Lord. If his spirits are kept up, he will be able to endure trial upon trial. He comes to the fire, but it will never kindle upon him when his faith is firm. He walks through the rivers, but the floods never overflow him while he can look to his God. The sweetest songs believers ever have are those they sing at night. God's people are like the nightingale — their music is best heard when the sun is gone down. Oh, how much depends on your spirits being supported! Let the spirits sink, and a little trouble lays like a dead weight upon the soul. On the other hand, if faith be firm, tons of trouble become light as a feather. Unless the spirits of God's people be sustained, *they will dishonor their God*; they will think hard things of him, and perhaps they will speak hard things against him, and so the holy name of God will not be had in repute. *What a bad example it is!* This disease of doubtfulness and discouragement is an epidemic that soon spreads amongst the Lord's flock. One downcast believer makes twenty sad. This *phobia* is a contagious species of madness; soon are men bitten with it; if one doubt of the promise of God, straightway a whole congregation will begin to foam with like doubts. When Paul was in the ship and took bread and ate it in the midst of the storm, then all the crew were encouraged; but if Paul had been downcast, then, from the captain to the smallest cabin-boy, there would have been great distress. Oh, be of good courage! for the sake of your brothers and sisters in Christ; when you would say a hard or bitter thing, keep it back as David did, lest he should offend against the generation of God's people. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." Unless your courage is kept up, *Satan will be too much for you?* My experience teaches me that the cowardly old tempter always comes upon us when we are in our worst state. If he would but meet me *sometimes*, I could drive him as chaff before the wind; but he will always meet me when an attack of bile, or some domestic trouble, or ill tidings in the camp, hinder my cheerfulness. Then, sure enough, in some dark, narrow lane, stands the arch-enemy, with his sword drawn, and he swears he will spill the blood of my soul. But just let the heart be right, let the spirit be joyful in God my Savior, the joy of the Lord shall be your strength, and no fiend of hell shall make headway against you.

Besides, *labor is light* to a man of cheerful spirit! You can work all day and almost all night, when the spirits are right, but once let the heart sink

and your soul lack encouragement, and then you grow weary, and cry, "Would God it were evening, and the shadows were drawn out, that we might rest from our toil." Success waits upon cheerfulness. The man who toils, rejoicing in his God, believing with all his heart, has success guaranteed. He who sows in hope shall reap in joy. He who trusts in the Lord and laughs at impossibilities, shall soon find that there are no impossibilities to laugh at, for to the man who is confident in Jehovah, all things are possible. It is thus of paramount importance that the spirits of the Christian should be constantly kept up. God so considers it. Thus saith the Lord, "Encourage him" — "Make the good man's heart glad; make the believer sing with joy; *encourage him.*"

II. Secondly, we remark that GOD USES HIS OWN PEOPLE TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER. He did not say to the angel, "Gabriel, there is my servant Joshua, about to take the people into Canaan — fly down and encourage him." God never works needless miracles; if his purposes can be accomplished by ordinary means, he will certainly accomplish them without using miraculous energy. Gabriel would have not been half so well fitted for the work as Moses. A brother's sympathy is more precious than an angel's embassy. The angel, swift of wing, had better known the Master's bidding than the people's temper. An angel had never experienced the hardness of the road, nor seen the fiery serpents, nor had he led the stiff-necked multitude in the wilderness. Moses felt it all. For my part, I am glad to think that God does his work by man. It gives us such a bond of brotherhood. We must be dependent on one another. We need condolence in our grief; and we invite companionship in our joys. So, being mutually dependent on one another's countenance and counsel, we are fused more completely into one mass, and made more thoroughly one family.

To whom, then, should this work of encouraging the people be committed? Surely *the elders* should do it; those of riper years than their fellows. I know some aged persons, who whenever they see a young Christian, make it a point to inform him of all the difficulties and perils of the road. Like *Mistrust* and *Timorous*, they have always a doleful story to tell about the way to heaven. This was the old style of Christian in many of our Churches. For my part, I think that the aged Christian is better employed in looking after the lambs of the flock and trying to carry them in his bosom. Talk cheerily to the young and anxious enquirer, lovingly try to remove stumbling-blocks out of his way. When you find a spark of grace in the heart, kneel down and blow it into a flame. Leave the young believer to

discover the roughness of the road by degrees. Tell him of the strength which dwells in God, of the sureness of the promise, of the delightfulness of fellowship with Jesus, of the charms of communion with Christ. Entice the young Christian on, as good mothers teach their children to walk by holding out here a sweetmeat and there some tempting thing that they may put their trembling feet one before the other, and at last know how to walk. I would that every Church had many of these aged brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers in Israel, who take this for their motto whenever they see a young Christian, — “Encourage him.” I know of nothing more inspiring than to hear the experience of a gray-headed saint. I have found much spiritual comfort in sitting at the feet of my venerable grandfather, more than eighty years of age. The last time I saw him I said to him, “I suppose you have had many trials, grandfather?” He said, “I have not had too many, and the most of what I have had, I have made myself.” “And do you think that God will ever leave his people?” “No,” said he, “for if he would leave one of them he would have left me, but he is a faithful God, and I have proved him, for I have known his love more than seventy years, and yet he has been faithful to me. Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised.” Why, it comes home to the hearts of us young people and makes us feel that we have found something which it is safe to depend upon when those who have gone through the valley can bear such a word of testimony as this. Do not let a word of peevishness come out of thy mouth, my aged brother; let no syllable of complaining escape thee, my sister. Let thy mouth be filled with thy Lord’s praise, and with his honor all the day, and so thou wilt encourage others.

Not the aged only, but *the wise* in the family should be comforters. All believers are not equal in knowledge. Some are quick of apprehension in the ways of the Lord; they rapidly acquire doctrinal knowledge; and experimental knowledge comes to them with a brighter light than it does to duller intellects. There are in all our Churches those who never will be doctors of divinity. Though they know right well that they are sinners, and that Christ saves them, and so their acceptance is secured, if you talk to them about the mysteries of the gospel they will soon get into depths where they lose their footing, for they have not learned to swim. Perhaps they will never be able to understand, or at least to appreciate the doctrine of election. Now, wiser men should not keep their knowledge to themselves; above all they should not use it to criticise. I could tell of men who carry knowledge like a sword. They listen to the sermon, and when

they meet some friend who gained a little good from it, they will cavil. They say, "Oh, the first or the third point I did not think quite sound." They will be sure to have something to say that will knock the bread from the mouths of those who are willing to feed. They are more knowing than wise. Moses was wise in doctrinal knowledge. With what consummate wisdom he addressed Joshua. "Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." Oh ye that have searched the scriptures through and know its promises — ye that have been among these beds of spices, and whose garments smell of frankincense, be sure to quote the promises of God to trembling hearts, and especially to those engaged in arduous labor for the Master. Comfort them. Repeat the doctrine of God's faithfulness; say to them, "He will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." Oh that the wise-hearted in the Lord's family would be thus employed at all times.

Nor can I doubt that the *happier* sort of Christians ought always to be engaged in comforting the mournful and sorrowing. You know whom I mean; their eyes always sparkle; wherever they go they carry lamps bright with animation, sunshine gleams in their faces, they live in the light of God's countenance. We have some of a more sombre countenance, good people too; they always see the black side of affairs. Now, you who are happy, try to encourage those that are downcast. Oh, dear friends, I am afraid we neglect this duty, many of us. You will say, "How can I perform it?" Speak a kind word always; find out those who are weary and give them a word of consolation. Even a smile from your face may do them good. Do not avoid them because they are melancholy, but rather pursue them. Hunt them out, do not let them be quiet in their nest of thorns, but if the Lord has given it to you to soar aloft into the clear blue ether, try to carry your friend with you, and lift him above the clouds. Suppose your house is on a hill, and he lives down in the marsh, ask him to climb the hill and stay with you. Perhaps you have the keys of the promise, use the key and open the door for him. It is just possible that you may live in the upper storeys where you can see further and behold more of the blessed land. Ask him to come up from his cellar and walk on the roof of your palace, and scan the prospect through your telescope, "*Encourage him.*"

Let the brother of low degree be likewise encouraged by these who are *rich* among you. You may frequently breathe comfort into a desponding spirit by seasonable help. The destitute will think himself rich upon your leavings. Peradventure your poor brother thinks you look down upon him because you are better off than he is; try to prevent his thinking so. If God has blessed you with a good position in providence, be ready to encourage those that are poor and needy. Oh, if all those things I have been counselling should be put in practice, what a vast amount of *happiness* would be *created*! Our Churches would be more like families. I do not like people to come into a place of worship like so many icebergs floating out to sea and wishing to avoid each other, but I do like to see all distinctions broken down, except the distinctions of superior grace, and those only observed because one brother has cast in more to the common treasury of the Church of spiritual riches than another can do. I like those who fear the Lord to speak often to one another. We are getting into a bad state when they who fear the Lord speak often *against* one another. I believe that this one practice of encouraging each other might restore to the Churches that holy *fraternity* and blessed love which once distinguished them. I am sure this would enrich you all. It is by commerce that countries grow rich.

France sends her exports to England, and England repays her with abundance, The labor of the humble, and the skill and enterprise of the lofty, contribute to the great commonwealth. An exchange of thought tends to help. A stream of *holy wealth* would flow through our Churches if each one would seek the other out with this aim of holy encouragement.

How many a good thing is strangled in the birth! How many a good enterprise is dashed to pieces on the shoals before it gets out to sea. Encourage that loving-hearted sister who thinks that she might at least take an infant-class in the Sunday-school. Encourage that aged woman who has but little talent, but who yet might go from house to house to attend the sick. Encourage that poor struggling tradesman who would do something for the Master if he could by any means be delivered from the constant cares which harass him. Encourage every soul that has a spark of grace in it. Labour to help others, and you shall find a most gracious return in your own soul. God encourages you, Christ encourages you as he points to the heaven he has won for you. The Spirit encourages you as he works in you to will and to do of his own will and pleasure. Do you then act the divine part, and go forth to encourage others, according to the motto, "Encourage him."

III. I advance to THE OBJECT that is uppermost in my mind. It struck me some six weeks ago that I might say a few things to my brother's congregation which he might not like to say himself, and that as this was a new enterprise — and I am sure all our hearts anxiously desire it the very richest success — I might possibly take the liberty of saying a few things to you, the congregation clustering around this pulpit, which may be useful in the future of the Church. I shall speak of him as a stranger, as I should speak of any other young man anxious to build up a Church and glorify his Master. I believe there is a special occasion for the exercise of this duty of encouraging one another in the case of the minister and Church in this place. It is a fresh enterprise surrounded with peculiar difficulties, and demanding special labor. "Why," say you, "should a minister need encouraging? *We* have plenty of troubles all the week long, with our losses here, and crosses there, *we* want encouragements, but surely ministers do not." Ah! if you want to have a refutation of that idea you had better come into this pulpit, and occupy it a little time. If you would like to exchange, I would truly say that so far as the pleasure of my voice is concerned, apart from the spiritual joy my Lord gives me, I would change places with a crossing-sweeper, or a man who breaks stones on the road. Let a man carry out the office of a Christian minister aright, and he will never have any rest. "God help," says Richard Baxter, "the man who thinks the minister's an easy life." Why, he works not only all day, but in his sleep you will find him weeping for his congregation, starting in his sleep with his eyes filled with tears, as if he had the weight of his congregation's sins resting on his heart, and could not bear the load. I would not be that man in the ministry who does not feel himself so fearfully responsible, that if he could escape from the ministry by going with Jonah into the depths of the sea, he would cheerfully do it; for if a minister is what he should be, there is such a weight of solemn concern, such a sound of trembling in his ears, that he would choose any profession or any work, however arduous, sooner than the preacher's post. "If the watchman warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." To sit down and spell over the question — "Am I free of his blood?" is terrible. I have sometimes thought I must have a day or two of rest, but I frankly confess that rest is very little rest to me, for I think I hear the cries of perishing souls, the wailings of spirits going down to hell, who chide me thus: "Preacher, can you rest? Minister, can you be silent? Ambassador of Jesus can you cast aside the robes of your office? Up! and to your work again." As Mr. Whitfield said, when he thought of the ministry, and what was

concerned in it, he wanted to stand on the top of every hackney coach in London and preach the gospel as he rode along. It is a work so solemn that if you do not encourage your minister, your minister will probably sink down in despair. Remember that the man himself needs encouragement, because he is weak. Who is sufficient for these things. To serve in any part of the spiritual army is dangerous, but to be a captain is to be doubly exposed. The most of the shots are aimed at the officers. If Satan can find a flaw in our character, then it will be, "Publish it, publish it, publish it!" If he can lend us to keep back a doctrine or go amiss in practice, or wander in experience, he is glad enough. How delighted is the devil to break the vessels of mercy. Pray for the poor man, whom you expose to perish, if you do not preserve him by supplication. If there were a ship at sea stranded and broken on the rocks, and some one volunteered to carry a rope to the sinking crew, you, standing on the shore, could do no more, methinks you could not do less, than cry, "O God! help him to bear the rope to that wrecked ship." Pray for the minister and encourage him, for there are plenty to discourage him. There are always carping spirits abroad who will remind him of any fault; he will be afflicted by those dastards who will not dare to sign their names to a letter, but send it to him anonymously; and then there is the devil, who, the moment the man has got out of the pulpit, will say, "There is a poor sermon! You will never dare to preach again." After he has been preaching for weeks there will come a suggestion, "You are not in your proper sphere of labor." There are all sorts of discouragements to be met with. Professing Christians will backslide. Those who do remain will often be inconsistent, and he will be sighing and crying in his closet, while you, perhaps, are thanking God that your souls have been fed under him. Encourage your minister, I pray you, wherever you attend — encourage him for your own sake. A discouraged minister is a serious burden upon the congregation. When the fountain gets out of order, you cannot expect to find water at any of the taps; and if the minister be not right, it is something like a steam engine in a great manufactory — everybody's loom is idle when the motive-power is out of order. See that he is resting upon God and receiving his divine power, and you will all know, each Sabbath day, the benefit of it. This is the least thing you can do. There are many other things which may cause you expense, effort, time, but to encourage the minister is so easy, so simple a matter, that I may well press upon you to do it.

Perhaps you will say, “Well, if it be so simple and easy, tell us, who are expecting to settle down in this place, how we can encourage the minister here.” Well, you can do it in several ways. You can encourage him *by very constant attendance*. By the way, looking round here, I think I know some of the persons present who belong to neighboring chapels. What business have you here? Why did you leave your own minister? If I see one come into my place from the congregation of another brother in the ministry, I would like just to give him a flea in his ear such as he may never forget. What business have you to leave your minister? If everyone were to do so, how discouraged the poor man would be. Just because somebody happens to come into this neighborhood, you will be leaving your seats. A compliment to me, you say. I thank you for it; but now, in return, let me give you this advice: these who are going from place to place are of no use to anybody; but those are the truly useful men who, when the servants of God are in their places, keep to theirs, and let everybody see that whoever discourages the minister they will not, for they appreciate his ministry.

Again, let me say by often being *present at the prayer-meeting* you can encourage the minister. You can always tell how a Church is getting on by the prayer-meetings. I will almost prophecy the kind of sermon on the Sabbath, from the sort of prayer-meeting on the Monday. If many come up to the house of God, and they are earnest, the pastor will get a blessing from on high; it cannot but be, for God opens the windows of heaven to believing prayer. Never fail to plead for your pastor in your closet. Oh, dear friends, when you mention a father’s name, and a child’s name, let the minister’s name come forth too. Give him a large share in your heart, and both in private and public prayer, encourage him. Encourage him, again, by *letting him know if you have received any good*. Oh, if there should come into this house of prayer a sinner needing a Savior, and not knowing the way, and my brother’s words shall point him to the Savior’s cross; if he should be the means of showing you what faith means, and of leading you to believe in him who hath reconciled us unto God by his death, do not conceal the good news — come and tell it. The best way to do it will be by proposing to be united with the Church in fellowship. Our Church meeting-nights, when we receive fresh candidates into fellowship, are the harvest nights in the Christian ministry. Then we see how God’s cause prospers in our hand. But if many in the Church who have been converted fail to let the minister know it, and hold back, how is the poor man to be comforted? I know I address some here — God’s people — who have never made a

profession. Suppose all God's people did as you do — and they have as much right to do it as you have — how, I ask you, would the ministry itself be maintained? How could ministers' hearts be kept from breaking, if they never knew of any conversion? Make haste. Do not put it off. Delay not to keep God's commandments, but come forward at once, and acknowledge what God has done for your soul.

Again, you can all encourage the minister *by the consistency of your lives*. I do not know when I ever felt more gratified than on one occasion, when sitting at a Church meeting, having to report the death of a young brother who was in the service of an eminent employer, a little note came from him to say, "My servant, Edward — - is dead. I send you word at once, that you may send me another young man; for if your members are such as he was, I never wish to have better servants around me." I read the letter at the Church meeting, and another was soon found. It is a cheering thing for the Christian minister to know that his converts are held in repute. Of another member of my Church an ungodly employer said, "I do not think anything of him; he is of no use to anybody; he cannot tell a lie!" Oh, that is the honor which a Christian minister longs and pants after, to have consistent followers, to have those listening to him who will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Gather round my brother, all of you, and encourage him, by earnestly aiding and abetting him in every good word and work. There is a neighbourhood here, I am told, requiring evangelization. Here we have, side-by-side, poverty and riches. Shall not yonder wretched potteries be the better for the building of this house of prayer. I am sure my friend Sir Morton Peto would think he had wasted his money, if it were merely for the gathering of a congregation, and not for improving the neighborhood. We build our houses of prayer always with a view to the people round about. We believe it is like opening a well in the wilderness, or a caravansary or oasis in the desert, or placing a drinking-fountain where thirsty souls may drink. It is introducing a new physician into the neighborhood to attend to the diseases and sickness of souls. Oh, how my heart yearns after the success of this house — not only because the minister is my brother, but because he is a valiant soldier of Christ. To preach the truth he has not hesitated to make himself a multitude of enemies elsewhere, and will not be ashamed to do the same here, if the same case should occur. I honor him, because he has honored my Master; and I expect that you will get from him the truth, the whole truth, and

nothing but the truth — so far as God has taught it to him. I know he is ready to lay down his own neck for the conversion of souls. I know his earnestness to do anything for the conversion of sinners. And if you do not encourage him, you will bring down upon your head every curse of those who reject the prophet of God, but encouraging him, you will see a Church flocking around him which shall last long after our time, which shall be a perennial stream of benediction to ages yet unborn, until Christ himself shall come and consummate the kingdom, by reigning himself in person among the sons of men. May the Lord grant his blessing!

Some of you cannot encourage the minister. You can encourage no one, for you are not born again yourselves. Oh, if you have not passed from death unto life, the first thing that can encourage him is to begin to think about your own state. Where are you? What are you? Out of God, out of Christ, out of safety? You will be out of life and out of heaven — shut in the pit for ever, except you repent. Oh, you will encourage the preacher, if the Lord lead you to consider your ways and turn from sin and from self-righteousness too, and look to the Almighty Savior, able to save unto the uttermost all among you who shall trust him. May the Lord add a blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

CALEB — THE MAN FOR THE TIMES.

NO. 538

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER
1ST, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.” — Numbers 14:24.

IT is a rough name that — “Caleb.” Most translators say it signifies “*a dog*.” But what mattereth a man’s name? Possibly the man himself was somewhat rough: many of the heartiest of men are so. As the unpolished oyster yet beareth within itself the priceless pearl, so oftentimes ruggedness of exterior covereth worth. A dog, moreover, is not all badness, though “*Without* are dogs and sorcerers.” It hath this virtue, that it followeth its master; and therein this Caleb was well-named; for never dog so followed his master as Caleb followed his God. As we have seen the faithful creature following his master when he is on horseback, through mud, and mire, and dirt, for many a weary mile, even though the horse-heel might wound him, so Caleb keeps close to God; and even if stoning threatens him, yet is he well content to follow the Lord fully. The name, however, has another signification, and we like it rather better: it means “*All heart*.” Here was a fitting surname for the man, whose whole heart followed his God. He says himself that he brought a report of the land according to all that was in his heart. He was a man of a healthy and mighty spirit; he did nothing heartlessly; his spirit was not the Laodicean lukewarmness, which is neither hot nor cold, but which God spueth out of his mouth — it was a spirit of holy heat, of noble daring. If I may not call him lion-hearted, never lion had a braver heart than he. Many mortals appear to have no heart. They are like

corporations of which we are often told, that a corporation has a head; doth it not have a new mayor every year? And yet who ever saw it blush? It certainly hath a mouth, for it swalloweth much — and hands, for it can grasp much — and feet, for it taketh long strides; but whoever heard of a corporation with either bowels, heart, or conscience? In the same manner it may be said of many persons — they have a head to understand and think, and feet to move, and hands to act, but bowels of compassion and a feeling heart they have not. Doubtless you have seen — doubtless you have met persons without hearts. The moment you come into their company you perceive what they are, as readily as the voyager on the Atlantic knows when there is an iceberg in the neighborhood, by the sudden chill which comes over him. You shake the man's hand — it drops into your hand as cold as a dead fish; the man's blood is cold as a December frost. You talk with him, but no effort on your part can stir the frozen current of his soul. You begin to speak to him about religion — which he professes to love so much — his words are few, his syllables faint, for his heart is not in the matter. Others we have the privilege of knowing — I trust there are many such in this community — who cannot talk of Jesus without emotion.

*“Their pulse with pleasure bounds,
The Master's name to hear.”*

If they sing, they wake up their glory, saying, with David, “Awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake right early.” If they pray, it is the wrestling prayer of Jacob at the brook Jabbok; and if they serve their God, they carry out the words of the apostles, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto God and not unto man.” It is *heartly* Caleb, then. We will rather interpret his name this way than the other; but if we put both together, he shall be *a dog* for faithfully following his God, but he shall be *all heart*, because he so fully follows his Lord.

There are three things about Caleb worthy of consideration, then: first, *his faithful following*; secondly, *his favored reward*; and thirdly, *his inner character* — that which was the secret source of his following God, namely, that “he had another spirit.”

I. First, then, let this brave veteran stand before us; let us look at him and learn something of HIS FAITHFUL FOLLOWING OF HIS GOD.

Perceive, beloved, *he never went before his God*. That is presumption. The highest point to which the true believer ever comes is to walk *with* God,

but never to walk *before* him. It is true that we walk before the Lord in the land of the living, but that is in another sense, meaning *under his eyes*; we never run before God so as to outrun his providence, and become the directors of our own steps. They who travel before the cloud will soon find other clouds lowering upon them. Those who leave the fiery pillar, and will be their own guides, shall soon be in the fire, without a guide to bring them out again. We ought to *follow* the Lord. The sheep follow the shepherd. “He putteth forth his own sheep,” saith Christ, “and goeth before them, and they follow him.” They follow as the soldier follows the captain; he points the road, leads the van, and bears the thick of the danger, while the faithful warrior keeps close behind. They follow as the disciple follows the Master, not teaching, nor discussing, or disputing, but sitting at his feet, believing that when he leads in the way of knowledge, it is a true and a right way, whereas if we seek to be wise beyond what is written, we make unto ourselves pits and traps, and fall into a snare. Caleb followed the Lord, many others do the same, but then they could not win that adverb, which is Caleb’s golden medal. He followed the Lord “*fully*,” says one text, “*wholly*,” says another. Some of us follow the Lord, but it is a great way off, like Peter, or now and then as did Saul the king. We are not constant; we have not given our whole heart to God. The pith then of the man’s faithful following lies in the adverb — “*fully*.” And here, by your leave, in explaining this word “*wholly*,” I shall follow the explanation of good Matthew Henry. I cannot think of a better, nor even of one so good, myself.

1. He followed the Lord wholly, that is, first of all, he followed him *universally, without dividing*. Whatever his Master told him to do, he did.

*“In all the Lord’s appointed ways
His journey he pursued.”*

He did not say “I will perform this duty and neglect the other; I will be faithful to my conscience and to my God upon this point, but that shall be left unto another day;” he took the commandments as he found them, and if they were ten he did not desire to make them nine; nor did he want to change their order, and put that second which God had put first. He did not wish to divide the commands; what God had joined together, he did not desire to put asunder. He followed the Lord without picking and choosing, being universally obedient to his Master’s law. Brethren, I wish we could say the same of all professed Christians. You see Caleb was quite

as ready to fight the giants, as he was to carry the clusters. We have a host who are ready for sweet duties, pleasant exercises, and spiritual engagements, which bring joy and peace, are always very acceptable; but as for the fighting of giants — how many say, “I pray thee have me excused.” To defend Christ’s cause against adversaries, to submit themselves to rebuke, to go up single-handed and fight against the Lord’s foes — from this the many will draw back, and we are afraid there be some that draw back unto perdition, because they have never had the perfect heart given to them which is obedient to God in all his will. If you have a servant who will choose which of your commands she will obey, she is rather the mistress than the servant. If you, dear brother, shall say concerning the Lord’s will, “I will do this and I will not do that,” you do in fact make yourself master, the spirit of rebellion is in you, you have already erred and strayed from your Lord’s ways, and set up the standard of revolt; mind that you do not pierce yourself through with many sorrows. Some excuse themselves for neglecting duties on the ground that they are non-essential — as if all *duty* was not essential to the perfect follower of Christ. “They are unimportant,” says the man, “they involve nothing;” whereas it often happens that the apparently unimportant duty is really the most important of all. Many a great lord, in the olden times, has given up his land on copyhold to his tenant, and perhaps the fee which was to be annually paid was to bring a small bird, or a peppercorn — in some cases it has been the bringing of a turf, or a green leaf. Now, if the tenant should on the annual day refuse to do his homage, and say it was too trifling a thing to bring a peppercorn to the lord of the manor in fee, would he not have forfeited his estate, for he would have been setting himself up as superior owner, and asserting a right which his feudal lord would at once resist. It is even so — to quote a single instance — in the matter of believer’s baptism. When the believer says, “Well, surely this is but a small thing, I may safely neglect it,” doth he not therein deny unto his sovereign Lord and Master that act of homage which, though it be simple in itself, is nevertheless full of meaning, because it is an acknowledgment of the superior rights of the great King. Who told thee it was nonessential? Who bade thee neglect it? Surely it must be a spirit of darkness that talked with thee! The Jew of old must not neglect circumcision. His child shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel unless the painful rite be performed. He must not refuse the paschal supper, for if he do the destroying angel shall smite his household. And in that passover everything must be observed. Not a bone must be broken; the creature must not be eaten raw, nor

sodden at all with water; it must be roasted in the fire; it must be eaten with bitter herbs. There are minute particulars given, and every one of these having the solemn command of God upon them are to be carefully observed by the children of Israel throughout all generations. Surely it must be so with Christian ordinances, and with the commands of the king of heaven. We cannot violate them with impunity. The spirit which would prompt us to neglect one of the least of them is of the devil and leadeth down to hell: a spirit of partial obedience is a spirit of radical disobedience. The old prophet did but eat and drink at Bethel, and that too, as he thought, upon prophetic authority, and yet the lion slew him, because he rebelled against the express bidding of God. We are not to imitate the Pharisee who tithed the mint, anise, and cummin, and then neglected the weightier matters of the law, but we are to remember that Jesus said, "These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone;" so that mint, and anise, and cummin, are still to be tithed; and still in the little as well as in the great our obedience to God is to be carried out. Take care, dear friends, that, like Caleb, you follow the Lord fully, that is, *universally, without dividing*.

Now may I put a question of conscience to all around me! Is there not something that I know to be my Master's will which I have not done? Brother, is there not some command which as yet you have not obeyed? some self-denying duty which you have shirked, some holy engagement for the good of your fellow men, or for your Lord's glory, which you have carelessly avoided? If it be so, do, I pray you, see to it, for you can never have the blessing of Caleb till you have the complete and universal spirit of obedience which Caleb had.

2. But again, secondly, Caleb followed the Lord fully, that is, *sincerely without dissembling*. He was no hypocrite; he followed the Lord with his whole heart. One of the safest tests of sincerity is found in a willingness to suffer for the cause. I suppose that the twelve spies met each other in the south part of the land, and held a little consultation as to what should be the report they would bring up. Like twelve jurymen they were now to bring in their verdict, and ten of them were agreed — "It is a land that floweth with milk and honey, but it eateth up its inhabitants; it is full of giants with cities walled up to heaven, and it is impossible for us to take possession of it." Caleb and Joshua both dissent from that verdict. I cannot tell what were the arguings and the reasonings, what the banterings, and the jests, and the jeers, to which Caleb was exposed from the other ten

princes, but we do know that when they came to give in their verdict Caleb dared to stand forth alone, and declare that such was not his testimony.

Joshua appears to have said nothing, probably from prudential reasons, because, being the servant of Moses, the people would attach less importance to what he said, arguing that he was sure to take part with Moses, and would be biassed by his superior. Therefore Caleb stood out alone, and took the brunt of the tumult. How courageous was that man, who had only numbered forty summers, to put himself in opposition to the other ten princes, and declare in flat contradiction to them — “Let us go up; we are able to possess the land.” When the people took up stones, and Joshua was forced to speak with Caleb, it was with no small peril, and required no little mental courage to stand up amidst the insults and jeers of the crowd, and still to bring up a good report of the land. Caleb followed the Lord sincerely. O beloved, how many profess to follow God who follow him without their hearts. The semblance of religion is often dearer to men than religion itself. As one saith, many a man has spent five hundred pounds upon a picture of a beggar by Murillo, or a brigand by Salvator Rosa, who would not give a penny to a real beggar, and go out of their wits at the sight of a brigand. The picture of religion, the outward name of it, men will give much to maintain; but the reality of religion — ah! that is quite a different thing. Many of our Churches are surmounted with the cross in stone, but how few of the worshippers care to take up the cross of Christ daily and follow him. We know religious men who are respected by the ungodly, not for their religion, but on account of some adventitious circumstance. It was not the religion itself they cared for. If you should take a bear in a cage into a town, men will pay their money to see it, but let it loose among them, and they will pay twice as much money to get rid of it. So sometimes if a religious man hath gift or ability, there are many who will regard and admire him, but not for his religion. Let the religion itself come abroad in the daily actions of his life, and then straightway they begin to abhor him. There is much false love to Jesus — much unhallowed profession. Let us remember however that the day is coming when all false profession will be destroyed. The fan in Christ’s hands will leave none of the chaff remaining upon the wheat-heap, and the great fire will not suffer a single particle of dross to be unconsumed. Happy shall that man be whose faith was a real faith, whose repentance was sincere, whose obedience was true, who gave his heart, his whole heart to his Master’s cause!

3. The third point is most noteworthy. Caleb followed the Lord wholly, that is, *cheerfully without disputing*. Those who serve God with a sad countenance, because they do what is unpleasant to them, are not his servants at all. Our God requires no slaves to grace his throne; he is the Lord of the empire of love. The angels of God serve him with songs, not with groans; and God loveth to have the joyful obedience of his creatures; in fact I will venture to say that that obedience which is not cheerful is disobedience, for the Lord looketh at the heart of a thing, and if he seeth that we serve him from force, and not because we love him, he will reject our offering at our hands. That service which is coupled with cheerfulness is hearty service, and therefore true. Take away joy from the Christian, and you have taken away, I believe, that which is the test of his sincerity. If a man be driven to battle, he is no patriot, but he that marches into the fray with flashing eye and beaming face, singing, "It is sweet for one's country to die," proves himself to be sincere in his patriotism. Cheerfulness, again, makes a man strong in service. It is to our service what oil is to the wheels of a railway carriage. Without its proportion of oil the axle soon grows hot and accidents occur; and if there be not a holy cheerfulness to oil our wheels, we shall not be able to serve God with anything like power. The man who is cheerful in his service of God proves that obedience is his element. I have seen the sea birds in stormy weather flying over the land with their huge heavy flapping wings. What a contrast between them and the lark, which as it mounts to heaven makes its wings vibrate many times in a moment, while these heavy broad-winged creatures fly as if they could not fly; they are out of their element; they long till again they shall be swimming upon the sea. Some men in the service of God are like these heavy swans; their wing goes every now and then with a sort of dying flap; there is no sprightliness of life in them; they are out of their element. Now God will never receive at our hands an obedience which is not consistent with our nature. Understand me, if it were possible for a man with an unspiritual nature, with a fallen nature, to perform the very same work which is performed by a saint, yet his nature would mar his act. God looketh at the nature from which the act cometh, and if he seeth that it comes from a spiritual, renewed, regenerated nature, then he recognizes that obedience is our element, and so accepts our service.

Let me put this question round among you all. Brother, do you serve the Lord cheerfully? Frequently people give to the cause of God because they are asked. A guinea is dragged out of them. Do you think God cares for

your guinea? You might as well have kept it; no blessing can come to you. When you give to the cause of God, do it cheerfully. He that giveth must not give grudgingly, or else he has offered an unacceptable offering unto God. When you come out to week-night services, do you come because you should come, or do you love to come? This is the mark of the genuine child of God, the true Caleb — that he can sing —

*“Make me to walk in thy commands
‘Tis a delightful road.”*

The man has his heart right, he feels at home in the work of the Lord; here is his joy —

*“‘Tis love that makes our cheerful feet
In swift obedience move.”*

Caleb was one of those who served the Lord cheerfully.

4. But now there is a fourth point, he followed the Lord *constantly without declining*. Having begun when he first started upon the search to exercise a truthful judgment, he persevered during the forty days of his spyship and brought back a true report. Forty-five years he lived in the camp of Israel, but all that time he followed the Lord and never once consorted with murmuring rebels; and when his time came to claim his heritage at the age of eighty-five, the good old man is following the Lord fully; still his speech bewrayeth him; he shows a constant heart. God set his seal upon that man’s soul in his youthful days, and he remained his God’s when grey hairs adorned his brow. Beloved, how many professors fail in this respect. They follow the Lord by fits and starts; they go out from us because they are not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. They leap into religion as the flying-fish leaps into the air; they fall back again into their sins, as the same fish returns to its element. They make a great name for a time like the crackling of thorns, but lo! the flame has soon expired, for they are not like the miraculous bush which burned, God dwells not in them. Caleb was kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. He could say with Jude, “Now unto him who is able to keep me from falling, unto him be honor and glory for ever and ever.” He was not as some are, who imitate the lame beggar who limped all day in the streets to gather money, and then at night went to the thieves’ kitchen, where all the dainty bits were brought out of the bag, the money flowed freely, and the wine and the good cheer was bought, then the rogue unstrapped his

lame leg, and danced as merrily as the rest. No, Caleb was not of this kind. He did not limp in virtue nor leap in vice, his walk was ever the same, and the way was always straight. God had delivered him from dissimulation, and had given him constancy in its place. How brightly he shone when he was left alone faithful among the faithless. Even Joshua for awhile is silent. But we may compare him, to use the metaphor of good old Gotthold — we may compare him to a tree. The wind had been blowing — it was a dreadful hurricane, and Gotthold walked into a forest and saw many trees torn up by the roots; he marvelled much at one tree which stood alone and yet had been unmoved in the tempest. He said, “How is this? The trees that were together have fallen, and this alone stands fast!” He observed that when the trees grow too closely they cannot send their roots into the earth; they lean too much upon each other; but this tree, standing alone, had space to thrust its roots into the earth, and lay hold on the rock and stones, and so when the wind came, it fell not. It was so with Caleb — he always would lay hold upon his God, not upon men; and so when the wind came, he stood. I saw this morning a huge tree which stood by the water’s edge but yesterday, blown into the large pond upon our common. Well might it fall during such a night, but there were other trees further from the water that stood fast. You know it is our prosperity, our mercy-side, it is where the water comes to the root, where the plenty comes, that the temptation comes too, and we are ever weakest where perhaps we dreamt we were the strongest. Caleb was constant, because he was a rooted man, and even success did not overturn him. He was not one of those plants which spring up quickly because there is no depth of earth. He had a firm hold upon his God. Ye know, my sisters, how ye wear your rings. I would that every Christian wore his graces after the same fashion. You wear not only the wedding ring, but the keeper too. And every Christian should wear the keeper of constancy to guard the ring of his faith. Caleb had set a seal upon his heart and a bracelet upon his arm: his love was strong as death, and endured even to the grave. He saw the Lord, he loved the Lord, he trusted the Lord, and for these reasons followed the Lord wholly. Here I leave him, only asking you, dear friends, to see to it that you have his holy perseverance, therefore pray, “Hold thou me up and I shall be safe,” and trust yourself where Caleb trusted himself — in the hand of God.

I will give you those four subdivisions again. Universally, without dividing; sincerely, without dissembling; cheerfully, without disputing; constantly, without declining.

II. Now for the second point, which was CALEB'S FAVOURED PORTION.

In reward for his faithful following of his Master, *his life was preserved in the hour of judgment*. The ten fell, smitten with plague, but Caleb lived. Blessed is the man who hath the God of Jacob for his confidence!

***“He that hath made his refulge God,
 Shall find a most secure abode;
 Shall walk all day beneath his
 shade,
 And there at night shall rest his head.
 What though a thousand at thy side,
 At thy right hand ten thousand died,
 Thy God his chosen people saves
 Amongst the dead, amidst the graves.”***

If any man shall experience special deliverances, Caleb is he. If he follows God fully, God will fully take care of him. When you look to nothing but your Master's honor, your Master will look to your honor. When Queen Elizabeth sent a certain merchant over to Holland, he complained to her, “If I do your Majesty's business, my own business will be ruined.” “You do my business,” said the Queen, “and I will see to your business.” It is so with our God “My servant, serve thou me, and I will serve thee.” Caleb is willing to give his life for his Master, and therefore his Master gives him his life. There be many who seek their life that lose it; and there be some who lose it for Christ's sake, that find it to life eternal. Caleb was also comforted with *a long life of vigor*. At eighty-five he was as strong as at forty, and still able to face the giants. If there be a Christian man who shall have in his old age a vigor of faith and courage, it is the man who follows the Lord fully. I have in my mind's eye one who gave himself, while yet a young man, to his Master's cause. He has zealously served the Church in his day and generation, and it is his privilege now to see the good of God's chosen. His heart is so glad at the sight of God's mercy that he is ready to say with Simeon — “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” We gain our old saints from among those faithful young ones. If ever we are to see among us noble veterans — champions of the age, whose heads shall be crowned with grey hairs of honor — we must look for those who in the beginning of their days were hearty in their Master's cause, were universal in their obedience, thorough in their consecration to God. Experience, wisdom, grace, are the gifts of our Lord Jesus to those who walk with zeal and earnestness in his ways.

Again, Caleb received as his reward *great honor among his brethren*. He was at least twenty years older than any other man in the camp except Joshua. How the mothers would hold up their little children in their arms to look at Caleb as he walked down the street! "All died," the mothers would say, "all died in Israel's host, except that man who walks yonder with steadfast tread. All died, and their carcasses were buried in the wilderness, except that man and Joshua the son of Nun." At their council he would be regarded with as much reverence as Nestor in the assemblies of the Greeks; in their camps he would stand like another Achilles in the midst of the armies of Lacedaemon. As king and sire he dwelt among men. As some mighty Alp lifts its head nearer to heaven than all its compeers; its pure, snow-white head communing with celestial things, so this gray-headed old man must have seemed a towering summit in the midst of Israel's worthies, a grace-made prime-minister of the people of Israel after Joshua himself had departed. Well, brethren, such will God make of us if we give our hearts wholly to him. I say, again, if we honor God he will honor us. "They that honor me I will honor; they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Inconsistent professors, men who may be Christians, but who never enter thoroughly into the Lord's work, — are never honored in the Church. They must necessarily keep in the background; they are rather tolerated than admired, but warm-hearted spirits, zealous and full of life — these are the men who stand like Joseph's sheaf in the midst of his brethren's sheaves which do obeisance unto it.

Again — and you will think this is a strange thing to say — Caleb had the distinguished reward of being *put upon the hardest service*. That is always the lot of the most faithful servant of God. There were three huge warriors in Mount Hebron; no one will undertake to kill them, except it be our good old friend Caleb. These Anakims, with their six toes on each foot, and their six fingers on each hand, are to be upset and driven out. Who is to do it? If nobody else will offer himself, here is Caleb. Nay, he does not merely allow himself to be sent upon the service, but he craves permission to be allowed to take the place, the reason being because it was the worst task of the war, and he panted to have the honor of it. Grand old man! Would God thou hadst left many of thy like behind thee. If there is some pleasant thing to do for Christ, how we scramble after the service; but if there be a front place in the battle, "Oh, let brother So-and-so do it." Do not you notice the way the most of men decline the honor of special danger? "Our friend So- and-so is much better qualified for that; let him take it." If we were true

heroes we should each of us contend which should undertake the most hopeless, the most difficult, and the most dangerous task. Who wins the honor? Why the man that leads the forlorn hope. But there are not many who will strive to have the privilege of going first. They are not quite so fond of being knocked off the ladder and sent headlong from the wall to have their brains knocked out on the ground, — not quite so desirous of being blown to pieces by the batteries; but, truly, if we could rival even earthly soldiers in their bravery and self-sacrifice it were well. Caleb had the distinguished honor of being permitted to lead the van against the gigantic Anakim. Follow the Lord fully, and the devil himself will be afraid of you; keep close to your Lord, and defy all the fiends of hell. Last Tuesday morning, when I left London to go to Worcester to preach, the fog was about as thick as I have ever seen it, but what did that matter? The engine had just to keep on the rails, stick fast to the metals, and she was safe. There was no particular need of seeing, because the road was laid down; and when a Christian knows he is right, he may go straight on, fog or no fog. But when a man goes out of the road, then he may well pause, for he may be in a ditch, and no one knows how soon he may come to grief. Get your heart right, and you are independent of weather. Get your soul right, and you may defy the sharpest arrow of the adversary. The Lord is with us, if we be with him.

This grand old man in his after years had *the honor of enjoying what he had once seen*. He had only seen the land when he said, “We are able to take it;” but others said, “No, no, no.” Well, he lived not only to take it, but to enjoy it for himself. We get in some of our Churches — I say nothing of mine just now — certain reverend old gentlemen who might as well have gone to heaven years ago, who if there is any enterprise to be undertaken, say, “Oh, no, no! it cannot be done.” They sit down and figure away on a piece of paper with their pencil and say, “We have not enough money; it cannot be done.” Perhaps some youthful soldier of Christ in the army says, “It can be done; I am sure we can do it;” but the good old man, having made up his mind never to walk by faith, stands to his watchword, “It is imprudent.” That is the big word with which they try to knock out the brains of young Zeal — “imprudent, *imprudent!*” But thank God there are others of another sort, who though they grow grey, say, “Well, I do not know, I may be thought to be a boy in my old age, but I do believe that God will hear prayer, and that if it is God’s work we can do it,” and the old man lays his hand on the young soldier’s shoulder and bids him go on, and

God be with him. That is the kind of Caleb I like; may such men live to see the reward of their confidence; indeed they shall see that God is true to their faith, and that he does reward those who dare to do hard things in confidence in his name. I may be speaking to some people from the country; you have got a minister down there but he wants to do a little more good than you like him to do. Now mind what you are at. Stand back; if you cannot help him let him alone. But I do pray you, on the other hand, endeavor to encourage him, cheer him on, for you will never win a Hebron for yourself or the Church, if you are always talking about the giants, and the difficulties, and the dangers. There are no difficulties to the man who hath faith enough to overcome them.

To conclude this point, good old Caleb *left a blessing to his children*. He had many sons, but he fought for them, and carved out a portion for them all; and he had a daughter too, whom he promised to give to wife, you will remember, to any one who would smite Kirjath-sepher. He was a man of such a kind, that he did not like to have a man for a son-in-law who could not fight as well as himself. He delighted to see valor in young people, and so he offered his daughter as a prize. When he had given his daughter, she came to him and asked for a double blessing. She had the field, and a south country — she would have the land of springs, and he gave her the blessing of the upper and the nether springs. If there is any man who shall be able to leave his children the blessing of the upper and nether springs, it is the man who follows the Lord fully. If I might envy any man, it would be the believer who from his youth up has walked through divine grace according to his Lord's commandments, and who is able when his day comes, to scatter benedictions upon his rising sons and daughters, and leave them with godliness which hath the blessing of this life and that which is to come. The blessing of the upper and the nether springs, then, was the reward of good old Caleb. There are some of us who are young in years, members of this Church, men and women, and we have before us, I hope, the opportunity, if God gives us grace, of becoming Calebs; and if the Lord should spare me as he spared Joshua, and spare you as he spared Caleb, we may yet, when our hairs are grey, do something still for the Lord our God, when those that fought the fight before us shall sleep among the clods of the valley. O for the Holy Spirit within us, and the love of Jesus upon us, that we may be accepted in the Beloved.

III. And now, the last point of all: CALEB'S SECRET CHARACTER.

The Lord saith of him, "Because he hath another spirit with him." He had another spirit — not only a bold, generous, courageous, noble, and heroic spirit, but the Spirit and influence of God which thus raised him above human inquietudes and earthly fears. Therefore he followed God *fully* — literally he filled after him. God shewed him the way to take, and the line of conduct he must pursue, and he filled up this line, and in all things followed the will of his Master. Everything acts according to the spirit that is in it.

Yonder lamp gives no light. Why? It has no oil. Here is another; it cheers the darkness of the cell. Why? It is full of oil, and oil is the mother of light. There are two huge bags of silk. One of them lies heavily upon the ground, the other mounts up towards the stars. The one is filled with carbonic-acid gas; it cannot mount, it acts according to the spirit that is in it; it has a heavy gas, and there it lies. There is another full of hydrogen, and it acts according to the spirit that is in it, and up it goes; the light air seeks the lighter regions, and up it mounts. Everything recording to its own order.

The real way to make a new life is to receive a new spirit. There must be given us, if we would follow the Lord fully, a new heart, and that new heart must be found at the foot of the Cross, where the Holy Spirit works through the bleeding wounds of Jesus. Dear friends, I would to God that we had all of us that which is the distinguishing mark of a right spirit, the spirit of *faith*, that spirit which takes God at his word, reads his promise, and knows it to be true. He that hath this spirit will soon follow the Lord fully. Unbelief is the mother of sin, but faith is the nurse of virtue. More faith, Lord, more simple childlike faith upon a precious Savior! Then a faithful spirit always begets a *meek* spirit, and a meek spirit always begets a *brave* spirit. It is said of the wood of the elder tree that none is softer, but yet it is recorded of old that Venice was built upon piles of the elder tree because it will never rot; and so the meek-spirited man who is gentle and patient lasts on bravely, holding his own against all the attacks of the destroying adversary. The true believer has also a *loving* spirit as the result of Jesus' grace. He loves God, therefore he loves God's people and God's creatures, and having this loving spirit he has next a *zealous* spirit, and so he spends and is spent for God, and this begets in him a *heavenly* spirit and so he tries to live in heaven and to make earth a heaven to his fellow-men, believing that he shall soon have a heaven for himself and for them too on the other side of the stream. Such a spirit had good Caleb. We cannot imitate him till we get his spirit; we are dead until he quickens us. O that his Holy Spirit would lead us to go to Jesus just as we are, and look up to him and beseech him to fulfill that great covenant promise — "A new heart

also will I give them, a right *spirit* will I put within them.” You and I have not followed the Lord fully. What shall we then do? First let us humbly repent. Caleb means a dog. Let us learn from a dog. When a dog has done amiss, you take a stick and are about to beat him, he will lie down on the ground and howl, and creep to your feet, and look up so piteously at you, that you throw down your stick. Now let us each do the same. Let us each be Calebs — dogs in this. Let us crouch at the feet of God’s justice, let us look up into the face of God’s mercy, and through Jesus Christ he will forgive us. Having this done, may he enable us to exercise a simple faith in Christ. As the child lives hanging upon the mother’s breast and deriving its nourishment from the parent, so be it yours and mine to hang upon the wounds of our own dear Lord; and to-night when we come to his table, let us eat his flesh and drink his blood, keeping close to his person, receiving *our* life from the secret channels of *his* life, living upon him. Ah, if we live close to Jesus, we must be Calebs! He that is one with Jesus will follow God, because Jesus is perfect in his following of his Father, and we being parts of him, shall be perfect too; but the Holy Spirit’s work must begin by bringing us to Jesus just as we are. God help us to trust him as we are, and then he will make us Calebs, and keep us to the end. Amen.

HEAVENLY LOVE-SICKNESS!

NO. 539

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER
8TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.” — Song of Solomon 5:8.

SICK! that is a sad thing; it moves your pity. Sick of love — love-sick! that stirs up other emotions which we shall presently attempt to explain. No doubt certain sicknesses are peculiar to the saints: the ungodly are never visited with them. Strange to say, these sicknesses, to which the refined sensibilities of the children of God render them peculiarly liable, are signs of vigorous health. Who but the beloved of the Lord ever experience that *sin-sickness* in which the soul loathes the very name of transgression, is unmoved by the enchantments of the tempter, finds no sweetness in its besetting sins, but turns with detestation and abhorrence from the very thought of iniquity? Not less is it for these, and these alone, to feel that *self-sickness* whereby the heart revolts from all creature-confidence and strength, having been made sick of self, self-seeking, self-exalting, self-reliance, and self of every sort. The Lord afflicts us more and more with such self-sickness till we are dead to self, its puny conceits, its lofty aims, and its unsanctified desires. Then there is a *twofold love-sickness*. Of the one kind is that love-sickness which comes upon the Christian when he is

transported with the full enjoyment of Jesus, even as the bride elated by the favor, melted by the tenderness of her Lord, says in the fifth verse of the second chapter of the Song, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.” The soul overjoyed with the divine communications of happiness and bliss which came from Christ, the body scarcely able to bear the excessive delirium of delight which the soul

possessed, she was so glad to be in the embraces of her Lord, that she

needed to be stayed under her overpowering weight of joy. Another kind of love-sickness widely different from the first, is that in which the soul is sick, not because it has too much of Christ's love, but because it has not enough present consciousness of it; sick, not of the enjoyment, but of the longing for it; sick, not because of excess of delight, but because of sorrow for an absent lover. It is to this sickness we call your attention this morning. Their love-sickness breaks out in two ways, and may be viewed in two lights. It is, first of all, the soul *longing for a view of Jesus Christ in grace*; and then again, it is the same soul *possessing the view of grace, and longing for a sight of Jesus Christ in glory*. In both these senses we, us accurately as the spouse, may adopt the languishing words, "If ye find my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love."

I. First, then, let us consider our text as the language of a soul LONGING FOR THE VIEW OF JESUS CHRIST IN GRACE.

1. Do ye ask me concerning *the sickness itself*: What is it? It is the sickness of a soul panting after communion with Christ. The man is a believer; he is not longing after salvation as a penitent sinner under conviction, for he is saved. Moreover, he has love to Christ, and knows it; he does not doubt his evidence as to the reality of his affection for his Lord, for you see the word used is "*My beloved*," which would not be applicable if the person speaking had any doubt about her interest; nor did she doubt her love, for she calls the spouse, "*My beloved*." It is the longing of a soul, then, not for salvation, and not even for the certainty of salvation, but for the enjoyment of present fellowship with him who is her soul's life, her soul's all. The heart is panting to be brought once more under the apple tree; to feel once again his "left hand under her head, while his right hand doth embrace her." She has known, in days past, what it is to be brought into his banqueting-house, and to see the banner of love waved over her, and she therefore crieth to have love visits renewed. It is a panting after communion. Gracious hours, my dear friends, are never perfectly at ease except they are in a state of nearness to Christ; for mark you, when they are not near to Christ, they lose *their* peace. The nearer to Jesus, the nearer to the perfect calm of heaven; and the further from Jesus, the nearer to that troubled sea which images the continual unrest of the wicked. There is no peace to the man who doth not dwell constantly under the shadow of the cross; for Jesus is our peace, and if he be absent, our peace is absent too. I know that being justified, we have peace with God, but it is "through our Lord Jesus Christ." So that the justified man himself cannot reap the fruit of

justification, except by abiding in Christ Jesus, who is the Lord and Giver of peace. The Christian without fellowship with Christ loses all his *life* and energy; he is like a dead thing. Though saved, he lies like a lumpish log —

***“His soul can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys.”***

He is without vivacity, yea, more, he is without animation till Jesus comes; but when the Lord sensibly sheds abroad his love in our hearts, then *his* love kindles ours; then our blood leaps in our veins for joy, like the Baptist in the womb of Elizabeth. The heart when near to Jesus has strong pulsations, for since Jesus is in that heart, it is full of life, of vigor, and of strength. Peace, liveliness, vigor — all depend upon the constant enjoyment of communion with Christ Jesus. The soul of a Christian never knows what *joy* means in its true solidity, except when she sits like Mary at Jesus’ feet. Beloved, all the joys of life are nothing to us; we have melted them all down in our crucible, and found them to be dross. You and I have tried earth’s vanities, and they cannot satisfy us; nay, they do not give a morsel of meat to satiate our hunger. Being in a state of dissatisfaction with all mortal things, we have learned through divine grace, that none but Jesus, none but Jesus can make our souls glad. “Philosophers are happy without music” said one of old. So Christians are happy without the world’s good. Christians, with the world’s good, are sure to bemoan themselves as naked, poor, and miserable, unless their Savior be with them. You that have ever tasted communion with Christ, will soon know why it is that a soul longs after him. What the sun is to the day, what the moon is to the night, what the dew is to the flower, such is Jesus Christ to us. What bread is to the hungry, clothes to the naked, the shadow of a great rock to the traveler in a weary land, such is Jesus Christ to us. What the turtle is to her mate, what the husband is to his spouse, what the head is to the body, such is Jesus Christ to us; and therefore, if we have him not, nay, if we are not conscious of having him; if we are not one with him, nay, if we are not consciously one with him, little marvel if our spirit cries in the words of the Song, “I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love.” Such is the character of this love-sickness. We may say of it, however, before we leave that point, that it is *a sickness which has a blessing attending it*: “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness;” and therefore, supremely blessed are they who thirst after the Righteous One — after him, who in the highest perfection embodies pure, immaculate, spotless righteousness. Blessed is that hunger,

for it comes from God. It bears a blessing within it; for if I may not have the blessedness in full bloom of being filled, the next best thing is the same blessedness in sweet bud of being empty till I am filled with Christ. If I may not feed on Jesus, it shall be next door to heaven to be allowed to hunger and thirst after him. There is a hallowedness about that hunger, since it sparkles among the beatitudes of our Lord. Yet it is a sickness, dear friends, which, despite the blessing, *causes much pain*. The man who is sick after Jesus, will be dissatisfied with everything else; he will find that dainties have lost their sweetness, and music its melody, and light its brightness, and life itself will be darkened with the shadow of death to him, till he finds his Lord, and can rejoice in him. Beloved, ye shall find that this thirsting, this sickness, if it ever gets hold upon you, is *attended with great vehemence*. The desire is vehement, as coals of juniper. Ye have heard of hunger that it breaks through stone walls: but stone walls are no prison to a soul that desires Christ. Stone walls, nay, the strongest natural barriers, cannot keep a lovesick heart from Jesus. I will venture to say that the temptation of heaven itself, if it could be offered to the believer without his Christ, would be as less than nothing; and the pains of hell, if they could be endured, would be gladly ventured upon by a love-sick soul, if he might but find Christ. As lovers sometimes talk of doing impossibilities for their fair ones, so certainly a spirit that is set on Christ will laugh at impossibility, and say, "It shall be done." It will venture upon the hardest task, go cheerfully to prison and joyfully to death, if it may but find its beloved, and have its love-sickness satisfied with his presence. Perhaps this may suffice for a description of the sickness here intended.

2. Ye may enquire concerning the cause of this love-sickness. What maketh a man's soul so sick after Christ? Understand that it is the *absence* of Christ which makes this sickness in a mind that really understands the preciousness of his presence. The spouse had been very wilful and wayward, she had taken off her garments, had gone to her rest, her sluggish slothful rest, when her beloved knocked at the door. He said "Open to me, my beloved; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." She was too slothful to wake up to let him in. She urged excuses — "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet: how shall I defile them?" The beloved stood waiting, but since she opened not he put in his hand by the hole of the lock, and then her bowels were moved towards him. She went to the door to open it, and to her surprise, her hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet

smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. There was the token that he had been there, but he was gone. Now she began to bestir herself, and seek after him. She sought him through the city, but she found him not. Her soul failed her; she called after him, but he gave her no answer, and the watchman, who ought to have helped her in the search, smote her, and took away her veil from her. Therefore it is that now she is seeking, because she has lost her beloved. She should have held him fast, and not have permitted him to go. He is absent, and she is sick till she findeth him. Mingled with the sense of absence is *a consciousness of wrong doing*.

Something in her seemed to say, "How couldst thou drive him away? That heavenly bridegroom who knocked and pleaded hard, how couldst thou keep him longer there amidst the cold dews of night? O unkind heart! what if thy feet had been made to bleed by thy rising? What if all thy body had seen chilled by the cold wind, when thou wast treading the floor? What had it been compared with his love to thee?" And so she is sick to see him, that she may weep out her love and tell him how vexed she is with herself that she should have held to him so loosely, and permitted him so readily to depart. So, too, mixed with this, was *great wretchedness* because he was gone. She had been for a little time easy in his absence. That downy bed, that warm coverlet, had given her a peace, a false, cruel, and a wicked peace, but she has risen now, the watchmen have smitten her, her veil is gone, and, without a friend, the princess, deserted in the midst of Jerusalem's streets, has her soul melted for heaviness, and she pours out her heart within her as she pineth after her lord. "No love but my love, no lord but my lord," saith she, with sobbing tongue and weeping eyes; for none else can gratify her heart or appease her anxiety. Beloved, have you never been in such a state, when your faith has begun to droop, and your heart and spirits have fled from you? Even then it was your soul was sick for him. You could do without him when Mr. Carnal-security was in the house, and feasted you, but when he and his house have both been burned with fire, the old love-sickness came back, and you wanted Christ, nor could ye be satisfied till ye found him once again. There was *true love* in all this, and this is the very pith of all love-sickness. Had not she loved, absence would not have made her sick, nor would her repentance have made her grieve. Had she not loved, there would have been no pain because of absence, and no sinking of spirits, but she did love, thence all this sickness. It is a delightful thing to be able to know when we have lost Christ's company, that we do love him — "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." I did deny thee, yea, in the moment

of thy sorrow, I said, 'I know not the man.' I did curse and swear that men might think I was no follower of thine, but still thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." When you can feel this, dear friends, the consciousness that you love will soon work in you a *heart-burning*, so that your soul will not be satisfied till you can tell out that love in the Master's presence, and he shall say unto you, as a token of forgiveness, "Feed my sheep." I do not doubt that in this sickness there had been *some degree of fear*. Sorrowful woman! She was half afraid she might never find him again. She had been about the city — where could he be? She had sought him on the walls and on the ramparts, but he was not there. In every ordinance, in every means of grace, in secret and in public prayer, in the Lord's Supper, and in the reading of the Word, she had looked after him, but he was not there; and now she was half afraid that though he might give his presence to others, yet never to her, and when she speaks, you notice there is half a fear in it. She would not have asked others to tell him if she had any assuring hope that she should meet him herself — "If ye find him," she seems to say, "O ye true converts, you that are the real grace-bow daughters of Jerusalem; if he reveals himself to you, though he never may to me, do me this kindness, tell him that I am sick of love." There is half a fear here, and yet there is *some hope*. She feels that he must love her still, or else why send a message at all? She would surely never send this sweet message to a flinty, adamant heart, "Tell him I am sick of love," but she remembered when the "lancings of her eyes had ravished him; she remembered when a motion from her hand had made his heart melt, and when one tear of her eyes had opened all his wounds afresh. She thinks, "Perhaps, he loves me still as he loved me then, and my moanings will enchain him; my groans will constrain him and lead him to my help." So she sends the message to him — "Tell him, tell him I am sick of love."

To gather up the causes of this love-sickness in a few words, does not the whole matter spring from *relationship*? She is his spouse; can the spouse be happy without her beloved lord? It springs from union; she is part of himself. Can the hand be happy and healthy if the life-floods stream not from the heart and from the head. Fondly realizing her *dependence*, she feels that she owes all to him, and gets her all from him. If then the fountain be cut off, if the streams be dried, if the great source of all be taken from her, how can she but be sick? And there is besides this, *a life and a nature* in her which makes her sick. There is a life like the life of Christ, nay, her life is in Christ, it is hid with Christ in God; her nature is a

part of the divine nature; she is a partaker of the divine nature. Moreover she is in *union* with Jesus, and this piece divided, as it were, from the body, wriggles, like a worm cut asunder, and pants to get back to where it came from. These are the causes of it. You will not understand my sermon this morning but think me raving, unless you are spiritual men. “But the spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

3. *What endeavors such love-sick souls will put forth.* Those who are sick for Christ will first send their *desires* to him. Men use pigeons sometimes to send their messages. Why, what sort of carrier pigeons do they use? The pigeon is of no use to send anywhere but to the place from which it came, and my desires after Christ came from him, and so they will always go back to the place from which they came, they know the way to their own dovecot, so I will send him my sighs and my groans, my tears and my moans. Go, go, sweet doves, with swift and clipping wings, and tell him I am sick of love. Then she would send her *prayers*. Ah! methinks she would say of her desires, “They will never reach him; they know the way but their wings are broken, and they will fall to the ground and never reach him.” Yet she will send them whether they reach him or not. As for her prayers, they are like arrows. Sometimes messages have been sent into besieged towns bound to an arrow, so she binds her desires upon the arrow of her prayers, and then shoots them forth from the bow of her faith. She is afraid they will never reach him, for her bow is slack, and she knoweth not how to draw it with her feeble hands which hang down. So what does she? She has traversed the streets; she has used *the means*; she has done everything; she has sighed her heart out, and emptied her soul out in prayers. She is all wounds till he heals her; she is all a hungry mouth till he fills her; she is all an empty brook till he replenishes her once again, and so now she *goeth to her companions*, and she saith, “If ye find my beloved, tell him I am sick of love.” This is using the intercession of the saints. It is unbelief that makes her use it, and yet there is a little faith mixed in her unbelief. It was an unbelief but not a misbelief. There is efficacy in the intercession of saints. Not of dead saints — they have enough to do to be singing God’s praises in heaven without praying for us — but saints on earth can take up our case. The king has his favourites; he has his cup-bearers; he has some that are admitted into great familiarity with him: give me a share in a good man’s prayers. I attribute under God the success the Lord has given me, to the number of souls in every quarter of the earth who pray for me — not you alone, but in every land there are some that forget me not when they

draw near in their supplications. Oh! we are so rich when we have the prayers of saints. When it is well with thee, speak for me to the Captain of the host, and if he should say to thee, "What was his message?" I have no other message but that of the spouse, "Tell him I am sick of love." Any of you who have close familiarity with Jesus, be the messengers, be the heavenly tale-bearers between love-sick souls and their divine Lord. Tell him, tell him we are sick of love. And you that cannot thus go to him, do seek the help and aid of others. But after all, as I have said this is unbelief though it is not misbelief, for how much better it would have been for her to *tell him herself*. "But," you say, "she could not find him." Nay, but if she had had faith she would have known that her prayers could; for our prayers know where Christ is when we do not know, or rather, Christ knows where our prayers are, and when we cannot see him they reach him nevertheless. A man who fires a cannon is not expected to see all the way which the shot goes. If he has his cannon rightly sighted and fires it, there may come on a thick fog, but the shot will reach the place; and if you have your hearts sighted by divine grace after Christ, you may depend upon it, however thick the fog, the hot-shot of your prayer will reach the gates of heaven though ye cannot tell how or where. Be ye satisfied to go to a Christ yourself. If your brethren will go, well and good, but methinks their proper answer to your question would be in the language of the women in the sixth chapter, the first verse, "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee." They will not seek him *for* us they say, but they can seek him *with* us. Sometimes when there are six pair of eyes, they will see better than one; and so, if five or six Christians seek the Lord in company, in the prayer-meeting, or at his table, they are more likely to find him. "We will seek him with thee."

4. Blessed love-sickness! we have seen its character and its cause, and the endeavors of the soul under it; let us just notice *the comforts which belong to such a state as this*. Briefly they are these — *you shall be filled*. It is impossible for Christ to set you longing after him without intending to give himself to you. It is as when a great man doth make a feast. He first puts plates upon the table, and then afterwards there cometh the meat. Your longings and desirings are the empty plates to hold the meat. Is it likely that he means to mock you? Would he have put the dishes there if he did not intend to fill them with his oxen and with his fatlings? He makes you long: he will certainly satisfy your longings. Remember, again, that he will give

you himself *all the sooner for the bitterness of your longings*. The more pained your heart is at his absence the shorter will the absence be. If you have a grain of contentment without Christ, that will keep you longer tarrying but when your soul is sick till your heart is ready to break, till you cry, "Why tarrieth he? why are his chariots so long in coming?" when your soul fainteth until your beloved speaks unto you, and you are ready to die from your youth up, then in no long space he will lift the veil from his dear face, and your sun shall rise with healing beneath his wings. Let that console you. Then, again, when he does come, as come he will, oh, *how sweet it will be!* Methinks I have the flavour in my mouth now, and the fullness of the feast is yet to come. There is such a delight about the very thought that he will come, that the thought itself is the prelude, the foretaste, the antepast of the happy greeting. What! Will he once again speak comfortably to me? Shall I again walk the bed of spices with him? Shall I ramble with him amongst the groves while the flowers give forth their sweet perfume: I shall! I shall! and even now my spirit feels his presence by anticipation: "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." You know how sweet it was in the past. Beloved, what times we have had, some of us. Oh, whether in the body or out of the body, we cannot tell — God knoweth. What mountings! Talk ye of eagles' wings — they are earthly pinions, and may not be compared with the wings with which he carried us up from earth. Speak of mounting beyond clouds and stars! — they were left far, far behind. We entered into the unseen, beheld the invisible, lived in the immortal, drank in the ineffable, and were blessed with the fullness of God in Christ Jesus, being made to sit together in heavenly places in him. Well, all this is to come again, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me." "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Think of this. Why, we have comfort even in this sickness of love. Our heart, though sick, is still whole, while we are panting and pining after the Lord Jesus.

*"O love divine, how sweet thou art,
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up with thee?
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The fullness of redeeming love —
The love of Christ to me."*

II. And now, secondly, with as great brevity as we can. This love-sickness may be seen in A SOUL-LONGING FOR A VIEW OF JESUS IN HIS GLORY.

1. And here we will consider *the complaint* itself for a moment. This ailment is not merely a longing after communion with Christ on earth — that has been enjoyed, and generally this sickness follows that: —

*“When I have tasted of the
grapes, I sometimes long to go
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps
And all the clusters grow.”*

It is the enjoyment of Eshcol’s first fruits which makes us desire to sit under our own vine and our own fig tree before the throne of God in the blessed land.

Beloved, this sickness is characterized by certain marked symptoms; I will tell you what they are. There is a loving and a longing, a loathing and a languishing. Happy soul that understands these things by experience. There is *a loving* in which the heart cleaves to Jesus: —

*“Do not I love thee from my soul?
Then let me nothing love:
Dead be my heart to every
joy When Jesus cannot
move.”*

A sense of his beauty! an admiration of his charms! a consciousness of his infinite perfection! Yea; greatness, goodness, and loveliness, in one resplendent ray combine to enchant the soul till it is so ravished after him that it crieth with the spouse, “Yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.” Sweet loving this — a love which binds the heart with chains of more than silken softness, and yet than adamant more firm.

Then there is *a longing*. She loves him so that she cannot endure to be absent from him; she pants and pines. You know it has been so with saints in all ages; whenever they have begun to love they have always begun to long after Christ. John, the most loving of spirits, is the author of those words which he so frequently uses — “Come quickly, even so, come quickly.” “Come quickly” is sure to be the fruit of earnest love. See how the spouse puts it — “O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.” She longs to get hold of him; she cannot

conclude her song without saying, “Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.” There is a longing to be with Christ. I would not give much for your religion if you do not long to be with the object of your heart’s affections.

Then comes a *loathing*. When a man is sick with the first lovesickness, then he does not loathe — it is, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples.” When a man has Christ, he can enjoy other things; but when a man is longing after Christ and seeking after Christ, he loathes everything else — he cannot bear anything besides. Here is my message to Jesus: “Tell him — “ what? Do I want crowns and diadems? crowns and diadems are nought to me. Do I want wealth, and health, and strength? they are all very well in their way. No — “Tell him, tell the beloved of my soul that I grieve after himself — his gifts are good — I ought to be more grateful for them than I am, but let me see his face; let me hear his voice. I am sick of love, and nothing but that can satisfy me, everything else is distasteful to me.”

And then there is a *languishing*. Since she cannot get the society of Christ, cannot as yet behold him on his throne nor worship him face to face, she is sick until she can. For a heart so set on Christ will walk about traversing highway and by-way, resting nowhere till it finds him. As the needle once magnetized will never be easy until it finds the pole, so the heart once Christianized never will be satisfied until it rests on Christ — rests on him, too, in the fullness of the beatific vision before the throne. This is the character of the love-sickness.

2. *As to its object* — what is that? “Tell him that I am sick of love;” but what is the sickness for? Brethren, when you and I want to go to heaven I hope it is the true love-sickness. I catch myself sometimes wanting to die and be in heaven for the sake of rest; but is not that a lazy desire? There is a sluggish wish that makes me long for rest. Perhaps, we long for the happiness of heaven — the harps and crowns. There is a little selfishness in that, is there not? Allowable, I grant you; but is not there a little like selfishness? Perhaps, we long to see dear children, beloved friends that have gone before; but there is a little of the earthy there. The soul may be as sick as it will, without rebuke, when it is sick to be with Jesus. You may indulge this carry it to its utmost extent without either sin or folly. What am I sick with love for? For the pearly gates? — No; but for the pearls that are in his wounds. What am I sick for? For the streets of gold? — No; but for his head which is as much fine gold. For the melody of the harps and

angelic songs? — No, but for the melodious notes that come from his dear mouth. What am I sick for? For the nectar that angels drink? — No; but for the kisses of his lips. For the manna on which heavenly souls do feed? — No; but for himself, who is the meat and drink of his saints himself, himself — my soul pines to see him. Oh, what a heaven to gaze upon! What bliss to talk with the man, the God, crucified for me; to weep my heart out before him; to tell him how I love him, for he loved me and gave himself for me; to read my name written on his hands and on his side — yea, and to let him see that his name is written on my heart in indelible lines; to embrace him, oh! what an embrace when the creature shall embrace his God — to be for ever so close to him, that not a doubt, nor a fear, nor a wandering thought can come between my soul and him for ever

*“For ever to behold him shine,
For evermore to call him mine,
And see him still before me;
For ever on his face to gaze,
And meet his full assembled rays,
While all the Father he displays
To all the saints in glory.”*

What else can there be that our spirit longeth for? This seems an empty thing to worldlings, but to the Christian this is heaven summed up in a word — “To be with Christ, which is far better” than all the joys of earth. This is the object, then, of this love-sickness.

3. Ask ye yet again what are *the excitements of this sickness*? What is it makes the Christian long to be at home with Jesus? There are many things. There are sometimes some very little things that set a Christian longing to be at home. You know the old story of Swiss soldiers, that when they have enlisted into foreign service they never will permit the band to play the “*Ranz des Vaches*” — *the Song of the Cows*, because as soon as ever the Swiss hears the Song of the Cows, he thinks of his own dear Alps, and the bells upon the cows necks, and the strange calls of the herd-boys, as they sing to one another from the mountains’ peaks; and he grows sick and ill with home-sickness. So if you were banished, if you were taken prisoner or a slave, why, to hear some note of one of old England’s songs would set your spirit a-pining for home, and I do confess, when I hear you sing sometimes —

*“Jerusalem! my happy home!
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an
end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?”*

it makes me say, “Ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell him, that I am sick of love.” It is the home-song that brings the homesickness. When we remember what he used to be to us, what sweet visits we have had from him, then we get sick to be always with him, and, best of all, when we are in his presence, when our soul is overjoyed with his delights, when the great deep sea of his love has rolled over the mast-head of our highest thoughts, and the ship of our spirit has gone right down, foundering at sea in the midst of an ocean of delights, ah, then its highest, its deepest thought is, “O that I may always be with him, in him, where he is, that I might behold his glory — the glory which his Father gave him, and which he has given me, that I may be one with him, world without end.” I do believe, brethren, that all the bitters and all the sweets make a Christian, when he is in a healthy state, sick after Christ: the sweets make his mouth water for more sweets, and the bitters make him pant for the time when the last dregs of bitterness shall be over. Wearying temptations, as well as rapt enjoyments, all set the spirit on the wing after Jesus.

4. Well now, friends, *what is the cure of this love-sickness?* Is it a sickness for which there is any specific remedy? There is only one cure that I know of, but there are some palliatives. A man that is sick after Christ, longs to be with him, and pants for the better land, singing as we did just now —

*“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of thine abode.”*

He must have the desire realized, before the thirst of his fever will be assuaged. There are some palliatives, and I will recommend them to you. Such for example is a strong faith that realizes the day of the Lord and the presence of Christ, as Moses beheld the promised land and the goodly heritage, when he stood on the top of Pisgah. If you do not get heaven when you want it, you may attain to that which is next door to heaven, and this may bear you up for a little season. If you cannot get to behold Christ face to face, it is a blessed make-shitt for the time to see him in the Scriptures, and to look at him through the glass of the Word. These are palliatives, but I warn ye, I warn ye of them. I do not mean to keep you from them, use them as much as ever you can, but I warn you from

expecting that it will cure that love-sickness. It will give you ease but it will make you more sick still, for he that lives on Christ gets more hungry after Christ. As for a man being satisfied and wanting no more when he gets Christ — why he wants nothing but Christ it is true, in that sense he will never thirst; but he wants more, and more, and more, and more of Christ.

To live on Christ is like drinking sea-water, the more ye drink the more thirsty ye grow. There is something very satisfying in Christ's flesh, you will never hunger except for that, but the more you eat of it the more ye may; and he that is the heartiest feaster, and hath eaten the most, hath the best appetite for more. Oh, strange is this, but so it is; that which we would think would remove the lovesickness, and is the best stay to the soul under it, is just that which brings it on more and more. But there is a cure, there is a cure, and you shall have it soon — a black draught, and in it a pearl: — a black draught called Death. Ye shall drink it, but ye shall not know it is bitter, for ye shall swallow it up in victory. There is a pearl, too, in it — melted in it. Jesus died as well as you, and as you drink it, that pearl shall take away all ill effect from the tremendous draught. You shall say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" When you have once drank that black draught, you are secure against that love-sickness for ever. For where are you? No pilgrimage, no weary flight through cold ether, thou art with him in paradise. Dost thou hear that, soul? Thou art with him in paradise, never to be separated, not for an instant; never to have a wandering thought, not one; never to find thy love waning or growing cold again; never to doubt his love to thee any more; never more to be vexed and tempted by sighing after what thou canst not view. Thou shalt be with him, where he is —

*“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”*

Till then, beloved, let us strive to live near the cross. Those two mountains, Calvary and Zion, stand right opposite one another. The eye of faith can sometimes almost span the interval. And the loving heart, by some deep mystery of which we can offer you no solution, will often have its sweetest rapture of joy in the fellowship of his griefs. So have I found a satisfaction in the wounds of a crucified Jesus, which can only be excelled by the satisfaction I have yet to find in the sparkling eyes of the same Jesus glorified. Yes; the same Jesus! Well spake the angels on Mount Olivet — *“This same Jesus,* which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in

like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” This same Jesus! my soul coats on the words; my lips are fond of repeating them. This same Jesus!

*“If in my soul such joy abounds,
While weeping faith explores his wounds,
How glorious will those sears appear,
When perfect bliss forbids a tear!
Think, O my soul, if ‘tis so sweet
On earth to sit at Jesus’ feet,
What must it be to wear a crown
And sit with him upon his throne?”*

Would to God you all had this love-sickness! I am afraid many of you have it not. May he give it to you. But oh! if there be a soul here that wants Jesus, he is welcome. If there is one heart here that says, “Give me Christ,” you shall have your desire. Trust Jesus Christ, and he is thine; rely upon him, thou art his. God save thee and make thee sick *of* vanities, sick *after* verities; pining even unto sickness for Jesus Christ, the beloved of my soul, the sum of all my hope, the sinners only refuge, and the praise of all his saints; to whom be everlasting glory. Amen.

THE LAMBS AND THEIR SHEPHERD.

NO. 540

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER
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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.” —
Isaiah 40:11.*

THE people of God are most fitly compared to sheep. The excellencies of their moral and spiritual character furnish one side of the picture, for like sheep they are gentle in their lives, and are well accepted, whether living or dying, as a sacrifice unto God; their frailties and weaknesses complete the likeness, for they are prone to wander — full of wants, powerless in self-defense, and ill able to escape from their enemies by rapid flight. No creature has less power to take care of itself than the sheep; even the tiny ant with its foresight can provide for the evil day, but this poor creature must be tended by man or else perish. Such are the people of God — timid, weak, defenceless, unable to provide for themselves, and compelled to depend for everything upon him whose name is, “That great Shepherd of the sheep.”

As the people of God individually are comparable to sheep, so the Church as a whole finds a very fit representative in a flock. A flock is a multitude. Diversities of character, of state, of age, of condition, are always to be found in a flock. Yet, while a multitude, it is but one. One in *association*: they journey or lie down together, in the same pasture they rest, beside the same still waters they are led. They are one in *nature*: they are equally sheep, and, however much they may differ, their diversity is not half so great as their agreement. Two believers may greatly differ; but only let me

be assured that they are both sheep of the Lord's pasture and I will find ten points of likeness for one of difference. They are one, moreover, in *property* — they are the property of one owner, being bought with one price in one great transaction, when their one great Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. The saints are intimately and truly united; even now they are secretly one in their absent Head, and they shall soon be visibly one in their glorious Lord, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him, and shall place the sheep at his right hand for ever.

In all flocks, unless they be cursed by barrenness, there will be lambs, and these will make up a very important part of the community. In all healthy Churches, those believers who are comparable to lambs, make up the major part; and though in our own we have many strong ones who are fit to lead the way, and not a few competent to bear the ~?~ell, yet the majority, I suppose, are the little ones of the flock. Mr. Ready-to-halt, on his crutches, is the commander of quite a regiment, distinguished as Mr. Fearing, Mr. Little-faith, Mr. Feeble-mind, Miss Much-afraid, and the like, who are slender in knowledge, shallow in experience, and weak in faith. It is, therefore, with great delight we find our gracious Lord executing the office of Shepherd in a peculiarly tender manner towards the lambs. Special need has here its own appropriate promise; great weakness is met by great consolation; the best place is found for those in the worst circumstances, and the most loving care bestowed on those most exposed to danger. "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."

First, let us *describe the lambs*; secondly, let us *express our fears about them*; thirdly, let us *rejoice in the tenderness of the great Shepherd over them*; and, fourthly, let us *hear that great Shepherd's voice*.

I. First, LET ME ENDEAVOR TO DESCRIBE THE LAMBS. Our first word concerning them is, that *they are truly sheep*. They are not sheep in maturity, but they are sheep to a certainty. Leave them to their good Shepherd's care, let them continue to lie down in the green pastures and feed beside the still waters, and they will become as fully developed as yonder ewes of the flock. It is true that not a bone in them is of full size, nor a muscle of its full strength; still who shall dare to exclude them from the fold? The new-born convert is possessed of the true nature and life of faith, even as the life of a babe is the same life as that which is found in perfection in the full-grown man. Every member is there, but it is in miniature; the vital processes are the same, although upon a smaller scale;

indeed, the whole man is in the child, and so the whole life of God is in the feeblest believer. If you will mark the signs of a sheep, you shall see them more or less distinctly in every one of the lambs. The sheep of God are *harmless*, “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” They can bear, but they cannot revenge. They have neither power nor will to hurt others. They would sooner be cheated a thousand times than wrong their fellow-men. They may sometimes be “wise as serpents” — they are commanded so to be — but then they blend with this the obedience to the precept, “Be ye harmless as doves.” If I see any man injuring his fellows, tearing, rending, fighting, quarrelling — if I see him blustering and proud — I discern at once that he is no sheep of God; for this is the mark of the Lord’s people, that they when reviled revile not again, but have put on as the elect of God, bowels of compassion, kindness, and long-suffering. You will find this holy, non-resistance of evil even more in the lambs than in some of the sheep, for worldly influences frequently wear off this beautiful bloom from older professors. The sheep goes further than the non-inflicting of evil, it *bears evil without complaint*; they are led to the slaughter and they are silent; they are thrown down by the shearer but they are dumb.

There is nothing revolting in the sight of the slaughter of a lamb even by our ordinary butchery, for the gentle creature is so passive and silent, that with scarce a struggle its life oozes forth from it. Long ere the knife is at their throats, the swine awaken all the neighborhood, fitly teaching us how rebellious are the wicked under their trials, and how horribly they are afraid of death; but in the case of the lamb, there is so little to shock or disgust, that the most delicate might have stood in the tabernacle of old, and seen the multitudes of lambs slaughtered without feeling any other emotion than a hallowed awe at the sinfulness of sin, and the value of the atonement by which it is put away. The extraordinary patience of the sheep is seen in God’s people when they joyously endure a weight of affliction, and pass through the valley of death with composure. Whether it be to the knife of death or to the shears of his persecutors, the faithful is alike patient, and the lambs of the flock partake of the same endurance.

Sheep, again, are *cleanly* creatures — cleanly in their feeding — carrion never tempts them — cleanly in their habits. The sow may revel in her wallowing in the mire, but the sheep loves the green pastures, and if it mire itself it is not easy till it has cleaned itself as best it may. So God’s people are holy. Be specially mindful of holiness, my beloved friends, for when men begin to despise holiness, they lose one of the most prominent marks

of a child of God. Now the lambs may not have all the excellencies of the sheep, but they quite as earnestly pant after holiness. Their daily prayer is

***“Teach me to run in thy commands,
‘Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God.”***

They pant to be perfect in their obedience to God, and sigh and cry when they find by daily experience that the flesh lusteth to evil, and that the tendency of the heart is to go astray. Furthermore, the sheep is *guileless*. You see the lion creeping through the thicket full of cunning; but sheep have none. “Poor, simple sheep,” we say; and God’s people are a simple people. Like Nathaniel of old, we may say of them, “Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.” Those who are crafty and cunning, betray but very little of the spirit of Jesus. Jesus was no dupe for knaves, but at the same time, a fool was safe in his hands; and so with the Christian, he is not to be so foolish as to be the prey of every deceiver, but he is to be so generous that the most foolish shall never be wronged, or have advantage taken of them by him. The lambs bear this character as well as the sheep; they, too know no guile. Again, sheep are *tractable*. When a man tames a lion so that he may sport with it, he gets the name of lion-tamer; nobody is renowned for taming a sheep, for it has a tractable disposition, and so all the elect of God, when they have been renewed by divine grace, have an obedient and yielding spirit. They are willing to follow their great Protector at his will. “Not my will, but thine be done,” is the constant bleat of every sheep and every lamb of the flock, when it is in a right state of heart. The lambs, then, are truly sheep in all the essential points.

Do not forget, dear friends, that the lambs are *truly* CHRIST’S *sheep*. They are as dearly bought with his blood; they are as surely objects of his care; they are as manifestly illustrations of his power; they shall as certainly be proofs of his faithfulness, as the strongest of the flock. When you look upon a child of God who has only known his Lord for the last few days, you must not despise him, for he is as dear to the Savior’s heart as the most advanced believer. He was as much loved in old eternity as you were, and will be as much loved in the eternity to come as you can be.

Well, but if they be truly sheep, and truly Christ’s sheep, why are they lambs, and in what are they distinguished? Some of them are lambs *for age*,

though not all; for there are some young Christians who are full grown, and there are others very aged, who remain to be lambs still. Growth in grace does not coincide with progress in human stature. Many men are seventy years old, and are nevertheless little children in grace; and, on the other hand, there are a few who at twenty are as solid, and profound, and spiritual, as veterans of eighty. It is not a man's age alone, yet for the most part, the young in years are also children in the divine family.

The distinguishing mark lies rather in spiritual deficiencies — they are but children in *knowledge*. Many in the Church do not as yet understand the loftier doctrines of revelation. They know Christ; they know themselves somewhat, but they cannot “comprehend with all saints what are the lengths and breadths.” As yet they have not taken a high degree in Christ's school. They sit at his feet with Mary, but they have not come to lean their heads upon his bosom with John. Some doctrines greatly puzzle them.

They are the subjects of many doubts and fears, under which they would not suffer if they knew more. They are easily put out by those who oppose themselves against the Word of God because they are not established in what they know. The arguments which prove a doctrine they have not yet handled. They believe, but scarcely know *why* they believe, and in this respect they are but lambs of the flock.

They are immature also in *experience*. They know that they have an evil heart, but they have not *felt* all its evil yet — they know not the plague within as they will do when God permits the fountains of the great deep to be broken up. Their heavy trials are yet to come. They have not yet felt the foot of Satan upon their necks in the valley of humiliation, nor trodden the dark places of the Valley of Deathshade. They have not tried and proved this wicked world, they are consequently too trustful of men. They have not yet proved the promises of God and their veracity; they have not as yet passed through the deep waters supported by an Almighty arm; they have not forded the floods of flame, protected by omnipotent love. They are shallow in the inner life, their experience is only up to their ankles; they have not learned to swim in the stream. Their little boats keep near the shore, they have not passed the great and deep sea; they are raw recruits in the army, and have not yet seen the garments rolled in blood.

So are they lambs in *tenderness of feeling*. They are too susceptible, and therefore feel the unkindness of the world acutely. If anyone speaks evil of them, they fret over it. If their conduct is misconstrued by the wicked, they

are grearly troubled. They have sleepless nights as the results of a slander which stronger saints would smile at. They have not as yet acquired that hardness to which the Christian soldier attains by enduring hardness. Young believers cry out where advanced believers would hardly wince. An ounce is more to them than a pound to the strong man. They cannot bear the brunt of the battle or the storm — they need seasoning for the strife. They are lambs for tenderness.

Then, again, they are *timid and trembling*, and dare not courageously proclaim themselves at all times on the Lord's side. To give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear is a great trial to them. Coming before the Church was a very blessed lesson to them — it braced their nerves and exercised their courage. They need a few more such exercises, for they are still very retiring and love most the rear of the army. They can hardly pray in public. If they were asked to say a few words even to five or six children in a Sunday-school class, they would quake for fear. It will be some time before they can be compared to lions for boldness; they have need of more grace, lest they fail to avow their Lord in the hour of persecution. They are poor timid lambs still.

Perhaps, too, they are subject to melancholy, to doubts, and fears, and distresses of mind. They cannot mount up as on the wings of eagles, but their wing is so broken that they lie on the ground and flutter. They are the subjects of very great questioning; they sing that hymn which just expresses the groanings of doubting babes —

***“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?”***

When any trial assails them, how hardly are they put to it! When a temptation assaults them, they do not yield to it, but it gives them very grievous pain and costs them many struggles. They cannot even think of meeting Apollyon without feeling the blood fly from their cheeks for very fright. I might continue thus to describe the various weaknesses and infirmities of the lambs, but I forbear; suffice it to say that everything which is wanted to make them perfect Christians they already have; but they have it as yet in an immature and undeveloped state. Everything is there; but it is feeble. Their faith is yet a sapling and not a tree; their love is a spark, not a fire; their hope is a fledgling and not a full-grown bird. In all respects they

are immature; weak eyes, hands hanging down, feeble knees, and stammering tongue, all shew their need of more grace.

I will give you a picture of some of them, to bring them more before your mind. There is one dear lamb: a boy of thirteen or fourteen. A pious mother has made that child the object of her constant prayers. He comes to a Sabbath-school class; he sits in the Tabernacle — it always gives me great joy to see so many lads and children come here, and I frequently notice that many of them are as attentive during the preaching of the Word as any of the elder folks. Well, the Lord blesses the Word to that child while but thirteen or fourteen. You know we have had the happiness of receiving several such into our Church. Now, as you look upon that curly-headed young soldier, you cannot but think of all the trouble which may befall him and temptations that may assail him. Sure I am, there are neither mothers nor fathers in the whole Tabernacle who do not feel the tears welling up into their eyes. We begin to pray, “Lord, keep that lamb; preserve it safely.” We think — I am afraid there is a little self-conceit about it — that a child is more in danger than we are; and our heart is moved to anxious prayer for it. What more melting sight than a child baptized into Jesus upon profession of its faith? May many such lambs be found among us.

Picture another. There are many such here, and thank God, there is a dear mother in connection with this Church, who nurses and nourishes them. I refer to the case of a young woman: father and mother are ungodly. She is out in a situation; she works and honourably toils. The grace of God has entered her heart, and there is something inexpressibly beautiful about her young piety, for she has had to forsake fond associations for Christ’s sake. In the work-room they point at her as a religious girl: they give her a name of scorn; she bears it — she bears it cheerfully. But when we think of how she has to suffer every day, we may well be anxious. Perhaps there is poverty mingled with her other trials; and poverty has its temptations, and some of these are of the severest character. When we see these young women, and young men too, thus exposed to perilous persecutions and cruel mockings, we number them with the lambs, and our heart is very anxious for them. We are glad to see them brought into the fold, but we rejoice with trembling. These are our jewels; these are the sheaves that we reap in our Master’s fields; but when we recollect the temptations to which they are exposed, we look with pity upon these poor tempted ones, and thank our loving Jesus that there is a promise on purpose for them.

I might single out too, as another specimen, yonder aged woman. She has lived for seventy years without God and without Christ, knowing nothing beyond a formal religion; bearing “a name to live,” but being truly “dead.” And now, at last, in her old age, when the body is tottering and the faculties feeble, she has found Christ, and she has come forward to be baptized. It has been our joy to receive some into Church fellowship who have passed the threescore years and ten allotted to human life, and have gone trembling down into the baptismal pool in obedience to their Lord. Seeing their infirmities, and the fact that much of the intellect is weakened — the eyes have become dim so that they cannot read, and the memory has become frail so that sermons do not profit them as they do younger persons — we look upon these as lambs, needing as they do so much of the gathering arm, and the nourishing bosom of the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls.

Shall I pause to describe one other? You know her well. She is a member of the Church, but she thinks she ought not to be. In her fite of grief, she even writes to the pastor to tell him that she wishes he would put her out, for she is not a Christian; and yet, in a few days afterwards, she retracts the notes, and begs him to forgive it. She very seldom can read her title clear — in fact, she never did but once or twice, and that was on very bright sunshiny days, when her soul was exceedingly glad. She is like Mrs. Much- afraid, in the castle; Giant Despair has shut her up in one of his dark dungeons, and frequently uses the crab-tree cudgel upon her, until she has grown a sorrowful creature indeed. We have a few brethren of the same spirit; they go limping and halting. We number these among the lambs of the flock.

I have given a too lengthy description, but you will not fail from this time very readily to recognize the lambs. You will see that in all Christian Churches they make up a large proportion.

II. Let us come then, in the second place, to EXPRESS OUR FEARS CONCERNING THESE LAMBS OF THE FLOCK.

We are afraid for them, *because of the howling wolves there are about*. Some of us can bear to be laughed at. We have grown so used to it now, that it has become the atmosphere which we breathe, but we do pity these new beginners. We know the cruel mockings, which if they break not the bones, yet often break the heart, and we are afraid lest they should turn back, lest they should say, “I cannot endure this,” and so seek the warm

side of the hedge, and forsake their Lord and Master. Yet more, we are afraid of another order of wolves — *the wolves in sheep's clothing* — those hypocrites, who by their bad living stumble the poor lambs, and make them think that surely religion must be a deception and a lie; and those other wolves — *doctrinal wolves* — full of all manner of error, we have them always prowling round our Churches. There is the Antinomian, too glad to get hold of any young lamb he can seduce with his fawning pretences to love a free-grace gospel, and the free-will wolf, which drags some away from the truth, and wolves of all sorts, that are continually trying to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. We are afraid for these young ones, knowing how easily they are carried about by every wind of doctrine. We are equally alarmed, too, because of their association with *the goats*. There is another flock in the world — the devil's flock. It is not easy for a Christian man to associate with the world without feeling the influence of it. We are afraid for some of the young ones, when they have to mingle in their work, and in their family associations with the baser sort. The worst form of ill association is ungodly marriage. I do not know anything that gives me more satisfaction than to see our brethren and sisters, who have walked in the faith of God, united in marriage — the husband and the wife, both fearing and loving God. It is a delightful spectacle, and bids fair to be the means of building up the Church with a generation which shall fear the Lord. But a very fruitful source of ruin to Church members is that of a young man or a young woman choosing an ungodly partner in life. They never can expect God's blessing upon it. They tell you sometimes they hope to be the means of their friends' conversion. They have no right to hope such a thing; it so seldom occurs. The much more likely thing is, that the ungodly one will drag the other down to his level, than that the godly one shall pull the other up. We are fearful, I say, for the lambs — for we mark some of them that were as earnest as they well could be, and apparently as loving to their Lord and Master, but another love came across their path, and where are they now? Perhaps the house of God sees them no longer, and the theater or the ball room is now their delight. When we think of some cases of this kind that have occurred, we do tremble for the lambs, and lift up our hearts in prayer to God for them, that they may be kept, as kept they will be if they be truly the Lord's.

Then we are jealous over the lambs, *because of the old lion*. We have some of us had to meet him face to face, and I do assure you I had sooner suffer any temptation that the world or the flesh can bring, than to be tempted of

the devil, for when Apollyon meets Christian in the valley, it is no child's play. A man needs to be the master of every heavenly weapon to get the victory there. Better to go twenty miles round, over hedge and ditch, than to have one conflict with Satan. There is nothing gained by it. Even should we overcome, we shall be wounded, and to our dying day will bear the scars of the terrible conflict. I can now remember one or two instances in which I have had to stand foot to foot with that arch-fiend, and though my soul has held her own through divine grace, I look back upon those days of trial with sorrow still, for there were blasphemous thoughts injected which I never can forget; they were fiery darts thrown at me, and though the barbed shafts have been drawn out, the wounds are there still. Would God it had been possible to have gone that road without contending with the fiend! We are afraid for you, young lambs, when we think of the lion.

We are even more concerned *when we think of the bear*. A flattering world hugs tightly. The lion tears, and rends, and rages, but the world when it takes to loving, speaks, oh, so gently! and puts the thing so nicely! — it loves the Christian — so it says. It is fashionable to be religious; it is a creditable thing to be a professor, and then the world says, “Come to my arms; I love you. Come and be one with me, and be a Christian too! Be not so Puritanical as to thrust me away.” We are more afraid of the hugs of the bear than of the teeth of the lion.

When we put all these dangers together, we add to them the fact that lambs are subject to the same diseases which are incident to all sheep. They, too, get the foot-rot of weariness in the ways of God. They begin to be slothful and sluggish in the cause of God. They, too, suffer from coldness of heart, have a tendency to wander, and catch the stiff neck of pride. Dear lambs of the flock! those who have to see after you and are God's under-shepherds, may well offer no apology when they say they tremble for you, and put up earnest prayers on your behalf.

III. In the third place, let us REJOICE IN THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

“He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom. *Who* is he of whom such gracious words are spoken? *Who* is he that careth so tenderly for lambs? Listen! These are the words of Isaiah — “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.” So, then, it is the Lord Jehovah who comes forth to bless his people in this fashion. What condescension is

here! The Lord

God, the Eternal and Infinite, acts the part of a Shepherd. But let us read on. The words which follow the text may well astound you, when you see how our great God stoops from his loftiness to carry lambs in his bosom. “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” And yet this same God, who doth all these things, gathereth lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom. I am sure we are not sufficiently sensible of the infinite love of God in stooping to consider us. Alas I that such condescension should be so unregarded.

Reflect, I pray you, that infinite power engages to protect you, that inimitable affection sets itself on you, that wisdom which cannot err watches for your good, and that which never can be turned aside, pledges itself to bless you. Why, that God should provide for such creatures as we are is some condescension; that he should think of them with a Father’s heart is marvellous. “What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?” But that he should carry that man, nay, the weakest of such men, the lambs among this flock — that he should carry them in his arms! What shall I say to this? I will be silent on a theme which needs a more eloquent tongue than mine. Blessed be the name of such a gracious God. Brethren, rejoice in this tender Shepherd. Be confident, be grateful, be joyful, be thankful, be of good cheer evermore, for he it is that carrieth you.

But *why? Why* doth he carry lambs in his bosom? First, because *he hath a tender heart and any weakness at once melts him*. If he sees a lamb he stops as you would do if you are gentle of spirit. If he hears your sigh, your groan, or marks your ignorance or your feebleness, the very tenderness of his mind, even if there were nothing else, would constrain him to look upon you. But more, *it is his office* to consider the weak. For this it is that he was made a faithful high priest — that he might have compassion on the ignorant. For this it is that he became the mediator. He were nothing if he had not this — I mean to say that his office would be a mere sinecure, but a nominal thing, if there were no weak and feeble ones for him to care for. Reflect, too, that *he was a lamb* himself once. What a mysterious fact! If a man could have been a lamb and known a lamb’s weakness, how would he

sympathize with it? Our Jesus was and is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He knows what strong temptations mean, for he has felt the same. Do you enquire for more reasons why he carries them in his bosom? He *purchased them with blood*. He sees the marks of his passion upon every one of them, and therefore he prizes them and will not suffer them to perish. *They are his property*. He is their proprietor.

Another man's lamb he might not so carefully carry; but his own lamb, the gift of his Father, the purchase of his blood, the heritage of his reward — he must and will care for that.

Moreover, remember, *he is responsible for that lamb*. At Jacob's hand Laban required all the sheep, and at Jesus' hand every elect one will be required at the last. He is the surety of the covenant, and he is bound by covenant engagements to bring the many sons home to glory, and not to suffer one whom his Father has given him to perish by the way. Nor will he fail in his covenant, my beloved. He will be true to his pledge, and say at the last, "Here am I and the flock committed to my care."

Moreover, *they are all a part of his glory*. This flock will be as the jewels of his crown. If he lost one of them he would lose a part of his fullness, a part of his reward of his soul's travail, therefore will he never turn away his eye from them, or his hand from doing them good, but he will preserve them to the end.

But *what* does he say he will do? He says, "He will *carry* them." How does he do that — how does Jesus carry weak saints? Sometimes he carries them by *not permitting them to endure much trouble*. "He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb;" he takes them up in the arms of providence, and carries them where there is no trouble. At other times, they are carried in his arm by having some tender, *loving person*, to take care of them. He carries them instrumentally. As Christians and the other women had Mr. Great-heart to kill the giants for them, so many saints are carried in the bosom of Christ Jesus, by the loving care of some godly relative, or friend, or pastor. At other times, such lambs are carried by having an *unusual degree of love* given them, and, consequently a large amount of joy, so that they bear up and stand fast. Though their knowledge may not be deep, they have great sweetness in what they do know. They may have but little to feed on, but that little is great from its nutritive power, and they have strong digestive powers given them by which they may even suck honey out of a rock, and oil out of a flinty rock. The little becomes much. The

barley loaves and few small fishes are sufficient for the thousands of their necessities. Sometimes he carries them by giving them *a very simple faith*. Their faith may not be very strong, but it is very simple, and after all, I do not know whether I would not almost as soon have a simple faith as a strong faith, if the two could be divided. That simple faith which takes the promise just as it stands, may not comprehend its meaning fully, yet it believes it, and runs away with every trouble straight to Jesus. That is very beautiful in a child. The child has no very great extent of knowledge, and is not strong to defend itself, but what does it say when illtreated in the street? "I will tell father." And so, simple souls will go and tell their Father. They run to their big brother, the great Savior, and so the simplicity of their faith gives them an unusual degree of confidence, and they are carried in Jesus' bosom.

But to close this point, *how does he carry them?* He carries them *in his bosom* — not on his back — that is how he carries stray sheep — he flings them over his shoulders rejoicing, but they do not rejoice mind you. They will not rejoice, for they have wandered; they must be made to feel the weight of the crook, and they must pray, "Make the bones which thou hast broken to rejoice." But "He carries *the lambs* in his bosom." Here is put forth, brethren, *boundless affection*. Could he put them in his bosom if he did not love them much? Where does the Father place the Son? He is in the bosom of the Father. Where did Abraham carry Lazarus? In his bosom. Where did Naomi bear her young grandson Obed? He was in her bosom. Where did the man in the parable put his little ewe lamb? In his bosom. Christ is boundless in his affection. Then there is *tender nearness*. How near to a man is that which is in his bosom! Here you see the Lord Jesus Christ does not put his people at a distance from himself, so that he has to stretch out his hand for them, but he keeps them near; he need not stretch out his hand at all; so near are they that they could not possibly be nearer. Then it is a *hallowed familiarity*. Lambs when put into the bosom, having no intellect, cannot therefore learn anything; but the lambs of Christ's flock, whenever they ride in Christ's bosom, talk with him; they tell him all their secrets, and he tells them his. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." Oh, there are some precious love-passages between Christ and his weak ones when they are snugly housed in his bosom. It were almost profanity to talk of the union and communion, the fellowship and converse, the delightful interchange of everything that is sweet and loving between Christ and his chosen ones in

his bosom. And then, dear friends, you must not fail to remark that there is *perfect safety*. The dear ones in his bosom — what can hurt them? They must hurt the shepherd first. How can they get the lamb out of the shepherd's arm? Must they not cut off the shepherd's arm before they can hurt the lamb? Must they not smite him through his body before they can kill the creature whom he fondles! How safe are you, O weak believers! You are borne up on eagles' wings; the shot must pierce the parent bird before it can reach you; the devil must destroy your Shepherd before he can slay you. Here is comfort. Oh, what a soft place to ride in! how warm! Oh! how the warmth of the Shepherd's heart cheers his lamb! So the warmth of Jesus, and the delightful comfort of his presence, shall be enjoyed by you — the very weakest of you in answer to the supplications we put up for you, and as a result of your faith in Jesus.

I do not know what you think after reading this promise, but I think I should like to be a lamb again. Some of us have outgrown our times of doubts, and fearfulness, and so on. We have to take the work of a shepherd. I love to be a shepherd under my Master; but there is many a time I envy you. I would delight to sit in the pew and hear a sermon instead of preaching sometimes — to be fed instead of feeding you. Some of you have grown to be strong men and are engaged in looking after others. You now look back, not with sorrow exactly, but with some regret upon the sweetness of your young days, when you were so little in Israel, but were so daintily fed, so wondrously cared for. You remember what the shepherds did with Mr. Great-heart, and all the company, when they came to the Delectable Mountains. The shepherds said, "Come in, Mr. Ready-to-halt, come in, Mr. Fearing, come in, Mrs. Much-afraid;" but they never said, "Come in, Mr. Great-heart." We look after the feeble, as to you that are strong, we know you will take the comforts to yourselves. Ah! but the strongest sometimes get very weak, and those that do exploits for God, at times feel as if they could creep into a mouse-hole, and hide their heads anywhere among the very feeblest and meanest of the Lord's people, if they could but enjoy the comforts which he is pleased to give them.

IV. And now, to conclude, LET US HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE.

If you be the lambs, hear the Shepherd's voice which says, "*Follow me.*" You that are weak and feeble, and young in the divine life, keep close to Jesus. Imitate the example of Caleb, of whom we spoke a Sabbath or two ago, and follow the Lord fully. Be obedient to all his commands, and let his

faintest wish be your law. Keeping close to Jesus, you shall realize the sweetness of the text. To you that are not lambs, and as yet are not brought openly into his fold, hear his words "*Come unto me.*" That gentle Shepherd who condescends to carry the lambs, may well entice you to himself. Come, guilty souls, and flee away to him who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Take his yoke upon you and learn of him, for he is meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. No tyrannic domineering Lord commands you to crouch as a slave at his feet. The generous Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." By his love and by his pity, by his deep compassion and his infinite love, I beseech you, come to him.

Then, too, those of us who are his sheep, let us hear the Shepherd's voice, saying, "*Feed my lambs.*" If at any time we have offended, and like Peter backslidden, let this be the token of our love — this the seal by which we show to him how true is our repentance — let us feed the lambs. O matrons and strong men, mothers in Israel and princes in our host, look ye well to your sons and daughters; see ye well to your little ones; train them up for Jesus. Where ye see the divine spark, blow it with your warm breath. Watch ye for the feeble. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably" unto the tender ones. Lay yourselves out, beloved, to do good to these weak ones. Spend and be spent. Bear ye their burdens, "and so fulfill the law of Christ;" and the Lord accept and bless you all, whether sheep or lambs, for his dear sake. Amen.

DIRECTION IN DILEMMA.

NO. 541

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER
22ND, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” — Exodus 14:13.

GOD’S great design in all his works is the manifestation of his own glory. Any aim less than this were unworthy of himself. He cannot act for the good of his creatures as an ultimate aim, for that were for God to be impelled by a motive less great than his own nature. Since there can be nothing greater than the infinite, and there can be but one infinite — if the infinite God be moved by an infinite motive which is the only one worthy of him, that motive must be found in his own glory. It is, then, the Lord’s will to manifest his glory to the sons of men. But how shall the glory of God be manifested to such fallen creatures as we are? Man’s eye is not single, he has ever a side glance towards his own honor, and so is not qualified to behold the glory of his God. Vanity has covered our eyes with scales more dense, than those which fell from the eyes of Saul of Tarsus. We are always prone to put a high estimate upon what we are, or may be, or can feel, or do. It is clear, then, that self must stand out of the way, that there may be room for God to be exalted; and this is the reason, the true secret, why God bringeth his people oftentimes into straits and difficulties, that, being brought to their wits’ end, and made conscious of their own folly and weakness, they may be fitted to behold the majesty of God when he comes forth to work their deliverance. A man whose life shall be one even and smooth path, will see but little of the glory of God, for he has few occasions of self-emptying, and hence, but little fitness for being filled with the revelation of God. They who navigate little streams and shallow creeks, know but little of the God of tempests; but they who “go down to the sea in ships, and do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord,

and his wonders in the deep.” Among the huge Atlantic waves of bereavement, poverty, temptation, and reproach, we learn the power of Jehovah, because we feel the littleness of man. Self esteem is that speck in the eye which most effectually mars human vision; the Great Surgeon of souls removes this from us chiefly by sanctified afflictions. At the mouth of the furnace the Great Purifier sits as a Refiner to purify the sons of Levi, and when this work has been achieved, and they have become pure in heart, the divine purpose is accomplished, God’s glory is manifested, for the pure in heart shall see the Lord, Thank God, then, dear brother, if you have been led by a rough road: it is this which has given you your experience of God’s lovingkindness. Your troubles have enriched you with a wealth of knowledge to be gained by no other means; your trials have been the cleft of the rock in which God has set you as he did his servant Moses, that you might behold his glory as it passed by. Praise your God, O sons of sorrow, ye have not been left to the darkness and ignorance which continued prosperity might have involved. Bless him that you have been capacitated to show forth his glory by being permitted and honored to endure a great fight of affliction. Our one aim in life is, I trust, to glorify our God, and if so, are not those afflictions precious which enable us to honor him? We will call them friends, if they help us to praise God. We will wear them as jewels, and rejoice in them as a bride rejoiceth in her ornaments, if they aid us in glorifying our blessed Lord. In this spirit, we may almost envy the children of Israel as we see them entangled in the wilderness and overtaken by their foes, for now shall they see the mighty arm of God made bare.

Our text exhibits the posture in which a man should be found while exercised with trial. Methinks, also, it shows the position in which a sinner should be found when he is under trouble on account of sin. We will employ it in both ways.

I. Take our text first, as A PICTURE OF THE BELIEVER WHEN HE IS REDUCED TO GREAT STRAITS. Then God’s command to him is, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.”

In this brief sentence there are two things very conspicuous: first, *what is to be done*, “Stand still;” and secondly, *what is to be seen*, “See the salvation of the Lord.”

1. *What is to be done?* The man is brought, we will suppose, into very extraordinary difficulties. He cannot retreat — that is sure destruction; he

cannot go forward — that appears to be an impossibility: on the right hand he is shut up by providential hindrances; on the left an adversary prevents him. Here, then, is the counterpart of Israel's position: Egyptians behind, the Red Sea in front, the craggy steeps of Pi-hahiroth on the right, and the fortresses of Migdol and Baal-zephon frowning on the left. What is the believer now to do? The Master's word is the same to him as to Israel, "Stand still." Brethren, let me warn you of other advisers. *Despair* whispers, "Cast thyself down, lie down and die; complain against God; give it all up. You have been buffeting for years with circumstances, and you have made no headway; give up the unequal contest; float with the stream, even though you go over the cataract; let the worst come to the worst, for there is no hope of any success in life for you. If the Lord will always give you evil and not good, then curse God, and die. No longer attempt to provide things honest in the sight of all men, just let things go as they will; drift into poverty, or die in a ditch. God has given you up; evidently you have been the butt for all his arrows, the target for all his shots. Now, despair, let there be an end of the thing." Not so, saith the God of our salvation; he loves us too well to bid us yield to despondency. He would have us put a cheerful courage on, and even in our worst times rejoice in his love and faithfulness. Faith hears the bidding of her faithful God, and is not willing to be shut up in the iron cage of despair; nay, she defies the old giant to put so much as a finger upon her. Lie down and die? that she never will, while her God bids her *stand*. See, beloved, the word *stand*. What does it mean? Keep the posture of an upright man, ready for action, expecting further orders, cheerfully and patiently awaiting the directing voice. This is a noble posture, but to despair, is mean and beggarly. Up, brother, play the man, be strong! While Jehovah lives there is no room for fear; a happy future awaits thee; yea, the present itself is bright with mercy, for the Lord's love is still the same.

***"Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."***

"Ah," saith *Cowardice*, "Retreat." *Cowardice* whispered to the children of Israel that it was better to go back into Egypt. They are willing to go with ropes on their necks, and their hands bound behind them, and give themselves up to Pharaoh. To have their lives spared, they will relinquish their liberty. Hear them, they are basely talking about their graves while they are yet alive. So *Cowardice*, sometimes, when the Christian comes into a great strait, whispers, "Retreat to the worldling's way of action; you

cannot play the Christian's part, it is too difficult. Evidently there are some men who can have faith in God, and can live in this world, but you cannot. If you must be in business, it is vain to attempt to be a Christian," says Cowardice. "Do as others do; follow the hollow maxims and tricky customs that once ruled you; let the shop be opened again on a Sunday; adulterate the goods once more; tell lies as you once did; be as other men are; go back and be Satan's slave; it is evident that religion will not keep a coat on your back and bread on your table; give it up now; go back.

Relinquish the ways of God, and be once more a bondsman to your own corruptions and to the world's evil habits." Ah, trembler, however much Satan may urge this course upon you, you cannot follow it if you are a child of God. Cowardice may bid you do it, friends may advise it, and the devil drive you to it, but if God has quickened you by his divine Spirit, there is a something in you which is bound to go forward, which you yourself may struggle against, by virtue of the power of the old man, but which will get the mastery over you, and lead you in a divine captivity; so that even when evil is most rampant, the force of grace within will impel you towards the right, constraining you to stand in the ways of God.

Where God impels forward, hell cannot drive back. O sun, thou turnest not back, because of the clouds which veil thy splendours. Predestinated of the Lord to persevere in thy perpetual path, thou climbest still the steep of heaven, and anon, thou dost descend to the western deeps; thou pausest not for tempest, hurricane, or storm; as a strong man runs a race, so dost thou speed onward towards thy far-off goal, for the Almighty bade thee more, and in his might thou travellest onward evermore. So is it with thee, Christian, God has said "Forward." His divine fiat has bid thee go from strength to strength, and so thou shalt, and neither death nor hell shall turn thee from thy course. What, if for a while thou art called to stand still, yet this is but to renew thy strength for some greater advance in due time.

Dream not, I pray thee, of so much as *looking* back; take courage, and in believing silence, possess thy soul while thy Captain bids thee "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

Precipitancy, another evil counsellor, cries, "Do something. Something or other *must* be done. Do not despair; do not turn back, but stir yourself, and leave no stone unturned. To stand still and wait, is sheer idleness. There is no time to be lost, you *must* do something, be it right or wrong." Yes, but it is well to remember, that in some cases, the more haste the worse speed. When a Christian is in very sharp trouble, one of his strongest temptations

is to be in an unbelieving, fretful state of agitation, which leads him to premature and unwise action. How sadly some who are weak in faith are doing and nudging themselves, by indiscreet haste! If they could but be quiet in faith, and stand still in patience, until the Master led the way, they would be led aright; but they run before the cloud, and fall into the net. So in haste are they to escape from Pharaoh's clutches, that they run into them at unawares. I am sure that much of the sin which we commit when we are in trouble, is produced by our being in a flurried state of heart; for then our soul is like a silly dove without heart, which has forgotten the dovecot, and therefore flies hither and thither, round and round, at imminent peril of its life from the hawk. We *must* be doing something at once — *we* must do it so we think — instead of looking to God, who will not only do something but who will do everything. Many of us when in a strait are hardly reasonable in our hasty endeavors. Fear blindfolds the judgment, and makes fools of us. Why is there any need of such speedy leaping — why not stand still and look? Are all means gone for ever if not snatched at in an instant? Will the Lord's arm grow short if I wait *his* time? Such questions we forget to ask; and, therefore, on we go, but our rash advance sinks us deeper in the mire; very soon we try something else, and only plunge into greater trials. We fly to this friend, and take his advice, and then to that, and get the reverse; then we go by our own judgment, and are, perhaps, greater fools still. O that we could learn to trust in the Lord with all our hearts, and lean not to our own understanding! What the Christian does with cool deliberation, when he has waited upon God, when, like David, he has said, "Bring hither the ephod," he does with a purpose, and God is with him; but what he does when he is excited or depressed, with an aching head and a fluttered heart, he will usually find cause to mourn over, and possibly he will be involved in more trouble through what he has done himself, than through the affliction which God sent him. But faith, I say, listens neither to Despair, nor to Cowardice, nor to Precipitancy, but it hears God say, "Stand still," and immoveable as a rock it stands.

Another hiss of the old serpent, is the suggestion of *presumption*. "On, on," says Presumption, "neck or nothing, make or break. If the sea be before you, march into it and expect a miracle. It is true you have no divine command, but never mind, your own daring will work wonders. You know you are ordained to inherit Canaan, and therefore go on towards it, sea or no sea. God has not commanded you, and he has not as yet divided the sea, but still go on." Dear brethren there is much hellish craft in this temptation;

it is peculiarly adapted to beguile those advanced Christians, who know what it is to walk by faith. I am afraid it is very easy for us to mistake presumption for faith, although there is a wide difference between the two. There is so much of dash and dare about an incitement to presumption, that brave, Christ-loving spirits must be on their guard against it, for presumption will never work the wonders of faith. If Christ bids me come on the water to him, faith shall tread the billow; but if I spring upon the water myself, to walk to Christ, I must expect to sink far sooner than Peter did. When our illustrious Commander putteth a man upon an extraordinary work, he will give him extraordinary strength; but if a soldier runneth without the captain's order, and defieth a giant adversary, he may not expect assistance, and will be sure to return with defeat. What a needful prayer is that, "Show me what I am to do." In dilemmas between one duty and another, it is so sweet to be humble as a child, and wait with simplicity of soul upon the Lord. It is sure to be well with us when we feel and know our own folly, and are heartily willing to be guided by the will of God. Such standing still has more true valor in it than the mad charges and dashes of an arrogant presuming. My soul, seek thou earnestly the grace to stand still in obedience to thy Lord's behest.

But in what way are we to *stand still*, dear friends? Surely it means among other things, that we are to *wait awhile*. Time is precious, but there are occasions when the best use we can make of it, is to let it run on. If time flies, that is no reason why I am always to fly. Every experienced man knows that by being wrongly busy for one hour, he may make mischief which a lifetime would hardly rectify. I may cut my fingers if I am too fast in reaching down my sword; and if I run without waiting to enquire the way, I may run upon my ruin. Many who have been very busy in helping themselves, had better have been waiting upon their Lord. Prayer is never a waste of time. A man who would ride post-haste, had better wait till he is perfectly mounted or he may slip from the saddle. He who glorifies God by standing still, is better employed than he who diligently serves his own self-will. Wait awhile, then. *Wait in prayer*, however. Call upon God, and spread the case before him; tell him your difficulty, and plead his promise of aid. Express your unstagging confidence in him; *wait in faith*, for unfaithful, untrusting waiting, is but an insult to the Lord. Believe that if he shall keep you tarrying even till midnight, yet he will come at the right time; the vision shall come and shall not tarry. Wait in quiet *patience*, not murmuring because you are under the affliction, but blessing God for it;

never murmuring against the second cause, as the children of Israel did against Moses; never wish you could go back to the world again, but accept the case as it stands, and put it as it stands simply and with your whole heart, without any self-will, into the hand of your covenant God, saying, "Now, Lord, not my will, but thine be done. I know not what to do; I am brought to extremities, but I will wait until thou shalt cleave the floods, or else drive back my foes. I will wait, if thou keep me many a day, for my heart is fixed upon thee alone, O God, and my spirit waiteth for thee in the full conviction that thou wilt yet be my joy and my salvation, my refuge and my strong tower."

Well, brethren, this is what is to be done. I dare say you will think it a very easy thing to *stand still*, but it is one of the postures which a Christian soldier learns not without years of teaching. I find that marching and quick marching are much easier to God's warriors than standing still. It is, perhaps, the first thing we learn in the drill of human armies, but it is one of the most difficult to learn under the Captain of our salvation. The apostle seems to hint at this difficulty when he says, "Stand fast, and having done all, still stand." To stand at ease in the midst of tribulation, shows a veteran spirit, long experience, and much grace.

2. But now, secondly, *what is to be seen?* You are to see, O believer, the salvation of God. In your present temporal trials, you are to see God's power and love manifested. Now, I think I hear you say, "Well, one thing I know, *I cannot deliver myself* out of the dilemma in which I am now placed. I had some dependence once upon my own judgment and upon my own ability, but that dependence is entirely gone." I thank God for that. It is a good thing for you sometimes, Christian, to be wholly weaned from yourself. When you are made sick of self-dependance, it is not long ere your spirit shall be in a healthy state of trustfulness in your God. "Well, but," you say, "*I cannot conceive how* God can deliver me; I have tried to think by what means he will interpose, but I cannot see a door open, nor a way of escape." This is well too, for now this shows that human wisdom is dead. God has nonplussed your wit; he has made a fool of your judgment; he laughs to scorn all that keen intellect of yours which once was your confidence. Now you shall see divine wisdom. When self goes, God comes in; and when human wisdom goes, then God's wisdom appears. "Well, but," says one, "whatever God may do for me, I can clearly perceive it must be his own doing, for *I am powerless*, paralyzed. I am so utterly broken by the strength of this tremendous current, that if it be stemmed, it

must be divine energy that stems it; I cannot do it." And this is well too, for now your power is dead. It is now that all the glory will be to God. While you had some power to help yourself, you would have shared the crown; but now, since all might is centred in the eternal arm, the whole of the crown shall be put on the eternal head. I am glad that your flesh is thus brought to a state of utter death. "Ah, but," you say, "sir, *I cannot believe* it possible that I should be delivered. I find my faith, this morning, reduced to the lowest ebb; it has run dry; I cannot believe the promise." "Ah, now," you say, "even my faith fails me." Every thing that is of the creature has now gone; you are like the poor lost one in the desert, your tongue faileth for thirst; and now the Lord will save, for the God of Israel will not forsake thee. Evidently you are reduced to the extremity of an extremity, when hope and faith alike are drowned; but now it is that the Lord will manifest his mighty strength. But you are saying, "What shall I see?" Well, I know not precisely what you shall see, except I am sure of this, you shall see *the salvation of God*, and in that salvation you shall see two or three things, just as the children of Israel saw them. You shall see, if needs be, *all nature and all providence subservient to God's love*. They saw the waters stand upright, contrary to nature; the east wind was made at once to obey God's behests, and blow all that night; thus they saw how there was nothing upon earth which could stand against the divine will. And you shall see the same. If it be needful for your deliverance, fire shall not burn you, neither shall the floods drown you. If you cannot be helped in the common order of providence, God will give some extraordinary proofs of his power. It may be that as you look back upon the method of your deliverance, you will be so surprised at it, that you will say, "If anybody had told me this beforehand, I would have laughed at them; but now I admire and wonder at the love of God." You shall be led to see that all things, even the most deadly, work together for good to them that love God. The waters cannot drown them, but they shall drown their foes. You will see again if you will but stand still and see it, that *the Lord reigneth*. You shall have such a picture of Jehovah sitting upon his throne, controlling and overruling all things, that you shall extol him with your whole heart as your God and King for ever. You shall see most distinctly, if you will but wait and look for it, how he can make you a wonder. *You shall be a wonder to yourself*, and marvel how it is that God supports you. You shall be a wonder to your enemies. You shall do what they cannot do; you shall walk through the depths of the sea, which the Egyptians, assaying to do, were drowned. You shall see *your enemies utterly destroyed*, if you will but wait. God's bow

shall be made quite naked. He shall make bare his arm. Death and hell shall lie at your feet. Your spiritual and your temporal trials too, shall be subdued under you; you shall tread them as straw is trodden for the dunghill. And as for you, if you will but stand and see it, you shall go forth like Miriam, with your timbrel of mirth and with your dance of joy. You cannot think it possible, shivering as you now are with the sight of your troubles, alarmed and afraid, that ever you should be singing “O let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;” but you shall, in this life you shall praise him; and if not, in the life which is to come, on that glorious shore you shall look back on all these perplexities and tribulations, and you shall say, “Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he cast into the sea.” Only learn to “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.”

I have had this text burnt into my own consciousness. I desire to be found in that posture with regard to my own position in Christ’s Church, and the work that the Master would have me perform. There are hours of perplexity when the most willing spirit, anxiously desirous to serve the Lord, knows not what part to take. Then what shall it do? Vex itself by despair? Fly back in cowardice, turn to the right hand in fear, or rush forward in presumption? No, but just say, “Lord, thou knowest what I know not. Make a plain path for my feet; because of mine enemies, be my guide. Guide me with thy counsel while on earth, and afterward receive me to glory.” Depend upon it, beloved, if we can get and keep in that frame of mind, it will not be long ere God shall say to us, as distinctly as ever Moses said to the people, “Go forward;” and we shall go forward to our joy and rejoicing, praising and magnifying his dear name.

II. I intend to take the text in reference to THE SINNER BROUGHT INTO THE SAME CONDITION IN A MORAL SENSE. I will trust that I have in this house of prayer this morning, some who have been led by God’s Spirit out of the Egypt of their sins, where they did eat the leeks, and garlicks, and onions of their own sinful pleasures, but where they were made to smart as bondslaves under the law. You have begun to feel some divine awakenings. The Spirit of God has somewhat delivered you from the corruption of your former estate, but you are, as yet, under conviction. You have as yet found no peace, no solid peace. Your sins are around you; you can hear their hoarse voices as they threaten to drag you back or to destroy you. Before you flows the tempestuous and deep sea of divine wrath: you know how richly you deserve it; and your spirit sinks within you as you think how

soon it may swallow you up. On the right hand and on the left, you see no method of escape. You had hoped to deliver yourself by your own righteousness, but the law, like Pi-hahiroth, riseth up with craggy battlements, and blocks the way. On the right hand, you seek to escape by ceremonies, but some dreadful threatening of God against the depravity of your nature, at once shuts out all hope in that direction. You are come, this day, to a dead stand. Well, now, *what are you to do?* What is the Master's word to you? O sinner, thus convinced of sin, my message from the Lord to thee, is "*Stand still.*" Understand what I mean, however, by it. I do not mean stand still in indifference, as though it were a little matter whether thou be damned or not; I do not mean stand still in inaction, without prayer, without repentance, without faith, but what I do mean is this, "*Stand still,*" first in the renunciation of all thine own righteousness, and of all attempts to seek a righteousness by thine own doings. Man, thou hast been hunting the whole world round to get something that may commend thee to God — cease thy hunting and stand still. Thou hast toiled and trodden many a weary league of performances, and prayers, and thinkings, and willings, and doings, but thou art not an inch the better for it. Thou hast tried to make thyself feel this, and to compel thyself to do the other, but thou art still as much in darkness as thou wast at the first. O, leave, leave, I pray thee, all these attempts to work out a salvation for thyself, and with regard to them all, "*Stand still.*" For, trembling soul, how canst thou hope to save thyself by thine own doings? Canst thou keep the law?

Remember it is exceeding broad: it takes in all thine actions, private as well as public; thy words, even thine idle words; nay, it touches thy thoughts, the imagination and the thoughts of thy heart. Canst thou keep a law so spiritual as this? Dost thou believe that thou canst live without sinful thoughts? Now, mark thee, if thou hadst no acts of transgression, yet thy thoughts of themselves were enough to send thee to the lowest hell. Why, when first of all a Christian gets a true view of the spirituality and extent of the divine command, when he hears the Master's words and understands them, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" when he knows that this is true of every other command, that the *thought* of evil is sin, then he throws down the trowel with which he hoped to build himself a Babel tower of righteousness, and he saith; "I cannot do it, it is impossible; the law is too great; I cannot attain unto it." Besides, remember thine own weakness, sinner. Hast thou tried to keep the law? Hast thou not come down from thy chamber in the morning, full of as good resolves as ever were in a man's

heart, and yet before the first meal was over, hast thou not committed thyself by some wrong expression; some angry temper? Didst thou ever pass a day without sin? Couldst thou do it? Your many break-downs and failures all tell you that there is no strength in your hand sufficient to open the gates of heaven, no power in your feet that shall be strong enough to make you tread the weary pathway that would lead to salvation by the works of the law. Stand still, sinner; why attempt a task for which thou art incapable? Do, I pray thee, recollect if thou couldst perform it for the future, yet thy past sins — where are they? Why, man, remember thy youth of folly. Didst thou always honor thy father and thy mother? Did thy young tongue always speak the truth? Is it not true of thee as the apostle said, “They go astray from the womb, speaking lies.” Is it not one of the earliest things a child doth, to lie? and do not all these things stand in the book of God against you? There are your youthful sins. Who among us can look back upon our youth, with all its hot blood, without regret. “O God, lay not the sins of my youth to my door!” may be the prayer of even the most righteous man. And, bethink thee, what have been the crimes of thine age? O soul, if thou wilt but look back through the glass of the revelation of God, remembering that thy thoughts and thy words come into the account, thou wilt surely see it to be a long, black, dismal list of reasons for condemnation. You cannot find in your whole life any cause why mercy should be extended, but you can see twenty thousand reasons why justice should have its way with you. Why, then, dost thou seek, being already over head and ears in debt, to work out thine own salvation by the law?

Thou hast already broken it, why try to keep it? That alabaster vase of God’s command — if thou couldst have kept it spotless and whole would have been a passport of entrance for thee at the gates of heaven, but thou hast broken it — broken it to shivers, and thy black and foul fingers have taken away all whiteness from it. O, be not so foolish as to seek to do what thy past sins have rendered impossible! Moreover, soul, I do beseech thee to remember that thou canst not satisfy divine justice. What if thou shouldst put thy poor body through a thousand mortifications, starve it in a prison, or stretch it upon a rack, or broil it upon the fire, or drown it in the sea? None of these things could take away the anger of God against thee for thy sin. Nay, when thou shalt lie in hell, though the flames be hot, yet there is no power in the torments of hell to make expiation for sin. The sinner is still as much an object of God’s righteous detestation, after millions of years of agony, as when first the law’s great whip began to fall. Wherefore then, dost thou go about hoping to do what the justice of God

may well assure thee no creature of the race of Adam can do? And wilt thou recollect, too, that if — *if* thou couldst atone for the past, and if thou couldst prevent one sin for the future, yet thou thyself art vile. Thy nature is as evil as thine actions. The marrow of thy bones is impregnated with thy lust, and in thy blood there rolls a black stream of sin. Thou art thyself loathsome. Not only doth evil come from thee, but there is a fountain of evil within thee. The leprosy lies deep within. Thou art thyself an enemy to God, and thy carnal mind cannot be reconciled to God. No power can reconcile it. God can give thee a new mind, and a new heart, and a right spirit, but the old nature in thee is so bad that it cannot be mended; it must be dead and buried, crucified and slain with Christ, for while it lives, there is no perfection for thee; it cannot help thee, it can only mar God's work, till God strike the nail through its head, even as Jael slew Sisera of old. Sinner, why wilt thou be trying thy prayers, thy church-goings, thy sacraments, thy chapel-goings, thy baptisms, and the like? All these are a lie and a vanity, if thou trustest in them. Even God's own ordained ordinances become a farce and a delusion when once you make them the foundation of your hope —

*“None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

Sinner, stand still now.

But now, in the second and last place, upon this point, the sinner says, “Suppose then, I give up all hope, and do no more by way of trusting to myself, *what shall I see?*” Why, thou shalt see the salvation of God. Do remark, dear friends, that all the sinner can do, is to see this salvation. He is not to work it out, he is not to help it on, but he is to see it; yet, mark you, that sinner cannot even find out that salvation of itself, for if you notice, the next sentence to our text is, “which he will show you to-day.” God must show it to us, or else we cannot see it. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” There must be a manifestation of Christ to us, before we shall ever be able to perceive him. O that the Lord would now, while I talk for a few more minutes, reveal his great salvation to some sinner who is standing still. Now, soul, thou art thoroughly prepared to give up thy self-righteousness. Thou art willing to be nothing, and to do nothing, in order to save thyself, then let me tell thee, God has wrought out and brought in a glorious and complete salvation, more resplendent far than that which he meritoriously wrought for Israel in

the Red Sea. I will tell thee of it. First, *it was ordained* of old, like that deliverance of the Red Sea. God had planned that. Before Pharaoh lived it was written in the eternal decree, "For this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show forth my power in thee." From old eternity God had chosen Israel to be the objects of his love, and cast away Egypt that it might show his honor in his terrible justice. The salvation of God's people was ordained of old. Before yon mountains lifted their hoar heads, he ordained to save his people; and long ere the ancient deeps began to roar in their channels, he had chosen them. God did not choose the Israelites because of any goodness in them; they were a stiff-necked generation; they had no hand in their own choice; he called their father Abraham, as a Syrian ready to perish, and made him his chosen, and made a covenant with his seed after him. And so, God has prepared a salvation for his elect, chosen by him not because of any goodness in them, but because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. Is not this a salvation that will suit thee, O poor sinner? If God had chosen them out of any merit, or if that choice depended on anything which men did or could do, thou wert a damned soul, for thou hast no goodness, and thou canst do nothing. If God's election comes to those who are without merit, without hope, without strength, here is hope for thee. In the next place, the salvation which God shows is one *wrought by a mediator*. Moses was the mediator of that time. He stretched his rod over the sea. Jesus is the great mediator, of whom Moses was the feeble type. Sinner, Jesus Christ has divided the Red Sea of God's wrath, lifting up himself upon the cross, a mightier weapon far than Moses' rod; he made the floods of God's wrath retire, that all his chosen might march through. If thou believest in him; if standing still to-day thou wilt but see the salvation of God, thou mayst discern a path to heaven over which no waters of divine wrath can ever dash. Christ himself has substituted his own person for thine: he took your guilt and stood as a sinner in the sight of God. He was punished instead of your being punished, and it is impossible, according to equity, that God can punish two for the one offense. If Christ has paid the debt, the debt is paid. Since Jesus was the substitute, wrath is gone. If Christ drank all the hell-draught, then there is not a drop left for any of those to drink for whom he died; and if thou canst see this morning (it is all thou hast to do), if thou canst see that Christ has done this, rest thou assured that God who showed it to thee, has not showed thee a lie. Well do I remember when first my eyes saw the complete salvation of Christ Jesus. I had been gadding about after

this, and that, and the other, but when I heard the gospel-message, "Look! look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth," I did nothing; I only trusted Christ to save me; I turned away from deadly doings and from soul-destroying feelings, to the wounded body of the Savior, and believed that he had saved me, trusted to the merit of his life, and to the prevalence of his death, and to the mighty power of his plea, and then the Spirit of God bore witness with my spirit, that I was born of God, and sin was put away. Sinner, if thou art standing still — I pray God thou hast been brought to that — then *look!* Canst thou not see it? Was ever anything more plain. Jehovah's darling son becomes a man! Oh, mystery of mysteries. God was manifest in the flesh as a man. He stands as the representative head of all his elect. Being such, when Justice cried, "Bring hither the sinner," Christ came forward, bound like a captive and a malefactor. "Strip that sinner" said Justice; and they stripped him naked to his shame. "Bring forth the whip," said Justice. "Ply it hard." "He gave his back to the smiter, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." "Drag him to execution," said Justice, "a sinner must die." They pierced his hands and his feet; they lifted him up upon the tree; they gave him vinegar to drink in the midst of his bitterest grief; they mocked him in his extreme sorrows; he cried to God, but God could not help a sinner, and Christ stood as such, though in him was no sin. That shriek of "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,*" was the gathering up of all human misery. Hell did not know a more dolorous cry, than "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Let the thunderbolts be launched, let the lightning scathe him, let every demon of the pit come up against him, let every friend forsake him, let his heart break, let his tongue cleave to his mouth, let his mouth become a furnace, let his heart be melted like wax, let the joints of his bones be loosed, let him come into the jaws of death — the law requires it all. It is done. Justice, hast thou any more to demand? She answers "No." The mighty substitute exclaims, "It is finished," and finished it is. The Red Sea of justice is effectually and perpetually divided. "But," saith one, "is this for the elect?" It is, and for them only. "But how know I whether I am one of them?" The elect are known by this — "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." The true mark of election is *trust*. If you will stand still and trust Christ, you are as certainly one of his elect as the apostles that are before his throne. *Trust* is the infallible mark of election; it is by this we make our calling and election sure. Believe thou in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Stand still, then, and see salvation in Jesus. "Well," says one, "but you really do not mean to say that I am now,

just as I am, to trust Christ to save me, and it is all done?" I do. Sinner, thou hast not misunderstood me. It is just that. Sinner, nothing do, either great or small, Jesus did it all, long, long ago. To add anything to him were to insult his perfect work; to hope to complete his matchless righteousness were impertinence; to imagine that thou couldst make better that which he has finished, were an idle, soul-destroying dream. Take a finished Savior just as he is, and you are saved *now*, although you have no good thing of your own. Away with those rusty farthings of your own merit, those proposals and vows of your own doings. Take Jesus as he is, and that act of accepting Christ through his merit saves your soul. After you have done this, then will come the command — "Go forward." For the present, all we have to say to you, poor trembler, is, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." May the Lord bless these last words to the sinner, and my first words to the saint, and we will together stand still and see what the Lord hath wrought; we will together sing unto him, for he will triumph gloriously, and all our enemies shall be cast into the midst of the sea. The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PAUL — HIS CLOAK AND HIS BOOKS.

NO. 542

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER
29TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.” — 2 Timothy 4:13.

FOOLISH persons have made remarks upon the trifles of Scripture. They have marvelled why so little a matter as a cloak should be mentioned in an inspired book; but they ought to know that this is one of the many indications that the book is by the same author as the book of nature. Are there not things which our short-sightedness would call trifles in the volume of creation around us? What is the peculiar value of the daisy upon the lawn, or the buttercup in the meadow? Compared with the rolling sea, or the eternal hills, how inconsiderable they seem! Why has the humming bird a plumage so wondrously bejewelled, and why is so much marvellous skill expended upon the wing of a butterfly? Why such curious machinery in the foot of a fly, or such a matchless optical arrangement in the eye of a spider? Because to most men these are trifles, are they to be left out of nature's plans? No; because greatness of divine skill is as apparent in the minute as in the magnificent: and even so in Holy Writ, the little things which are embalmed in the amber of inspiration are far from inappropriate or unwise. Besides, in providence are there not trifles? It is not every day that a nation is rent by revolution, or a throne shaken by rebellion: far oftener a bird's-nest is destroyed by a child, or an ant-hill overturned by a spade. It is not at every hour that a torrent inundates a province, but how frequently do the dewdrops moisten the green leaves? We do not often read of hurricanes, tornadoes, and

earthquakes, but the annals of

providence could reveal the history of many a grain of dust borne along in the summer's gale, many a sear leaf rent from the poplar, and many a rush waving by the river's brim. Hence learn to see in the littles of the Bible, the God of providence and nature. Observe two pictures, and you will, if thoroughly skilled in art, detect certain minute details, which indicate the same authorship if they are by the same hand; the very littlenesses often, to men of artistic eye, will betray the painter more certainly than the more prominent strokes, which might far more easily be counterfeited. Experts detect a handwriting by a slight quivering in the upstrokes, the turn of the final mark, a dot, a cross, or less matters still. Can we not see the legible handwriting of the God of nature and providence, in the very fact that the sublimities of revelation are interspersed with homely, every-day remarks? But they are not trifles, after all. I venture to say, that my text has much in it of spiritual instruction. I trust that *this cloak* may warm your hearts this morning, that *these books* may give you instruction, and that *the apostle* himself, may be to you an example of heroism, fitted to stir your minds to imitation.

I. First, let us LOOK AT THIS MEMORABLE CLOAK which Paul left with Carpus at Troas. Troas was a principal seaport-town of Asia Minor. Very likely the apostle Paul was seized at Troas on the second occasion of his being taken before the Roman emperor. The soldiers usually appropriated to themselves any extra garment in the possession of an arrested person, such things being considered as the perquisites of those who made the arrest. The apostle may have been forewarned of his seizure, and therefore prudently committed his few books and his outer garment, which made up all his household stuff, to the care of a certain honest man named Carpus. Although Troas was full six hundred miles' journey from Rome, yet the apostle Paul is too poor to purchase a garment, and so directs Timothy, as he is coming that way, to bring his cloak. He needs it much, for the sharp winter is coming on, and the dungeon is very, very chilly. This is a brief detail of the circumstances. What kind of cloak it was, certain learned commentators have spent whole pages in trying to discover; but as we know nothing at all about it ourselves, we will leave the question to them, believing that they know as much as we do, but no more.

1. But what does the cloak teach us? There are five or six lessons in it. The first is this — *let us perceive here with admiration, the complete self-sacrifice of the apostle Paul for the Lord's sake.* Remember, my dear friends, what the apostle once was. He was great, famous, and wealthy; he

had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. He was so zealous among his brethren, that he could not but have commanded their sincere respect. He was attended by a guard of soldiers when he went from Jerusalem to Damascus. I do not know whether the horse on which he rode was his own, but he must have been a man of importance to have been allotted so important a post in religious matters. He was a man of good standing in society, and doubtless, everybody looking at young Saul of Tarsus would have said, "He will make a great man; he has every chance in life; he has a liberal education, a zealous temperament, abundant gifts, and the general esteem of the Jewish rulers; he will rise to eminence." But when the Lord met him that day on the road to Damascus, how everything changed with him! Then he could truly say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him." He begins to preach — away goes his character. Now, nothing is too bad for Paul among his Jewish associates. "Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live," was the exact expression of Jewish feeling towards him. He continues his labors, and away has gone his wealth — he has either scattered it among the poor, or it has been sequestered by his former friends. He journeys from place to place at no small sacrifice of comfort. The wife to whom he was probably once united — for no unmarried man could vote in Sanhedrim as Paul did against Stephen — had fallen sick and died, and the apostle now preferred a life of singleness, that he might give himself entirely to his work. If in this world only he had hope, he would have been of all men the most miserable. He has at length grown grey, and now the very men who owed their conversion to him have forsaken him. When he first came into Rome they stood with him, but now they have all gone like winter's leaves, and the poor old man, "such an one as Paul the aged," sits with nothing in all the world to call property but an old cloak and a few books, and those are six hundred miles away. Ah! how he emptied himself, and to what extremity of destitution was he willing to bring himself for Christ's name sake. Do not complain that he mentions his clothes: a greater than he did so, and did so in an hour more solemn than that in which Paul wrote the Epistle. Remember who it was that said "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." The Savior must die in absolute nakedness, and the apostle is made something like him as he sits shivering in the cold.

Brethren, was Paul right in all this? Were his sacrifices reasonable? Was the object which he contemplated worthy of all this suffering and self-denial? Was he carried away by an excessive heat of fanaticism to spend upon an inferior object what was not required of him? No believer here thinks so. You all believe that if you could give up substance, and talent, and esteem, yea, and your own life also for Christ, it would be well spent. I say you think so, but how many of us have ever carried it out? Had I not better say, how few of us? There are some who seldom have an opportunity for sacrificing for Christ at all. What they give, is spared from their superfluity; they never feel it. It is a high luxury when a man has such a love for Jesus that he is able to give until he pinches himself. If Paul were reasonable, what are you and I? If Paul only gives as a Christian should do, how ashamed should we be of ourselves? If he will bring himself to poverty for Christ, what shall we say of those base-born professors who will not lose a trifle in their trade for honesty's sake? What shall we say of those who say "I know how to get money, and I know how to keep it too," and look with scorn upon those who are more generous than they. If you are content to condemn Paul, and charge him with folly, do so, but if not, if this be but a reasonable service, and such as the infinite grace of God which Paul experienced required of him, then let us do something of the like sort. If you have experienced as much love, love the Lord as much, and spend, and be spent for the Lord Jesus.

2. Secondly, dear friends, we learn *how utterly forsaken the apostle was by his friends*. If he had not a cloak of his own, could not some of them lend him one? Ten years before, the apostle was brought in chains along the Appian way to Rome; and fifty miles before he reached Rome, a little band of members of the Church came to meet him; and when he came within twenty miles of the city, at the "Three Taverns," there came a still larger *posse* of the disciples to escort him, so that the chained prisoner Paul, went into Rome attended by all the believers in that city. He was then a younger man; but now for some reason or other, ten years afterwards, nobody comes to visit him. He is confined in prison, and they do not even know where he is, so that Onesiphorus, when he comes to Rome, has to seek him out very diligently. He is as obscure as if he had never had a name, and though he is still as great and glorious an apostle as ever, men have so forgotten him, and the Church has so despised him, that he is friendless. The Philippian Church, ten years before, had made a collection for him when he was in prison; and though he had learned in whatsoever state he

was, therewith to be content, yet he thanked them for their contribution as an offering of a sweet smelling savor unto God. Now he is old, and no Church remembers him. He is brought to trial, and there are Eubulus, and Pudens, and Linus — will not some of them stand by his side when he is brought before the emperor? “At my first answer no man stood with me.” Poor soul, he served his God, and worked himself down to poverty for the Church’s sake, yet the Church has forsaken him! Oh! how great must have been the anguish of the loving heart of Paul at such ingratitude. Why did not the few who were in Rome, if they had been never so poor, make a contribution for him? Could not those who were of Caesar’s household, have found a cloak for the apostle? No; he is so utterly left, that although he is ready to die of ague in the dungeon, not a soul will lend or give him a cloak. What patience does this teach to those similarly situated! Has it fallen to thy lot, my brother, to be forsaken of friends? Were there other times when your name was the symbol of popularity, when many lived in your favor like insects in your sunbeam — and has it come to this now, that you are forgotten as a dead man out of mind? In your greatest trials do you find your fewest friends? Have those who once loved and respected you, fallen asleep in Jesus? And have others turned out to be hypocritical and untrue? What are you to do now? You are to remember this case of the apostle; it is put here for your comfort. He had to pass through as deep waters as any that you are called to ford, and yet remember, he says, “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.” So now, when man deserts you, God will be your friend. This God is our God *for ever and ever* — not in sunshiny weather only, but for ever and ever. This God is our God in dark nights as well as in bright days. Go to him, spread your complaint before him. Murmur not. If Paul had to suffer desertion, you must not expect better usage. Let not your faith fail you, as though some new thing had happened to you. This is common to the saints. David had his Ahithophel, Christ his Judas, Paul his Demas, and can you expect to fare better than they? As you look at that old cloak, as it speaks of human ingratitude, be of good courage, and wait on the Lord, for he shall strengthen thy heart. “Wait, I say, on the Lord.”

3. There is a third lesson. Our text *shows the apostle’s independence of mind*. Why did not the apostle borrow a cloak? Why did not he beg one? No, no, no. That is not to the apostle’s taste at all. He has a cloak, and though it is six hundred miles away, he will wait until it comes. Though there may be some that may lend, he knows that they who go a borrowing

go a sorrowing, and that they who beg are seldom welcome. I do not think a Christian man should blush to borrow or to beg if he be absolutely brought to it, but I never like that class of people who do either systematically. I wish many of the poor would not damage the charity of others by being so ready to beg on every presence of necessity. A Christian man would do well to remember that it is never to his honor, though it is not always to his dishonor, to beg. "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed," said the *unfaithful* steward, and if he had been a *faithful* one he would have been more ashamed still. I say again, when it comes to the pinch, and a man must ask of his fellow, let him do it boldly; but let him never be too ready to do it, but, like the apostle, as long as he can do without it, let him say, "I have labored with my own hand, and eaten no man's bread for nought." He taught that the minister of God had a right to be supported by the people. "If ye partake of heir spirituals," says he, "it is right that you give of your temporals." He insists upon it that they are not to muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn; yet, though he holds this as a great general principle, he never takes anything himself; he follows his trade of tentmaking; he stitches away at the canvas, and earns his own living, so that he is chargeable unto no man. Noble example! How anxious all Christians ought to have been to see that he did not come to want in his old age! Yet he does come to poverty; but his independent spirit is not broken to the last, for he will wait till his own cloak is brought six hundred miles, rather than ask any man to give or lend. Let the Christian man be quite as independent, for though independence is not a Christian grace, yet it is a common grace which, when wreathed with Christianity, is very beautiful, and befits the character of a son of God.

4. The fourth remark is: *see here, how very little the apostles thought about how they were dressed*. Paul wants enough to keep him warm; he asks no more. There is no doubt whatever, that the other parts of his garments were getting very dilapidated — that he was indeed in a state of rags, and so he needed the cloak to wrap about him. We read in olden times of many of the most eminent servants of God being dressed in the poorest manner. When good Bishop Hooper was led out to be burnt, he had been long in prison, and his clothes were so gone from him, that he borrowed an old scholar's gown, full of rags and holes, that he might put it on, and went limping with pains of sciatica and rheumatism to the stake. We read of Jerome of Prague, that he lay in a damp, cold dungeon, and was refused anything to cover him in his nakedness and cold. Some

ministers are very careful lest they should not always be dressed in a canonical or gentlemanly manner. I like that remark of Whitfield's, when some one of a bad character wondered how he could preach without a cassock. "Ah," he said, "I can preach without a cassock, but I cannot preach without a character." What matters the outward garment, so long as the character be right? This is a lesson to our private members too. We sometimes hear them say, "I could not come out on the Sabbath: I had not fit clothes to come in." Any clothes are fit to come to the house of God with, if they are paid for, no matter how coarse they may be. If they are the best God has given you, do not murmur. Inasmuch as the trial of raiment is a very sharp one to some of the poorest of God's people, I think this text was put into the Bible for their comfort. Your Master wore no soft and dainty raiment. His garment was the simple peasant's smock-frock, woven from the top throughout without seam, and yet he never blushed to wear it in the presence of kings and priests. I shall always believe that the Christian ought to cultivate a noble indifference to these outward things; but when it comes to the pinch of absolute want of clothing, then he may comfort himself in this thought, "Now am I companion with the Master; now do I walk in the same temptation as the apostles; now I suffer even as they also suffered." Every saint is an image of Christ, but a poor saint is his express image, for Christ was poor. So, if you are brought to such a pitch with regard to poverty, that you scarcely know how to provide things decent by way of raiment, do not be dispirited; but say, "My Master suffered the same, and so did the apostle Paul;" and so take heart, and be of good cheer.

5. Paul's cloak at Troas, shows me *how mighty the apostle was to resist temptation*. "I do not see that," you say. The apostle had the gift of miracles. Our Savior, though able to work miracles, never wrought anything like a miracle on his own account; nor did his apostles. Miraculous gifts were entrusted to them with gospel ends and purposes, for the good of others and for the promotion of the truth; but never for themselves. Our Savior was tempted of the devil, you will remember, when he was hungry, to turn stones into bread. That was a strong temptation to apply miraculous powers which were intended for other ends, to his own comfort. But he rebuked Satan, and said, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Paul also had power to have created a cloak if he had liked. Why could he not? His very shadow healed the sick; if he had willed it, he could have prevented the cold and damp from having any effect upon himself; He

who had once raised to life dead Eutychus, when he had fallen from a loft, and brought back the vital heat, could certainly have kept the heat in his own body if he had chosen. And I am bold to say, the devil often came to him and said, "If thou be an apostle of God, if thou canst work miracles, command this atmosphere to rise in temperature, or these rags to be joined together, and form thee a comfortable raiment." You do not know — you cannot tell, for you were never put to it, what were the stern struggles the apostle must have had in resisting the foul temptation to use his miraculous gifts for himself. O brethren, I am afraid you and I are much more ready to give way to self than was the apostle. We preach the gospel, and if God helps us, oh! directly the devil will have us to take some of the praise. "You preached a good sermon this morning," said one to John Bunyan, as he came down the stairs. "You are too late," said honest John, "the devil told me that when I was preaching." Yes, we work the miracles, but take the honor of it to ourselves. There is the temptation to any man who hath gifts, to use them to his own purposes, and if he does, he is an unfaithful steward to his Master. I do beseech you, whether in the Sunday-school or the Church, never let the miracle-working power which God has given you be used for yourselves. You can do for Christ's sake mighty things, through faith and prayer, but never let prayer and faith be prostituted to so base a purpose as to minister unto the flesh. I know carnal minds will not comprehend this, but spiritual minds, who know the temptations of the devil, will know how stern must be a life-long battle to keep ourselves back from doing that which might apparently make us happy, but which would at the same time make us unholy.

6. The sixth lesson from this cloak is, *we are taught in this passage how precisely similar one child of God is to another.* I know we look upon Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, as being very great and blessed beings — we think that they lived in a higher region than we do. We cannot think that if they had lived in these times, they would have been Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We suppose that these are very bad days, and that any great height of grace, or self-denial, is not very easily attainable. Brethren, my own conviction is, that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had lived now, instead of being less, they would have been greater saints — for they only lived in the dawn, and we live in the noon. We hear the apostles often called "*Saint*" Peter and "*Saint*" Paul; and thus they are set up on high as on an elevated niche. If we had seen Peter and Paul, we should have thought them very ordinary sort of people — wonderfully like ourselves; and if we

had gone into their daily life and trials, we should have said, “Well, you are wonderfully superior to what I am in grace; but somehow or other, you are men of like passions with me. I have a quick temper, so have you, Peter. I have a thorn in the flesh, so have you, Paul. I have a sick-house, Peter’s wife’s mother lies sick of a fever. I complain of the rheumatism, and the apostle Paul, when aged, feels the cold, and wants his cloak.” Ah, we must not consider the Bible as a book intended for transcendental super-elevated souls — it is an every-day book, and these good people were every-day people, only they had more grace, but we can get more grace as well as they could, the fountain at which they drew is quite as full and as free to us as to them. We have only to believe after their fashion, and trust to Jesus after their way, and although our trials are the same as theirs, we shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb. I do like to see religion brought out in every-day life. Do not tell me about the godliness of the Tabernacle, tell me about the godliness of your shop, your counter, and your kitchen. Let me see how grace enables you to be patient in the cold, or joyful in hunger, or industrious in labor. Though grace is no common thing, yet it shines best in common things. To preach a sermon, or to sing a hymn, is but a paltry thing compared with the power to suffer cold, and hunger, and nakedness, for Christ’s sake. Courage then, courage then, fellow pilgrim, the road was not smoothed for Paul any more than it is for us. There was no royal road to heaven in those days other than there is even now. They had to go through sloughs, and bogs, and mire, as we do still.

*“They wrestled hard as we do now
With sins, and doubts, and fears;”*

but they have gained the victory at last, and even so shall we. So much then, for the cloak which was left at Troas with Carpus.

II. We will LOOK AT HIS BOOKS. We do not know what the books were about, and we can only form some guess as to what the parchments were. Paul had a few books which were left, perhaps wrapped up in the cloak, and Timothy was to be careful to bring them. *Even an apostle must read.* Some of our very ultra Calvinistic brethren think that a minister who reads books and studies his sermon must be a very deplorable specimen of a preacher. A man who comes up into the pulpit, professes to take his text on the spot, and talks any quantity of nonsense, is the idol of many. If he will speak without premeditation, or pretend to do so, and never produce what they call a dish of dead men’s brains — oh! that is the preacher. How

rebuked are they by the apostle! He is inspired, and yet he wants books! He has been preaching at least for thirty years, and yet he wants books! He had seen the Lord, and yet he wants books! He had had a wider experience than most men, and yet he wants books! He had been caught up into the third heaven, and had heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, yet he wants books! He had written the major part of the New Testament, and yet he wants books! The apostle says to Timothy and so he says to every preacher, "Give thyself unto reading." The man who never reads will never be read; he who never quotes will never be quoted. He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains, proves that he has no brains of his own. Brethren, what is true of ministers is true of all our people. *You* need to read. Renounce as much as you will all light literature, but study as much as possible sound theological works, especially the Puritanic writers, and expositions of the Bible. We are quite persuaded that the very best way for you to be spending your leisure, is to be either reading or praying. You may get much instruction from books which afterwards you may use as a true weapon in your Lord and Master's service. Paul cries, "Bring the books" — join in the cry.

Our second remark is, that *the apostle is not ashamed to confess that he does read*. He is writing to his young son Timothy. Now, some old preachers never like to say a thing which will let the young ones into their secrets. They suppose they must put on a very dignified air, and make a mystery of their sermonizing; but all this is alien from the spirit of truthfulness. Paul wants books, and is not ashamed to tell Timothy that he does; and Timothy may go and tell Tychicus and Titus if he likes — Paul does not care.

Paul herein is a picture of industry. He is in prison; he cannot preach: what will he do? As he cannot preach, he will read. As we read of the fishermen of old and their boats. The fishermen were gone out of them. What were they doing? Mending their nets. So if providence has laid you upon a sick bed, and you cannot teach your class — if you cannot be working for God in public, mend your nets by reading. If one occupation is taken from you, take another, and let the books of the apostle read you a lesson of industry.

He says, "*Especially the parchments*." I think the books were Latin and Greek works, but that the parchments were Oriental; and possibly they were the parchments of Holy Scripture; or as likely, they were his own

parchments, on which were written the originals of his letters which stand in our Bible as the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and so on. Now, it must be "*Epecially the parchments*" with all our reading; let it be *especially the Bible*. Do you attach no weight to this advice? This advice is more needed in England now than almost at any other time, for the number of persons who read the Bible, I believe, is becoming smaller every day. Persons read the views of their denominations as set forth in the periodicals; they read the views of their leader as set forth in his sermons or his works, but the Book, the good old Book, the divine fountain-head from which all revelation wells up — this is too often left. You may go to human puddles, until you forsake the clear crystal stream which flows from the throne of God. Read the books, by all manner of means, but especially the parchments. Search human literature, if you will, but especially stand fast by that Book which is infallible, the revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

III. We now want to have AN INTERVIEW WITH THE APOSTLE PAUL HIMSELF, for we may learn much from him.

It is almost too dark to see him — we will find him out in that frightful den! The horrid dungeon — the filth lies upon the floor till it looks like a road which is seldom scraped — the draught blows through the only little slit which they call a window. The poor old man, without his cloak, wraps his ragged garment about him. Sometimes you see him kneeling down to pray, and then he dips his pen into the ink, and writes to his dear son Timothy. No companion, except Luke, who occasionally comes in for a short time. Now, how shall we find the old man? What sort of temper will he be in?

We find him *full of confidence in the religion which has cost him so much*; for in the first chapter, at the twelfth verse, we hear him say, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." No doubt, often the tempter said to him, "Paul, why you have lost everything for your religion! It has brought you to beggary. See, you have preached it, and what is the reward of it? The very men you have converted have forsaken you. Give it up, give it up, it cannot be worth all this. Why, they will not even bring you a cloak to wrap round you; you are left here to shiver, and very soon your head will be struck from your body. Take off your hand from the standard

and retire.” “No,” says the apostle, “I *know* whom I have believed.” Why, I have heard of professors who say, “Ever since I have been a Christian I have lost in my business, and therefore I will give it up.” But our beloved apostle clings to it with a life-grip. And oh, there is no heart in our piety if our afflictions make us doubt the truth of our religion, for these trials inasmuch as they work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, render us such that we are not ashamed, but we do the yet more firmly hold on to Christ. Just think you hear the apostle say, “I know whom I believe.” It is very easy for *us* to say it. We are very comfortable, sitting easily in our pews; we shall go home to our plentiful meal, we shall be clothed comfortably; we have friends about us who will smile at us, and it is not hard to say, “I know whom I have believed;” but if you were vexed on the one hand by Hermogenes and Philetus, and on the other hand by Alexander the coppersmith, and Demas, you would not find it quite so easy to say, “The Lord is faithful.” Behold this noble champion, who is just as much unmoved at the worst as he was at the best times. “I know how to be full,” said he once, and now he can say, “I know how to suffer hunger: I know how to abound, and how to suffer loss.”

But he is not only confident. You will notice that this grand old man is *having communion with Jesus Christ in his sufferings*. Turn to the second chapter, at the tenth verse. Did ever sweeter language than this come from anyone? “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” Ah, there are two in the dungeon — not only the man who is suffering trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds, but there sits with him one like unto the Son of Man, sharing all his griefs, and bearing all his despondencies, and so lifting up his head. Well may the apostle rejoice that he has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Nor is this all. Not only is he confident for the past, and in sweet communion for the present, but *he is resigned for the future*. Look at the fourth chapter, and the sixth verse. “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” It is a beautiful emblem taken from the sacrificial bullock. There it is, tied to the horns of the altar, and ready to be offered. So the apostle stands as a sacrifice ready to be offered upon the altar. I am afraid that we cannot all say we are ready to be offered. Paul

was ready to be a *burnt offering*; if God willed it, he would be burnt to ashes at the stake. Or he would be a *drink offering*, as he did become, when a stream of blood flowed under the sharp sword. He was ready to be a *peace offering*, if God willed it, to die in his bed. In any case, he was a *free-will offering* unto God, for he offered himself voluntarily, as he says, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Glorious old man! Many a professed Christian has been clothed in scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day, and yet never could say he was ready to be offered, but looked upon the time of his departure with grief and sorrow. As you think, then of poor, shivering, ragged Paul, think of the jewel which he carried in his breast; and O ye sons of poverty, recollect that the magnificence of a holy life, and the grandeur and nobility of a consecrated heart, can deliver you altogether from any shame which may cling to your rags and poverty; for as the sun at setting, paints the clouds with all the colors of heaven, so your very rags, and poverty, and shame, may make your life the more illustrious, as the splendor of your piety lights them with heavenly radiance.

We have not quite concluded with the apostle; for we find him not only resigned, but *triumphant*. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." See the Grecian warrior just returned from battle. He has many wounds, and there is a gash across his brow; his breast is streaming here and there with cuts and flesh-wounds; one arm is dislocated; he halts, like Jacob, on his thigh; he is covered with the smoke and dust of battle; he is besmeared with many a blood-splash; he is faint, and weary, and ready to die, but what does he say? As he lifts up his right arm, with his buckler tightly clasped upon it, he cries, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept my shield." That was the object of ambition with every Grecian warrior. If he kept his shield he came home glorious. Now, faith is the Christian's shield. And here I see the apostle, though he wears all the marks of the conflict, yet he triumphs in these marks of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I have fought a good fight; my very scars and wounds prove it; I have kept the faith." He looks to that golden buckler of the faith fastened to his arm, and rejoices in it. The tyrant Nero never had such triumph as the apostle Paul, nor all the warriors of Rome, when the multitudes climbed the chimney-tops, and looked down upon the procession. None of them had such true glory as this solitary man, who has trodden the wire-press alone, and of the people there were none with him; who has stood against the lion, a solitary champion, with no eye to pity and

no arm to save, still triumphant to the end. Brave spirit! never mind the old cloak at Troas, so long as thy faith is safe.

Once more; he not only triumphs in the present, but he *is in expectation of a crown*. When the Grecian wrestler had fought a good fight, a crown was presented to him; and so Paul, who writes about the old cloak, also writes — “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” When I was picturing Paul, and talking of the poverty of many believers — “Ah,” said the sinner, “Who would be a Christian? Who would suffer so much for Christ? Who would lose everything as Paul did?” Worldly minds here are thinking — “What a fool, to be led away by such an excitement!” Ah! but see how the tables have turned! “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown!” What if he had been robed in scarlet, had rolled in wealth, and been great, and there had been no crown for him in heaven, no joy hereafter, but a fearful looking for of judgment? See, he springs from his dungeon to his throne. Nero may cut off his head, but that head shall wear a starry crown. Courage, then, ye that are down-trodden, afflicted, and despairing, be of good cheer, for the end will make up for the way, and all the roughness of the pilgrimage will be well recompensed by the glory which shall await all those who are resting upon Christ Jesus.

We close, having done with this old cloak, when we say, is it not beautiful as you read this epistle, and, indeed all the apostle’s letters, to see how *everything which the apostle thought of was connected with Christ*; how he had concentrated every passion, every power, every thought, every act, every word, and set the whole upon Christ. I believe that there are many who love Christ after a sort, just as the sun shines to-day; but you know if you concentrate the rays of that sun with a burning-glass, and fix all the rays upon any object, then what heat there is, what burning, what flame, what fire! So many men scatter their love and admiration on almost every creature, and Christ gets a little, as we all get some rays of the sun; but that is *the man*, who, like the apostle Paul, brings all his thoughts and words to a focus. Then he burns his way through life; his heart is on fire; like coals of juniper are his words; he is a man of force and energy, he may have no cloak, yet for all that he is a great man, and the Czar in his imperial mantle is but a drivelling dwarf by the side of this giant in the army of God. O, I wish we could set our thoughts on Christ this morning. Are we trusting in him this morning? Is he all our salvation and all our desire? If he be, then

let us live to him. Those who are wholly Christ's are not many. O that we were espoused as chaste virgins unto Christ, that we might have no other lover, and know no other object of delight. Blind be these eyes to all but Christ; and deaf these ears to any music but the voice of Christ; and lame these feet to any way but that of obedience to him; palsied these hands to anything but work for him; and dead this heart to every joy if Jesus cannot move. Even as a straw floats upon the river, and is carried to the ocean, so would I be bereft of all power and will to do aught but that which my Lord would have me do, and be carried along by the stream of his grace right onward, ready to be offered up, or ready to live, ready to suffer, or ready to reign just as he wills, only that he may be served in my living and dying. It will little matter what cloak ye wear, or if ye have not any at all, if ye have but such a concentration of all your bodily and mental powers, and spiritual energies upon Christ Jesus, and upon him alone. May those of you who have never trusted Jesus be ready to rely upon him now. He did not forsake Paul, even in extremity, and he will not forsake you.

*“Trust him, he will ne'er deceive you,
 Though you hardly of him deem;
 He will never, never leave you,
 Nor will let you quite leave him.”*

Therefore trust him now and ever, for Jesu's sake. Amen.

ONCE A CURSE BUT NOW A BLESSING.

NO. 543

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER
6TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel, so will I save you and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.”
— Zechariah 8:13.

AS these words came from the lips of Zechariah, doubtless they referred to the seed of Abraham, including the two tribes of Judah and the ten tribes of Israel. They have already received a minor fulfillment; but their most glorious accomplishment is yet to come. The Jews have for many a generation *been cursed* by all people. For ages no one had a good word or a kind look for the Jew. In every nation they have been persecuted, and hunted like beasts of prey. The followers of the fierce Mohammed have not been their only enemies, for the children of the Babylonian harlot have equally thirsted for their blood. In our own country, in the dark ages, it was accounted God’s service to afflict the Israelites, and the day upon which the Church celebrated our Savior’s passion was chosen for the public stoning of his own brethren if they ventured into the streets. To be a Jew was, in the estimation of that era, to be deserving of all scorn and cruelty, and of no pity or consideration. To what exactions, to what fines, to what imprisonments and tortures, have not the sons of Jacob been subjected by the professed followers of the Messiah. It is perhaps the greatest of all modern miracles, that there should be one Jew upon earth who is a Christian for the treatment they have received from pretended Christians has been enough to make them hate the name of Jesus; it has

been not

simply villainous, but diabolical. Devils in hell could not be more cruel to their victims than professed Christians have been to the sons of Abraham. They have been a curse indeed. The whole vocabulary of abuse from “*dog*” down to “*devil*” has been exhausted upon them; among all nations they have been a hissing and a bye-word. But the day is coming, yea it dawns already, when the whole world shall discern the true dignity of the chosen seed, and shall seek their company, because the Lord hath blessed them. In that day when Israel shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for their sins, the Jew shall take his true rank among the nations as an elder brother and a prince. The covenant made with Abraham, to bless all nations by his seed, is not revoked; heaven and earth shall pass away, but the chosen nation shall not be blotted out from the book of remembrance. The Lord hath not cast away his people; he has never given their mother a bill of divorcement; he has never put them away; in a little wrath he hath hidden his face from them, but with great mercies will he gather them. The natural branches shall again be engrafted into the olive together with the wild olive graftings from among the Gentiles. In the Jew, first and chiefly, shall grace triumph through the King of the Jews. O time, fly thou with rapid wing, and bring the auspicious day.

Another meaning has been given to the passage by some very eminent expositors, namely, that the Jews have been for ages *the model of a curse* to all people. As old Master Trapp says, they bear upon their backs the wheels of God’s rod, or, as he puts it yet more strongly, like Cain, they carry upon their foreheads the mark of God’s wrath. They have been a people scattered and peeled, not numbered among the nations, men of weary foot and haggard countenances. Their nation has been the football of providence and the butt of misfortune. They have been shipwrecked upon every sea, overturned by every storm, the victims of every calamity, and the objects of every misery. Everywhere have they been men evidently accursed of God and given up to his wrath. When men wanted a name to curse by, they said “Let me be as accursed as the Jew.” But the day is to come when they are to be quite as manifestly the blessed ones of God.

Their conversion shall show how God favors them: their gathering to their own land, the splendor of the reign of Messiah in their midst, and all those latter-day glories which are dimly shadowed in the Book of the Revelation, and in the Book of the Vision of Daniel the Prophet, — when all these shall come to pass, then the sons of men shall speak of the Jewish people as a royal priesthood and a peculiar people. The seed of Abraham, God’s

friend, are very dear to him — the darlings of his bosom, the flock of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Oh, that the dark night would soon be over! Long has the Christian Church slept in forgetfulness of the Jew; even faithful men have scarce given a thought to Israel, and have left the Jew to perish, as though his heart were too hard to be melted by divine love. I trust that mistake has been discovered, and that there are many now anxiously praying for the restoration of the glory unto Israel, but too many are still indifferent where earnestness is needed. May the Lord in his infinite mercy first put it into his people's hearts to pray for Israel, and then to work in love, and labor in faith: may he hasten in his own time the fulfillment of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then shall the whole earth be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. We may work and we may toil, but till Israel be gathered God's glory cannot be universal, nor even widely spread. Until the Jew acknowledges Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the fullness of the times of restitution shall not have arrived. Make no tarrying O our Lord! Come quickly, and send thou as the herald of thy coming thine own brethren, who once despised thee when thou camest to thine own, and thine own received thee not.

You can clearly understand the text now in its literal signification without another word of exposition — “As ye have been a curse among all nations, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing.”

We feel ourselves perfectly justified in using the text in a broader sense. Our text teaches us that the *unconverted are a curse*; secondly, that *when converted they become a blessing*; thirdly, the text tells *the means by which the transformation is wrought* — “I will save you” — and *it closes with a word of encouragement* to those who desire salvation — “Fear not, but let your hands be strong.”

I. UNCONVERTED MEN ARE A CURSE. This they are *positively*, for every unconverted man, no matter what may be his moral character, *adds in his degree to the amount of evil in the world* — he adds another handful of leaven to leaven the whole lump, another breath of death-bearing wind to scatter the plague of sin among the sons of men. Every unrenewed heart casts another stone upon the heap of iniquity, and assists the rising Babel of rebellion to lift its head more proudly. As I see the ungodly advancing one by one, I hear the prince of darkness cry, “Here comes another soldier

to swell the ranks of evil, another lance for Satan, and another sword for the powers of evil." To the black banner every man that is unconverted is a recruit. Let him do as he may and think as he will, he that is not with Christ is against him, he that is not for the right is on the side of the wrong. How is the body corporate of humanity poisoned more and more as each man adds his grain of evil! How is the torrent swollen with another and another stream! A deluge of iniquity is but a collection of all the contributions from every fountain of the great deep. Every graceless spirit binds another millstone about the neck of the human race to sink it to the lowest hell.

Every sinner is a positive mischief-maker in the world. He is a deadly upas — every feat distilling poison. It is impossible that it should be otherwise, for as a black and filthy fountain must send forth unclean streams, so by a law of nature, as long as man is himself evil he must do evil. One sinner destroyeth much good, and whatever sort of sinner he may be, whether his sin be written on his forehead, or only carried concealed in his right hand, he infects the world with evil. The sinner is a curse, then, because he adds to the positive evil in the world.

He is yet more — he is a curse because *he helps to bring down the wrath of heaven upon the world*. Another destroying angel to cry, "O Lord, how long ere thou smite iniquity and bathe thy sword in the blood of rebels?" Another voice to cry, "Awake! awake! O sword of justice! smite the sinner and let him perish from the face of the earth." Doubtless every sin is a God-provoking thing. It stirreth him to jealousy. As the blood of Abel cried "Vengeance," so doth sin; it is a thorn in the side of justice, a stab at the heart of truth. God's great patience is expended at a tremendous rate by the sins of men. Thou unconverted man! thou makest every day a draught upon the exchequer of long-suffering, and the day shall come when the golden sun shall all be expended, and then woe unto the world, for then shall the last plagues be let loose and the last vials shall be poured out.

Even *when the ungodly man dies he hath not finished his evil work*. His life may be over, but the moral death caused by his life still continues. As the tree that hath borne evil fruit sendeth to the winds its seeds and these are buried in their appointed places, where young saplings spring up to become a forest of evil, so is it with the ungodly man — his words and his example, like seeds in the ground, germinate and bring forth the like in other men. Like produceth like. His children in nature and spirit arise after him, and these prolong the echo of the dreadful curse which his life has pronounced upon the race. He cannot stay that curse even if he would, it is

given to the course of time as a feather to the wind, and on it must go for ever. Those saplings which sprang from him as from the parent tree will all grow into death-yielding trees, and these will scatter their seeds, and so on, and on, and on, as long as the human race lasts — nay, even in eternity the victims of his sin lie in torment and blaspheme God world without end, so that his curse is an everlasting curse, and the evil which he does lives on when he himself sleeps with the clods of the valley. The ungodly man is everlastingly a positive curse.

But he is also a curse *negatively*. It is deplorable to think how much of good a man who knows not God keeps from this world. He cumberes the ground in which he grows. He extracts nourishment from the ground, and covers it so that it cannot yield nourishment to any other plant, and yet he himself brings forth no fruit. Is this your position, my hearer, this morning? Are you a do-nothing? If you are, remember that the spot which you occupy might have been occupied by a man who would have glorified God, and done much for the spread of true religion. You have much time upon your hands, but you kill it. If another had it, it would be occupied with visitation of the sick, teaching the ignorant, comforting the weary, and other acts which would glorify the name of Jesus. You have the time and it is ill-spent. You have *money*. You spend perhaps upon a feast for your own pleasure as much as might have sent a herald of the cross to a foreign land. Many a man, if he had your means, would put clothes upon the backs of the naked, and bread into the mouths of the hungry. In one respect money answereth all things, but you make it answer to nothing except your own gratification. Ah, how much mischief thou dost in this way! Thou hast influence — it may be, thou art a master with many servants, or placed in such a position that many wait upon thee, and thine example is followed, and thy words are weighty. If another had thy place, how would he lead a whole troop to heaven. With what earnestness would he seek to bless those who dwell under his shadow. But thou, what dost thou do? Thou cumberest the ground. These many years there has not been found upon thee one single ripe fruit such as may be acceptable to the Lord of the vineyard. Beware, beware lest he cut thee down! Seest thou not what evil thou art doing to others? The minister is preaching to thee this morning, and he has to do it often; if it were not for stray sheep such as thou art, he would have more time to see after the lambs of the flock. If he had not to cry out after thee, and against thy sins, he might be led into the deep things of God, to the comfort and edification of the Lord's chosen people. Whilst

thou art in this house thou art spoiling the song — thou art marring the prayer by the wandering and wantonness of thy thoughts. If thou shouldst come into the midst of a company of God's people, who were talking of divine things, thou wouldst be like an iceberg chilling the atmosphere about thee. How many young Christians thou hast hindered in their zeal by thine indifference. If thou didst nothing else but damage the good, stop up the stream of love, and quench the light of truth, thou wouldst have done enough to make them a curse among men, and to provoke God to smite thee with the curse that withers body and soul for ever and ever.

This is true of *every unconverted man*. Many of you *moral men*, whose lives are admirable, have not your hearts right with God. What is the lesson that men learn from your conversation? Why, when the infidel wants to prove that there may be goodness apart from religion, he quotes you, as an argument against the word of God, and against the necessity of a new heart and a right spirit. Have not many in your own position been hardened in their halt between two opinions by your example? Young people say, "There is Mrs. So-and-so, and Mr. This-and-that, what good people they are, and yet they have never given their hearts to God. "Surely," say they, "such people must know, and if there were anything in religion, they would certainly have followed in the right road, and have put their trust in Christ." The better you are, the more do I deplore that you should be upon the wrong side. If my country were at war, it would be very little comfort to me to know that my enemies were good soldiers. Nay, I had rather that they were bad ones; for there were then the more hope of overcoming them. The weight of your character makes it the more sad that it should be thrown into the scale of self-righteousness. I say, the very excellence of your morals renders it a more serious crime that you should not take your stand with Christ, the lover of holiness. Thou doest mischief, I am sure. Possibly, there is a measure of moral good effected by thine example, but there is a more abundant spiritual evil, because many stop where thou stoppest; being affected by thine example, they halt at thy halting place, and as thou wilt perish except thou be born again, so will they, and the blood of their souls will lie at thy door, because thine example was a curse to them.

If this be true of the moral unconverted man, how much more certainly is it of the *open follower of vice*. Shall I venture? No; I will scarcely so much as use my pencil to pourtray the mischief which the votary of vice bringeth upon others. How doth the drunkard drown multitudes in his cups? How

doth the man of lust destroy and damn both the body and the soul of his victim? How doth the man who leads a licentious life spread poison by his very eyes — like the basilisk, doing mischief by his glance? “His feet,” we may truly say, “are swift to shed blood.” His hands are full of drawn swords and flaming firebrands to destroy souls. The profane swearer — what a pest is he! Young ears are inoculated with sin by him, and young hearts learn the crimes of old rebels. Ah! thou art a curse indeed! Better for some one to walk the streets with a deadly plague about him, and to spread it in every house, than to have such as *thou* art living in society, for thou hast the death plague and the damnation plague upon thee: thou art a walking miasma; a breather of pestilence; a myrmidon of hell; a jackal to the infernal lion, the lackey and the slave of the destroyer.

Perhaps there are few such here, therefore let us be brief upon that point. It is the same with the sinner who *makes ungodly men his associates* — he is a curse. You do not drink as they do, you say, nor go to their excess of riot, nor curse with their curses, but yet you herd with them. You make them your associates, and, if you want a little pleasure, you seek their acquaintance. Sir, you are a curse; you are a curse to these men. I will not say you make them sinful, but I must say you add to their comfort in their sin. They see such as you are with them, and as association always hardens the sinner, they grow more confirmed in evil. Many a drinking club would break up if it were not for the two or three sensible men in it, and yet what is the effect of their morality? Not so much to check the others as to keep the whole together, and put a respectable face upon mischief. You who lie in the same bed with the wicked, must take care when God smites the house, that you do not perish in its overthrow. You that eat at their feasts, and drink of their cups, and laugh at their jokes, and revel in their vices, and take pleasure in their wantonness, mind when the Lord spreads his net to take these foul birds, he will take you in the same net, and award you a portion with those that were his enemies.

Nor can we spare here *the men of thoroughly bad principles*; the men who pretend to doubt the existence of a God, who question the inspiration of the Scripture, deny the deity of Christ, or impugn the veracity of gospel promises — all such men are great destroyers of good. They will always be on the face of the earth, and we must never expect to see them rooted up, until the Lord’s coming. It is wonderful that in England they should be so miserably small a party. If again infidelity should be as prevalent as Christianity, I should not much marvel, for it so suits the natural heart of

man, that the wonder is that there is not more of it abroad. But one infidel — O what a curse he is! In a workshop that one man of sharp shrewd sense will very soon make disciples, for, like the Pharisees of old they compass sea and land to make one proselyte. Too often the believer does not give that attention to the reading of Scripture, and to the finding up of arguments for his faith which the ungodly man will give in order to find arguments to shake the faith of others. I would that our members were more industrious, both in searching the Scriptures, and in studying the evidences of their inspiration and authenticity, that they might have their weapons ready to meet the attacks of infidels, for these infidels — men of much thinking, and shrewdness, and sagacity, and wit — placed in the midst of poor uneducated Christians, are terrible as wolves in the midst of a flock of sheep, and much havoc may they do; though they cannot turn one truly blood-bought child of God out of the flock, nor yet make one that is born again apostatize from truth, yet they bring much misery into the heart, and doubtless many who are undecided are led by them into decision for Satan, and go straight away from all hopefulness of being converted to God. Now of such an one we may say he is a curse indeed.

But now, I hear another say, “Well now, I do not come under the description of immoral, nor yet of those who spread infidel principles and practices.” Ah, but, still you may be a curse, if you have *an evil spirit towards religion*. There are some who say but little, but who hate the very name of Christ. Even if they hold their tongues, that shrug of the shoulder, that look, that cold, heartless reception which they give to the truth, must infallibly be observed by others. Children, and those round about them, cannot help detecting what they are and who they are, and they will thus become very successful servants of the Prince of darkness. O dear friends, I fear that some of you know in your own conscience, without any words of mine, that hitherto your lives have been no blessing to your fellows, but rather, wherever you have gone, you have been a curse.

I shall conclude this point by noticing that *the unconverted man is a curse everywhere*. In *the family*, what a curse he is! His wife, perhaps, is a Christian: what a life he leads her! Doth he strike her? Perhaps not; but his words wound her even more than blows would have done. What about the children? Why, they will go as the father goes: his crooked words they learn to speak, and his crooked actions they will learn to do. It is not likely, though by divine grace it is possible, that they should be better than he. If we were to put a black cross upon every house where there is a husband

who is a curse to the household, how many streets in London might have the black cross half the way down! Art thou an ungodly man — and does thy life teem with iniquity? Then think that the black cross is there as thou goest home, and say, “Yes; I am a curse to this house; I lead them away from God.” He is a curse in *the workshop*. As soon as he goes to it, those who would be decent, are led to the public house by him, and to places where sin is wont to be allowed. Let him become what is *more respectable*, as we say, in life; but he is a curse there. Make him a master, and give him many servants: then how haughty and how domineering he will be if he meets a servant who is a professor of religion. His misspending of his Sabbath will be known to all his working men, and they are always willing enough to follow the example of their employers in doing evil. Make him *wealthy*, he can indulge himself in all sorts of pleasures, and his gold is spent in the service of Satan. Give him abilities — talents of thought and speech — he becomes a sort of serjeant-major in the ranks of Satan, a commander of others. Satan employs him as a decoy duck to bring others into the net. Now he goes abroad, and is the call-bird of others, so that others hearing his sweet notes, are lured into the fowler’s snare, and are taken and destroyed. Put him on a throne, and he curses an empire. Give him but a small village, over which he shall be the squire, and he is a curse to all the parish. Let him become a *professor*, and oh! this is the place where he can do the most of mischief. Clothe him with the garments of a Christian, while his heart is rotten — and now, while pretending to be a disciple of Jesus, he will become more than ever a successful servant of Satan. Make him a *minister*, and you have given him the worst possible position; in fact, the better the man’s place, the more evil can he do. Oh, to be a minister — to be thought to be sent of God to the people, and then to be delivering falsehood, to be either by one’s life or one’s teaching contradicting the oracles of God! Of such a man we may well say his damnation is sure, but this is not the worst of it, for, ere he goes down to the pit himself; he drags as with a hundred ropes, multitudes of others down the dreadful steep.

II. But secondly, here is a gracious promise made that THEY SHALL BE A BLESSING.

Dear friends, the true Christian is a blessing *temporally* in the world. If there were no life to come, yet is a converted man a blessing: since *he arrests the judgments of God*. Sodom shall stand if there be ten righteous found in it. The world shall last as long as there is salt enough in it to keep

it from putrefaction. The world shall not be given up to blackness of darkness for ever, so long as there are a few lights still shining in it. As the conducting-rod prevents the dwellings of men from being destroyed by lightning, so believers, in a State or in a town, are its preservation from the avenging judgments of God. Who will deny, again, that the Christian, the true Christian *promotes morality* — that his godly life settles the foundation of order? Where are the most revolutions? Where is the least of religion? Where has the guillotine fallen with its fatal drop? Where have heads rolled by hundreds in a basket? Where have streams of blood crimsoned the street? Where is there an empire, never safe except as the throne is supported by bayonets? Look across the Channel, and you will see that the absence of religion is the absence of order in the State. It is England's Bible which is the keystone of England's institutions. The flag of old England is nailed to the mast, not so much by her soldiers and sailors, as by the men who love her God and bring down the blessing upon her continually by prayer. Think you that we should have had a famine in the north, and a stoppage of the mills without riot, if it had not been for the wide spread of religion among the working men? But the blessed restraints of holiness and goodness, have produced order and patience. Dear friends, the Christian man is the truest patriot; he is a blessing to his country, be he where he may.

Does not the Christian *aid in every good work*? He is no Christian if he does not. If there be an hospital, does he not delight as much to contribute towards the relief of sickness of the body, as for the removal of disease of the soul? If education be needed by the lower classes, who shall be found to teach in the Sunday-school, and who will support institutions on the week-day more readily than Christian men? Anything which is pure and lovely, and of good repute in this world, owes, if not its origin, yet its main support to the godliness of believers. No one shall be able to estimate how much the presence of a good man in the State is a preventative as well as a cure. It prevents the breaking out or the more frightful forms of vice, or else drives it into seclusion, and makes it hide its head for very shame. The Christian I believe, is to a nation, one of the greatest temporal blessings which God can send to it.

And as *for eternity*, truly a Christian is a blessing there. If his example shall lead men to seek after God — if his words shall teach the sinner his need of a Savior — shall point him to the cross — shall show him the cowering wounds — oh! if his prayers shall be heard, and the Spirit of God shall

descend, and his family shall be converted, and his kinsfolk shall be reclaimed, then eternity shall know the music of the blessing which he scattered among the sons of men. You cannot bless men for ever, in any other way than by yourself being a true follower of Jesus, and then seeking to bring them to a knowledge of the truth. Now, as I said of the ungodly, that every ungodly man is a curse, so will I venture to say that every Christian man is a blessing in the degree in which he is true to his Christianity. If he has been moral before, now that he becomes a Christian, how that tells upon men like him. How those who would have been undecided are moved to go forth! The force of his former character, the excellence and amiability of his deportment, operate upon those who knew him. If he has been a drunkard and a swearer before, this will not hinder him from being a blessing now. His old companions hear of the great change; they enquire how it was wrought; they go with him to the house of God, and they too are brought to Christ. Some of those who have brought more saints to God than others were once themselves the greatest of sinners. Let no one suppose that because his character has been hitherto very vile, therefore, if converted, he would be of no use: sometimes he will even be of the more use. What would all your old mates say, when they saw you a Christian. "There must be something in it," say they, "if drunken will be saved." What if the swearer should wash his mouth, and should preach God's Word! What if yonder voice should be heard at the prayer-meeting, although once so loud in a brothel! Oh, would not men wonder, and would not there be many who would suddenly feel attracted to the cross, as you have been, and say, "We will go with you, for we perceive that God has blessed you."

Such a man, even if he has been an infidel, becomes a blessing now — sometimes most a blessing to those to whom he was most a curse. Now he refutes himself; now his own example becomes the best answer to his former false teaching; now his love to Jesus is observed and noticed — all those whom he taught to hate the Lord, will help to adore his sacred person. And if the man has been through and through of a bad spirit, though he hath not openly spoken against the things of God, yet when converted, how serviceable he becomes, for even if he be almost silent, and can say but little, yet, as the bad spirit oozed through him, so now the Spirit of God will shine through him. There shall be a difference about his very face; and the manner of his walk and conversation shall be such that it will betray him; out of the midst of him shall flow rivers of living water,

whereof multitudes shall drink. No matter, O Christians, how poor you may be, or how ignorant you are, or how little of influence you may have, you are and shall be a blessing, if God gives you a new heart and a right spirit.

The converted man is a blessing everywhere. He is a blessing *to his family*. Daily prayer, Bible reading, teaching of the children — all these make his house a little paradise. When he goes to *the workshop*, if any learn vice, it is not from him. If there are any who despise Christ, it is not from his example. He has a good word for Jesus. Now he begins to lament and pray over the sins of his fellow-men; he speaks of the cross of Christ, and perhaps he brings some of them to repentance, and to a saving faith. You may put him anywhere with safety. Make a king of him — he ruleth his dominions in the fear of God. Give him a large estate, and you will find his substance expended as it should be. Now the hungry shall have their portion, and the needy their share; the Church at home, and missions abroad, shall all be prospered by him. Let him make a profession — he does not dishonor it. He puts golden chains about the neck of piety, by the excellence of his deportment. You may put him into the pulpit with safety. With a new heart he can be trusted, even at the altars of God. His soul having been renewed, there will be nothing in his example, or word, of which a Christian could complain. Now you may take him to heaven itself, for even there he shall be a blessing, and help to swell the song of “Hallelujah unto him that washed our robes and made them white in his blood.” I would to God we had a holy emulation, to be more a blessing than we have been, for do remember that if you have been converted, and are not living consistently with your religion, then your life is not much of a blessing. Oh! it is so sad, so sad, to my own soul, when I see those who might be a blessing, by some weakness or folly throw away their golden opportunities. There are some of you — I cannot tell what good you might do in the world, but either through natural infirmity or unmortified sin, you are of little service. Do not, I pray you, destroy your own power to bless your fellow-men. Do not so act in the family, and in business, and in the Church, as to make yourself a little blessing, when you might have been a great one, but do ask the Lord to fill you so full with his grace, that you may be like a great cloud of mercy, resting continually over the sons of men, and pouring forth its gracious shower day by day.

III. The third point was, HOW IS ALL THIS TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT? How is the man who was a curse to be made a blessing? Can he do it himself?

Rests there a power in human will, that by the magic of its might, men who were once a curse may be made a blessing? Ah no! this abideth not in the creature, but with the Creator. So runs the text: “I will save you.” You that have been a curse, “I will save *you*.” Swearer, drunkard, whoremonger, whoever thou mayst be, “I will save thee, to show what sovereign grace can do:” “I will save thee, and make thee a blessing.” But thou sayest, “How then may I be saved?” Salvation from sin is one, but yet it is a salvation from sin in two senses — from the guilt of it, and from the power of it. Sinner, cursed of God, and cursing others, all the sin that thou hast done can be blotted out. No matter, though it be red like scarlet, it may be as wool; and, though it be as crimson, God can make it whiter than snow. In a moment all thy sin can pass away, so that if it were sought for it could not be found; yea, though an inquisition were made to search it out, yet could it not be discovered. And this can be done by the blood, the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus the substitute, the Son of God, and yet the Son of Man, took the sins of all believers upon himself, and suffered the punishment of all their sins.

*“He for the sins of all the elect
Hath a complete atonement made;
And justice never can expect
That the same debt should twice be paid.”*

If thou believest, that is, if thou trustest in Christ, all the sin thou hast ever done was laid upon Christ. Thy believing is the sign and mark of this; and henceforth thou hast no sin, thy sin is gone; thou art an accepted and pardoned man. Nay more, thou art justified. The righteousness of Christ is thine; and in the sight of God thou standest accepted in the beloved. And all this is to be had by the simple act of trusting. Whosoever thou mayst be, “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.” But then thou sayest, “But how can I be delivered from the power of sin? If all my past sins were forgiven, yet I might go back and do as before, and so remain as vile as ever.” Yes, there is power in the Holy Ghost to make a new man of you.

He can put into your heart the holy influences of grace, so that though you naturally go towards evil, you shall by supernatural influence go towards the right. He shall give you that fiery motion, which, as the flame always ascends towards heaven, shall make your heart ascend towards holiness. He shall subdue in you the powers of evil which now reign, shall keep your sins under your feet, and eventually cast them out for ever, and make you perfect before the Lord.

Remember, this is to be done *for* you, not *by* you. You cannot make yourself a new man. It is impossible for you to work regeneration. One look at Jesus will take away past sin, and will kill the power of sin for the future. Sprinkle His blood upon the old serpent, and it dies. Put the water which flowed with the blood from Christ, and the foulness of nature only remains to be subdued, and eventually to be cast out when the believer shall be taken up in perfection to dwell before the Father's throne. God can save you, whoever you may be, and whatever your past life may have been. No doings of your own, no prayers, no penances, no almsgivings, are required. Simply trust Jesus who died for you, and you are saved, saved on the spot — saved for ever.

IV. And then comes the last point. The text GIVES A WORD OR TWO OF ENCOURAGEMENT from this — "*Let your hands be strong: fear not.*"

Though you have been a curse until now, yet, if you sincerely desire to be made a blessing, and if the Holy Spirit has made you willing to accept the perfect righteousness of Christ, and to be washed in his most precious blood, then "fear not." Let not conscience make you fear; God will answer to your conscience, the blood of Christ shall purge it from dead works. Let not a sense of divine justice make you fear, Christ has satisfied divine justice, and justice is your friend. Let not the remembrance of past sins make you fear; they shall be cast into the depths of the sea — not one of them shall rise to accuse you. Let not the thoughts of judgment make you fear; you shall have an advocate at the last great day to plead your cause. Fear not, but, come and welcome. Christ invites you by his wounds; the Father bids you come and trust his only-begotten Son. He earnestly entreats you to come unto him and live. "Fear not," saith he; and if doubts and fears stand at the door to keep thee from coming, yet dash thou forward through them all, saying — "God has bid me fear not, and, therefore, will I not fear, but boldly venture upon the finished work of Christ; and if I perish, I perish." "Let your hands be strong," especially the hand with which you grasp the Savior. Lay hold upon him, sinner. O may the Spirit of God help you to lay hold upon him now! "Let your hands be strong." Grasp him. Lay hold on eternal life. As a sinking man lays hold upon the rope that is cast to him, so lay hold on Christ. It is now or never with thee. If Christ save thee not, thou art damned for ever. Grasp him, then. He passes by. He may never pass this way again. This morning he comes in mercy to thee to turn thee, thou cursed one, into a blessing. Grasp him. Even as Jacob laid hold upon the angel, lay thou hold on Christ;

and if he struggle with thee, and seem as though he would not bless thee, say unto him —

*“Nay, I must maintain my hold,
‘Tis thy goodness makes me bold;
I can no denial take,
Pity me for thy love’s sake.”*

O for strong hands to grasp the Savior! Let your hands be strong to lay hold on his promises. They are such as these — “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.” Lay hold on these; take them before God and say to him, “Canst thou lie? Canst thou be untrue? If thou be true, keep this promise to me. Hast thou not said, ‘As thou hast been a curse, so I will make thee a blessing?’ I have been a curse — I own it. I lament it. Make me a blessing, Lord. By the sufferings of Jesus — by the agony and bloody sweat — by his cross and passion — by his precious death and burial — make me a blessing, Lord: Thou hast but to speak the word, and I, even I, shall repent. Thou hast but to will it, and I shall behold thy face in Christ, and believe in him. Thy Spirit is not to be resisted; send him forth to raise my dead soul from the grave. Come and work with me. Turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove.” Sinner, if thou canst believe that God will do it, he will do it; for anything thou wilt believe of him, however high and great, he can do and will do, for he will never let thy faith be in excess of his power — his unbounded power. Trust in him; rest upon him. God help thee to do it, and may these poor stammering words of mine, by their very weakness, be fitted for thy conversion, because my Master’s glory shall shine the better through my weakness, and his power to save shall be the more resplendent because of my feeble words. If it be so, I would sooner be dumb than speak with the tongues of men and angels, if he were not to be honored. Father, glorify Jesus! Glorify him now in bringing some who have been a curse, to the making of them a blessing, for his name’s sake. Amen.

LESSONS FROM LYDIA'S CONVERSION.

NO. 544

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER
13TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer wee wont to be made, and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which won shipped God, heard us whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” — Acts 16:13, 16.

PHILIPPI is famous in classic story as the spot where the world's future trembled in the balance when Octavius met Brutus and Cassius in terrible conflict. The two republican generals here ended their stormy career, and universal empire crouched at the feet of Caesar. As long as time endures, or human slaughter is thought worthy of a record, Philippi will be remembered as one of the greatest names in martial history. But when time shall have past away, and the records of human guilt shall have been cast into oblivion, Philippi will still have a name as the place where the first herald of the cross cried, “Europe for Jesus,” struck the first blow at the demon of evil, and won his first victory in our quarter of the world. More fraught with blessings to the human race was that conquest of a woman's heart, than all the laurels which Octavius had reaped upon the bloody field. Angels looked on while Paul threw down the gauntlet of defiance to all the powers of darkness, and invaded our fair continent in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. We may well look back with admiration, to the gallant advance of the little band, the apostle and his few companions, who were the

pioneers of the Lord's elect army in the western world. Philippi is enrolled for ever in the record of the battles of peace.

The introduction of Christianity into Europe is a very humble affair, There is nothing very stately in the architecture of the house where Jesus is first preached; in fact, we have no evidence that there was any building at all — probably it was an open-air service by the river-side. Happy augury of the results of open-air preaching in after times! There were not enough Jews in the merely military city of Philippi to admit of the erection of a synagogue, and therefore, a few women met in a quiet spot by the river's bank. A stranger might walk through Philippi a hundred times and never know of the existence of the Jews' meeting-place, it was a nook so retired and frequented by so few. Heathendom might seem to the ordinary observer to be universal in its reign; for who would care to notice the feeble company who met in retirement, to offer prayers unto the Most High God of Israel? We will go to the meeting-place this morning, and in spirit mingle with the few women, and listen to that strange man who in burning accents is addressing them, and mark the result produced in the heart of yonder seller of purple, who has come with her wares from the city of Thyatira.

First, we shall consider *Lydia's conversion in itself*; secondly, *in contrast with another which is recorded in the chapter*; thirdly, *in comparison with that other*; and lastly, *as a type and model of multitudes of conversions in our own day*.

I. First, in LYDIA'S CONVERSION there are many points of interest.

Observe that it was brought about by providential circumstances. She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira. That city was famous for its dyeing trade, which had flourished there ever since the days of Homer. The mode of producing a peculiarly delicate and valuable purple seems to have been known to the women of Thyatira. It may be that Lydia had come to Philippi upon a journey, or that while her manufactures were carried on at Thyatira, she resided during a part of the year at Philippi, to dispose of her goods. The communication between the two places was very easy, and she may have frequently made the journey; at any rate, providence brings her there when the hour of her conversion is come. You will remember that Thyatira was situated in that pelt of the country into which Paul was forbidden by the Spirit to go and preach; therefore, had Lydia been at home, she could not have heard the truth; and as "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," she must have remained unconverted.

But providence brings her to Philippi at the right time. Here is the first link of the chain.

But how is Paul to be brought there? He must, first of all, be shot out of Bithynia; and he must be silenced in his journey through Mysia; he must be brought to Troas, close by the margin of the sea; he must look across the blue sea, and muse upon Europe's needs; he must fall asleep, and in the visions of the night, he must be prompted to cross to Macedonia; he shall ask for a ship — that ship shall be bound for Samothracia, and for no other place; he must land at Neapolis, and by the same instinct, he must make his way to Philippi; he cannot go in any other direction; he must be brought there at the very time when Lydia is present; he must find out the little oratory by the river's brink, for God ordains that Lydia shall be saved.

Now, how many different threads were all interwoven here, to make up the fabric of her providential conversion! In this case, God rules and overrules all things to bring that woman and that apostle to the same spot; and, beloved, everything in God's providence is working together for the salvation of the elect. If there be an elect soul whom God predestinates to be converted by my word, he may have fetched him home from Australia to-day, by some untoward accident, as it seems to him; or he may have set sail for America, and the ship may have been drifted back; but this I know, that God will shake heaven and earth sooner than suffer one sleet soul to miss the predestined moment; for when the eternal counsel runs — “On such a day that man shall be arrested by sovereign grace, and shall be made willing in the day of God's power,” happen what may, and occur whatever may, God's purpose shall stand; he will do all his pleasure. We do not well if we forget the prevenient providences which work before our conversion, to bring us unto that spot where God was pleased to manifest himself unto us.

Observe next, that in Lydia's case there was not only preventing providence, but there was also grace in a certain manner preparing the soul. The woman did not know the Savior; she did not understand the things which make for her peace yet she knew many truths were excellent stepping-stones to a knowledge of Jesus. If not a Jewess by birth, she was a proselyte of the gate, and therefore well acquainted with the oracles of God; she was one who worshipped God; nay, she was one of the most devout of God's worshippers among the Jews. Though she was far away from the synagogue — some forget the Sabbath when they travel in foreign lands — yet when the day came round, she was found with that little

handful at the river-side oratory I doubt not that she had read Esaias the prophet, that she could carry in her heart and remember such words as these, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . . He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” As in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, the Scriptures she had read, though they were not understood for want of some man to guide her, had prepared her mind: the ground had been ploughed ready for the good seed; it was not a hard rock as in the gaoler’s case. She worshipped God; worshipped him in sincerity; worshipped him looking for the coming of the Messiah, Israel’s consolation; and so her mind was prepared for the reception of the gospel. Doubtless, dear friends in many of us there was a preparation for Christ before Christ came to us in quickening grace. I know that in some of our cases the pious example of a godly father, and the loving instruction of a tender mother, had softened us somewhat, so that though still we were unsaved and still out of Christ, yet we were like the man who laid at the pool of Bethesda, we were close by the edge of the healing stream and there was not in our case that sudden, that astounding change which we have seen in other. Still, dear friends we ought to ascribe all this preparatory work to sovereign grace, for grace — free favor does much in which no grace of effectual salvation is perceptible. I mean that before grace renews the heart there is grace preparing us for grace; grace may be setting the mind in activity, clearing us from prejudice, ridding us of a thousand infidel and sceptical thoughts, and so raising a platform from which divine grace conducts us into the region of the new life. Such was the case of Lydia, such is the case of many; providence and grace co-work before the effectual time is come.

Note, concerning her conversion, in the third place, that *it took place in the use of the means*. On the Sabbath she went to her gathering of her people. Although God works great wonders and calls men when they are not hearing the Word, yet usually we must expect that being in the way, God will meet with them. It is somewhat extraordinary that the first convert in Europe was converted at a very small prayer-meeting.

There were only a few women there; we have no reason to think that there were any more males than just Paul and his friend Luke; and these you see, had called in, as we say accidentally, and had been moved to give an address at the prayer-meeting, and that address it was which was the means in God’s hand of opening her heart. Beloved friends, let us never neglect

the means of grace; wherever we are, *let us not forget the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is*. I say again, God may bless us when we are not in his house, but we have the best reason to hope that he will when we are in communion with his saints. Oh! what a joy it is to see so many constantly thronging our house of prayer, because we have good hope that the God of salvation will meet with them. Nay, it is not mere hope, but a confident expectation, for I suppose there never is a sermon preached in this house, which is not the means of the conversion of some. We have ourselves abundant testimony that so often as Christ is lifted up here, the wounded in the camp forbear to die. May it ever be the case, and may you ever have, even if as yet you are unconverted, a love to the courts of the Lord's house, and to the place where his people meet together. Love the prayer-meeting; do not say of it, "Only a prayer-meeting!" God loves to put honor upon prayer, upon the assembly of his people directly for his worship; and you may hope, dear friends, that even if the sermon shall not have been useful, and if the common Sabbath-day service may not have been blessed, yet, perhaps, on the Monday evening; perhaps, too, in that little cottage, when there are only a few women present, you may meet with God, who did not appear to you in the greater assembly. Be diligent in the use of the means; be constantly in God's house, as often as the doors are open and your engagement will permit, for Lydia's conversion takes place in the use of the means.

Note again, for we will only hint at these things rather than dwell upon them, that *it was assuredly a work of grace*, for we are expressly told, "whose heart the Lord opened." She did not open her own heart. Her prayers did not do it; Paul did not do it; the Lord himself must open the heart, to receive the things which make for our peace. To operate savingly upon human hearts belongs to God alone. We can get at human brains, but God alone can arouse human affections. We may reach them, we grant you, in the natural and common way, but so to reach them, as that the enemy of God shall become his friend, and that the stony heart shall be turned into flesh, is the work of grace, and nothing short of divine power can accomplish it. We pray you, brethren, never forget this. We think it meet, according to Scriptural warrant and example, to speak to you, and exhort you to arise from the dead that Christ may give you life; but we remind you, and trust you never may forget it, that all the work must always be of the Holy Spirit, and of him alone. I am told, in preaching the gospel, to command you to, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou

shalt be saved.” -But well I am aware, and may you be aware of it too, that faith is the gift of God. Though the Scripture bids us say, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil” — though it cries, “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,” — though our Savior himself puts it, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life” - yet we know that salvation is neither by your striving, nor by your laboring, nor by your reformings and amendings, but that all these are the fruit of an inward and mysterious work which the Holy Ghost alone can perform. Give unto God the glory if you have been converted, praise him alone — “Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord.” He alone can cut the bands which fasten the heart; he alone can put the key into the hole of the door and open it, and get admittance for himself. He is the heart’s master as he is the heart’s maker, and conversion in every case is the Lord’s work alone.

Yet — for one truth must always march arm in arm with another, and no man gets at correct ideas by merely grasping one truth; he has two eyes and two hands, and let him be content to use them both — although the Lord opened the heart, Paul’s words were the instrument of her conversion. The heart may be opened, and willing to receive, but then if truth enter not, what would be the use of an open door? But God always takes care to open the heart at a time when the messenger of mercy shall be going by, that the heart may give him admittance. There shall be the ploughed field, but there shall be no cry, “Where is the sower?” for when the plough has done its work, here comes the sower, and begins broadcast to scatter the seed. Paul speaks the word as surely as God opens the heart. Do not decry the ministry. It is a temptation of modern times to be always talking as though the ministry were a magnifying of man, as though to listen to the preacher were a glorification of the creature at the expense of the Maker. Now, I believe there is nothing in the world which shows our humility of spirit, and tends more to glorify God than a cheerful willingness to receive at his hands the golden treasure of his grace out of an earthen vessel. The weakness of the preacher becomes a foil to set forth his glory, and by no means derogates from the honor due to the Lord himself. God has worked and always will work by means, by chosen men upon whom he puts the anointing of his Spirit; and when the men are lacking to serve the Lord, then is the Church always in a weak state. While she has her Pauls to

preach, she shall not be without her God to open hearts to receive the Word.

Now, only one more thought upon her conversion — *it was distinctly perceptible by the signs which followed*. She was baptized. As soon as she had believed in Jesus, she put on, together with her household, the profession of her faith in Christ Jesus. Happy Lydia, to have a household which believed in Jesus! Happy Lydia, to see them all baptized with her! Now, there is a danger in certain sections of the Church, to make too much of baptism by linking it with regeneration, as baptismal regeneration; but there is an equally great danger among us who are called Baptists, of making too little of baptism. We cannot make too much of it, because our belief that none ought to be baptized but those who are regenerate already, will always be a healthy check for our making too much of it; but we may make too little of it. We ought to insist very strongly upon the duty of all believers who have found the Savior, to obey the second gospel command, for “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” We do not doubt but that all who believe shall be saved, but still for our part, when we see baptism put in so close connection with believing, we would not be disobedient to our Master’s command. We think it to be a sweet sign an humble and broken heart, when the child of God is willing to obey a command which is not essential to his salvation, which is not forced upon him by a selfish fear of damnation: we say it is no mean sign of grace, when, as a simple act of obedience and of communion with his Master in his burial to the world and resurrection to a new life, the young convert yields himself to be baptized. Lydia was baptized, but her good works did not end at the water; she then would have the apostles come to her house. She will bear the shame of being thought to be a follower of the crucified Jew, a friend of the despised Jewish apostle, the renegade, the turncoat — she will have him in her house; and though he saith “Nay,” out of his bashfulness to receive aught, yet she constrains him, for love is in her heart, and she has a generous spirit; and while she hath a crust it shall be broken with the man who brought her to Christ; she will give not only the cup of cold water in the prophet’s name, but her house shall shelter him. Brethren, I do not think much of a conversion where it does not touch a man’s substance- and those people who pretend to be Christ’s people, and yet live only for themselves, and do nothing for him or for his Church, give but sorry evidence of having been born again. A love to the people of God has ever been a distinguishing mark of the true convert. Look, then, at Lydia,

and remembering that she is but a specimen of many, let her case rest before you, and let the prayer go up, "Lord, bring in Lydias this morning, according to thy mighty grace."

II. We now look at the case again BY WAY OF CONTRAST.

There is another story in the chapter; read it carefully, for there is a remarkable contrast between the two. In the case of the gaoler, we see *nothing like a previous preparation for the reception of the Word*; he seems to be coarse, rough, brutal. It may be he did no more than his orders required of him when he treated Paul so harshly, for it is written, "Having received such a charge he thrust them into the inner prison;" but the probabilities are, that he did this with a very hearty goodwill; and, looking with a thorough contempt upon the two enthusiasts who had plunged themselves into this trouble, he was not at all likely to adjust the stocks in any comfortable manner, or see to their ease in any way. He was a rough, veteran legionary, probably, who had been elevated to the gaoler's office. He had gone to sleep; no preparation, surely, in sleep for the reception of the Word! The earthquake comes; the man springs out of his bed in terror; he grasps his sword, and would have killed himself. He is in the very act of committing suicide, when a voice is heard, "Do thyself no harm, we are all here." Now we cannot discover the slightest atom of preparation for his conversion. He is far off from hope as a man can well be, and is just upon the edge of perdition, near to running before the bar of his Maker with hands red with his own blood. Beloved, there are conversions such as these. They may not be very plentiful, but there are such, and there have been such in this house of prayer. Men have come under the sound of the Word with an intention of despising and laughing at it; they have come with their hearts full of venom and enmity; they have despised the preacher and despised the truth; they have come fresh from the foulest haunts of sin, they were proposing yet further to plunge into the depths of iniquity; they were enemies to God by wicked works, they made their hearts hard as an adamant-stone, and yet on a sudden, the ponderous hammer of the Word has come upon them, and the flint was made to fly into a thousand shivers, the proud sinner became humble as a little child, Paul's case is somewhat similar to that of the gaoler; you will have it in your recollection, and there are cases of persons here to-day who can, as they read the gaoler's story say, "Such was I once, as great a stranger from God as he, and as little likely to be called by grace as he was, and yet grace came and made me a

new creature in Christ Jesus.” Here was no preparation, while in Lydia’s case there was much which went to prepare the way for the grace of God.

Another contrast is perceptible in the fact, that *she was in the way* where the grace of God was likely to meet with her. She was in God’s house, at least in the spot which had been dedicated to his worship: she was engaged in prayer, and that not a formal prayer, but as far as her light went, it was acceptable to God, and was at any rate sincere, coming from her heart. But not so the gaoler. He is not in a place where the gospel is at all likely to come. His office keeps him in the midst of felons, of murderers, and criminals of all sorts. If grace shall come to the gaol, it will come to a graceless place indeed. His occupation was not that which would foster any religious ideas. Superstitious So doubtless was, and there was no point upon which a Roman was more superstitious than concerning an earthquake. It was one of the things which made the stout hearts of Roman legionaries tremble in a moment. It was the earthquake which made the guards at the tomb of our Savior become like dead men, swooning from fright; and this earthquake had much the same effect upon the gaoler. He was not seeking after God; he had not a thought about God; his thoughts were hellward, and his course was towards the pit. But in a moment, at God’s voice, the current of his thoughts changes its direction, and flows where it had never gone before. So have I known men who have been going on with all their might towards the realms of darkness, with their free and stout will, determining to inherit eternal damnation; but the hour has struck, sovereign mercy has come forth, and they wonders to all, but greatest wonders to themselves, have suddenly become heirs of God and children of the Most High. May such wonders still be wrought.

Yet further, *we do not find in Lydia’s case that there was anything like an earthquake*; there were no great shakings and alarms; it was a “still, small voice.” The gaoler sprang in, and came trembling. We doubt not that Lydia felt her need of a Savior, and that her cry was, “What must I do to be saved?” but still we find very little about her trembling, or being overwhelmed with the terrors of conscience; she was gently led by the finger of the eternal Father. The light dawned upon her as the morning’s dawn, a gradual enlightening of the darkness. Grace came upon her as the shower which first begins as a mist, and then thickens into a heavy dew, and then becomes a gentle sprinkling, and afterwards empties the clouds upon the soil. To the gaoler it was like an April storm beginning with big drops, and dashing into a torrent in a few moments: to the gaoler it was as

though the sun should rise in an instant, and turn the thickest night into full blaze of noon. Not so, in Lydia's case. Now do note, dear friends, these differences, because they may help to solve many of your difficulties. Do not expect all to be converted in the same way. Do not suppose you are all to pass through the same terrors, nor all to be led by the same gentle methods, our God is the God of variety. In creation and in providence there are no two things exactly alike and in the works of grace, we are not to have Christian run into a mould, or dropped down like shot, all fashioned in the same shape, but there must be in every conversion a something distinct and separate from every other, and every man must expect to perceive in the glass of his experience some lineament about the features of his conversion, different from those of any other. Why, do you not see that the means which converted Lydia would not have been of any avail to the gaoler? The gaoler would not go to the place by the river-side; he would have laughed at the idea of sitting down with a parcel of women. You would not find him listening, to Paul; he would smile at the very thought — "I go and listen to a renegade Jew, whom his own nation has cast off? Nothing of the kind." On the other hand, an earthquake would not have been appropriate to Lydia's character. Good, gentle soul, it might have frightened her out of her wits, and, instead of making her cry, "What must I do to be saved?" it is very likely she would have been in a swoon, if not altogether dead. The same quantity of alarm which will bring a stronger man down into something like reason will just drive a woman out of her reason altogether. Gentle Lydia and the rough gaoler are two very different people; they were of different sexes to begin with, and the woman is more easily moved by that which gently appeals to the affections than is the man; she, again, had been a moral and excellent woman; he has, probably, been tutored in sin. There must be different methods with different temperaments. Does the husbandman use the same machines in threshing different kinds of grain? Are all seeds sown after the same fashion? Do we not feel with regard to our children that we can speak a sharp word to one and he will scarcely feel it, but that the same expression will break another boy's heart? One child needs the rod, and there are others upon whom a touch of the rod might work mischief. Certainly, then, it must be so in the constitution of the soul; and therefore, God deals with us each in different ways, and we are not to question the sincerity of our conversion because it is not precisely like our favorite model, but we are rather to see whether its fruits are the same, whether it comes of God, whether it leads to Christ, and if it does all this it matters not in what mould it is run.

III. So much for that point but here, as I generally like, if I can, to place two truths side by side, we have our third point, namely, THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TWO, because they are essentially alike, though circumstantially different.

In both cases, dear friends, *providence co-worked with grace*. Providence brings Lydia to Philippi: providence shakes the prison. God makes the realm of nature subservient to his will in both cases. There is a demand for purple at Philippi. I do not know how it came about; I cannot tell whether there were new fashions among the ladies at Philippi at that time, or what it was, but for some reason or other Lydia gets to Philippi, because there is a great market for her purple. Well now, that is providence which brings her there. The same providence by another revolution of its wheel has appointed that gaoler to keep the prison. Why was he gaoler to that particular prison? Why is Paul brought to Philippi at all? And how is it that through the accidental circumstance of the demoniac woman having been healed, Paul is beaten with rods, and thrust into prison. Then comes the earthquake? Link within link, and wheel within wheel, providence works its way. So is it in every case, whether it is conversion by thunder and lightning, or by the “still, small voice.”

There was in both cases a *distinct work of God*. We see it in Lydia’s case, and have dwelt upon it; even more distinctly we perceive it in the gaoler’s case, for what but irresistible grace could have made him cry, “What must I do to be saved?”

In both instances, too, the Word of God is essential, for we read concerning the gaoler, as we did before, concerning Lydia, “They spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all who were in his house.” The earthquake cannot dispense with the minister; and though the mighty power of God can take the natural bonds from every prisoner, yet he does not choose to take away the spiritual bonds from any one soul without the proclamation of the Word, for it pleases God, “by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

And again, in both cases, *the same signs followed*. The gaoler is baptized with all his house, and we are told that they all believed. He washes their stripes; just as Lydia had entertained them, so he begins to wash their poor backs which were all black and blue, and probably bleeding with the hard blows of the lictor’s elm rods. He sets meat before them, and entertains them with the best he has, and glad enough is he in the morning, when he

finds they are not to be kept in durance vile any longer, but may go their way. Here is the same result, the same love to the brethren, the same obedience to the divine command, "Arise, and be baptized." There is an unmistakable likeness among all the people of God. All the children have the father's features, yet they are not any one of them precisely like his fellow. They are all brought by glace, and grace does its work in the same way; yet, as to the minutiae of the details of their conversion, they are as wide as the poles asunder.

IV. We take Lydia's conversion to be A MODEL OF MULTITUDES OF CONVERSIONS WHICH ARE GOING ON IN OUR MIDST AT THE PRESENT TIME, AND IN OTHER CHURCHES, WHERE GOD IS MAKING BARE HIS ARM.

The expression used is, "The Lord *opened Lydia's heart*, to attend to the things that were spoken." Now what is meant by this? I think we have a summary of the work of the Holy Spirit here. Well, there are several things meant, upon each of which briefly. No doubt *the Lord removed prejudice*. This prejudice is an evil which we have to tight against in very many. In Lydia's case it would he Jewish prejudice; perhaps the report had reached her, as it had most of the Jews, concerning Jesus of Nazareth; she knew that her race had hounded him to the death, that her nation had even said, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Paul the apostle, was the subject of much of this prejudice among the Jews, insomuch that when writing his Epistle to the Hebrews, you will have observed that he does not begin with his name, as he does in all the other Epistles, because he felt that the very name "Paul," from the fact of his having been an eminent Pharisee, and having become a Christian, was distasteful to the Hebrew people. But God removed all this prejudice from Lydia's mind: she sat down to listen to Paul with a determination to give him a fair hearing, and to weigh the matter and see whether these things were so or not — somewhat like the Bereans of old who also had their hearts in a measure opened, for they searched the Scriptures to see whether things were so. The devil often covers men from head to foot in a coat of mail, so that when they come where the arrows of God are flying, there is very little hope of their being wounded, because there is scarce a joint of the harness which the devil has not protected by an iron rivet of prejudice. You know how he tries in these days to do it. Some silly tales are set afloat about the minister — some inventions of addled brains — or else some old stories which were true of eccentric men whom the worms have eaten one hundred years before — all these are appended to the preacher that so he may be made to appear in a

ridiculous light, in order, as the devil thinks, that there may be a prejudice against the word which comes from his lips. Or else it is the denomination or the sect, as it is called, to which the preacher belongs. "Of course, I can get no good from him," says one; "I am a Churchman." Or, saith another, "I could not expect that I should be blessed under him — I am an Arminian." So these things raise prejudices, and many make up their minds beforehand that they will not like the preaching, and they come into the place, as it were, with their ears stuffed full of wool, and you cannot get a word in; they have their hearts already so occupied with certain set notions, that though an angel from heaven should minister the truth, it would need to have the earthquake of the gaoler before the truth could enter. In Lydia's case there was nothing of the sort; she was willing to hear and to give a candid attention to the preacher. Much is gained when this is done.

In the next place, when her heart was opened her desires were awakened. She felt now a wish to understand this matter, and if there was anything in what the apostle was saying about eternal salvation — about complete pardon by the blood of him who was the "Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world," she said to herself, "I should like to know about it; I hope it may be true; I wish I may get an interest in these things." So she listens, anxiously desiring to be impressed by the Word. She has a hunger and a thirst: and these people have this blessing — "They shall be filled." When we get our people, by God's grace, as far as hungering and thirsting, then we are very thankful to say, this is the opening of the heart. As the oyster when the tide comes up, openeth its shell, so when the tide of grace is coming, God often makes men open their hearts, so that now they may get the spiritual supply.

Well, there was a desire awakened, but this was not all, there came another kind of opening, *her understanding was now enlightened*. "Yes," as the apostle went from one point to the other point — "yes, I see that God did promise a prophet like unto Moses. This man Jesus is like Moses, for he is a prophet mighty in word and deed, which none of our prophets were, except Moses. Yes," said she, "yes, Isaiah does speak of him as being 'despised and rejected of men.' That is right, and David does say, 'They pierced my hands and my feet- they parted my garments among them; for my vesture did they cast lots.' Yes," said she, "I see it- in the person of the man Christ Jesus whom Paul preaches, I perceive the Messiah who is spoken of in the law and in the prophets." And when he went on to say that faith in this Christ Jesus, who was fastened to the tree, would take away all

sin, because this same Christ Jesus had carried upon his blessed shoulders the transgression of all believers. "Yes," said she, "I see that this is a reasonable doctrine, that of substitution. I can see how God is just, for he does punish sin in Christ; and I can see how he is gracious, too, for he is able now to freely give out of the fullness of his heart, such grace as poor sinners require." So her understanding was opened; she clear view of the gospel; she could see in its height, and depth, and length, just that which her soul wanted.

Then came something else; now *her affections were excited*, she felt growing within her a love to him who, though he was equal with God, yet took upon himself the form of a servant. As she heard Paul describe his sufferings, as she pictured to herself the scene around the cross, she thought she could hear the death-shriek and mark the flowing blood, and she seemed to think, "Yes, I love that man; I love that God; my heart goeth after him; O that he were mine! Yes," said she, I love that preaching; sweet to my ears are those doctrines of mercy." She began already to rejoice, and "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound," for if they do not yet walk in the light of God's countenance, yet they shall, for so the promise runs. All this, I think, is included in the term, "Her heart was opened." Her affections were now kindling towards divine things. And then came faith; *she believed the whole of the record*. She took it to be absolutely true, as Paul had stated, that there had been a Messiah, that he, according to Scripture, was the Son of God, and was also the Son of Man; that he had suffered, the just for the unjust, and that she, believing in him, had her sins forgiven. Faith came now through hearing. She took God at his word; she simply and humbly put her soul at the feet of that cross where the blood was dropping, believing, that as it fell from heaven, it pleaded for her, and as it dropped on her it gave her peace with God through Jesus Christ.

Faith being given, *all the graces followed*. Now she hated her sins, she repented. Now she loved righteousness, she sought after holiness. Now she had a bright hope of the many mansions in the Father's house! Now she began to run with holy and happy feeling in the ways of obedience to Christ's commands, and she became, not merely a believer in the elements of Christianity, but she went on towards perfection, adding to her faith courage, and to her courage experience, and to her experience brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love. Onward she went in the way of

her God, All this the Master did by opening her heart to attend to the things that were spoken of by Paul.

And now, beloved, the practical lesson is, let us pray for those who are round about us, and the many hopeful ones, that God would make them like Lydia. Let us put up this petition for our sons and daughters, that the God who has put them in the way of the means, and, to a degree, has prepared their minds for the reception of truth, would be pleased to work effectually and savingly, and bring them to accept the Savior.

As for those in whom God is thus working, O that the Word I speak this morning might lead them to lay hold on Jesus. Recollect, there is nothing for you to do: you have but to trust Jesus, and you are saved; and to do this, as your warrant, there are no good works required, nor good feelings, nor deep experiences either. You have, just as you are, to believe that Christ can save you, and trust yourself to him as the Savior, and he will save you, save you now with a great, present, and complete salvation. The Lord help you to do it, and he shall have the praise. Amen.

THE HOLY CHILD, JESUS.

NO. 545

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER
20TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“That signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child, Jesus.”
— *Acts 4:30.*

THE opposition of the world is often a very great blessing to the Church. If it be met by holy boldness, it is sure to yield a glorious triumph to the servants of God. Sanctified by the Holy Ghost, out of the eater cometh forth honey, for it becomes an incentive to greater zeal. Now that the foeman is determined to conquer, the Church will be resolved to hold its own. Pressure from without drives the members of the Church together, and so promotes holy love, and when love and zeal come together, then there is such a blessed unity of action, and such a power in every effort that great success must follow. Woe unto the world when it persecutes the Church, for it kicks with its naked foot against the pricks; it stirs up a nest of hornets about its own ears; yea, it provokes the Lion of the tribe of Judah to spring upon his enemies.

Our text is a portion of an apostolic song, which celebrated the release of Peter and John and the confusion of the priests and scribes. Every persecution shall yield psalms of victory to the people of God. There is one sweet result which always flows from the opposition of the world, namely, that it draws true disciples nearer to their Master. You will perceive that they sing concerning the birth, and death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the Lord is the theme of their grateful song. The title by which they salute him, “Thy holy child, Jesus,” is most appropriate to their case. The history of the Church is Christ’s life written out in length. Our Lord enters upon the world a holy child: when the Church begins her history, she is as a holy

child too, and therefore rejoices in the childhood of her gracious Lord. How precious is it to see Jesus as made in all points like unto his people, and how rapturous for his people to see their Redeemer's features drawn by the pencil of fellowship in themselves. Trial is often sanctified to this noble end. Let the world oppress the Church; let the members of that Church be thoroughly weaned from any other ground of comfort; let the Lord Jesus be their only rock and refuge, and they will soon perceive analogies in the history of Christ beautifully explaining their own — analogies which they never would have discovered except in the glare of the furnace. In the chapter before us, the apostles are thrown back upon the person of Jesus for comfort, and they revel in the thought of his being a child, because they discover in this his likeness to the Church, which, in its infancy, the enemy sought to destroy, even as Herod sought to slay the new-born King of the Jews.

Brethren, whenever we endure adversities, or tribulations, or distresses, be it ours to turn to Christ, and consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; for we may rest assured that the black finger of our distresses will often point out beauties in the person of Immanuel hitherto unseen. There is a certain spot from which alone each glorious trait in the Savior's character can be seen, and many of our most painful positions are ordained for us in order that we may from their vantage ground behold the Lamb of God.

Our subject, this morning, may perhaps be suitable to the experience of some- the Lord make it useful to all. Taking the text as we find it, we shall, first of all, meditate upon *the humanity of Christ as here declared*; secondly, we shall *view it as here described* — “A holy child;” and thirdly, we shall then *behold it in the glory which surrounds it* — signs and wonders are wrought by the name of the holy child, Jesus.

I. First, then, dear friends, may our hearts be enlightened to see, as the apostles did, the beauty and excellence of THE REAL HUMANITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

While we always contend that Christ is God, very God of very God, let us never lose the firm conviction he is most certainly and truly a man. He is not a God humanized, nor yet a human being deified; but, as to his Godhead, pure Godhead, equal and co-eternal with the Father; as to his manhood, perfect manhood; made in all respects like unto the rest of mankind, sin alone excepted. His humanity was real, *for he was born*. He

lay hidden in the virgin's womb, and in due time was born into a world of suffering. The gate by which we enter upon the first life, he passed through also; he was not created, nor transformed, but his humanity was begotten and born. As he was born, *so in the circumstances of his birth*, he is completely human; he is as weak and feeble as any other babe. He is not even royal, but human. Those who were born in marble halls of old were wrapped in purple garments, and were thought by the vulgar to be a superior race; but this babe is wrapped in swaddling clothes and hath a manger for his cradle, that the true humanness of his being may come out. More a man than he is a Prince of the House of David, he knows the woes of a peasant's child. As he grows up, the very *growth* shows how completely human he is. He does not spring into full manhood at once, but he grows in stature, and in favor both with God and man. When he reaches man's estate, he gets the common stamp of manhood upon his brow. "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread" "is the common heritage of us all, and he receives no better. The carpenter's shop must witness to the toils of a Savior and when he becomes the preacher and the prophet, still we read such significant words as these — "Jesus, being weary, sat thus on the well." We find him needing to betake himself to rest in *sleep*, he slumbers at the stern of the vessel when it is tossed in the midst of the tempest. Brethren, if *sorrow* be the mark of real manhood, and "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," certainly Jesus Christ has the truest evidence of being a man. If to hunger and to thirst be signs that he was no shadow, and his manhood no fiction you have these. If to associate with his fellow men, and eat and drink as they did, will be proof to your mind that he was none other than a man, you see him sitting at a feast one day, at another time he graces a marriage supper, and on another occasion he is hungry, and "hath not where to lay his head." Since the day when the prince of the power of the air obtained dominion in this world, men are *tempted*, and he, though he is born pure and holy, must not be delivered from temptation.

***"The desert his temptation knew
His conflict and his victory too."***

The garden marked the bloody sweat, as it started from every pore while he endured the agony of conflict with the prince of this world. If, since we have fallen and must endure temptation, we have need *to pray*, so had he

*“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer.”*

Strong crying and tears go up to heaven mingled with his pleas and entreaties, and what clearer proof could we have of his being man of the substance of his mother, and man like ourselves, than this, that he was heard in that he feared. There appeared unto him an angel strengthening him; to whom but men are angels ministering spirits? Brethren, we have never discovered the weakness of our manhood more than when God has deserted us. When the spiritual consolations which comforted us have been withdrawn, and the light of God's face has been hidden from us, then we have said, “I am a worm and no man,” and out of the dust and ashes of human weakness have we cried unto the most high God. Let “Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani” assure you that Christ has felt the same. Follow man wherever you will and you find the footprint of the Son of Mary. Go after man where you will, into scenes of sorrow of every hue, and you shall find traces of Jesus' pilgrimage there. You shall find in whatever struggle and conflict of which man is capable, the Captain of our salvation has had a share. Leave out sin, and Christ is the perfect picture of humanity. Simple as the truth is, and lying as it does at the very basis of our Christianity, yet let us not despise it, but try to get a personal grip of it if we can. Jesus, my mediator, is a man, “Immanuel, God with us.” He is a child born, he is better than that, for “unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a son is given.” He is to us a brother; he is bone of our bone to-day. As a man leaves his father and mother and cleaveth unto his wife, and they twain become one flesh, so hath he left the glory of his Father's house and become one flesh with his people. Flesh, and bone, and blood, and heart, that may ache and suffer, and be broken and be bruised, yea, and may die, such is Jesus; for herein he completes the picture. As the whole human race must yield its neck to the great iron-crowned monarch, so must Christ himself say, “Into thy hands I commend my spirit, Father,” and he, too, must yield up the ghost. Oh, Christian, see your nearness to him and be glad this morning! Oh, sinner, see his nearness to you! Come to him with confidence, for in body and soul he is completely human.

Having thus insisted upon the humanity of Christ, let us gather a few reflections from it. There are a thousand things which it indicates, but as the garden is too full of flowers for us to bring them all, we have gathered but a handful.

As the first meditation, let us marvel at his *condescension*. It is the greatest miracle that was ever heard or read of, that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Cyprian well said, “I do not wonder at any miracle, but I do marvel at this, which is a miracle among miracles, that God should become man.” That God should make a creature out of nothing is certainly a marvellous manifestation of power, but that God should enter into that creature, and should take it into intimate union with his own nature — this is the strangest of all acts of condescending love. Indeed, so marvellous is it, that in all the heathen mythologies — strange freaks though imagination has there played, theology we do find instances of the gods appearing in the likeness of men — yet never do we find anything like the hypostatical union of the two natures in the person of Christ. Human wisdom in its most happy moments has never risen to anything like the thought of deity espousing manhood, that man might be redeemed. To you and to me the marvel lieth in the motive which prompted the incarnation. What could it have been that brought Immanuel to such a stoop as this? What unrivalled, indescribable, unutterable love was this that made him leave his Father’s glory, the adoration of angels and all the hallowed joy of heaven, that he might be made a man like ourselves, to suffer, to bleed, to die? “He was seen of angels,” saith the apostle, and this was a great wonder, for the angels had worshipped at his throne, but their created eyes could not bear to look upon the brightness of his person. They veiled their faces with their wings when they cried “Holy! Holy! Holy!” But angels saw the Son of God lying in a manger! The Lord of all wrestling with a fallen spirit in the wilderness! The Prince of Peace hanging upon the tree on Calvary! “Seen of angels” was one of the wonders concerning the incarnation of Christ; but that he should be seen of men — nay that he should be the associate of the worst of men, that he should be called the friend of publicans and sinners, so perfectly incarnating himself, and condescending so low that he comes to the very lowest state of humanity — all this, my brethren, is condescension concerning which words fail me to speak. A prince who puts aside his crown, and clothes himself with beggar’s rags to investigate the miseries of his country, is but a worm condescending to his fellow worm. An angel that should lay aside his beauty, and become decrepit and lame, and walk the streets in pain and poverty to bless the race of man, were nothing, for this were but a creature humbling himself to creatures a little lower than himself; but here is the Creator taking the creature into union with himself, the Immortal becoming mortal, the Infinite an infant, the Omnipotent taking weakness, even human weakness into union with his

own person. We may truly say of Jesus, that he was weak as the dust, and yet as mighty as the Eternal God; liable to suffer, and yet God over all blessed for ever. O the depth of the love of Jesus!

Let us reflect upon another theme. *See the fitness of Christ for his work!* He is a perfect man — he could not be a priest if he were not. But now, “He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, seeing he was tempted in all points like as we are.” Being not ashamed to call us brethren, he can compassionate the ignorant and those who are out of the way. O brethren, if he were no man, he could not have been our substitute; man sinned, and man must pay the penalty: he must be perfect man to make atonement. If he were not man, his righteousness would not have availed us, for while we want a righteousness divine to cover the infiniteness of God’s demands, we want a righteousness which is human, for it is that which the law requires. O soul, if thou art in sadness and sickness to-day, let thine arms embrace the man Christ Jesus. Feel in the fact that he is thy brother, how suitable is such a Savior to thy poverty, thy weakness, and thy sin.

Let us think, too, of another thought. Behold, inasmuch as Christ is man, *his near relationship and union to his people*. He is no stranger of whom we speak — he is our Brother, nay, more than that, he has become our Head. Not a head of gold, and feet of clay, or limbs of baser metal; but as we are, so was he, that as he is so might we be. It is manhood which is at the head of the Church, as it is manhood which constitutes the members. Union to Jesus is, methinks, the sweetest doctrine in revelation. There are other doctrines which possess a more transcendent grandeur, but the doctrine of union is the quintessence of all delights. What is heaven but union to Christ realized; and what shall be the foretaste of heaven but union to Christ believed? As thou seest him then completely, such as thou art, know, Christian, how near, how dear, how intimately one with him thou art, and be thou glad this day.

Let me give thee another flower. *See the glory of manhood now, restored!* Man was but a little lower than the angels, and had dominion over the fowl of the air, and over the fish of the sea. That royalty he lost; the crown was taken from his head by the hand of sin, and the beauty of the image of God was dashed by his rebellion. But all this is given back to us. We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; and at this day all things are put under him,

waiting, as he does, and expecting the time when all his enemies shall be beneath his feet, and the last enemy, Death, shall be destroyed by man — by the very man whom he boasted that he had destroyed. It is our nature, brethren, Jesus in our manhood, who is now Lord of providence; it is our nature which has hanging at its girdle the sovereign keys of heaven, and earth, and hell; it is our nature which sits upon the throne of God at this very day. No angel ever sat upon God's throne, but a man has done it, and is doing it now. Of no angel was it ever said, "Thou shalt be King of kings and Lord of lords, they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before thee, and thine enemies shall lick the dust- "but this is said of a man. It is a *man* who shall judge the world in righteousness; a man who shall distribute crowns of reward- a man who shall denounce, "Depart, ye cursed;" a man, the thunder of whose words shall make hell shrink with affright. Oh, how glorious is renovated manhood! What an honor is it, my brethren, to be man, not of the fallen first Adam, but man made in the image in the second Adam? Let us with all our weakness, and infirmity, and imperfection, yet bless and praise God, who made us what we are by his grace, for man, in the person of Christ, is second only to God — nay, is in such union with God, that he cannot be nearer to him.

When we think of the true and proper manhood of Christ, ought we not to rejoice that *a blessed channel is opened by which God's mercy can come to us?* "How can God reach man? "was once the question; but now, brethren, there is another question. "How can God refuse to bless those men who are in Christ? "The everlasting Father must bless his only-begotten Son, and in blessing him he has blessed a man, and that man having all the elect in his loins, they are necessarily all blessed in him. Look upon the person of Christ as that of a representative individual. Whatever Christ is, all his elect are, just as whatever Adam was all men who were in him became. If Adam fell, all manhood fell; if Christ stands and is honored and glorified, then all who are in Christ, that is the goodly fellowship of his elect, are all blessed in him. Now, it is utterly impossible but that God should bless Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is for ever one with God, and his manhood is also one with Godhead. As an old writer observes, "The nearest union that we know of is the union between the humanity and the divinity in the person of Christ. That of the three persons in the Trinity may rather be called a unity than a union — but this is the closest union we know of — the union between humanity and deity in Christ." So complete is it, that you cannot think of Christ aright as a man apart from God, nor as

God apart from man. The very idea of Christ hath in it the two natures, and it is a clear impossibility that the Godhead should not impart of its blessedness to the manhood, and that manhood being thus blessed, every elect soul is necessarily blessed also. O see what a channel is thus opened; a channel through which the stream cannot but flow; a golden pipe through which grace cannot but come. The laws of nature might be reversed, but not the laws of God's nature, and it is a law of God's nature that in the person of Christ the deity must bless the manhood, and that manhood being blessed, it is another law that elect manhood must be blessed, since that elect manhood is for ever indissolubly bound up with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. See what a river deep and broad is here opened for us, and what a fullness there is in that river, for all the fullness of the deity dwells in Christ, and the fullness of that deity thus flows to man.

See again, beloved, *what a door of access is thus opened between us and God!* I am a man; Christ is a man. I come to the man Christ Jesus — no I have not even to do that — I am *in* the man Christ. If I am a believer, I am a portion of him. Well, being a portion of the man Christ, and God being united with him, I am very near unto God. I have such nearness of access then to God, that whatever may be my desires and my prayers, I have no need to climb to heaven nor to descend into the depth in order to obtain my desire, for God's ear must be near to me inasmuch as God is in Christ, and my soul being in Christ I am very, very near to God. Christ's body is the veil that hangs before the majesty of God, that veil was rent; and whoever by a living faith knows how to come through the rent body of the man, Christ, comes at once into the presence of God. Such communion, such sacred commerce, such blessed interchanges between mankind and God could never have taken place on any other plan. That ladder which Jacob saw was but a faint and dreamy picture of this. This is no ladder, but the access is such as though God, who was at the top of Jacob's ladder, had come down to Jacob as he lay sleeping there. There is no ladder wanted now, the person of Christ brings God to man, brings man to God in closer contact than the ladder can ever picture. Brethren, let us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace, to obtain grace to help in every time of need.

Another thing I cannot leave out, is this — beloved, do see it, do see it — *how safe we are!* Our soul's estate was once put in the hands of Adam: he was a fallible man; how unsafe our salvation was then! The salvation of every believer now is in the hand of a man; it is the man Christ Jesus! But

what a man! Can he fail? Can he sin? Can he fall? O no, beloved, for the deity is in intimate union with the manhood, and the man Christ Jesus, since he can never sin, can never fall, and is therefore a sure foundation for the perpetual salvation of all the elect. When the angels were all in heaven, before the fall of Satan, methinks they could never be perfectly happy, because they knew that if they sinned they would perish, and this surely would mar their bliss, because there was a fear of their losing all their glory; but, beloved, our salvation does not rest with ourselves, we may have all the joy of perfect security, because it rests in the hand of one who cannot by any possibility sin, who cannot err, cannot fail, but who standeth fast for ever, from everlasting to everlasting, God. See then, the comfort and security of God's people, but indeed there are so many sheaves in this field of incarnation that I cannot possibly unbind them all for you. You must come and pluck an ear or two for yourselves, and rub them in your hands on this Sabbath day, that your hunger may be relieved.

Beloved, do you not see that *here is your adoption*? You become sons of God, because Christ becomes a son of man. Do you not perceive that *here is your acceptance*? The man, Christ, is accepted, and you, since he stands for you, are accepted in him. Nay, there is not a mercy in the covenant, there is not a single stream of blessing which flows to the believer, that does not spring from the fact that Christ is to be called the "holy child Jesus," being most certainly and properly a man. Thus much, then, upon the first point.

II. Now let us VIEW THE HUMANITY AS IT IS HERE DESCRIBED. The words teach it to us — *holy child*.

Christ's humanity was *perfectly holy*. Upon this doctrine you are well established- but you may well wonder that Jesus was always holy. He is *conceived* of a woman, and yet no sort of sin cometh from his birth. "That holy thing which is born of thee shall be called the Son of God." He is *educated* in the midst of sinful persons. It could not be otherwise, for there were none on earth that could be called good — all having become unprofitable, and yet, though tabernacling in the midst of sinners, in him is no taint or trace of sin. He *goes into the world*, and as a physician must mingle with the sick, so he is found in the very worst of society. The harlot may speak to him, and from the publican he turns not away, yet from none of these did he receive any corrupt influence. He is *tempted*, and it is usually supposed that a man can scarcely be tempted, even should he

overcome the temptation, without receiving some injury to his innocency; but the prince of this world came and had nothing in Christ; his fiery darts fell upon the nature of Christ as upon water, and were quenched at once. Satan was but as one who should whip the sea; he left no mark upon the perfect holiness of Christ. *Imputation of sin* would be the nearest approach to making our Lord a sinner; but let it ever be remembered that though Jehovah made him to be sin for us, yet he knew no sin. The world's sin was put upon the shoulders of Christ, and yet he had no sin for all that; the imputation was accomplished in such a manner that it did not in any sense or in any degree derogate from his title to perfect holiness. I have read sermons upon the imputation of sin to Christ, which have left painful impressions upon my mind, because I remember to have met with the expression that Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived, because he stood in the room of millions of sinners. Now it is true that Jesus took the sinner's place, but yet he never was a sinner, nor ever can in any sense be thought of as unholy. Perfect, pure, spotless, the great Redeemer stood; and even in the conflict, when all the powers of hell were let loose against him, and when *God himself had withdrawn* — that withdrawal of God from us would have hardened our hearts, but it did not harden his heart. The taking away of God's grace from us is the ruin of our graces; but he had a well-spring of grace within himself, and his purity lived on when God had withdrawn from him. From the first dawn of his humanity in the womb to the time when he is laid in the new tomb, he is "holy."

The next word is one that requires most attention. Why is Christ called a "holy *child*?" We can understand his being called a child while he was so, but why a "holy child" now that he is ascended up on high? Why, dear friends, because the character of Christ is more aptly pictured by that of a child than that of a man. If you conceive of a perfectly holy child, you have then before you a representation of Christ. There is that in childhood, in holy childhood, which you cannot find even in holy manhood. You note in childhood its *simplicity*, the absence of all cunning. We dare not in manhood usually wear our heart upon our sleeve as children do; we have lost the trustfulness of our youth and are upon our guard in society. We have learned by very painful experience to suspect others, and we walk among our fellow men often with our heart locked up with many locks, thinking that when thieves are abroad, good housekeepers must not leave the door on the latch. We have to practice the wisdom of serpents, as well as the harmlessness of doves.

But a child is perfectly guileless; it prattles out its little heart; it has no caution or reserve; it cannot scheme, for it cannot go round about with the skillful words of the politician; it knows not how to spin the web of sophistry; it is plain, transparent, and you see through it. Now, such was Christ. Not foolish, for there is much difference between simplicity and folly. He was never foolish; they who mistook him for such, and sought to entrap him, soon discovered that the child was a wise child. Still he is ever a child — he tells his heart out everywhere. He eats, he drinks like other men. They call him a drunken man and a wine-bibber; does he, then, from prudential motives, therefore, cease to eat and drink as other men? O no! He is quite a child. In every thing that he does there is an artless simplicity. You see through him and you can trust him, because there is a trustfulness about his whole nature; he knows what is in man, yet he does not act with suspicion towards men, but ever with simplicity.

In a child we expect to see much *humbleness*. There is a humbleness of association. There is a little child yonder — it is a king's daughter, and here is another little child belonging to a gipsy woman. Leave the two in a room and see if they will not be at play together in five minutes. If it had been the queen and the gipsy woman they would have sat as far apart as possible. O no! They do not associate together at all! Distinctions of rank and all that kind of thing they studiously maintain, and, therefore, remain isolated; but the two children will be down on the floor together, and if there happen to be some little heap of dust or a few pieces of broken crock, the princess will find in them almost as much mirth as the beggar-woman's child. Here is humbleness of mind. So with Christ- he is King of kings and Prince of the house of David, yet he is always with the poor and needy, and sympathizes with them just as heartily as though he were altogether such as they were. You do not find little children sitting down and planning how they shall win crowns — in what way they shall obtain popularity or applause. O no! They are quite satisfied to do their father's will, and live on his smile. It is so with Christ. What a childlike act that was — when they would have made him a king, he went and hid himself, and how childlike does he seem when he rides upon the colt, the foal of an ass, through the streets of Jerusalem, and must have the mother ass there too, lest either of the two creatures should be distressed. He is the friend of the brute creation as well as of man in general; so thoughtful and so kind, so simple, so humble in all that he does.

We picture a holy child as being all *obedient*. You have but to say to it “Do this,” and it doeth it. It asketh no questions. Was it not so with Jesus his whole life long? “My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me.” “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”

So, again, we look in holy children for a *forgiving temper*. We know that sometimes the blood comes up in the little face, and a little angry quarrel ensues, but it is soon over, and with their arms about each other’s neck, and many a loving kiss, it is soon made up again by the little ones. Well, with Jesus this characteristic of childhood is carried out to the fullest extent, for his latest words are, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Ah! holy child! no fire from heaven dost thou call, like John; no denunciations come from thy lips against sinners. “Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more,” saith he to the woman taken in adultery. He is the child all through. Scripture calls him the man-child, and what if we call him the great child-man! He was a child when he had become a man. He never had childish things to put away in the sense in which the apostle speaks of it, for as to all the folly, and the littleness, and giddiness of youth, Christ knew not these, but everything that is beautiful, and lovely, and just, in the virgin innocence of a pure and holy child — such as children would have been, if their parents had not fallen — all this you see in the person of Christ Jesus.

Beloved, I think there is something very sweet in this picture of Christ’s humanity, because we are none of us afraid to approach a child. Men that are childlike men — we are never afraid of. You know certain people in the world — you could not tell your trouble to them; they have a haughty manner, they look down upon you, you feel that you can never reach their hearts. There are certain others with an open and honest face, and you instinctively feel, “There, I can tell that man anything, I know I can. If I were in any kind of distress, or trouble, I would go to him — I know he would help me if he could.” Well, that is because such a man has a degree of childlikeness about him. Now in the person of Christ there is all this carried out to the fullest degree. Come then, and tell Jesus everything.

Whatever your trouble or difficulty may be, stand not back through shame or fear. Wilt thou fear Immanuel, or dread the Lamb of God? Wilt thou be afraid of a holy child? Nay, rather come, and like Simeon take him in thine arms and own him as thy consolation and thy trust. I would I could get a hold this morning on those timid ones who always say, “I am afraid of Jesus.” Why, dear friends, how can you talk so? You do him wrong. You

know him not, or you would not thus speak. This is the unkindest cut of all, to think that he is unwilling to forgive. Dying for you, living as a holy child for you, O can it be, can it be possible that he should be hard to forgive and receive you?

Thinking of a holy child while I looked through this verse, I turned to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's story of Eva and little Topsy. She gives a graphic picture there of a holy child indeed. There is the law in the person of Miss Ophelia: she whips the child, but the more she whips her, the worse she is, she gets no further than, "I's so wicked, I can't help it; I's so wicked." That is all the law can do; it can only make a man feel he is "so wicked," that he cannot help it, and he goes on sinning still. But what a picture is that when St. Clair draws the curtain and sees the two little children sitting with their cheeks together. Eva says, "What does make you so bad, Topsy? Why won't you try and be good? Don't you love *anybody*, Topsy?" "Donno nothing 'bout love; I loves candy and sich; that's all," said Topsy. "But you love your father and mother?" "Never had none, ye know; I telled ye that, Miss Eva." "Oh, I know," said Eva sadly; "but hadn't you any brother, or sister, or aunt, or —" "No, none on 'em — never had nothing nor nobody." "But, Topsy, if you'd only try to be good, you might —" "Couldn't never be nothin' but a nigger, if I was ever so good," said Topsy. "O Topsy, poor child, *I* love you!" said Eva, with a sudden burst of feeling, and laying her little thin, white hand on Topsy's shoulder, "I love you, because you haven't had any father, or mother, or friends — because you've been a poor, abused child! I love you, and I want you to be good. I am very unwell, Topsy, and I think I shan't live a great while; and it really grieves me to have you be so naughty. I wish you would try to be good, for my sake; it's only a little while I shall be with you." The round, keen eyes of the black child were overcast with tears; large, bright drops rolled heavily down, one by one, and fell on the little white hand. Yes, in that moment, a ray of real belief, a ray of heavenly love had penetrated the darkness of her heathen soul! She laid her head down between her knees, and wept, and sobbed- while the beautiful child, bending over her, looked like the picture of some bright angel stooping to reclaim a sinner. Now something like this, only in a far nobler style, Jesus Christ has behaved towards us. He sees us lost and ruined, wicked, hopelessly wicked, and he comes as a holy child and sits down by our ruined humanity, and he says, "I love you — I love you because you are so lost, so ruined, so hopelessly ruined; because I know the dreadful doom into which you will fall. There is

nothing in you that makes me loves you, but I do love you; I cannot bear to see you die like this. I would sooner die than you should remain a sinner. I would sooner die and bear my Father's wrath for you, than that you should be a sinner, and disobedient to him." The holy child sits down by you this morning and weeps for you. Will you grieve Immanuel? Will you break the heart of Jesus, your soul's lover? Oh, will you open his wounds afresh and crucify him again? If ye would not, then trust him now; fly to him, give yourselves up to him. He waiteth to be gracious to you; his loving arms are wide open to receive you. "Whosoever will," saith he, "let him come, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Such is the coming of the "holy child Jesus."

III. To conclude: it seems that the name of this holy child is to work great wonders. Only for one second let us turn aside and behold THE GLORY OF HIS HUMANITY.

Although Christ was a man, all the powers of nature knew their Master and crouched at his feet. He could command the sea or the boisterous wind; diseases, the myrmidons of death, and death their prince, all owned allegiance to him who is immortality and life. After his resurrection he endowed his disciples with his own power, and more than his own power — "For greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father." The name of Jesus was uttered, uttered by feeble men, and devils fled apace; dumb mouths began to sing, lame men leaped like a hart, and the blind began to see; nay in several instances the grave itself yielded up its prey when the name of Jesus sounded through its hollow vaults. The age of miracles passed off, it was well it should. Miracles are but the cradle in which the man-child, the Church, must be rocked. When the Church becomes strong enough to stand alone, she leaves her swaddling bands behind her; but the name of Jesus hath not less power to-day because no risen dead, no opened eyes follow in our train. At this hour, dead souls hear the voice of God and live. At this moment, spiritual eyesight is restored; hearts that were stone are turned to flesh, and tongues that were ready enough at cursing begin to sing. The miracles of the spirit world are infinitely greater than those of the natural. It is little to turn a stone into bread; but it is much to turn a stony heart into flesh. It is comparatively little to open a blind eye, but it is divine indeed to enlighten the understanding and illuminate the dark heart. The name of Jesus is just as mighty in this Tabernacle to-day, as it was in the lips of Paul upon Mars Hill, or when he stood in his own hired house in Rome. Do not say that

you entertain a doubt concerning it. Look around, and see the proofs. O men and brethren, you and I have been the willing trophies of the power of that great name. In this house, or in the Surrey Music Hall, and elsewhere, where that name was proclaimed, we received a broken heart — we who once had hearts hard as adamant. There the tears of repentance began to flow; there the griefs, the heavy glooms of our spirit, were scattered by the Sun of Righteousness. If we have been made to walk in holiness, this is one of the signs and wonders of his name. If drunkenness and lust have been shaken off, this, too, is to his praise. If the demoniac, the man who was full of devilry, has been clothed and made to sit in his right mind at the feet of Jesus, this is another of the signs and wonders. In this place — not only in this great chamber, but below-stairs in our classes, and in our Sabbath-schools too, signs and wonders are wrought by the name of the holy child, Jesus. And in other places of worship in London, wherever Christ is lifted up — wherever his sacrifice is made the prominent theme, the dry bones in the valley come together, the Spirit breathes upon them, and they live as an exceeding great army. We defy the whole world to show anything comparable to the power of Jesus' name. There is more magic in it than ever was in Moses' rod; it is more mighty even than his voice, though he divided the Red Sea and brought water out of the rock. Brethren, let us spread his name; let it be always on our tongues. Let us each in our proper sphere, declare his glory, and we shall see his kingdom come, and his will shall be done on earth even as it is in heaven. I wonder whether there is anyone here who will be a sign and wonder of the love of Christ! Do you wish to be? Ah! then, I hope you are. Do you wish to be? Then, the door is open. "Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned." One look at Jesus, and you are saved — a trustful casting of yourself on him, and you are delivered. God enable you to do this now, and you shall see in the change which is wrought within you, an internal evidence of the majesty of Christ's person, which shall never fail you. You shall be established by that which you feel within, in so sure and certain a manner, that the arguments of infidelity or deism shall never be able to shake you off the rock. May God grant this for his holy name's sake. Amen.

ALPHA AND OMEGA.

NO. 546

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER
27TH, 1863,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” —
Revelation 22:13.*

EVERY Sunday-school child knows that there is no great mystery hidden in the words “Alpha and Omega.” We have here the names of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, so that the sense would be, “I am A and great O,” in the Greek, or in plain English, “I am A and Z.” “Jesus is the Alpha and Omega — A and Z — the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”

Our text demands no preface; indeed, I do not know how I could venture to put a single letter before Alpha. Let us therefore come to our subject at once.

In three ways I shall talk of the text. First, I shall *bring certain doctrines to it*; secondly, *we will look at the doctrines which are really in it*; and then thirdly, *at the lessons which naturally flow from it*.

I. At the outset, WE SHALL BRING CERTAIN TRUTHS TO THE TEXT.

This is a much too common method of preaching, and one which I am very far from admiring as a custom. When some preachers get a text, the enquiry is not what truth is in the passage, but what sense shall they thrust upon it? Full often the poor text is served as a cook treats a bird; it is first killed, and then stuffed with any kind of fancies that the preacher may have chopped up ready to hand. By frankly stating that my first observations are not in the verse before us, I shall avoid sanctioning such methods of

abusing God's Word. The thoughts to which I now give utterance, have

been suggested by divers commentators, and certainly, if they be not the legitimate offspring of the text are closely connected with it.

1. Of things which we may fairly bring to the text, let us notice first, that *our Lord may well be described as the Alpha and Omega in the sense of rank.* He is *Alpha, the first*, the chief, the foremost, the first-born of every creature, the Eternal God. Man by nature is not the first even among creatures, for angels excel him far; nor are angels the chief, for our glorious Lord infinitely transcends them. He who made is greater than they who are made; and he who sends is greater than those who are sent. Jesus Christ stands Alpha in honorable degree; no angel can vie with him. “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? . . . And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” As for the Son, he hath appointed him heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, but of the angels it is asked — “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

Alpha was frequently used by the Hebrews to signify the best, just as we are accustomed to use the letter A. We say of a ship, for instance, that it is “A 1.” So Jesus Christ may truly be said to be the Alpha the first in this sense. Call him by whatever title Scripture has affixed to him, and he is the first in it. Is he a prophet? Then all the prophets follow at a humble distance, bearing witness of him. Is he a priest? Then he is the Great High Priest of our profession; he is the fulfillment of all that which the priest did but typically set forth. Let him mount his throne as king, then he is King of kings, and Lord of lords; “his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.” If he be the builder of his Church, he is the wise Master-builder; if a shepherd, he is the Great Shepherd who shall appear; if the corner-stone, he is the chief corner-stone — in fact, it mattereth not what title, or which character he beareth, he is in all these respects the Alpha, as much surpassing all things that may be compared to him, as the sun excelleth the stars, or as the sea exceedeth the drops of the dew.

But, beloved, though our blessed Lord is thus Alpha — the first — he was once in his condescension made *Omega, the last*. How shall I describe the mighty descent of the Great Savior. Down from the loftiness of his Father’s

glory, and from the grandeur of his own divine estate, he stooped to become man. There is a vast distance from the Alpha of Deity, down to that letter which stands for manhood; but to this he came, he was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death. But this is not enough; he stoops lower than man, yea, there is a verse in which he seems to put himself on a level with the least of all creatures that have life — he says, “I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” His Father forsook him- the wrath of heaven rolled over him. He was so utterly crushed and broken, that he was poured out like water, and brought into the dust of death. Marshal the creatures of God in their order, in the dread day when Jesus hangs upon the cross, and you must put him for misery, for weakness, for shame as the last, the Omega. How marvellous is this tremendous sweep of his humiliation, that from the highest throne in glory he should descend into the lowest depths of the tomb. Death bringeth the creature to its very lowest degradation, and maketh it as though it were nought. Jesus died, and as I see the incorruptible body lying in Joseph’s sepulcher, I can but marvel that ever the great Alpha should come so low as to yield up the ghost, being subjugated beneath the power of the last adversary.

Now, this is not in the text, but it may be fairly brought to it I think, and, without any compulsion, it may shake hands with the passage as being near of kin to it.

2. We will make another observation which is not in the text, but which is still a very precious truth, namely, that Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega *in the book of holy Scripture*. Open the first page, and a discerning eye will see Jesus Christ in Genesis. We know that the worlds were made by him, and as we hear that majestic sentence, “Let us make man in our own image after our likeness,” we at once discern him as one of the sacred Trinity. We go onward to the fall, and at the gates of Eden the promise of the woman’s seed consoles us, we advance to the days of Noah, and lo, we see the Savior typified in the ark, which bears a chosen company out of the old world of death into the new world of life; we walk with Abraham, as he sees Messiah’s day; we dwell in the tents of Isaac and Jacob, feeding upon the gracious promise; we leave the venerable Israel talking of Shiloh on his deathbed; we see his seed brought out of Egypt, and eating the Lamb of God’s passover; we reach the age of the law, and here the types crowd in upon us; but time permits not even a glance — suffice it to say, in brief, that we view the face of Jesus in almost every page, and behold his

character painted to the life in nearly every book. Prophets and kings, priests and preachers, all look one way — they all stand as the cherubs did, over the ark, desiring to look within, and to read the mystery of God’s great propitiation. In the New Testament we find our Lord the one constant theme of every page. It is not an ingot here and there, or dust of gold thinly scattered, but here you stand upon a solid floor of gold, for the whole substance of the New Testament is Jesus crucified. What would be left of the evangelists if you could remove Christ from them? What are Paul’s Epistles if Jesus be taken away? The whole of the Pauline literature sinks in a moment if Jesus be withdrawn. And what have Peter, James, Jude, or John to write upon but the same subject? Is it not Jesus still? Do not shut the book too hastily, for see its closing sentence is bejewelled with the Redeemer’s name. “Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Brethren, we should always read Scripture in this light; we should consider the Word to be as a mirror into which Christ looks down from heaven; and, then, we looking into it see his face reflected as in a glass — darkly, it is true, but still in such a way as to be a blessed preparation for seeing him as we shall see him face to face. This volume contains Jesus Christ’s letters to us, perfumed by his love. These pages are the garments of our King, and they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Scripture is the golden chariot in which Jesus rides, and it is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the holy child, Jesus — unroll them and you find your Savior. Talk not to us of bodies of divinity — the only body of divinity is the person of Christ. As for theology, Christ is the true theology — the incarnate Word of God; and if you can comprehend him you have grasped all truth. He is made unto us wisdom; getting him you have the wisdom of the Scriptures. The quintessence of the Word of God is Christ. Distill the book — and reach its essential quality, and you have discovered Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, and the king of the Jews. He is the Alpha and Omega of holy Scripture.

3. Another fact is also sweetly true, although not perhaps in our text. Jesus Christ is *the Alpha and Omega of the great law of God*. Brethren, the law of God finds not a single letter in human nature to meet its demands. You and I are neither Alpha nor Omega to the law, for we have broken it altogether. We have not even learned its first letter — “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” and certain I am we know but very little

of the next — “thy neighbor as thyself.” Even though renewed by grace, we are very slow to learn the holiness and spirituality of the law; we are so staggered by the letter that we often miss its spirit altogether. But, beloved, if you would see the law fulfilled, look to the person of our blessed Lord and Master. What love to God is there! O brethren, where shall we find anything to be compared to it? “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” “Christ, ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” “My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me.” What love to man you find in him. Talk not of the good Samaritan; here is one who is better than he; the Samaritan did but give his wine and his oil, and his twopence, but Jesus gives himself — gives his heart’s blood instead of wine, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit instead of oil, while for food he gives his own flesh and blood for poor humanity to feed upon. Jesus loved in such a way that, as we said on Thursday night, all the love that ever gleamed in human bosom, if it could be gathered together, would be but as a spark, while his great love to man would be as a flaming furnace heated seven times hotter than human imagination can conceive. Do not, beloved friends, if you are in Christ Jesus, permit legal fears to distress you at the remembrance of your failures in obedience, as though they would destroy your soul. Seek after holiness, but never make holiness your trust. Seek after virtue; pant for it; but when you see your own imperfections, do not therefore despair. Your saving righteousness is the righteousness of Christ; that in which God accepts you is Christ’s perfect obedience; and we say of that again, in the words of the text, Jesus Christ is “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” There is not a precept which he has not fulfilled in its widest sense. As for the spirit of the law, it breathes through his whole life of holiness and service; and as for the letter of the law, he hath carried it out to its extremity. The commandment may be exceeding broad, but not broader than the life of Christ; the law may ask perfection, but it could not ask and could not have a greater perfection than is found in the person of him whose name is. “The Lord our Righteousness.”

Brethren, these three matters I cannot affirm to be in the text, but can you blame me for bringing them forward? They stand in such a near connection with the exact sense of the passage, that they cannot well be omitted. May the Lord bless them to you.

II. Now we will take the text itself; and show what are THE TRUTHS WHICH WE ASSUREDLY BELIEVE TO BE IN IT.

1. Our Lord Jesus is Alpha and Omega in the great *alphabet of being*. Reckon existences in their order, and you begin — “In the beginning was the Word.” Proceed to the conclusion, suppose that all the universe has melted like the hoar-frost of the morning — imagine that all worlds are extinguished as the sparks from the forge — conceive that, as a painted bubble passes away for ever, so the whole creation has departed — What then? What is the Omega? Why assuredly Jesus Christ would still be “God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.” This we are quite sure is in the text, because the expression “Alpha and Omega” is only used four times, and on the second occasion we find it in the eleventh verse of the first chapter of the Book of the Revelation, in a connection which leads us to conclude that it must relate to the eternity and self-existence of our Lord; for the seventeenth verse explains the eleventh thus, “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” Those expressions manifestly refer to the eternity of Christ; to his self-existence, his having life in himself; to the fact that death did by no means destroy his self-existence, and that now since his resurrection he liveth for evermore, death hath no more dominion over him. Beloved, this is a great theme. When we begin to talk of the eternity of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are overwhelmed by the glory of our subject. We need the eagle eye and the eagle wing of John to see and soar into heavenly things. I read the other day a word by an ancient author, and in the chapter upon the eternity of God I could not help noticing that there was hardly a word of more than one or two syllables, sure sign of the sublimity of the theme, and of the inability of man to see more than its most simple outline. Will you go back six thousand years, when the world has newly emerged from darkness, will you fly on, if you can, through all the ages of the geological periods, if such there were. Can you journey back millions of years? Can you, can you, can you reach in spirit the time when as yet cherubim were not born, when the solemnity of silence had never been disturbed by song of seraph, when the unnavigated ether had never been stirred by the wing of angel? There is no world, no sun, no stars; space alone exists. Can you go further back till space is gone? You cannot. It is impossible; you are lost; for you can only think of space and time. But if you could by any stretch of imagination multiply the millions of years of which we dreamed just now, by another million times, and that a million million million times more, and those on still as far as ever human arithmetic can go, ay, and beyond the possibilities of angelic computation, yet even then you have not

begun to fathom the eternity in which God hath dwelt alone. Certainly there was an age in which God was dwelling alone, not in solitude, for, as the fathers very rightly say, you must not use the term “solitude” in reference to God, since the three Divine Persons everlastingly delighted in each other, and so knew no solitude — yet there was and is an aloneness in our God, since he is before all things. Can your thoughts attain to that age of God in lonely glory: in that eternity we know that Jesus was. He, whom though we have not seen his face, unceasingly we do adore, was then the eternal Son. The Word was God. Jesus was Alpha. To fly as far in the other direction, when the little river of time shall have been absorbed into the deep ocean of eternity, when all the world shall have departed even as the motes which dance in the sunbeam are seen no more when the sunbeam is gone; yet still Jesus shall be the Omega. It has been well observed by Dr. Gill, that no doubt the words “Alpha and Omega” are comprehensive — they take in all the letters between. Certainly God comprehends all creatures. God is that without whom there is nothing, and in whom are all things. Philo, the Jew, compares the great God to a tree, and all creatures to the leaves and fruits, which are all in the tree; but the metaphor is not complete, because you may remove fruit from the tree, but there can be no creature out of the power and will of God by which alone it can exist at all. If you remove the fruits from the tree, the tree has at least lost something; but if all creatures were destroyed, yet still the Lord would be as infinitely God as he is now; if the creatures were multiplied, God were no more — and if diminished, he were no less. The creatures may be likened to the waves, and God to the great sea; the waves cannot exist apart from the sea, nor the creatures apart from God: but no earthly figure of the Divine can be complete; for the waves are a portion of the sea, but the creatures are not God, nor do they contribute to his essence or attributes. The sea would be diminished if the waves were gone; but if you could take all creatures away, God would be no less God nor less infinite than he is now. In fact, the moment we begin to talk of infiniteness, we know nothing of diminishing or of increasing. O brethren, we must leave this subject in the silence of reverent humility, for my little boat is out of sight of shore already, and I must not venture further on this great and wide sea.

***“ Great God, how infinite art thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to thee.”***

A deaf and dumb man in one of the institutions in Paris, was asked to write upon the slate his idea of God's eternity, and he wrote the following forcible lines. "It is *duration* without beginning or end; *existence* without bounds or dimensions, *present* without past or future. His eternity is youth without infancy or old age, life without birth or death, to-day without yesterday or to-morrow." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

2. Another truth is most certainly in the text, namely, that *Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega in the alphabet of creating operations*. Who was it that began to make? Not an angel, for the angel must first be made. Did matter create itself? Was there an effect without a cause? It is contrary to our experience and our reason to believe any such thing. The first cause stands first, and the first cause is God in the divine Trinity, the Son being one Person of that Trinity. He is Alpha because his hand first of all winged angelic spirit, and made his ministers a flame of fire. He first made all things out of nothing. He moulded the clay from which man was made; all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that is made. As he alone began, so his power maintains the fabric of creation; all things consist by him. Christ is the great iron pillar of the universe, and the creatures twine about him as the vine doth about its prop. These things are not, they vanish like a dream if Jesus withdraw his power. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power. Brethren, there may be creations going on at the present moment- fresh globes may even now be fashioned between the hands of Omnipotence, if so; in every one of these Immanuel hath a share. At this very moment new comets may be launched like thunderbolts upon their fiery way, but not without the Son of God. Human souls issue from the womb of creation every hour, but in their sustenance and sending forth the mighty God is ever present. On, on, on, as the works of God shall be enlarged and extended, as the universe shall grow on every side, Christ shall be there still; his Father's delight, with whom he taketh counsel — his equal, bearing with him the name of Alpha and Omega. If this world shall be rolled up like a worn-out vesture, *he* shall roll it up, if the stars shall wither, it shall be at Jesu's bidding- if the sun shall be quenched, his breath shall blow out its coal, and if the moon shall be black as sackcloth of hair, Christ's hand shall extinguish the lamp. He shall do it all, even until the end shall come, for he is Omega as well as Alpha.

3. So again, beyond a doubt, our text intends that Christ is Alpha and Omega *in all covenant transactions*. Beloved, here is a theme worthy of

many discourses from the most eminent divines. The thoughts of God, the eternal decrees, the inscrutable purposes of Jehovah, these are deep things; but we know this concerning them, that from first to last they all have a relation to Christ. Concerning our race and the elect out of it, the whole matter is encompassed in the person of the Redeemer. Speak ye of election? "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," is Christ's name. We are chosen in him from before the foundation of the world. Speak of our being predestinated to be sons — we are only made so in him who stands as the elder brother. Every separate individual of the chosen tribe stands only by virtue of an union which was established from of old between his person and the person of the Redeemer. Search for the celestial fountain from which divine streams of grace have flowed to us, and you find Jesus Christ as the well-spring of covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running along the margin of every page, and you shall see that from beginning to end one object was always aimed at — the glory of the Son of God. The Father begins with exalting Jesus and concludes with glorifying him with the glory which he had with him before the world was. How I do love the doctrines of grace when they are taken in connection with Christ. Some people preach the Calvinistic points without Jesus; but what hard, dry, marrowless preaching it is. Oh, dear friends, the letter killeth; it breedeth in men a controversial, quarrelsome spirit; but when you preach the doctrines of grace as they are in Christ, as Dr. Hawker would have preached them, when you talk of them as Rutherford would have talked of them, oh, then, a holy unction rests upon them, and they become inestimably precious; and let every believer remember he does not get these doctrines as he should get them, unless he receives them in Christ. Everywhere the Lord Jesus is to be considered not as the friend of a day, or our Savior only in his life on earth, but as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the anointed Mediator set up from everlasting days. By faith I see him as the eternal Son of God; I see him standing in the purpose of the Father as the covenant head of the elect. I see him in due time born of a woman, but I do not forget that his goings forth are of old from everlasting, and that before the day-star knew its place his delights were with the sons of men. I see him; he cries "It is finished!" he bows his head, I do not, however, forget that he is not dead, but that when the world shall die and time shall conclude its reign, then he who is the Ancient of days shall live, and shall

flourish in immortal youth. Alpha and Omega is Jesus Christ, then, in the eternal purposes and in the covenant transactions of God.

4. Jesus Christ is certainly Alpha and Omega *in all salvation-work as it becomes apparent in act and deed*. That this is the meaning of the text I am clear, because in the first passage where the Alpha and Omega occurs — namely, in the first chapter of the Revelation, eighth verse — you will see that all the works of salvation are ascribed to our Lord. Read the fifth verse, “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him . . .

. I am Alpha and Omega.” Now, we have here a summary of the great transactions of saving grace. You have here that *he loved us* — loved us before the world was, with an everlasting love; you have next, that *he washed us* from our sins in his own blood, in which you have his redemption, and our consequent pardon, justification, and sanctification, all of which come to us through him. As for our glory, it is the result of his second advent, therefore, “Behold, he cometh,” makes him the Omega, as the “Unto him that loved us,” made him the Alpha. I need not repeat to you who know so well that “There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved,” and that in no part or portion of that salvation can any other name be admitted into partnership with his. Jesus must begin. Jesus must conclude. It is very striking to observe the commencement and the perfection of the spiritual life both laid at Jesus’ door in the sixth verse of the twenty-first chapter — “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” So then, if you have any thirst, you must come to Jesus Christ at the beginning, to get the water of life. If you have been led to know your own emptiness — if you have received from his Spirit a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness, go not to the law; look not within; but come to the Alpha, drink and be satisfied. If, on the other hand, life is near its close- if you have been preserved in holiness if you have been kept in righteousness, remember still to trust in the Omega- for these words follow, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” So that the inheriting of all things, the final overcoming of all spiritual foes comes through Jesus, just as did the first drink of living water. The first breath

which heaves the spiritual lungs, the

first light which greets the newly-opened eye, comes from Jesus who is the beginning; and the last shout of faith, the last shout of holy joy which shall admit the saints into the paradise of God, shall proceed from him who is the end. Beloved, lay thou back upon Christ with all thy strength; lean on him with all thy weight. He who began will finish: he never was Alpha yet without being Omega too. Nothing shall change his purpose: neither heaven, nor earth, nor hell, can afford a motive to turn him from his way of love. "He is of one mind, and who can turn him? What his soul desireth, even that he doeth."

5. There is one more truth which I conceive to be in the text. Jesus is Alpha and Omega not only in the individual salvation of every saint, *but in the whole chain of the Church's history*. Where shall I say that the Church began? Why, very speedily after there was a seed of the serpent, there was also a seed of the woman. Surely the line of demarcation began hard by the gates of Eden; there we see Abel worshipping God in faith, and Cain who was of the wicked one and slew his brother. Do we not thus early see in Abel's sacrifice the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Follow the Church through all her varied fortunes, and you will find her always bearing the banner of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah at her forefront. No matter if she wanders about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, Christ is still the day-star of her comfort. In her victories, his name is the loudest note; others may have slain their thousands, but the Son of David his ten thousands. No name wakes up the minstrelsy of Israel like the name of Messias, the coming one. Nothing can move the feet of Zion's maidens so joyously in the sacred dance, nothing can make the daughters of Jerusalem smite their timbrels to a more joyful strain than this — "He cometh- he cometh who shall judge the world in righteousness, and his people with truth." Since the first advent of our Lord, has not the Church ever carried Jesus as her standard. Where will you find the Church without Christ? Jesus is yonder, among the snowy mountains of Switzerland, and his Church is with him though her sons bear the approbrious names of heretics, schismatics, traitors, and worse. The Church of Rome had forgotten her first husband, and played the harlot, committing fornication with the kings of the earth; but there was a faithful bride found for the Son among the Albigenses and the Waldenses, in whose homes Jesus dwelt. What was their battle cry? — what the note they chanted round the family hearth? — what the name they pressed to their bosom when they dare not sing for fear the foe should fall upon them? Was

it not the name of Jesus? And when the dark ages passed away, what light do I see gleaming yonder? What doth Luther proclaim? What doth Calvin teach? It is the great name of Jesus which is their common theme. What say you, brothers and sisters? do you not join hands in solemn covenant, and say to-day, "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be remembered as long as the sun." Do you not long for the time when "all nations shall be blessed in him, all people shall call him blessed? "Surely you yourselves will help to fulfill the promise, "one generation shall praise his name to another, and shall declare his mighty acts." But the end cometh; Jehovah's banner will soon be furled- his sword shall be sheathed for ever- the unsuffering kingdom shall be proclaimed; swords shall be broken, and spears shall be snapped; the sun shall look upon no battlefield, but shall greet the reign of universal peace. What then? Jesus' name shall then be known everywhere, men shall talk of him and think of him by day and by night. Prayer, also, shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. They who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. Then cometh the end. The judgment throne is set. The wicked are summoned. The righteous on the right hand have received their rewards — from whose hand? From the hand of the Omega who closes the chapter with his benediction, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." There are the wicked; hell is gaping for them; the tongues of flames lick up the multitudes as the lion devoureth his prey. Who is this that pronounces the thundering sentences, "Depart, ye cursed?" It is the Omega. That same face which once was bedewed with tears, is now brighter than the sun with flashes of lightning; the voice which said, "Come to me, ye weary," now saith, "Depart, ye cursed." He began — he ends — the Alpha is the Omega. But it is an end without end. Long, longthrough the ages of eternity, amid heaven's perfect inhabitants, his name shall be the perpetual theme of song. Down there, amidst the howlings of the damned, they shall, against their will, declare his awful justice- they shall proclaim, in the eternal moanings, the power of the pierced feet which shall tread them as clusters in the winepress, until their blood floweth forth to the horses' bridles. In eternity, heaven and earth and hell shall adore Jesus as Alpha and Omega. Hallelujah, hallelujah, Jesus Christ reigneth still as the Lord God omnipotent — Alpha and Omega!

III. By your patience we will notice A FEW THINGS WHICH FLOW OUT OF THE TEXT.

1. The first is this — Sinner, saint, *let Jesus be Alpha and Omega to thee to-day in thy trust.* Poor soul, art thou willing to be saved? But dost thou say, “I have not this qualification, or that recommendation?” Ah; do not begin with thyself as the Alpha. Come to Jesus as you are, and let him be Alpha to you. Are you black? Let him wash you. Is your heart hard? Let him soften it. Are you a dead good-for-nothing soul? Are you ragged and wretched? Are you lost, ruined, and undone; do not stop to write Alpha first; do not stop to begin your own salvation. Sinner, remember there is no preparation wanted for Christ. Just lean upon him wholly. Take him to begin with — nay let him take thee to begin with. Drop into his arms now, repose upon him *now*, you will never get the true salvation unless the first letter in it be Christ, for he is the Alpha. It will all have to be begun over again if you begin with humblings, with repentings, with convictions, or with anything but Christ; it must all be done over again, I say, unless you begin with Jesus. There he is. His wounds are flowing, his heart is breaking, his soul is in anguish — there is the Alpha of your salvation. Look and live. “Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth.” Child of God, let him be the Omega of your salvation. If you have begun with him, do not now confide in yourself. Shall I say to you as Paul did to the Galatians, “Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?” “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” Your first hope was through looking to Jesus, will you now look to your sanctifications, to your prayings, to your evidences, to your humblings, to your communings. Away with all these, if they pretend to be the ground of your soul’s comfort. Remember, child of God, that to the end of the chapter it must be as it was in the beginning —

*“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

Up in that chamber of yours, with strong cryings and tears you turned to God and you never had any comfort till you looked to Jesus only, and in that other chamber where you shall lie a-dying with the death-damp heavy on your brow — you shall have no comfort but Jesus only. You passed through the river of conviction, and Jesus forbade your drowning; you shall go through the stream of death, and he shall still keep your head above the waves. Alpha and Omega should Christ be to every one of us as our trust this morning.

2. Beloved, if we have trusted him, *let him be Alpha and Omega in our love*. Oh, give him the first place in your love, young woman may the Holy Ghost win thy young heart for my Lord and Savior. Let the flower of thy heart be offered to him in the bud. O you, young children, who are your mother's delight, and your father's care, I pray that your first dawning days may be consecrated to the Savior; let him be Alpha with you. I trust he is Alpha to some of us, and has been so for years. We can use the words of the Psalmist, "I was cast upon thee from the womb. Thou hast been my God from my youth up. Truly I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid." You who are growing old and grey-headed, let him have the Omega of your love. As you lean upon your staff, bending downward as if to salute your graves, bear loving recollection of all the years of his patience, and the days of his faithfulness to you. Breathe the prayer "Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." See to it that you forsake him not, but clasp him with an expiring grasp as the Omega of your soul's delight.

3. But, surely, brethren, our Lord should be the Alpha and Omega *of our life's end and aim*. What is there worth living for but Christ? Oh, what is there in the whole earth that is worth a thought but Jesus? Well did an old writer say, "If God be the only Eternal, then all the rest is but a puff of smoke, and shall I live to heap up puffs of smoke and shall I toil and moil merely to aggrandize myself with smoky treasures that the wind of death shall dissipate for ever?" No, beloved let us live for eternal things, and what is there of eternal things that can be chosen but our Lord? O let us give him next year the Alpha of our labor. Let us begin the year by working in his vineyard, toiling in his harvest field. This year is almost over. There is another day or two left — let us serve him till the year is ended, going forward with double haste because the days are now so few. "Lord teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Let your time and your talents, your substance and your energies, all be given to my Master, who is worthy to be your soul's Alpha and Omega.

4. Lastly, Jesus crucified should be the Alpha and Omega of all our preaching and teaching. Woe to the man who makes anything else the main subject of his ministry. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Do not tell me you preach sound doctrine, you preach rotten doctrine, if you do not preach Christ — preach nothing up but Christ, and nothing down but sin. Preach Christ; lift him up high on the pole of the

gospel, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and you will accomplish your life's end, but preach orthodoxy, or any form of doxy; if you have left out Christ, there is no manna from heaven, no water from the rock, no refuge from the storm, no healing for the sick, no life for the dead. If you leave out Christ, you have left the sun out of the day, and the moon out of the night, you have left the waters out of the sea, and the foods out of the river, you have left the harvest out of the year, the soul out of the body, you have left joy out of heaven, yea, you have robbed all of its all. There is no gospel worth thinking of, much less worth proclaiming in Jehovah's name, if Jesus be forgotten. We must have Jesus, then, as Alpha and Omega in all our ministrations among the sons of men.

And now I am very conscious this morning that I have only ploughed the surface. I wish I could drive into the subsoil of such a glorious text as this, but I suppose that the ploughman who can do this, had need to have been caught up to the third heaven, and even then would fail. Who shall know anything of God but those who have seen him, and have beheld his glory in heaven? As for us, our eyes are holden. We have Jesus among us, but we perceive not his excellent glory; but like Peter, and James, and John, we sleep while Jesus is transfigured. The theme is far too high for me. Who can know God but God? Who can reveal him but the only-begotten? And who can comprehend the fullness of him who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last? It is enough if we have a saving acquaintance with the Redeemer, enough for our peace and joy, but gracious Lord, teach us more. Amen.

