

RUNAWAY JONAH AND THE CONVENIENT SHIP NO. 2171

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1890,
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***“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord,
and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish.”
Jonah 1:3.***

SAD sight! *Here is a servant of God running away from his work.* As well see the stars wandering from their spheres! When we read that he fled from the presence of God, we do not suppose that Jonah thought that he could get away from God as to His Omnipresence, but he wanted to escape serving in the Divine Presence—he wished to avoid being employed by God in his special service as a Prophet. He thought that the Lord might call him and send him upon errands if he went to Nineveh, for Assyria had some measure of evident relationship to the Lord and His people. But if he could once travel as far as Tarshish, he would be out of the world altogether and would no more have to speak in the name of the Lord. He imagined that there could be no relationship between Tarshish and Israel and he would not be expected to do any further prophetic work. Or, if he did, he would not suffer in repute, for the report would not reach Jerusalem. If he did not want to get away from the toilsome and self-denying duty of prophecy, he did, at least, wish to avoid an expedition to the heathen of Nineveh—an expedition which, he foresaw, would not be for his own honor.

Now, why did he desire to get away from his work? Whatever reason he had, it must have been a bad one, for no servant of God ought, on any account whatever, to think of quitting the service of his Lord. We should not wish to avoid the doing of the Lord's will. When we know what our duty is, we ought to follow it with unswerving determination. We must not wish to leave our post, no, not even to go to Heaven. We ought not to be sighing to be gone. Employers do not like a man who is always looking for Saturday night! Let him attend to the work of Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and the week will end quite soon enough.

One does not like to see a fellow standing about, stretching his arms upward and sighing, “The week is very long. I wish it were Saturday.” You

like a man who means to do a fair day's work for a fair day's wage and who does not watch till you turn your back that he may slacken his labor. We must not be crying, "Oh that I had wings like a dove!" What should we do with them if we had them? Such heavy mortals as some of us are had better keep nearer the ground! Whatever reason anyone thinks he has for avoiding the Lord's work, the reason is as vicious as the thing he is aiming at, for children of God have no right to leave the service of their heavenly Father and, when they do so, it is at their own peril.

What was his reason? Was it, in part, that he considered the work to be too great for him? Certainly he had a great task appointed him. "Nineveh, an exceedingly great city of three days' journey"—how was one man to admonish and evangelize the whole of it? Preposterous! Might he not have been aided by at least one colleague? Even Moses had his Aaron! Why did not the Lord send forth a college of Prophets, or an army of preachers and bid them go and divide the vast city into districts? Then they could hold services in all the large halls, at the street corners, or even visit from house to house! Just one man is pitted against hundreds of thousands?

Would a single voice be heard amid the noise of a city which was full of tumult? The odds were great against the lone man. Was that why Jonah ran away? I think not—but it has been the cause of the flight of many others. Is there a servant of God here who feels unequal to his work and therefore wishes he could escape from it? My dear Brother, you are unequal to your work, for you have no sufficiency of your own! I know, also, that I am, in and of myself, unequal to my own calling—shall we, therefore, run away?

No, no! That is not the true line of argument. This is the reason why we should stick to our work all the more closely. Every hard thing can be cut by something harder and the most difficult work can be done by stern resolution. But if the work cannot be well done by us, how will it be done without us? If our diligence seems too little, what will our negligence be? If there is too much for us to do, should we therefore leave undone what we can do? God forbid! Pluck up courage, my Brother, and in your own personal weakness find a strong reason for getting to your work, for, "When I am weak, then am I strong" and the strength of God is made perfect in our weakness! With more prayer we shall have more power.

I hardly think that fear of being overdone was Jonah's reason for deserting his post. Why did Jonah wish to run away? Because he did not like the Ninevites? I think that there was something of that on his mind. He was a stern old Jew and he loved his race—and he felt no desire to see anything done for the Gentiles or for the heathen outside the Abrahamic Covenant—therefore he had no passion for a mission to Nineveh. Is there anybody here who does not want to go to a certain service because he does not like the people? Will you flee to Tarshish to get away from a dreaded sphere? Are you backing out of your duty because those with

whom you are to serve are not quite to your taste—too ignorant or too cultured, too countrified or too polite? Come, my dear Brother, this must not be! Be not of a cross, morose disposition as Jonah undoubtedly was. If the men to whom you are sent are worse than others, let that be a call for you to go to them, first, even as the Apostles were to “begin at Jerusalem.” If those to whom you are sent are greater sinners than others, they need Christ all the more! And if you have heard a very bad report of them, surely there is a call for you to elevate them.

However, I am not sure that this was very much Jonah’s case, though it may have been one of the many arguments that worked together to produce his undutiful behavior. Was it not, possibly, because Jonah knew that God was merciful? “Now,” said he to himself, “if I have to go through Nineveh and say, ‘Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,’ and if these people repent, it will not be overthrown! And then they will say, ‘Pretty Prophet that Jonah! He is a man that cries, ‘Wolf,’ when there is no wolf,’ and I shall lose my reputation.” Do I address any servant of God here who is afraid of losing his reputation? This is not a reason which will stand examination.

My Brother, that is a fear which does not trouble me. I have lost my reputation several times and I would not go across the street to pick it up! It has often seemed to me to be a thing that I should like to lose—that I might no longer be pressed with this huge throng—but might preach to two or three hundred people in a country village, look after their souls and stand clear, at last, to God about each one of them. Whereas, here I am tied to a work I cannot accomplish—pastor to more than 5,000 people! A sheer impossibility! How can I watch over all your souls? I should have an easy conscience if I had a Church of moderate size which I could efficiently look after. If a reputation gets one into the position I now occupy, it certainly is not a blessing to be coveted.

But if you have to do anything for Christ which will lose you the respect of good people and yet you feel bound to do it, never give two thoughts to your reputation for, if you do, it is already gone in that secret place where you should most of all cherish it. The highest reputation in the world is to be *faithful*—faithful to God and your own conscience. As to the approbation of the unconverted multitude, or of worldly professors, do not care the turn of a button for it—it may be a deadly heritage. Many a man is more a slave to his admirers than he dreams of—the love of approbation is more a bondage than an inner dungeon would be. If you have done the right thing before God and are not afraid of His great judgment seat, fear nothing, but go forward! I think that there was a little of regard for reputation in Jonah—possibly a great deal.

But still there was a higher and a better motive, though even that was a bad one, for anything is bad, however true and excellent in itself, that leads a man to run contrary to God’s mind. It was this. He thought that

the Character of God Himself would suffer, for if he went down to Nineveh and proclaimed, "Yet 40 days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," then the people might repent and Jehovah would allow them to live. And then, after a while, the people would say, "Who is Jehovah? His Word does not stand fast. He does not carry out His judgments. He lays His hand on the hilt of His sword and then pushes it back into the scabbard." Thus the Lord Himself, by His mercy, would lose His name for Truth and Immutability.

Jonah would have preferred the destruction of Nineveh to the least dishonor to the name of the Lord. Have you ever felt as if you could wish that God would execute judgment on deadly forms of error and cruel forms of oppression? Have you not been half weary of His longsuffering? I stood at the bottom of Pilate's staircase in Rome. Pretentious imposition! It is said to be the staircase from which our Lord came down from Pilate's Hall—and there are certain holes in the wood which covers the marble wherein are said to be seen the drops of blood which fell from our Lord's bleeding shoulders. As I saw people going up those stairs on their knees and the priests looking on, it occurred to me that if the Judge of all would lend me His thunderbolts for about five minutes, I would have made a wonderful clearance.

It was the Jonah spirit stirring me and I felt I did well to be angry. But, you see, the good Lord did not empower me to be an executioner—and I am right glad that He did not! Have you ever felt a zeal for the Lord of Hosts which led you, like John, to wish to call fire from Heaven? Did you not feel half sorry that the Lord withheld His anger when it seemed necessary to execute vengeance in order to maintain the honor of His Gospel? Have you not almost said, "Oh, that He would punish such tremendous iniquities"?

Not long ago, when these streets of ours were ringing with stories of licentious infamy, did you not feel as if something must be done, something terrible, to sweep away the dens of lust and cleanse the Augean stables of pollution? But God did nothing in the way of plague, or war, or famine. In His longsuffering He passed by the transgressors and allowed them, still, to go on in their wickedness as He has done these many years, bearing and forbearing, if haply men may come to repentance. This is a trial to righteous souls!

That, I think, was the great fear that lay in the heart of Jonah, for he said to God, when God had spared the city, "I pray You, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that You are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repent You of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech You, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." This was not because the people were spared, but because he thought God had lost His honor by not fulfilling His threats.

I have given too much time to these excuses of Jonah. If you have any excuses for not doing what you ought to do, turn them out of doors and never let them in again. Away with them! Away with them! You need not even take the trouble to repeat them to yourselves, or to judge their comparative value—they are all mischievous. If you are a servant of God, obey Him at once without question. If you are not a servant of God, God grant that you may be, for, if you are not His servant, you are His foe. And if you turn not to Him through Jesus Christ and do not find mercy at His hands, what will become of you?

Now I come to the text. Jonah desired to go away from his prophetic work by journeying to the out-of-the-way place called Tarshish. And when he came to Joppa, which was the port of Jerusalem, he found a vessel bound for the place which he desired to reach. May we be taught of the Holy Spirit certain practical Truths of God from this incident! I would teach you four things.

I. The first is—WE MAY NOT FOLLOW OUR IMPULSES TO DO WRONG. Jonah felt it come upon him, all of a sudden, not to go to Nineveh, but to Tarshish. “Tarshish! Tarshish!” was constantly whispered in his ear, till he had Tarshish on the brain and go he must. Now I very commonly meet with persons who say, “I felt that I must do so-and-so. It came upon me that I must do so-and-so.” I am afraid of these impulses—very greatly afraid of them! People may do right under their power, but they will spoil what they do by doing it out of mere impulse and not because the action was right in itself.

People far oftener do very wrong under impulse and I feel it necessary to give a warning to any here who are prone to be so led. Our impulses are not to be depended on—our thoughts run wild. Do you say, “It came into my mind all of a sudden to do so-and-so”? And do you think this a good reason for your act? You are much mistaken! Do you say, “It flashed upon me to do so”? Do not let this be the rule of life. As well follow a will-o’-the-wisp as follow these freaks of fancy. You must never obey an impulse to do wrong!

Now, in Jonah’s case the impulse was, “Go to Tarshish. Go to Tarshish.” I dare say that he could have pleaded that he felt pressed in spirit to do so. “Go to Tarshish, go to Tarshish,” was still beaten upon the drum of his soul. *Now it may be that the impulse is to do a very brave thing.* To go to Tarshish was a daring act. Jews never took well to seafaring. They were a land-loving people. Will Jonah go in a *ship*? We nowadays think little of it—but the Hebrews thought it a very terrible ordeal to go upon the sea. And then, to go to Tarshish—to the utmost ends of the earth—who but the men of Tyre would venture so far?

These Hebrews did not know what kind of a place Tarshish was, but Jonah is bold to go. Some of you who are now in the Tabernacle ought to be on the Congo, or in North Africa, or in India, or in China—but you do

not go from lack of courage. Yet, you see, men are bold enough when bent on going wrong. They will take great leaps in the dark! Whereas others are afraid to follow the *right* along a far safer way, Jonah will go to Tarshish! He is not afraid of the sea, or the storm, or anything—but although the impulse may seem to call him to that which is brave and noble, it is evil—for it leads him to oppose the plain command of God.

Impulses may also appear to be very self-denying. It was disagreeable to go to sea and to leave his native land and all its associations. Yet on this point of self-denial it is easy to go wrong. A man may be worshipping self by practicing what he calls self-denial. The devil can readily use this as a raiment of light under which to hide the demon of arrogant self-righteousness. Men may fast from bread that they may gorge their souls on pride. It seemed also that *he might have claimed liberty in this matter.* Surely he might go to Tarshish if he liked! It is true he was a Prophet, but could he not quit the service if he wished? Does God turn men into slaves that they may serve Him? Surely a Prophet may make an excursion and take a holiday!

If he did not feel happy in going to Nineveh, was it right for him to go? Have you ever met with this form of argument? I have heard people speak about sacred duties in this style. Take, for instance, Believers' Baptism—they believe that it is Scriptural, but they say—"I never felt called upon to attend to it." As if we were not called upon to obey every command of Christ! I have heard persons say, "No doubt it is in the Word of God, but I have never felt it laid home to me." What a wicked thing to say! If I had a boy and I gave him a command, and he told me that he did not feel it "laid home," and therefore should not obey me, I think I should take care to lay it home very soon in a way which he might not appreciate.

I believe that when Christian people trifle with known duties, their heavenly Father will soon find a rod to fit their backs. A tender conscience looks to the Word of the Lord and longs in all things to be conformed to it. What do you need beyond the command of God? If an angel were sent from Heaven to command you to obey, the command would not be more binding upon you than it is now! The Lord has given you liberty—not liberty to sin—but liberty to *obey*. Never talk of freedom to do wrong. It is a horrible thing for one to say, "God loves us to be free in our service of Him and therefore I shall not serve Him, but follow my own impulses."

At the same time, Jonah was violating his conscience, *running counter to the inner life*. As a servant of God he was bound to go where he was commanded and he was fighting against that which was to him a necessary element of life. O Friends, take care of defiling your consciences! Whatever you do, never trifle with conscience. If you are going to make a gash in yourself anywhere, make it on your ear, or on your nose, but not in your conscience! The wounding of your members would pain you and might injure your beauty—but a wound in your conscience is a far more

serious matter since it touches the center of life. A gash in the conscience may disfigure a soul forever. Let conscience speak to you in all things and do not follow fancy. Weigh the impulse in the scales of conscience and if it is not such that conscience can guarantee it to be consistent with the mind of God, let the impulse alone. We are no more to follow vain impulses than cunningly-devised fables. The Word of the Lord is to be our leading star in all things.

Persons who talk about their impulse *will often do what they would condemn in others*. This ought to open their eyes to their dangerous proceeding. If anybody else had run away to Tarshish when he was told to go to Nineveh, Jonah would have seen his wrong and would have rebuked him with all his might. I should like to have seen Jonah analyzing Jonah's case—just as David judged and condemned the rich man who took the poor man's ewe lamb—and then found that he had been judging and condemning *himself*!

I should like to make some of you into jurymen upon your own cases. I am sure that you would censure yourselves in burning language for those very things which you now allow. How clearly would you see the disgrace of a man's running away from the plain path of righteousness because he had a miserable impulse urging him to do wrong! Why, you can see the absurdity of it now. Will you, then, go on with a like course yourself? Will you flee to Tarshish when God bids you go to Nineveh? Shall self rule? Shall the flesh be pleased? This presence of impulse is what *none of us would allow to be an excuse if it were made the rule of conduct towards ourselves*. If any person had an impulse to knock us down, we should not see the propriety of it. If he had an impulse to rob us, we should feel an impulse to call in a constable! If any man had an impulse to wrong us, we should appeal to the law for protection.

In the same way, if we feel an inward incitement to do what we ought not to do, let us not be so silly and so wicked as to imagine that the law will be relaxed because of the evil movements of our mind! I think it necessary to take this text and speak in this way because I have seen several examples of men following, not the Word of God, not the law of righteousness, but some idle movements of their own minds to which they attached an authority which did not belong to them. I am ready to say, "How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?" But they half imagine that these fancies come from God, whereas God is not the Author of evil desires and suggestions!

It is much more likely that these thoughts come from the devil—and most of all likely that they rise from a foolish and corrupt heart. If anything says to you, "Flee to Tarshish," when God says, "Go to Nineveh," shut your ears against the evil impulse and hasten to do as God bids you. What have you to do with the devices and desires of your own hearts? Are these to be a law to you? I pray you, be not among the foolish ones who

will be carried about with every wind of fancy and perversity. “To the Law and to the Testimony,” should be your cry and you may not appeal to inward movements and impulses.

II. My second remark is this—WE MAY NOT TAKE A WRONG COURSE BECAUSE IT SEEMS EASY. Jonah says, “I will go to Tarshish.” And he goes down to the port of Joppa where he finds a ship going to Tarshish. How easy a thing it often is to carry out an evil purpose! My dear Hearers, whether you are Christians or not Christians, I want to put you on your guard against the idea that because a certain course in life is very natural and easy, you may therefore follow it, though it is not right. Remember that *the way of destruction is always easy*. “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, and many there are which go in there.”

The way to Hell is downhill and this is easy traveling. Because it seems easy, natural and almost inevitable for you to go along a certain questionable road, do not, therefore, dream that this gives you a license to follow it. You have reason to suspect a course in life in which there is no difficulty, for righteousness is by no means an easy thing. If a course of conduct should be difficult, you may the more surely reckon upon its being right, for “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.” Remember that to do wrong will always be easy while our carnal nature is what it is. Men can always find, somewhere or other, the means to rebel against God. The old proverb is, “You can always find a stick to beat a dog with”—and I only quote it to show that in some things the will always ensures the way. Man can always find ways of sinning against God.

I remember, in my younger days, a schoolboy who, when at play with his companions, would fly into furious passions and would at once throw something at the person with whom he was angered. And the point I noticed was that he always found something to throw. Let him be in the schoolroom, or in the playground, or in the street—there would surely be a stone, or a book, or a slate, or a cup ready to his hand. So is it with men who fight against the Lord—they discover weapons everywhere in the fury of their rebellion. The evil brain is quick in devising. The depraved heart is swift in apprehending and the sinful hand is deft in carrying out any and every scheme of disobedience to the Lord. When a man wishes to sin, it is always easy to sin and therefore the readiness of any mode of action is no argument in its favor.

Satan also labors to make men sin and his cunning is great. When he tempted Jonah to go to Tarshish, the Evil One knew that there was a ship at Joppa waiting for a fair wind to sail for Tarshish. Therefore he whispered into Jonah’s ear, “Go to Tarshish,” because he knew that he would not be thwarted in following out the base suggestion. Our tempter has a complete acquaintance with what is going on in the world and therefore he can plot and scheme so that his suggestion shall be supported by

events which are transpiring. He is *not* Omniscient, but his army of spies keeps him well posted. He can therefore fit his temptations to our surroundings.

The way of sin may well be easy since *evil men will help you that way*. If anything wrong is to be done, the sons of Belial will lend a willing hand! Thus an evil device may well succeed since all the world pulls that way. Only set up a calf and the tribes will hasten to cry, "These are your gods, O Israel." Sin is soon made popular. All men will praise the evil way which yields them pleasure. In the rush along the downward road the eager crowd will carry you off your feet and bear you with them down to destruction without your needing to exert yourself—and therefore it is generally easy to go wrong—it is swimming with the stream, flying with the wind.

Moreover, *good things are always difficult*. God makes them so for purposes of discipline to His people. He that can persevere in goodness, when made to suffer by it, is good, indeed. It is, moreover, an increase to the honor of saints that they are enabled to do the right thing under great opposition and to fight their way to Heaven, foot by foot, at the sword's point. If virtue were so very easy, where would be the honor of it? To Glory and Immortality we climb uphill! Do not, I pray you, fall into the delusion that because an evil act looks to be the next thing, the inevitable thing, therefore you may do it! The law is not, "Do the easiest thing," or some would be very virtuous.

Would you excuse other people for injuring you on the ground that it was easy to do so? Somebody in your house pilfers, robs you of your trinkets or your cash—but you do not accept the excuse that such things were so readily got at that it was natural for the thief to take them! A man only opens his mouth and takes away your character—is the ease of slander an excuse for it? A person signs your name to a check and gets the money for it—is it a valid excuse when he says, "I have a great facility in imitating handwriting. Forgery is very simple and remunerative, so you can hardly blame me for trying it"? No, Friends, you denounce the thief, the slanderer, the forger—and even so will you be denounced if you fall into the sin which does so easily beset you.

I doubt not I am pricking the conscience of some who will do anything for a quiet life and are gradually slipping down to Hell because the way there is so smooth that they delight in it—so easy that their sloth prefers it. I know how many are excusing themselves for doing wrong because it is, in their case, so natural, while to do right would cost so great a trial. O Sirs, take yourselves out of the deadly atmosphere which renders the sleep of sin almost sure to overtake you! Excuses are soon fabricated! I pray you, quit that unrighteous business and, at all costs, follow after that which is good! Begin by faith in Jesus and then go on to build up a holy character. May the Holy Spirit work it in you!

III. Now, we will go a step further. WE MAY NEVER PLEAD PROVIDENTIAL ARRANGEMENT AS AN EXCUSE FOR DOING WRONG. There could hardly ever be a more remarkable instance of apparently Providential co-operation than we have here! Jonah wants to go to Tarshish and having selected that place as the region of his hiding, he must go down to Joppa, on the Mediterranean sea. He walks on the wharf and the first thing he sees is a ship going to Tarshish! Is not that Providence? Boats did not often make that voyage. Do we not confess that it is Providence when we learn that the vessel will take passengers at a set fare?

Jonah wants to go to Tarshish and the very day that he gets to Joppa, a decked vessel is about to start for the remote region which he desired to reach! No one can refuse to see an apparent Providence. This is often used as a cover for wicked actions. "I could not do otherwise," says one. "Providence seemed to point in that way. I should have been flying in the face of God if I had not done as I have done." Ah, me! How base is man to seek to saddle his sin upon God! How grossly you deceive yourself! If Jonah was so persuaded, he was soon cured of his error. Two or three hours later, when they woke Jonah from his sleep in the hole of the ship and he saw that awful storm—did he then consider that a gracious Providence had led him into that tremendous tempest?

He soon wished himself anywhere else than on the great sea! When they were about to throw him out to the fishes, he did not say much about Providence—he was too much convinced of his own folly to blame his God. I have seen a man in trade doing certain tricky things and he has tried to make it out that the circumstances compelled him to do it. "Such-and-such a person walked in just at that time and said certain things—and another event occurred so remarkably pat to the case that it all looked like a Providential arrangement—and everyone who saw it would have thought so." Nonsense! Nothing can make it right to do wrong! I pray you, never blaspheme God by laying your sins on the back of His Providence!

This is an act of daring presumption and profanity. You will never see a Providence more remarkable than that which occurred to Jonah and yet Jonah, for all that, was rebelling against the Lord in going down to Tarshish! Providence or no Providence, the Word of the Lord is to be our guide and we must not depart from it under pretext of necessity or circumstances. *It is very easy to make up a Providence when you want to do so.* If you sit down and try to find, in the ways of God, an excuse for the wrong which you mean to commit, the crafty devil and your deceitful heart, together, will soon conjure up a plea for Providence.

The man who shot another in malice might say that Providence led him to carry his gun that morning. The burglar providentially met with a companion who wished to relieve a householder of his spare plate. The petty pilferer saw goods lying unprotected near a tradesman's door and they providentially happened to be exactly what he needed. It will not do! The

pretence is too barefaced. Yet I fear that many who think themselves Christians are deluded by this wicked argument! *Such a method of reasoning would have led many into sin who are famous in history for their virtue.* The three holy children would have escaped the fire and Daniel would never have been in the lion's den if they had been guided by what men call Providences.

But note other plain instances—such as Joseph. Joseph's mistress is so kind to him and he is in such a splendid position as head of the household—it is hard for him to deny her desire and lose his place. Had not Providence put him into his fortunate position? Shall he throw it away? When his mistress tempts him, shall he risk all? Would it not be better to think that Providence plainly hinted that he should comply? Joseph was not so base as to reason in that fashion! He knows that adultery cannot be tolerated and so he flees from his mistress and leaves his garment in her hands rather than remain near her seductions.

Look at David, too. He is brought out by Abishai upon the field at night. There lies king Saul, sound asleep, and Abishai says to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hands this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray you, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time!" What a Providence, was it not? The cruel foe was altogether in David's hands and the executioner was eager to settle all further conflict by one fatal stroke! What could be clearer or simpler? Wonderful Providence! Yet David never said a word as to Providence, but replied, "Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's Anointed and be guiltless?"

He therefore came away and left the king sleeping as he was. He would not follow opportunities, but would keep to the Law of his God. I pray you, do the same and if ever everything seems to lead up to wrong-doing—and many circumstances unite to steer you in that direction—do not yield to them! Your guide in life is not a so-called Providence, but an unquestionable precept of the Lord! Do as God bids you and do it at once. God help you to follow where He has laid down the lines! By His Spirit may He lead you in the way everlasting, for the path of obedience is the way of peace and righteousness.

A so-called Providence *has often been a pretext for wrong-doing.* I dare say that many have erred through looking at circumstances rather than at commands. Look at Lot. Lot went and dwelt in Sodom, among a godless, filthy set of Canaanites. He had been with Abraham in the separated life before, but now he quit tent life for a city dwelling with its foul surroundings. Why did Lot go to Sodom? He looked and saw its well-watered plains—and as he had flocks and herds, it seemed a Providence that he was able to go there and that his uncle Abraham had left him free to choose. Did not Providence say, "Go to the well-watered plain of Sodom"? What could be more plain?

I have known a sort of Providence speak in that fashion to certain Christian people who were growing rich and desired to get into what is called society—they jumped at the first chance and fell into bad company. They entered upon a trade which promised to pay them well. True, it was a bad trade, a perilous trade to him that carried it on and a ruinous trade to those drawn into it—but then it would pay well. It was the well-watered plain of Sodom and they pleaded that they could not wisely forego it. Others will go to live in a certain district where there is no Gospel preaching. They leave all their friends, their Bible class and every opportunity of usefulness for the sake of the hedges and the birds. Providence has found them a spot where they can be as idle as they like.

When men go into dangerous courses, they thus speak of Providence. Fine Providence, is it not? Alas for Lot! In the end he had to read over again those lessons of Providence by the light of the blazing cities of the plain. Think, also, of Aaron. He, on one occasion, fell so low as to try to throw his sin upon Providence. When he had been making the golden calf for the people to worship and his brother Moses sharply upbraided him for it, he declared that the people were ready to stone him and when they brought their gold, he said, “Then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.” It is true the image came out, but it had first been molded and put in! Aaron wanted to make Moses believe that a special Providence made the metal form itself into the shape of the ox-god. A wretched falsehood!

Alas, that the priest of the Most High should palter with truth in this manner! And so there are people who tell you wonderful stories about what has happened to them and what has led them into their way of evil. Blessed forever be the Providence of God! Let the Lord be worshipped and adored, for He is good and does good, and good only! His Providence is always holy! Stay clear of every blasphemous charge against it! Never let us avail ourselves of opportunities to do evil—but if we dare to do so—let us not saddle the blame of it upon the thrice-holy God!

Would you excuse any other man who should do you wrong on the ground of Providence? Suppose a thief broke into your house and said that it was a Providence that you had not fastened the back window, or that the fastening was so easy to open? Suppose he said that Providence spared him a good deal of trouble because your drawers were not locked, nor your money put into the iron safe? What would you say about such Providences? A person deceives you in business and takes you in—but he says that it was a very remarkable Providence that put you in his way! Do you endorse such talk? Why, you would not listen to the fellow for a moment—and will you listen to yourself, when your heart begins to make the holy Lord an accomplice in your transgressions?

No, no, there are devil’s providences as well as Divine Providences! And there are mistaken notions of Providence and wretched perversions

whereby the Holy One of Israel is grossly insulted and provoked! Thus have I briefly given you three words of caution and the fourth is like unto them.

IV. WE MAY NOT EXCUSE OURSELVES IN DOING WRONG BY THE LAWFULNESS OF AN ACT IN ITSELF. What is right in another may not be right in me. That which another might do without offense may be a grievous wrong in a child of God.

For the mariner to go to Tarshish was right enough. We do not say that in itself it was wrong to go by sea to Tarshish. There would be an end to trade if ships might not roam the watery plains. Yes, my dear Friend, it may be quite right for certain persons to pursue a course which you must not even think of! For the Tyrian sailors to go to Tarshish was their business, their calling, their duty—but it was very different with the Prophet. It was not Jonah's business, calling, or duty—why should he go to Tarshish? There is a solemn difference between being at sea in the path of duty and going there to escape service.

He did exactly as the sailors did. I mean that, as a matter of form, it was the same—but they were right and he was wrong. They did not go on board to escape from the service of God—but he was doing so and that made all the difference. Two men may do the same thing and the one may be improving his Grace by doing it—and the other may be increasing his *damnation* by doing it. After all, it is the *motive* that must rule our judgment of the action. Beware of defending your transgression from the fact that others may do it without being censured!

But might not Jonah be allowed to go to Tarshish if he wished? *Yes, it might, under certain circumstances, have been right for Jonah.* When he was off duty, it might have been good for his health for him to go to Tarshish—but it must not be so when God says to him, "Go to Nineveh." You may not do that which is contrary to the Lord's will, even though, in itself, the action may be innocent. We may not say, "I have a right to do it." We have no right to do otherwise than as the Lord commands. We have no right to do wrong—and the more God loves us and the more sure we are that we are His children—the more are we bound to follow closely in the way of truth and holiness. We are not saved by works, but because we are even now saved, we desire, in all our ways, to glorify Him who has saved us by His most precious blood. O dear Heart, if you are, indeed, a servant of God, you will know that *obedience* is liberty, *holiness* is freedom! To the pure in heart sin would be bondage, while to do what God commands would be liberty. By Divine Grace we will to do the will of the Lord.

It was no excuse for Jonah's sin that he acted in an honorable manner in the doing of it. It is true that Jonah paid his fare and that this was right, if he meant to take his passage. "He found a ship going to Tarshish, and he paid the fare thereof." He did not steal on board and try to get a free pas-

sage as a stowaway. But someone asks, “When he had paid his fare, had he not a right to go?” Yes, he had, as far as the captain of the vessel was concerned. But he had no right before God! After paying his fare, how could he decline to go? He would lose his money, and that would be foolish. Yes, it is very easy to construct excuses for wrong courses, but they will hold no water. Apologies for disobedience are mere refuges of *lies*. If you do a wrong thing in the most right way in which it can be done, it does not make it right. If you go contrary to the Lord’s will, even though you do it in the most decent and, perhaps, in the most devout manner, it is, nevertheless sinful and it will bring you under condemnation.

Servants of God, you are under a higher law than anybody else. Redeemed with precious blood, chosen of God by His Sovereign Grace, made heirs of eternal Glory, it is yours to “perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord” by His good Spirit and so to do whatever He says to you, neither turning aside to the right hand nor to the left. Thus have I shown you that there is teaching in the incident at Joppa. I think it is legitimate teaching, from the fact that when Jonah wanted to do evil, everything seemed ready to his hand—and yet he was doing grievously wrong. May this warning be useful to some of you, by God’s Grace! I do not know for whom this sermon is meant, but I have felt bound in spirit to deliver it. It is intended as a warning for somebody who is hearing it, or shall hereafter read it.

Perhaps some dozen or two may find it applicable to their cases and, if it comes home to your consciences, I charge you, by the living God, do not turn a deaf ear to it! Let it search you through and through. Let it not only plow you, but scar you and cross-plow you and have its full effect upon your heart—and then, feeling that you have sinned, cast all your idle excuses to the wind and come to Jesus just as you are. Come to Jesus and find pardon for all your inexcusable sins! As long as you are sewing together the fig leaves of excuse, you will never come to Jesus for true covering. But when you have done with the spider’s webs of foolish argument, the Holy Spirit will bring you to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if you wished to go to Tarshish, it would be a great Providence if you found a vessel bound for that port. But if you want to go to Jesus you may *always* go to Him. You may go to Him now! Sitting in that pew you may come to Jesus. If you go to Tarshish, you will have to pay the fare. There is no fare to pay in coming to Jesus. To Him it is, “Come and welcome.” His salvation is free, gratis—given to all who are willing to receive. It is not to be bought by way of merit or of money—it is to be had freely by the way of Sovereign Grace.

I know that the impulse of yonder young man is to fly away from Christ and hope, and Heaven—the Lord help him to resist the impulse! Your mother begged you to attend the House of God—the inclination is to go out for country strolls. Resist the wish and hear the Gospel! Many go to Tarshish and are lost. I know that the temptation to yonder young woman

is to forsake the way of righteousness, to follow after gaiety and so to go to Tarshish. Shut your ears to every whisper of the deluding foe and, however easy it may be for you to obey his suggestion—however even Providence may seem to make a way for you—regard not the voice of the Tempter and do not dishonor the Lord your God by supposing that He can really invite you by His Providence to do that which He forbids you by His Word.

Listen to me and *come to Jesus! Come to Jesus now!* Perhaps tonight, if that young man does not come to Jesus, he will be lured into a den of vice and led into desperate sin. And for many a year he will not again feel that tenderness which is stealing over him just now. Trifle not with the wooing of Divine Grace lest you be ensnared by the lies of Satan! The man is strongly tempted now—a voice incessantly cries in his ears, “Go to Tarshish.” I implore you, O my tempted Brothers and Sisters, nerve yourself to fight with this demon! Instead of hearkening to his alluring note, let the voice of Mercy have power with you. God the Holy Spirit grant that it may be so! “Come unto Me,” says Jesus, “all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.”

Seek not Tarshish, but Calvary! If you run from the Presence of the Lord, a storm will pursue you! An angry sea will open its abysses for you! There may be no fish for you, no friendly whale to carry you to shore—and you may be lost forever! O man of God, run not away from your work! O Sinner, lust not after vain and empty pleasure! Child of God, come back to Him from whom your heart has wandered and, from now on, by His Grace, be diligently His servant to the end! Sinner, you that have gone far away from peace and hope, hear the heavenly voice tonight which warns you of your danger!

Cry, “I will arise, and go to my Father.” He will come to meet you! On your neck He will fall. He will kiss you, wash you, clothe you, save you and you shall praise Him world without end! Happy, indeed, shall I be if I have, by the Grace of God, taught some souls to give up their dissembling and excuse-making! And if I have persuaded them to make full confession of sin before the Lord Jesus who will wash them till they are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Jonah 1, 2.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—645, 185, 381.

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TRAVELING EXPENSES ON THE TWO GREAT ROADS NO. 622

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 2, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“So he paid the fare.”
Jonah 1:3.*

AS a general rule, wherever we go, whatever we do, we must “pay the fare.” Expenditure is connected with every act, work and operation. The sun does not constantly flood this world and all its sister spheres with light and heat without some kind of consumption within itself. Nor does the earth yield her fruits of harvest except at the cost of the matter of which it is composed. By the force of wind and frost, the very “Mountain falling comes to nothing and the rock is removed out of his place” (Job 14:18). The rivers do not reach the sea without wearing away their banks and cutting channels in the earth through which their floods may flow. The raindrops, the generous gifts of Heaven, have first been loaned from the treasury of the great deep. The air itself is constantly in process of consumption, and were it not that a fresh supply is daily being produced, even the atmosphere would become exhausted.

All the processes of Nature involve a constant expenditure of power. Ponderous as is the engine of creation and little as it shows the fretting power of age, it is certain that in the whole of its machinery, from its most stupendous wheel down to its smallest valve, it is daily and necessarily experiencing an appointed amount of wear and tear. It is assuredly so with regard to the lesser world of man. The body cannot move a limb or contract a muscle without expense. The lifting of my hand, the pointing of my finger, the motion of my tongue, the stirring of my brain in thought all cost something and make a draught upon the inner store of strength—you cannot so much as gaze upon the world around you without some wear and tear of that marvelous optical instrument by which outward sights are brought to the inward mind.

Friction operates on flesh and bone and sinew and a higher friction acts on mind and intellect and passion, for even these grow weak with strain and age—“the fare”—Nature sternly demands before she will loose her cable or spread her sail to the breeze. He quarrels with God’s laws who expects something for nothing and hopes to be served without offering a just remuneration and to find friends without showing himself friendly. We must pay our fare, for the universe requires it—we will pay it cheerfully—for we are honest men.

This general rule of expenditure holds good when we enter the world of morals and commune with *spiritual* things. Man plucked the forbidden fruit and dearly was that apple paid for in the fall of all our race. The Lord redeemed us in His boundless love, but not without a price—the free

mercy of God cannot work its way among men except Heaven's best treasure is spent to purchase men from bondage. Expense occurs everywhere in our salvation—"The price of pardon was the Savior's blood." "To buy our souls it cost His own."—

***"There's never a gift His hand bestows,
But cost His heart a groan."***

Nor is it so in the kingdom of Heaven only, for even if a man would pursue a foolhardy voyage across the sea of rebellion in the ship of sin to the horrible land of perdition, he must "pay the fare." Sinners, for that which is not bread, must spend their money and for that which profits not, must pay their labor. He who would be saved must take care to sit down and count the cost, lest, after having begun to build, he should not be able to finish it. But let him not think that he is alone in his expending, for the transgressor's bill of costs is no light one! War of any sort is costly, but ungodly men will find that a war with Heaven is the dearest of all. God's House, like the palace of Solomon, needs a large income to sustain its daily feasting—but it is not like the house of evil which makes a beggar of every man that comes within its doors.

I. I shall, this morning, commence my discourse by endeavoring to direct your attention to THE COST OF TRAVELING ON THE BROAD ROAD TO HELL. Phocian paid for the poison which killed him—and the sinner pays dearly for the sin which proves his ruin. The worldling often taunts the Christian because he expends his money on his religion. The Christian may well reply to the sinner, "I wish that your taunts were more true, for I fear that I do not spend one-tenth as much in the service of God as you do in the service of your vices." Very few except the most generous of Christians could venture to say that they spend as much upon their God as profligates squander upon their lusts.

1. Let us begin to add up the bill! We are met at once with a heavy item. The man who makes the world his idol and forgets God, has at once, at the start of his voyage, to pay down and place in a sinking fund all hope of God's favor and all expectation of the blessings which it brings. He cannot run contrary to God's will and command and then expect that God will be his Friend and prosper his designs! If I set myself up in rebellion against Heaven's great King, I cannot suppose that He will make it His constant care to promote my interests, nor dare I dream that He will aid and abet me in my designs of evil.

"With the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate" (Psa. 18:26), is the revelation of Scripture. "If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you," is the voice of the God of Sinai. The man throws down the glove of battle against the Lord and his Creator will let him know that it is, "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker." Long-suffering is Jehovah and He does not smite the rebel with speedy ruin, but still it is written, "God is angry with the wicked every day: if he turns not He will whet His sword, He has bent His bow and made it ready." The good man sees a gracious Providence smiling at his side—he knows that, "all things work together for good to them that love God."

And although the wheels of Providence are too high for him to understand their revolutions, yet he knows that they are full of eyes, marking the wisdom and care of his Father in Heaven. He sings with rapture—

***“Your ways, O Lord, with wise design,
Are framed upon Your Throne above.
And every dark and bending line
Meets in the center of Your love.”***

The Almighty God is the Believer’s refuge and beneath His wings he finds perpetual shelter. Not so the sinner. In the court of Providence he is an outlaw and can claim no right of protection. How shall Providence care for him who cares not for God? He is under its ban and he shall, before long, learn that, “They that plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish and by the breath of His nostrils are they consumed.”

The ungodly cannot claim the privilege which Eliphaz ascribes to the righteous—“He shall deliver you in six troubles: yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you. At destruction and famine you shall laugh: neither shall you be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For you shall be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.” On the contrary, Providence may justly remind him of his sins and say, “Call now, if there is any that will answer you. And to which of the saints will you turn?”

Our gracious God has given no charge to His angels to keep the sinner in all his ways. Those ministering spirits have no commission to bear him up lest he dash his foot against a stone. Rather, the forces of Nature are restrained by almighty mercy, or else the very stars in their courses and the waters in the rivers would fight against the wicked, as they did against Sisera in days of yore.

The Christian has the Presence of God also to rejoice in. Mungo Park, when lost in the wilderness, observed a tiny piece of moss, and marking how beautifully it was fashioned, he recollected, “God is here! My Father is here!” So does the Christian. He is never out of his Father’s House and consequently he is forevermore at home. The lines of Thompson are ours, not as poetry merely, but as matter of fact—

***“Should Fate command me to the farthest verge
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to song, where first the sun
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
Flames on the Atlantic isles; ‘tis naught to me
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full.
And where He vital breathes, there must be joy.
When even at last the solemn hour shall come,
And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,
I cheerfully will obey.
There with new powers
Will rising wonders sing.
I cannot go
Where UNIVERSAL LOVE not smiles around,
Sustaining all yon orbs and all their sons,
From seeming evil still educing good.
And better there again and better still,
In infinite progression.”***

It is not so with the sinner? The presence of God is to him dreadful. If there were some valley of confusion where God’s power is not known, its congenial desolation would become the sinner’s Heaven—the place where

God's Presence shall gleam upon him with irresistible force will be his Hell. Moreover, the sinner gives up every promise of God in choosing the road to perdition. There is not a word in this Book of Divine Love which can breathe comfort into the sinner's ear while he chooses his own ways. It is a book of threats and of curses to the impenitent. It woos as a mother would call her wandering child—it has a gentle voice forever broken, and contrite spirit—but it thunders like Sinai's own self against every hardened sinner who will not turn from his wicked way.

O Unbeliever, you have renounced, by the very fact of your remaining without God and without Christ, all possession in the rich promises of God! You have sunk the immense capital upon the interest of which the Christian lives in time and in the enjoyment of which he hopes to be blest throughout eternity. You who know how to add, mark this one item of expenditure to begin with, and guess how heavy is the fare of sin!

2. In the next place, they who follow the course of sin make a great expenditure of their time. However, that I dare say they do not think much of, for time to them is a mere drug of no clear value. Many of the ungodly seek after pastimes, kill-times and all sorts of inventions by which they may get rid of time, which to us appear sadly too little for our daily work. The precious privilege of existence is to them a nuisance. The pictured gallery of life is to them a prison or corridor through which they would hasten as speedily as may be, forgetting its end and where it leads.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if they were wise they would comprehend that time is the stuff which life is made of and that this life is the only season in which we can be made qualified for the enjoyments of eternity. If men understood it, they would sooner cast pearls to swine than give their days to sin and their nights to rioting. If time is the chrysalis of eternity, who but a fool would treat it with contempt?

He is the worst of prodigals who wastes that most precious of all treasures, his time! But what hours does fashion demand? What days will the debauched and the profligate give to their sensual indulgence? But what am I saying? It is needless to single out the more bold of transgressors—the rule is universal—the sinner's life is all waste, for it is unconsecrated by faith, unblessed by God and is therefore all lavished for nothing on shadows and dreams.

3. It must not be forgotten that some ungodly men expend a deal of labor to gratify their evil desires. The way to Hell may be downhill, but it is not all smooth. There are Hills Difficulty even for the ungodly. "The way of transgressors is hard." Therefore the Savior says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden," for sinners labor and their sins prove to be a heavy burden. The same Hebrew word and the same Greek word, stands both for "laboring," and for "sin," for sinning is often hard.

As the Prophet says, "The people labor in the very fire and weary themselves for vanity." Though men call sin pleasure, who does not know that it often jades and wearies the man worse than the hardest toil! How the proud man toils for honor! How the miser pinches himself for gold! How the thief exhausts his ingenuity to get at another man's wealth! How hard is the harlot's drudgery! How heavy is the yoke of Satan!

4. Sinners, again, are frequently put by their sins to a great expense of their actual substance. Their money finds feather's for its wings in the

gratification of their desires. Who can be a drunkard without coming to poverty or lessening his estate? Who fills the cup to the brim without before long clothing himself with rags and bringing his household to poverty? The prodigal wasted his substance in riotous living—who can do otherwise if he entertains a host of greedy sins? God only knows how much of the poverty of this land is due to nothing else but drunkenness.

No doubt there always will be some poverty which may claim our charity, for the poor shall never cease out of the land. But still, it is to be feared that three-fourths of all the poverty of this great city is to be traced more or less directly to the gin palace and the beer shops. Drunkenness is a “reedy sin and like the horseleech it cries, ‘Give, give.’” England, with all its liberality, does not give anything like so much to the cause of missions, or for the maintenance of religion, as men spend in intoxication.

Then look at other sins, how costly they are! Consider those amusements of the world which many defend as being no offense to public morals, but which the spiritual avoid as being unfit occupations for heirs of Heaven. Even these are far from being inexpensive. I noticed yesterday an advertisement in the newspaper for boxes at the opera, for a certain term, to be let for two hundred guineas! What would people think if a pew in any place of worship were only to be had on terms of so heavy a subscription? Why, that sum would pay the charges all the year round of full many a place of worship!

And yet this amount represents probably but a portion of the expense involved in attendance at the theater. There are far greater drains upon the purse than those implied in missionary societies, ministers, chapels and Bible-women. Who has not heard how fast debauchery burns the candle at both ends? Is it not said of the prodigal, that he devoured his living with harlots? This sin has brought many a man of wealth and fortune down to shiver like a beggar on a dunghill! “Remove your way far from her and come not near the door of her house...lest strangers be filled with your wealth and your labors be in the house of a stranger.” He who sins must pay the fare.

5. Nor is this all. Those men who go far into sin and carry out the desires of their hearts soon find that there is an expense of health. How many a man has rottenness in his bones and disease in his heart’s core brought on by gluttony, drunkenness and vice? Well may men pray that they may be delivered from the sins of their youth and their former transgressions, for they are in a sad plight who mourn at the last when their flesh and their body are consumed. It is not God who has thickly sown this world with disease and sorrow—man’s iniquity has done it. Men cast darnel and cockle into the furrows of life and when they spring up, they complain of the appointments of God, whereas, they are the result of their own sins!

And there is no injustice in the rule, that whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. “Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?” “His bones are full of the sins of his youth which shall lie down with him in the dust.” The fare, the full fare of sin’s voyage, must be paid.

6. Another expense and that one which ought not to be forgotten, is the loss of peace of mind. A man cannot indulge in sin and yet go to his bed

with a quiet conscience. At least, if he can do so, this callousness is of itself a still greater evil. For the most part, men start back at the ghosts of their own crimes. "Terrors make the wicked afraid on every side and drive them to their feet." Even the respectable sinner whose life is outwardly moral, but whose heart is far from God, cannot avoid some qualms and disturbance of mind.

If I am not one with God, if I am not washed in Jesus' blood, if I am not sanctified by God's Holy Spirit, there is an aching void within me which the world can never fill. There is an inward monitor which tells me, "There is something that you need, a something that the world cannot give you which you cannot earn for yourself. How is it that you are living in the neglect of it?" "A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the Destroyer shall come upon him...He wanders abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? He knows that the day of darkness is ready at his hand."

Until I was saved by Divine Grace, I can truly say I had no lasting peace. But now my peace is like a river. How a trumpet will often blanch the sinner's cheek! The cholera comes and how the man trembles because death is at work next door! How fearful he is when he stands at the grave's brink and looks down upon the coffin of some companion with whom he has spent many a boisterous hour! Ah, you cannot have peace! You cannot have peace till you have Christ! You cannot be truly happy till you have given your souls to Jesus!

The apple may look fair, but it is rotten within. You may talk of joy, but you know it not if you know not Jesus. Surely to lose this priceless pearl is an item in the bill of no mean magnitude—

***"Peace has sweets
That Hybla never knew.
It sleeps on down***

Culled gently from beneath the cherub's wing.

Who would throw this away for vexing, mocking, deceiving, lying vanities?

7. The worst expense, however, we have only hinted at. The man who goes to Hell must pay the fare in another way—he loses his soul. What that loss may be no mortal tongue can tell. If one could come again from the pit, as once the rich man proposed, perhaps he might tell us in dolorous tones what it is to be cast out from God into the place where there is not a drop of water to cool the fire-tormented tongue. But it is not for us even to conceive what the place of torment may be.

It is enough to hear and profit by the question of the Savior—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What is Caesar the better for his dominions? What is Croesus the better for his wealth? What is the philosopher the better for his wisdom, now that he is cast away from the favor of God forever? In fact, the greater the wretched beings were on earth, the more terrible will their doom be in eternity, when, looking from their beds of flame, the lesser sinners shall cry, "Are you become like one of us? Is the lofty one brought low? Is the proud one humbled? Is the boaster made to feel in the torment of this fire that he is no greater than the rest of us?"

I say, the more honor and dignity and glory the man obtained on earth, the more terrible his shame and disgrace when, his soul being lost, he is cast into the pit forever! Let us, then, if we have been deluded by the

pleasures of sin, or have been tempted in any way to forget God because we have thought that the way of the flesh was easy—let us think awhile that we shall have to pay the fare and that the fare is far too expensive to be paid by men of understanding. We dare not risk soul and body, life and death, Heaven and Hell, judgment and eternity merely for the sake of those paltry, passing, delusive joys which are all that the world can pretend to offer.

II. Let us change our strain and say a little upon THE EXPENSE OF AVOIDING DUTY. Jonah's duty was to go to Nineveh and preach the Word—he preferred not to go—he therefore shirked the work, went down to Joppa and paid his fare to go to Tarshish. I hope we are not in the habit of doing the same, but yet there are occasions when even God's servants shrink from duty and seem willing to forget that where God calls they are bound to go.

Possibly this remark may apply to some minister who may come under the Word. He is called to bear his protest against a certain sin and he thinks to himself, "If I so speak, some of those who hear me will never come again. I may lose rich subscribers. I will not say a word on that point." Or, he has it laid upon him to cry against the monstrous evils in the State Church—but he puts his finger to his lips and remains silent, inwardly calculating—"I had better hold my peace on that subject, for I may risk my popularity."

Such a minister should reflect that it is a very expensive thing to try to fly to Tarshish when you ought to go to Nineveh, for a man cannot avoid duty without expense. I have known good people who will say, "I know so-and-so is what I ought to do, but still, you see, the path is very difficult and I do not feel called upon to make so great a sacrifice." Well, Friend, if you do not make the sacrifice when God demands it of you, He has other ways of taking away your treasured goods. In the long run you will find it far more expensive to shun the work and will of God than at once to give yourself to it. You will be a loser by your prudence! You shall find that the Scriptural rule holds good, "He that would lose his life shall save it, but he that would save his life shall lose it."

If you are willing to be a loser for Christ you shall be a gainer! But if you insist upon being held harmless and try at all costs to make provision for the flesh, then you shall find that before long you will have to pay the fare to your own grievous hurt and injury. What did Jonah lose? Jonah had to pay as part of his fare the presence and comfortable enjoyment of God's love. He went down into the bottom of the vessel and hid himself from sight. I think I see him. That Jonah, who a few days after walked with all the boldness of a lion through the streets of Nineveh, crying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" That Jonah who bearded Nineveh's haughty monarch and was not afraid to tell him that in forty days his city would be overthrown!

That Jonah goes sneaking down among the goods at the bottom of the hold for fear anybody should see him and there hides his coward, craven head. Poor Jonah, you have lost the hallowed fellowship of your God! You have lost His Presence and consequently your courage has all oozed out of you! This is a dear price which you have paid for shunning Nineveh!

When you and I serve our Lord Jesus as Believers should do, we can remember that our God is with us and though we have the whole world against us, if we have God with us what does it matter? But oh, the minute we start back and begin to seek our own inventions and appeal to our own wisdom, we are all at sea without a pilot and our great Helper withdraws from us. Then may we bitterly lament and groan out, "O my God, where have You gone? How could I have been so foolish as to shun Your service and in this way to lose all the brightness of Your face? This is a price too high! Let me return to my allegiance and to Your Presence."

In the next place, Jonah lost all peace of mind. When he was in Nineveh, crying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," he was not afraid of the edge of the sword, nor of the tyrant's rage—he felt that he was doing God's work and he knew that when on God's errands he was perfectly safe. His heart beat gently, like that of a man in a happy, tranquil frame of mind wearing the herb called heart's ease in his bosom. But now, down there, in the hold of the vessel, his heart is palpitating—he does not know what may happen and until sleep happily comes in to ease the distress of his mind he is like a poor hunted staff, panting with alarm.

These were two great things to lose—God's Presence and his own peace of mind—but these were not all his damage and injury! He was now brought into great peril—he must be thrown into the sea. In all likelihood he will meet with a watery grave. Had he gone to Nineveh that would not have occurred. He would have been under the care of God's special Providence there, but now the winds and waves threaten him. With what a splash he falls into the deep! As we see him engulfed let us, with holy caution, shun the dangerous way of disobedience. Other men may escape the chastisements of God in this world, but not the Lord's own children. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

Now, too, he is brought into great affliction of soul. He tells us that he, "cried by reason of affliction." He compares his state to the "belly of Hell." He was brought into such depths of distress, a miracle interposed to save his life—but not to cheer his spirit. Like the Savior, of whom he was a type, he was exceedingly sorrowful and very heavy, almost unto death.

Sin soon destroys a Believer's comfort. It is the deadly upas tree from whose leaves distil deadly drops which destroy the life of joy and peace. Jonah, too, had lost everything upon which he might have drawn for comfort in any other case. He could not turn to the promise of God that He would keep him, for he was not in God's ways. He could not say, "Lord, I am Your servant," for then conscience would have said, "Yes, and a pretty servant, too!" He could not say, "Lord, I am on Your errand!" for conscience would have said, "No, you are on your own!" He could not say, "Lord, I meet with these difficulties in the discharge of my duty, therefore help me through them"—no, for there would have been a reply, "You are not here in the discharge of duty."

"You flew in the teeth of the Most High. You sought to escape from a little difficulty—you tried to get away from the Presence of God altogether and you have prepared all this for yourself. If the draught is bitter, you mixed it. If the fruit is sharp, you planted the tree. If this harvest is terrible, you sowed the seed—you are reaping your own deeds—you are being

filled with your own ways.” Poor Jonah, poor Jonah, to be in such a state as this!

Then here is another point—he had to go to Nineveh after all—and so will you. You may kick, but when God means you to do His work, you will be made to do it. The ox-goad has been thrust into you already because you hate the yoke. You do not like it and you kick against it and the only result is that it is driven further into you. Saul, Saul, it is hard for you to kick against the pricks, for with all your kicking and rebelling you will have to go where you were originally ordered to go. You might as well go at first—you will go with better Grace. You will go with your Master’s comfortable Presence—and you will have to go one way or another.

Many men have found this true. They have struggled against duty and perhaps year after year they have drawn back from it, finding miserable excuses for their consciences. But they never prospered in business, they could not get on in the world, they had trouble on trouble and at last it came to this—they had to go back to the very place where they were ten or twenty years ago. And there they discharged the duty which they had been so long seeking to avoid which had proved a burdensome stone to them until they were rid of it by yielding to its demands.

Now, my dear Brothers, do not play the Jonah, for you will have to pay the fare of it. If you know your duty, do it. I may be speaking very pointedly to some of you. “I should have to sever the bonds of many a fond connection.” Do it for Christ’s sake. “I should have to leave the camp and go outside of it, take up a very heavy cross and bear Christ’s reproach.” You may as well do it now as by-and-by, for you will have to do it.

“But,” says one, “this business of mine—I have nothing left to live upon. I feel it is a bad business, but I do not like to give it up just yet.” You will have to do so sooner or later. You may as well do it now, before, like Jonah, you have had to pay for your wit. Remember, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and a good understanding have all they that keep His commandments.” May God the Holy Spirit give you the wisdom which comes from above which will lead you to sit as a child at the feet of Jesus and learn His ways.

“Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.” “But hearken diligently unto His commandments and then shall your peace be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

III. A few words upon another point—there is AN EXPENSE CONNECTED WITH GOING TO HEAVEN. It is estimated at a very high rate by some who say that the road is good enough, but the tolls are too high. Others pretend to believe that religion is only a scheme for putting money into ministers’ pockets, whereas I can truly say for one, that what I receive for my ministry is not a tenth of what I could readily earn in an engagement infinitely less laborious and harassing than my present position. Although, let it be added, I would not leave my ministry for ten thousand worlds.

Let us think over this matter of expense and begin with an old story. “An aged couple, in the vicinity of London, who, in the early part of life, were poor, but who, by the blessing of God upon their industry, enjoyed a

comfortable independency in their old age, were called upon by a Christian minister who solicited their contributions to a charity. The old lady was disposed to make out some excuse and to answer in the negative, both for her husband and herself. And therefore replied, "Why, Sir, we have lost a great deal by religion since we began. My husband knows that very well." And being wishful to obtain her husband's consent to the assertion, she said, "Have we not, Thomas?"

Thomas, after a long and solemn pause, replied, "Yes, Mary, we have lost a great deal by our religion! I have lost a great deal by my religion. Before I got religion, Mary, I had got a water pail in which I carried water and that you know I lost many years ago. And then I had an old slouched hat, a patched old coat and mended shoes and stockings. But I have lost them, also, long ago. And, Mary, you know that poor as I was, I had a habit of getting drunk and quarrelling with you. And that you know I have lost.

"And then I had a burdened conscience and a wicked heart. And then I had ten thousand guilty feelings and fears. But all are lost, completely lost and, like a millstone, cast into the deepest sea. And, Mary, you have been a loser, too, though not so great a loser as myself. Before we got religion, Mary, you had a washing tray in which you washed for hire. And God Almighty blessed your industry—but since we got religion—you have lost your washing tray. And you had a gown and bonnet much the worse for wear, though they were all you had to wear. But you have lost them long ago.

"And you had many an aching heart concerning me, at times. But those you happily have lost. And I could even wish that you had lost as much as I have lost and even more—for what we lose by our religion, Mary—will be our eternal gain." We need not add the preacher did not go away without substantial proof that Thomas deemed his losses for religion his most weighty obligations to the goodness of Almighty God as the richest gift of Divine Grace on earth and the most authentic pledge of Glory in the world to come!

If some of us were to look back upon what religion has cost us we might cast up the amount with very much the same result. Where were you apt to spend your Sundays once, some of you? Where would some few of you have been on other occasions?—at the race course, at the theater—yes, and in the brothel. But now you are washed and cleansed and sanctified and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. This is what your religion has cost you—the giving up of nothing that made you truly happy—but only renouncing that which pretended to make you happy but which was ruining your soul forever!

The first expense of religion is that it takes away from men spurious joys and gives them real ones. It takes away from them shadows and gives them substance. Then, again, the expense of your religion has been this—some of you have given a good deal of your time to the cause of Christ. Others of you have devoted a considerable portion of your money to it, but after all that you or any of us have ever given, I am sure we can say religion has cost us nothing which we did not give cheerfully—and it has asked of us nothing which it was not our happiness to render! We have felt a greater joy in giving than in withholding—a greater bliss in serving

God than in being idle. Moreover our liberality has always been repaid to us with interest, for our God will be in no man's debt.

Here is a specimen of what has been our experience from the pen of a tradesman: "Some years ago I heard a sermon from the words, 'Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse' (Mal. 3:10). I cannot describe how my mind was impressed with the manner in which Jehovah here condescended to challenge His people when He says, 'And prove Me now,' etc. Suffice it to say that the subject made such an impression that I found it my duty to do more for the cause of God than I ever had done. I did so, and on closing that year's accounts, I found that I had gained more than in any two years preceding it. Some time afterwards I thought the Redeemer's cause had an additional claim, as the place in which we worshipped Him needed some repairs. The sum I then gave was L20. And in a very little time afterwards I received L40 which I had long given up as lost."

Our Master's service is our liberty. We count it our joy to run in the way of His commandments. And if the worldling pities us and says, "Poor man, how he must deny himself!" We reply, "In one sense it is true, but in another, our best self is fed and satisfied and feasted when we deny self. The duties we perform are not performed as duties, but as *privileges*. We do not run into them at all because we feel forced to do so, but because we love them. We confess that religion has cost us our spirit, our soul, our body. And our only regret is we have not more that we can give to the cause of Christ. We think we can stand at the foot of the Savior's Cross and say—

***"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss.
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross.
Yes, and I must and will esteem
All things but loss for Jesus' sake
O may my soul be found in Him,
And of His righteousness partake!"***

Religion, then, takes away from us nothing but what we are glad to lose. And it asks nothing of us but what we are too glad to give. And it returns to us in ten thousand ways all that it takes from us. It gives us blessings of the upper and of the nether springs. It comforts us in life, it cheers us in death. It makes us so happy that we can say with Watts—

***"I would not change my blessed estate
For all the world calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."***

IV. In the last place, THE TRUE FARE OF GODLINESS IS ALREADY PAID—NOT BY US—BUT BY OUR LORD JESUS. Jonah paid his fare from Joppa to Tarshish, but I never find that he paid any fare back. The conveyance which brought him to land was far cheaper than the ship of Tarshish, though not quite so comfortable. He came back to land with no expense to himself whatever!

So we must pay much and do much in order to be cast away—but the way of eternal life and salvation is perfectly free. When Jonah was thrown out into the midst of the sea, the whale did not swallow him because he was a man of money, or because he was a man of merit—he was just a

needy, destitute sinner, subject to the wrath of God as expressed in that tempest and in that storm and in that boiling sea. And there came the friendly fish which carried him into a living grave for three days that his life might be preserved.

And this is very much like our salvation—salvation by death and burial with Jesus. We flee away. We trust by our self-righteousness to escape from the tempest of God's wrath, but we cannot. At last we feel that we are cast right out into the sea to perish and God's anger, as we think, is hot against us. There is no good thing in us, nothing upon which we can rely. We see no hope of escape. Just then the death of Christ, which was our greatest crime—which seems as though it would destroy us—takes us into its friendly shelter and in it we go to the bottoms of the mountains.

In it we descend till all the waves and billows of God's wrath have rolled over us. And in it we are securely landed, to praise the name and love of God. When our extremity comes and there is none to help, then God prepares the way of deliverance for us, His people. Hear me for one moment, my Brothers and Sisters, this morning. We have sinned! God help us to feel the sin! Grievously have we offended against God by flying in His face and going where He would not have us go!

Can we return? We have paid our fare to go to the place of destruction, but we have no means to pay our fare to Heaven. Penniless, stripped of all hope in ourselves, is there any way by which we can return—by which we can find eternal life? There is! There is—if we give ourselves up wholly to God, confessing our sins and if our soul rests alone upon the finished work of the great salvation provided in Christ Jesus. We need not fear because we have nothing. Our God, who has everything, asks nothing from us. He does not save us because we are righteous, but because He is gracious. He will not deliver us because there is something good in us—but because there is everything good in Himself.

Let me say to those of you who are sleeping this morning, careless of your fate—If you sleep much longer, you may wake up where your waking will be terrible. What are you doing, O you Sleepers! Rise! I remind you of your future doom, of your present danger. O Spirit of God, arouse them! And if awakened, you cry, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer comes, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Though you can see no means of escape, yet there is a means provided by God! And when you are cast out from the ship, have left all other confidence and think that God's sea of wrath will cover you up—then Christ, who has been prepared of old as our great Deliverer, shall take you and bear you safely to the land of eternal Glory. I would God that you were made to forsake the way of the Destroyer and led in the way of peace, that He might have all the praise forever. May He bless these poor, feeble, but well-intended remarks, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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SLEEPERS AWAKENED

NO. 2903

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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“But Jonah was gone down into the lowest part of the ship;
and he lay there and was fast asleep.”
Jonah 1:5.***

WE are told before this fact is mentioned that the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea to overtake the ship in which Jonah was sailing for Tarshish. The great wheels of Providence are continually revolving in fulfillment of God's purposes concerning His own people. For them winds blow and tempests rise. It is a wonderful thing that the whole machinery of Nature should be made subservient to the Divine Purpose of the salvation of His redeemed! I was in a diamond-cutting factory at Amsterdam and I noticed that there were huge wheels revolving and a great deal of power being developed and expended. But when I came to look at the little diamond—in some cases a very small one, indeed—upon which that power was being brought to bear—it seemed very remarkable that all that power should be concentrated upon such a little, yet very precious object! In a similar style, all the wheels of Providence and Nature, great as they are, are brought to bear by Divine skill and love upon a thing which appears to many people to be of trifling value, but which is to Christ of priceless worth—namely, a human soul!

Here is this common-looking Jew, Jonah, named according to the general rule that names go by contraries, “a dove,” for, at any rate on this occasion, he looked more like the raven that would not come back to the ark! And for this one man—this altogether unfriendly Prophet—the sea must be tossed in tempest and a whole ship full of people must have their lives put in jeopardy! This Truth of God is a very far-reaching one. You cannot well exaggerate it. The vast universe is but a platform for the display of God's Grace and all material things that now exist will be set aside when the great drama of Divine Grace is completed. The material universe is but scaffolding for the Church of Christ. It is but the temporary structure upon which the amazing mystery of redeeming love is being carried on to perfection. See, then, that as the great wind was raised to follow Jonah and to lead to his return to the path of duty, so all things work together for the good of God's people and all things that exist are being bowed and bent towards God's one solemn eternal purpose—the salvation of His own!

But note also, that while God was awake, Jonah was asleep. While storms were blowing, Jonah was slumbering. It is a strange sight, O Christian, that you should be an important item in the universe and yet that you should not know it or care about it—that all things are keeping their proper place and time for you and yet that you are the only one who does not seem to perceive it and, therefore, you fall into a dull, lethargic, sleepy state. Everything around you is awake for your good, yet you are slumbering even as the fugitive Prophet was while the storm was raging!

I am going to speak upon the case of Jonah, first, as we may regard it as a useful lesson to the people of God. And, secondly, as it may be considered as *an equally valuable warning to the unconverted*.

I. First, then, I shall use the case of Jonah as A USEFUL LESSON TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD—and I may very fairly do so when we remember who Jonah was.

First, *Jonah was a believer in God*. He worshipped no false god—he worshipped only the living and true God. He was a professed and avowed believer in Jehovah. He was not ashamed to say—even when his conduct had laid him open to blame and when there was nobody to support him—“I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land.” Yet, though he was a believer in God, he was in the lowest part of the ship fast asleep! O Christian—a real Christian, too—if you are in a similar condition, how is it that you can be slumbering under such circumstances? Should not the privileges and the honor which your being a believer has brought to you by Divine Grace forbid that you should be inactive, careless, indifferent? I may be addressing dozens of Jonahs—those who are really God’s people, but who are not acting as if they were—chosen of the Most High but are forgetful of their election, their redemption, their sanctification, the life they have begun to live here below and the eternal glory that awaits them hereafter!

Besides being a believer or as a natural consequence of being a believer, *Jonah was a man of prayer*. Out of the whole company on board that ship, he was the only man who knew how to pray to the one living and true God. All the mariners “cried every man unto his god.” But those were idle prayers because they were offered to idols—they could not prevail because they were presented to dumb, dead idols! But here was a man who *could* pray—and who could pray aright, too—yet he was asleep! Praying men and women—you who have the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven swinging at your belt—you who can ask what you will, and it shall be done for you—you who have many times in the past prevailed with God in wrestling prayer—you who have received countless blessings in answer to your supplications—can you be, as Jonah was, sleeping in the time of storm? Can it be possible that he who knows the power of prayer is restraining it—that he to whom God has given this choice privilege is not availing himself of it? I fear that this may be the case with some of you and looking at Jonah, a praying man sinfully asleep, I cannot help feeling that I may be speaking to many others who are in exactly the same condition!

More than this, Jonah was not merely a believing man and a praying man, but *he was also a Prophet of the Lord*. He was one to whom God had spoken and by whom God had spoken. He was a minister—that is to say one of God’s own sent servants though he was not in his proper place when he was in the ship sailing towards Tarshish. But can God’s minister neglect their duty like this? If I had been asked at that time, “Where is the Prophet of the Lord?”—perhaps the only Prophet of his age—at any rate a man who was the very foremost in his time—if I had been asked, “Where is he?” I would have said that he must be looked for amidst the masses of the dense population of Nineveh, carrying out his Master’s commission with unstaggering faith! Or else that he might be looked for amidst the thousands of Israel, denouncing their idol gods and their wicked ways. But who would have thought of finding Jonah asleep on board such a ship as that? He is a Seer, yet he sees not, for he is sound asleep! He is a watchman, but he is not watching, for he is slumbering and sleeping! Everything is in confusion, yet this man, upon whom rests the Divine anointing and into whose mouth God has put a message to multitudes of his fellow creatures is sleeping instead of witnessing!

Come Mr. Preacher, see to yourself while I am talking about Jonah—and I will take the message to myself while I am talking to you—for this is a matter which ought to come home to all of us upon whom such great responsibilities are laid and to whom such high privileges are given. But all of you who love the Lord are witnesses for Christ in some capacity or other—and it would be a very sad thing if you who are called to speak in the name of the Lord, though it should only be in your Sunday school class, or in a little cottage meeting, or to your own children—should be asleep when you ought to be wide awake and active! May the Lord awaken you, for you are the wrong person to be asleep! You, above all others, are bound to have both your eyes open and to watch day and night to hear what God the Lord will speak to you and what He would have you say to the ungodly or to His own chosen people in His name.

It is also worthy of notice that at the very time when Jonah was asleep in the ship, he was not only a Prophet, but he was *a Prophet under a special commission*. He was not on furlough. He was, on the contrary, empowered by special warrant, under the King’s seal and sign manual, to go at once to a certain place and there to deliver the King’s message. And yet there he is, asleep in this ship and going in the very opposite direction to the one given him! When Prophets sleep, it should be when their errand has been done and their message has been delivered, but Jonah had not been on his Lord’s errand, nor had he delivered his Lord’s message. No, he had refused to obey his Lord and had run away from the path of duty—and here he lies, fast asleep in the lowest part of the ship! O dear Brothers and Sisters, if we could truthfully say that our own work for the Lord was done, we might be somewhat excused if we took our rest. But is our life-work done? Mine is not, that I feel certain. In fact, it seems to be scarcely begun. Is yours finished, my Brother, my Sister? Have you so lived that you can be perfectly content with what you have

done? Would it not be a cause of grief to you if you were assured that you would have no more opportunities of glorifying God upon the earth? I think you would feel that very much. Well, then, how can you be willing to be indifferent, cold and dead when so much of God's work lies before you scarcely touched as yet?

All that you and I have done so far has been like apprentice work—we have just been getting our hands in—we have not become journeymen in God's great workshop yet—certainly we cannot claim to be wise master-builders! Few of us, if any, have attained to that degree, so let us not go to sleep. O Sir, shame on you! Asleep in the early morning? A man may take his rest when he gets weary after a long day's toil, but not yet—with all that work to be done—with the King's commission pressing upon us! With the call of the myriads of Nineveh sounding in his ears, Jonah, God's appointed Messenger, should not have been found asleep in the lowest part of the ship.

This, then, is who the man was. He was a believing man and a praying man. He was a Prophet and a Prophet under a special commission. But where was he? Where had he gone?

Well, he had gone down into the lowest part of the ship. That is to say *he had gone where he hoped he would not be observed or disturbed*. He had gone down into the lowest part of the ship—not among the cargo—the mariners threw that overboard, yet the noise did not wake the sleeping Prophet. He was not upon the deck ready to take a turn at keeping watch—no, he had got as much out of the way as he could! And I have known Christian people try, as far as they could, to get out of the way. Possibly they are not living inconsistently, or doing, as far as others can see, anything that is glaringly sinful—but they have retired from their Master's business. They have got into a little quiet place where nobody notices them. I wonder whether there is a Christian who has gone to live in a country village where he has not yet said anything for Christ, although, when he lived in London, he was a busy worker for God? He has, like Jonah, gone down into the lowest part of the ship, into a quiet place where nobody can see him. Around him there are very few Christian people—perhaps hardly any—and he does not want anybody to know that he is a Christian. He would like to live in a private way. If he were asked about himself, he would answer, as Jonah did, "I fear God." But he does not wish to be asked anything about himself. He does not want people to fix their eyes upon him. He is afraid of being too conspicuous. He says that he was always of a retiring disposition, like the soldier who ran away as soon as the first shot of the battle was fired and so was shot as a deserter. He says that he is like Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, or like Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He has gone down into the lowest part of the ship, though, at one time, he was one of the foremost workers for Christ!

He has gone, too, *where he will not lend a hand in any service that needs to be done*. He was once in the Sunday school, but he says that he has had his turn at that and does not intend to do anything more. He

used to be, perhaps, a deacon of a church, but now he does not wish for such a position as that. He says there is a great deal of trouble and toil in connection with such offices and he intends, for the future, to avoid everything that will give him trouble or cause him the slightest toil. Once he took delight in preaching the Word and in those days if anybody had said that he would live to be silent and not speak in Christ's name, he would have been very angry at the man who made such a statement! But it has now come true. Jonah is not up on deck helping to hold the rudder, or to set a sail, or to do anything—not even a hand's turn to help the poor laboring vessel! He has gone to sleep in the lowest part of the ship where nobody enquires about him, at least for the present, and where there is nothing for him to do!

Observe, too, that *Jonah was staying away from the Prayer Meeting*. Do you ask, "What Prayer Meeting?" Why, every other man on board that ship was crying unto his god, but Jonah was asleep in the lowest part of the ship! He was not praying—he was sleeping and, perhaps, dreaming—but he was certainly not praying! And it is a very bad thing when a true servant of God, a praying man and one by whom God has spoken before, begins to get into such a spiritually sleepy state that he not only does nothing to help the Church, but he does not even join in prayer in the time of danger! Do you know anybody in such a state as that, my Brother? "Yes," you reply, "several." Are you in that state yourself, Brother? If so, let charity for people who are doing wrong begin at home—it may extend to others afterwards. But if this cap fits you, wear it and wear it till you wear it out and have improved yourself through wearing it!

This man, asleep in the lowest part of the ship, *represents one who cannot even take any notice of what was going on around him*. At first he did not wish to be observed, but now he does not care to observe others. What is the condition of the millions of heathen in foreign lands? That is a subject that he avoids—he is of opinion that they will be converted in the millennium, or that even if they are not converted, their future lot may be a happy one. At any rate, it is a subject about which he does not concern himself. Jonah is asleep in the lowest part of the ship and he appears quite content to let the millions of heathen perish. Then, with regard to the Church of Christ at home, sometimes he is told that everything is prospering, but from other quarters he is informed that we are all going to the bad. Well, he does not know which report is the true one and he does not particularly care! And as for the Church of which he is a member, does he not care for that? Well, yes, in a certain fashion, but he does not care enough for the Sunday school, for instance, to lend a hand there, or for the preaching society to lend a hand there. He never encourages the minister's heart by saying that the love of Christ compels him to take his share of holy service. Jonah is asleep in the lowest part of the ship. He is not much noticed, if at all, for those around him have come to the conclusion that he is good for nothing and he, as I have shown you, does not take much notice of what is going on though all the while he is a man of God, a man of prayer and one whom God has used in times

past! I wonder whether these descriptions are at all applicable to any of my hearers? At any rate, I know that they represent, as in a mirror, the lives of many professors of religion. We trust they are sincere in heart in the sight of God, but, to us their sleepiness is more apparent than their sincerity!

Now, further, what was Jonah doing at that time? *He was asleep—*asleep amid all that confusion and noise! What a hurly-burly there was outside that vessel—storms raging, billows roaring—and Jonah was not a sailor, but a landsman and yet he was asleep. Certainly he must have been in a remarkable state to be able to sleep through such a storm as that! And what a noise there was inside the ship as well as outside! Everybody else was crying to his god and the mariners had been throwing the cargo out of the ship, so they must have stirred the whole place up from one end to the other. There seems to have been scarcely any opportunity for anybody to rest, yet Jonah could sleep right through it all, no matter what noise the men made as they pulled the ropes, or threw out their wares, or what outcries they made as they presented their prayers to their idol gods! Jonah was asleep amid all that confusion and noise and, O Christian, for you to be indifferent to all that is going on in such a world as this—for you to be negligent of God's work in such a time as this is just as strange!

The devil alone is making noise enough to wake all the Jonahs if they only want to awake. Then there are the rampant errors of the times, the sins of the times, the confusions of the times, the controversies of the times—all these things ought to wake us. And then, beyond the times, there is eternity with all its terrors and its glories! There is the dread conflict that is going on between Christ and Belial—between the true and the false—between Jesus and antichrist. All around us there is tumult and storm, yet some professing Christians are able, like Jonah, to go to sleep in the lowest part of the ship. I think, Brothers and Sisters, if we are spiritually awake—if we only look at the condition of religion in our own country—we shall often be obliged at night to literally lie awake and toss to and fro, crying, “O God, have mercy upon this distracted kingdom and let Your Truth triumph over the Popery which many are endeavoring to bring back among us!” But, alas, the great multitude of Believers have little or no care about this matter—they do not even seem to notice it, for they are sound asleep in the midst of a storm!

Notice, also, that *Jonah was asleep when other people were awake..* All around us people seem to be wide awake, whether we are asleep or not. When I see what is being done by Romanists and observe the zeal and self-denial of many persons who have dedicated themselves to the propagation of their false faith, I am astonished that we are doing so little for the true faith! Is it really the case that God has the dullest set of servants in the whole world? It is certain that men are all alive in the service of Satan—then we should not be half-alive in the service of our God! Are the worshippers of Baal crying aloud, “O Baal, hear us,” and the devotees of Ashtaroth shouting, “Hear us, O mighty Ashtaroth,” and yet the

Prophet of Jehovah is lying asleep in the lowest part of the ship? Is it so? Does everything else seem to awaken all of a man's energies—but does true religion paralyze them?

I have really thought, when I have been reading some books written by very good men, that the best thing for sending a man to sleep was a book by an evangelical writer—but that the moment a man becomes unsound in the faith, it seems as if he woke up and had something to say which people were bound to hear! It is a great pity that it should be so, just as it was a great pity that everybody should have been awake on that vessel with the exception of Jonah, yet I fear that it is still only too true that those who serve the living God are not half filled with the awakening fervor which ought to possess them for the honor of the Lord Most High!

Jonah was asleep, next, not only in a time of great confusion and when others were awake, but also *in a time when he was in great danger*, for the ship was likely to sink. The storm was raging furiously, yet Jonah was asleep. And, Believer, when you and those about you are in danger of falling into great sin through your careless living—when your family is in danger of being brought up without the fear of God—when your servants are in danger of concluding that religion is all a farce because you act as if it were—when those who watch you in business are apt to sneer at Christian profession because they say that your profession is of very little worth to you—when all this is taking place and there is imminent danger to your own soul and to the souls of others, can you still sleep in unconcern?

And Jonah was asleep *when he needed to be awake*. He, above all other men, was the one who ought to be awake and to call upon his God. If anybody goes to sleep nowadays, it certainly ought not to be the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! All things demand that Christians should be in real earnest. I know of no argument that I could gather from time or eternity, from Heaven or earth, or Hell to allow a Christian to be inactive and careless! But if I am asked for reasons why Christians are needed to be in downright earnest and full of consecrated vigor in the service of God, those arguments are so plentiful that I have no time to mention them all! The world needs you! Careless souls need to be awakened! Enquiring souls need to be directed! Mourning souls need to be comforted. Rejoicing souls need to be established! The ignorant need to be taught, the desponding need to be cheered! On all sides, for a Christian there is an earnest cry and, certainly in these days, God has made a truly godly man to be more precious than the gold of Ophir! And that man who keeps himself back from earnest service for God in such a time as this, surely cannot expect the Lord's blessing to rest upon him. Verily, the old curse of Meroz may well be pronounced upon the man who, in this age and under present circumstances, like Jonah, goes down into the lowest part of the ship, lies down and goes to sleep!

Jonah was asleep with all the heathens around him upbraiding him by their actions. They were praying while he was sleeping and, at last it came to this—that the shipmaster sternly addressed the Prophet of God

and said, "What are you doing, O sleeper?" It is sad, indeed, when things have come to such a pass that a heathen captain rebukes a servant of God! And yet I am afraid that the Church of God, if she does not mend her ways, will have a great many similar rebukes from heathen practices and heathen utterances! Look at the enormous sums that the heathen spend upon their idols and their idol temples and worship—and then think how little we spend upon the service of the living God! One is amazed to read of the lacs of rupees that are given by Indian princes for the worship of their dead deities—and yet our missionary societies languish and the work of God in a thousand ways is stopped because God's stewards are not using what He has entrusted to them as they should. Think, too, of the flaming zeal with which the votaries of false faiths compass sea and land to make one proselyte, while we do so little to bring souls to Jesus Christ!

One of these days you will have Hindu and Brahmins talking to us in this fashion, "You profess that the love of Christ compels you, but to what does it compel you?" They even now ask us what kind of religion must ours be that forces opium upon the poor Chinese! They quote our great national sins against us and I do not wonder that they do. I only wish that they could be told that Christians reprobate those evils and that they are not Christians who practice them. But we must do more than even the best Christians are now doing or else we shall have the heathen saying, as the semi-heathen at home say, "If we believed in eternal punishment, we should be earnest day and night to rescue souls from it"—which is to me a strong corroboration of the truth of that Doctrine. We do not need any Doctrine that can make us less zealous than we are! We certainly do not need any Doctrine that can give us any excuse for lack of zeal. Still, there is great force in the remark I quoted just now. We are not as earnest to save men from going down to the Pit as we ought to be if we do, indeed, believe that they are hastening to that doom! The shipmasters are again rebuking the Jonahs! Those who believe in error and who worship false gods turn around upon us and ask us what we are doing. O Jonah, sleeping Jonah, is it not time that you were awake?

But why was Jonah asleep? I suppose that it was partly the reaction after the excitement through which his mind had passed in rebelling against God. He had wearied himself with seeking his own evil way, so now, after the disobedience to God of which he had been guilty, his spirit sinks and he sleeps. Besides, it is according to the nature of sin to give—not physical sleep, I grant you—but to give spiritual slumber. There is no opiate like the commission of an evil deed. A man who has done wrong is so much less able to repent of the wrong and so much the less likely to do so. Jonah's conscience had become hardened by his willful rejection of his Lord's commands and, therefore, he could sleep when he ought to have been awakened and alarmed.

Besides, he wished to get rid of the very *thought* of God. He was trying to flee from God's Presence. I suppose he could not bear his own thought-

ts—they must have been dreadful to him. So, being in a pet against his God and altogether in a wrong spirit, he hunts about for a snug corner of the ship, stretches himself out and there falls asleep and sleeps on right through the storm! O sleepy Christian, there is something wrong about you, too! Conscience has been stupefied. There is some darling sin, I fear, that you are harboring. Search it out and drive it out! Sin is the mother of this shameful indifference! God help you to get rid of it! Brothers and Sisters, I am speaking to you with as much directness as I possibly can, yet not with more than I use towards myself. Have I, in my preaching, been slumbering and sleeping? If you find that I am not in earnest, I charge you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, tell me of it and wake me out of my sleep if you can, as I now tell you of it and say, by all that God has done to you in saving you by His Grace and in making you His servant, give not up your soul to slumber, but awake, awake—put on strength and awaken yourself, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to prayer and to the service of your God!

Thus I have spoken, perhaps at too great a length, to Christians.

II. Now, more briefly, I want to give A WARNING TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Jonah, asleep on board that ship, is a type of a great number of unconverted people who come to our various places of worship. Jonah was in imminent danger, for God had sent a great storm after him and, my unconverted Hearer, *your danger at this present moment is beyond description.* There is nothing but a breath between you and Hell! One of our beloved Elders was with us here last Sabbath—he is now with the spirits of just men made perfect—but if it had been the lot of any unconverted person here to suffer and to expire in the same manner, alas, how sad it would have been for you, my Hearer! Driven from the Presence of God, you would be cast in the outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! The sword of Divine Justice is already fur-bished, will you yet make mirth? Can you laugh and jest when there is but a step between you and death—but a step between you and Hell? An enemy to God, unforgiven, the Angel of Justice seeking you out as the storm sought out Jonah in that ship, “What are you doing, O sleeper,” when the peril of everlasting wrath is so near you?

You are asleep, too, *when there are a great many things to awake you.* As I have already said, there was a great noise in the vessel where Jonah was, a great noise inside and outside the ship, yet he did not awake. I do believe that many of you unconverted people find it hard to remain as you are. You get hard blows, sometimes, from the preacher. At family prayer, often, your conscience is touched. When you hear a passage from the Bible read, or when you hear of a friend who has died, you get somewhat aroused. Why, the very conversion of others should surely awaken you! If nothing else had awoken Jonah, the prayers of the mariners ought to have awakened him—and the earnestness of your mother and father, the pleading of your sister, the cries of new converts, the earnest anxie-

ties of enquirers ought to have—and if you were not so deeply sunken in slumber, *would have* some influence over you to arouse you.

You are asleep *while prayer could save you*. If your prayers could not be heard, I think I would say, “Let him sleep on.” If there were no possibility of your salvation, I do not see why you should be awakened from your slumber. Despair is an excellent excuse for sloth—but you have no reason to despair. “Arise, call upon your God,” said the shipmaster to Jonah! And we say to you, “Friend, how is it that you are so indifferent and do not pray, when it is written, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find,’ and when the facts prove the Truth of the words of Jesus, ‘for he that asks receives, and he that seeks finds?’” Heaven is within your reach, yet you will not stretch out your hands! Eternal life is so near to you that Paul writes, “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” Assuredly that man who has food heaped up before him, but who sits down and goes to sleep with his head in Benjamin’s mess and yet will not eat of it deserves to be starved! He who can sleep when the river runs up to his very lips—he who is dying of thirst, yet will not drink deserves to die, does he not? With such wondrous blessings set before you in the Gospel—with Heaven itself just yonder and the pearly gates set wide open, yet you are so indifferent that you despise the good land and murmur and refuse to accept the Savior who would lead you to it—why, surely, you must be sleeping the sleep of death!

You are sleeping while God’s people are wondering at you, just as those mariners in the ship wondered at Jonah—and while they are weeping over you and praying for you! There are some in this place who are the constant subjects of prayer. Some of you who are seated here do not know it, perhaps, but there are those who love you and who mention your name day and night before God. And yet, while they are concerned about you, you are not concerned about yourself! O God, if storms cannot awaken these sleeping Jonahs, awaken them by some other means, even though it is by one like themselves, or one even worse than themselves! Send a message that shall upbraid them. Set some blasphemer to ask them how they can attend the means of Grace and yet be undecided! I have known that to happen. I have known a coarse, vile-living man to accost a moral and excellent attendant on the means of Grace and say to him, “Why are you not either one thing or the other? If religion is all a lie, why don’t you be as I am? But if it is true, why don’t you become a Christian?” And verily may they put such questions as those to some of you!

O Friends, I pray you, if you are out of Christ, do not pretend to be happy! Do not accept any happiness till you find it in Him. To some of you I would speak very pointedly. Are you sick? Do you feel that your life is very precarious? O my dear Friend, you are like Jonah when the ship was likely to be wrecked. Do not delay! Are there the beginnings of consumption about you? Is it supposed to be so? Do not delay! Has some

relative been taken away and does there seem some likelihood that you may have the same disease? Oh, do not sleep, but awake! Are you getting old, Friend? Are the gray hairs getting thick around your brow? Oh, do not delay! For unsaved young people it is wrong to sleep, for he that sleeps when he is young sleeps during a siege! But he that slumbers when he is old sleeps during the attack, when the enemy is actually at the breach and storming the walls! Do any of you work in dangerous trades? Do you have to eat your bread where an "accident" might easily happen as it has often happened to others? Oh, be prepared to meet your God!

But, having begun this list, I might continue it almost indefinitely, but I will end it in a sentence or so. *Are you a mortal man? Can you die? Will you die? May you die now? May you drop dead in the street? May you go to sleep and never wake up again on earth? May your very food or drink become the vehicle of death to you? May there be death in the air you breathe? May it be so? Will you one day, at any rate, have to be carried to your long home, like others, and lie asleep in the grave? Will you give account to God for the things done in the body? Will you have to stand before the Great White Throne to make one of that innumerable throng and to be there put into the balance to be weighed for eternity? If so, sleep not, I beseech you, as do others, but bestir yourself!*

May God's Holy Spirit bestir you to make your calling and election sure! Lay hold on Jesus Christ with the grip of an earnest, humble faith and henceforth surrender yourself to the service of Him who has bought you with His precious blood! God grant to all of us the Grace to awake and arise that Christ may give us life and light for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 51.

Verses 1-5. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* "It is not merely that I have sinned in practice, but I am a sinner by nature. Sin would not have come out of me if it had not first been in me. I am a mass of sin and must, therefore, be loathsome in Your sight."

6, 7. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop.* Take the bunch of hyssop as the priests did, dip it into the basin filled with sacrificial blood—"Purge me with hyssop." Apply the precious blood of Jesus to me—

7, 8. *And I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* He feels like a man whose bones are broken and he asks the Lord, by putting away his sin, to bind up those broken bones till every one of them should sing a song of gratitude to the Divine Healer.

9-13. *Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clear heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* “If You will only save me, I will tell everybody about it. I will be a preacher as well as a penitent. Rising from my knees where I have been confessing my sin, rejoicing that You have blotted it all out, I will hasten away and tell others what a good God You are, and they will believe my testimony, and sinners shall be converted unto You.

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.* David had been guilty of the death of Uriah. It is a proof of his sincerity that he does not mince matters, but calls a spade a spade and prays, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.”

14. *The God of my Salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* “I will not only preach, but I will also sing. I will be preceptor as well a preacher. A Christian can never do too much for the Lord who has so graciously pardoned him. David feels that he cannot do anything right, either singing or preaching, by himself; so he adds—

15. *O Lord, open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; otherwise I would give it: You delight not in burnt offering.* God cares little for the mere outward forms of worship. Ritualistic observances are nothing to Him—“You desire not sacrifice, otherwise I would give it: You delight not in burnt offering.” Though these were the fixed ordinances of the Lord under which David lived, yet he was enabled to look beyond them to something higher and better!

17-19. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* When we come to God and are saved by Him, then ordinances take their proper place. You cannot teach a man how to live until he is born and you cannot teach him what his spiritual life is to be until he is born-again. All religious rites and ceremonies which precede the new birth go for nothing. First there must be the inward life—the broken heart, the contrite spirit—and then everything else drops into proper order. Mind this—God help us all to mind it well!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, O SLEEPER?

NO. 469

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship.
And he lay and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster
came to him and said unto him, What do you
mean, O sleeper? Arise, call upon your God,
if so be that God will think upon us,
that we perish not.”
Jonah 1:5, 6.*

OF all the men in the ship, Jonah was the person who ought most to have been awake. But nevertheless, he was not only asleep but *fast* asleep. All the creaking of the cordage, the dashing of the waves, the howling of the winds, the straining of the timbers, and the shouting of the mariners, did not arouse him. He was fast locked in the arms of sleep. See here, in Jonah's heavy slumber, the effect of sin. No noxious drug can give such deadly sleep as sin. The body never knows so dread a sleep when under the influence of opiates, as the soul does when sin has cast it into a slumber. If men could be awake to the evils, to the danger, to the desperate punishment of sin, sin were not half so deadly as it is. But when it puts its sweet cup of nightshade to the lip, that cup soon blinds the eyes, and “steeps the senses in forgetfulness,” and man knows not what or where he is.

Nor is sin the only cradle in which evil rocks the soul—the world, too, casts men into slumber. I do not know that Jonah ever slept so soundly anywhere as when he had gotten into the midst of busy mariners who were going to Tarshish. Ah, it is comparatively easy for us to keep awake in the midst of God's Church. It is easy for us to maintain our steadfastness and integrity when we meet with those who rejoice in His name. The world is an enchanted ground, and happy is that Christian who is able to survive the deadening influence of business, the soporific influence which creeps over the minds of men whose merchandise increases, whose houses are filled with the riches of nations.

What downy pillows does the world sew to all armholes! What beds of ease she spreads for those whom she entraps. See also, the slumbering effects of the flesh. It was to spare himself a little toil, it was to avoid per-

sonal dishonor, that Jonah fled. Ah, flesh! When you are yielded to, into what follies will you not drive us, into what prostration of strength do you not hurl us? Pleasures and comforts, if sought as ends, are desperate drains upon the vigor of the spirit. When the body is indulged, then the soul lies cleaving to the dust. It is not possible for us to pamper the flesh without, at the same time, starving the soul. If we sacrifice unto our own lusts, we are quite certain to get the sacrifices by robbing God's altar. The body shall not have pleasure in sin unless the soul shall soon be in a state of misery and decay.

See also, in our text, one of the devices of Satan. He seeks to lull God's Prophets into slumber, for he knows that dumb dogs that are given to sleep will never do any very great injury to his cause. The wakeful watchman he always fears, for then he cannot take the city by surprise. But if he can cast God's watchman into slumber, then he is well content and thinks it almost as well to have a Christian asleep as to have him dead—he would certainly sooner see him in Hell—but next to that, he is most glad to see him rocked in the cradle of presumption, fast asleep. May we be delivered from Jonah's condition.

But since like Jonah, we are infested by sin, encumbered by the flesh, surrounded by the world, and tempted by the devil, we have good cause occasionally that the shipmaster should come round and shake us by the shoulders, or even roughly strike us with the rope, lest we should sleep as do others and so fall into spiritual decay.

I shall this morning act the shipmaster's part and, as captain of this vessel, I will cry both to *slumbering saints* and to *sleepy sinners*, "What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God."

I. First of all, we will deal with the SLEEPING SAINTS, those poor Jonahs who are God's true servants but are yet asleep. To break their bands of sleep asunder, let me remind them, first, that *the ship is in danger*. It was ill for Jonah to sleep when all hands were at the pumps. When every other man was doing his best to lighten the ship and save her, if possible, from the terrific tempest, it was a shame that he should be asleep. The peril of human life demanded of every generous spirit prompt and earnest action. Every groaning timber would upbraid the lazy, sleepy Prophet. Members of this Church, professed Christians, is it not a shame to be slumbering, to be dilatory, in your Master's service when the souls of men are in danger? It is marvelous to me how men can be so careless about the ruin of men's souls.

Let us hear the cry of, "Fire! fire!" in the streets, and our heart is all in trepidation lest some poor creature should be burned alive. But we read of Hell and of the wrath to come, and seldom do our hearts palpitate with any compassionate trembling and fear. If we are on board a vessel and the

shrill cry is heard, “A man overboard!” who has ever heard of a passenger wrapping his plaid around him and lying down upon a seat to contemplate the exertions of others? But in the Church, when we hear of thousands of sinners sinking in the floods of ruin, we behold professed Christians wrapping themselves up in their own security and calmly looking on upon the labors of others, wishing them no doubt, all success, but not even lifting a finger to do any part of the work themselves.

If we heard tomorrow in our streets the awful cry—more terrible than fire—the cry of, “Bread! Bread! Bread!” and saw starving women lifting up their perishing children, or hungry men imprecating curses upon those who should keep back their necessary food from them—would we not empty out our stores? Who among us would not spend our substance to let the poor ravenous creatures satisfy the pangs of hunger? And yet, here is the world perishing for lack of knowledge. Here we have them at our doors crying for the bread of Heaven—and how many there are that hoard their substance for avarice, give their time to vanity, devote their talents to self-aggrandizement—and center their thoughts only on the world or the flesh?

Oh, could you once see with your eyes a soul sinking into Hell, it were such a spectacle that you would work night and day, and count your life too short, and your hours too few for the plucking of brands from the burning. I suppose if we had once seen a drowning man, or a wretch borne over the rapids of Niagara, or if we had seen a person stabbed in the street, we should scarce ever forget it. Death’s doings are painted in very red colors upon the memory.

O that God would give some of you the sight of a lost soul! O that you could see it in its naked condition when it steps behind the curtain into the world unknown! O that you could behold its first horrors, when it discovers itself exposed to the anger of Almighty God! Would that you could see that soul when the awful Hell-sweat shall stand upon its brow as God proclaims—“Depart, you cursed one!”

O if only the vision of Hell were sometimes before our eyes—that some few of the sighs of a damned soul were ringing in our ears! Would God we had a vision of the judgment, the tremendous crowd, the flaming heavens, and the rocking earth, the open book, the eyes that flash with lightning and the voice that speaks with thunder! Would that we could see the crowds as they descend into the pit that has no bottom. For then, starting up like men that have long been given to a foolish slumber, we should gird up our loins, and using both our hands, we should seek to pluck men from the burning and deliver them from going down into the pit.

Men are dying! Men are perishing! Hell is filling! Satan is triumphing! Poor souls are howling in their agonies and you sleep? I, as the shipmas-

ter, shake you yet again. O that the Holy Spirit may quicken and arouse you! Perhaps He may do it through my voice, while again I entreat you. "What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God," that the multitudes perish not!

A second time I would arouse you, by reminding you that in the peaceful times in which we live, men are earnestly craving for our prayers—*men are longing for deliverance*. In Jonah's ship every man was a pleader—every person was praying. And though I cannot say this of the world that lies in the Wicked One, yet, to a very great extent, it is true that the masses are longing to hear the words of this life. There was never an age like this for hearing sermons. I marvel, every Sunday, as I see the crowd willing to stand outside waiting by the hour and then rustling in like a mountain torrent, even treading upon one another to hear the Word of God!

Is not this an encouragement to labor? See the theater on a Sunday—no actors could attract greater multitudes! How they throne the doors to listen to some simple-minded man, who is going to tell the story of the Cross! I have seen this thirst for the Word all over England. But this present week, I have seen in a village, thinly populated, some ten thousand people crowding the cliffs, drinking in every word from the preacher's lips—earnest to listen to the message of mercy. By God's Grace, we have not now to stir up the people to attend the means—for there is all around us a desire to hear. This is a hearing age. This is a time when men are *willing* to listen—when they are only too glad to hear the Word faithfully preached. I say not that it is so in every place but certainly it is in London. And a man with but very moderate gifts, if his tongue is but on fire, will soon command an audience.

If there is an empty place of worship in London, it is generally the preacher's fault. And, in nine cases out of ten, you will find that empty benches are evidences that the man does not preach the Gospel. For, if he preached the Gospel, the people would soon throng to listen to him. What? Shall we sleep NOW? What? Shall we be idle *now*? Ministers of Christ, shall we relax our efforts, or shall we be dull and cold about immortal souls when every omen urges us to zealous labor? My fellow workers—deacons and elders, honored Church officers—will you draw back in this day of hopefulness, and refrain to sow the seed, when the field is plowed and ready for the grain?

Church members—you young men that can speak in public—you women that can in your households talk of Christ—will any of you be dull and lethargic *now*? Now is the moment when we may carry the fortress by storm, and if armed and carrying bows we turn our backs in the moment of victory, when triumph trembles in the scales—how we should through-

out life regret our wicked folly and idleness! What do you mean, O sleeper, to sleep *now*? Arise, for it is a happy and auspicious hour—"Arise, and call upon your God."

Yet further, let us remember that as Jonah was the only man in the ship whose prayer could be of any avail, so *the children of God are the only men who can do any real spiritual service to the perishing world*. All the cries of the shipmaster and his crew were addressed to the gods of their various countries. And they had ears which could not hear and hands which could afford no aid. Jonah was the only man who worshipped the Lord that made the sea and the dry land. Hence, *his prayers*, alone could save the ship.

Now, the salvation of the world under God lies with the *Church*. Christ has finished the atonement. It is for the Church to finish the ingathering. Christ has paid the purchase-price and completed redemption by His blood. It is for the Church to seek the Holy Spirit and fully to redeem the world by power. Suppose, then, that you who fear God say, "This is no case of mine. I am not my brother's keeper"? Suppose that you waste opportunities and throw precious time to the dogs—then the world must go down to its awful doom. But, mark you, its blood shall be upon your garments. This generation, under God, must have salvation given to it through our ministry, through our Evangelists, through our Sunday schools, through our missionaries, through our preaching and teachings.

And if we do it not, the world will not stay from perishing while we are staying from laboring. Men will not live on until another generation worthier than we are shall have taken our places, but this generation must go down to the tomb, muttering curses between its lips against the faithless, wicked, unbelieving, inactive Church. And we must go down, too, to meet the doom of those who had no real faith in Christ, or else they would have had a love for the souls of men. To meet those who had not the spirit of Jesus, or else they would with wooing entreaties and with earnest efforts have brought men to the Cross of Christ.

Ah, Beloved! I know that we have some in the Church who are but a drag to it. There are some in all Churches who are of this kind, but let me solemnly remind you—we must address the Church as a body—let me again remind the Church that it is with *her* and with no one else that the world has to deal as to its conversion. We must never think of leaving Christ's work to societies. They have had their day and have supplied a great lack created by the loss of the Apostolic spirit. But it is now time that the aroused and revived Church should assume her true position and do her own work. Fifty years or more, missionary societies have been trying to convert the world, and albeit that many souls have been saved, and

therefore the effort has been far from useless, yet, compared with Apostolic success, they have been a miserable failure.

All these years we have spent ten times the money, with not a tenth of the success, of early Evangelistic effort. In my inmost soul I believe that the Lord is not with the most of our foreign missions. And why? Because God never called the missionary *societies* to the work. He never bade the missionary society become the spouse of Christ and bring forth sons unto Him. His offspring, His seed which shall reward Him for His soul's travail, must spring from His own well-beloved bride. Much as I value all good societies, I cannot hesitate to declare that the Church is the ordained agent, and that all beside is human, and derives authority only from man. Hence I say of a society for the conversion of the heathen—it is a man-constituted body and not of God.

The Lord will work, not by committees, but by His Churches. The Church must do her own work and when all our Churches are thoroughly aroused to this fact and every congregation shall send out its own men, pray for their own men, and support their own men, we shall see greater things than we have ever dreamed of and “the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.” But it lies with the Church. O you that are in the Church and sleep, what do you mean? Rise and call upon your God.

Further, and here I more especially address such members of this Church as may have been up to now careless about the good work. Remember, Sleeper, that *you are in the ship yourself*, that you enjoy its privileges, and therefore you ought to take your quota of the work. It is said of Lepidus, a Roman officer, that one day, when all the soldiers were at drill he laid down out of the sunshine and said he wished it were all the duty of a soldier to lay under a tree forever. We have some such soldiers. The breed is not extinct. The enlisting officer, however exact he may be, cannot help it—there will lie some such introduced into all our little armies—who like to lie in the shade and take matters easy and wish this were all that ever a Christian soldier had to do.

Oh, rise, Man! For if the battle is to be won, it must not be fought by soldiers lying in the shade, but by men who can bear the heat of the sun, wear their heavy armor without weariness, and rush to battle against the foe for God and for the Truth—fearless and dauntless—in the face of leaguered hosts. There is an old story told of Philip, last king of Macedon. Before the last disastrous battle by which his monarchy was destroyed, it is said that he stood up to speak to his soldiers upon a sepulcher. It was interpreted by the soothsayers to be a sign of sure defeat, because he stood upon a *tomb* to speak.

And I, your minister, if it should ever be my unhappy lot to stand upon a dead Church to preach the Word, cannot expect anything but the most disastrous defeat. Let but the minister of God be supported by a living Church, let him be borne up in the arms of a loving and a praying people—and who can stand against his word? Nothing but victory must follow. But let us have dead, careless deacons and elders, let us have idle Church members and the omens are against us, and the result of our battle must be a terrible calamity. There is more mischief done by the presence of one unconverted person in a Church than we think.

We are told by anatomists, that there is no part of the body which is dead. Even the bones are alive. Life abhors alliance with death. And if a dead substance once gets into the body, all the enfolds of nature are directed to the one point where the foreign body is found, to drive it out. And often ulcers and running sores and such like things, are but the effects of nature seeking to expel the dead substance from the body. Now, there is nothing in Christ's real Church that is dead. And if ever dead substances get into the Church, they will not lie there still and quiet, but the Church shall be aware of it in her every nerve and pore—and she shall soon begin to exert her strength and vitality to expel the foreign substance from her living body. Would that this energy could be spared for other works, for the saving of souls for Jesus!

Now, I address some pretended Christians here who are not alive to God. Let me beg of them to relinquish their profession, or if not, to make it real. Either be what you profess to be, or drop your profession. Lie not unto God, for in so doing you injure the Church of which you are a part and, which since you are a part of it, it is your duty to serve. I should not expect, if I were a member of a commercial firm, to take half the profits and to do nothing. It is evil to the very last degree to share the benefits without uniting in the toil. And yet some professors are guilty of this miserable conduct. As it was in the days of Job, so it is even until now—"the oxen were plowing and the asses were feeding beside them." There is always a large proportion of the latter class in the Churches—too glad to feed but quite unwilling to work. To every Jonah, then, I say, "either arise and pray with us or get out of the ship, for sooner or later we shall be compelled to throw you out if you do not."

Furthermore, and here let me conclude this point, *the honor of our God is mightily concerned in every Jonah being aroused*. How could Jehovah be glorified, if the only worshipper of Jehovah in the vessel should sleep? If *he* did not cry to God, how could the mariners know whether Jehovah did hear prayer or not? Now, mark you, the honor of Christ—of His doctrines, of His blood, of His Person, the dignity of everything that we hold sacred—rests, in the eyes of the sons of men, in the keeping of the Church. When

a Church grows proud, worldly and idle, what does the world say? “That’s your religion!” says the world. And then, “Aha! Aha! Aha!” it says, “what a lie religion is!” But let the world see a really earnest Church, it grows very angry, it finds all the fault it can. But down deep in its heart, it reverences those it hates and it secretly confesses, “There is a power here.”

They gaze and admire, even though they hate the might with which God surrounds such a Church as this. The Christian religion was at one time looked up to by the heathens with awe and reverence, for they saw its martyrs dying without a tear. They saw in astonishment its poor content in their poverty, without murmuring—its great men humble, not giving way either to lust or covetousness. They saw the purity and chastity of Christian matrons. They beheld the diligent industry of Christian bishops. They saw as though they beheld the face of an angel, when they looked upon Christ’s fair Church on earth.

But she became degenerate—she committed fornication by being allied with the State. She lost her dignity and turned aside from her high position as queen of the Lord, and a spiritual body quickened by a Spirit from above. What, then, did the world do? It mocked and jeered. And while it paid an outward homage to a bejeweled Church glittering with gold and silver, yet in its soul it loathed and despised her. Men no longer needed to dread the omnipotence of Christian zeal. An excellent historian thus speaks of Believers in the martyr age—hear it and judge whether men have such reasons to fear us now.

He describes the common opinion of the Roman pagans concerning the followers of Jesus—“They were intensely propagandist. While ever unseen they were at work. Every member was a missionary of the sect, and lived mainly to propagate a doctrine for which they were ever ready to die. Thus the infection spread by a thousand unsuspected channels. Like a contagion propagated in the air, it could penetrate, as it seemed, anywhere, everywhere. The meek and gentle slave that tends your children, or attends you at table, may be a Christian. The favorite daughter of your house, who has endeared herself to you by a tenderness and grace peculiarly her own, and which seems to you as strange as it is captivating, turns out to be a Christian.

“The captain of the guards, the legislator in the senate-house, may be a Christian! In these circumstances who or what is safe? What power can defend the laws and majesty of Rome and the peace of domestic life, against an enemy like this? Then it was often as hateful for its absence as for its presence. With sullen moroseness this strange people studiously absented themselves from all places and scenes of public entertainment and festivity. Games, shows, gladiatorial contests, public fetes of every kind, military or civil, they eschewed as they would have done the plague.

Such scenes, indeed, were so mixed up with idolatry and so steeped in licentiousness and sin, that though consecrated by the presence and express sanction of their country's gods, they were not good enough for them!"

O my Brethren, how I wish that *we* could be thus happily reviled. If we cannot reach so high, at least let us keep our garments spotless. Would you make this Church, my fellow members, to become a stink in the nostrils of the wicked? We have, Brethren, a power among men. When they have followed us with their hoots and their jeers, we have borne patiently and have been too glad to bear every slander if we might arouse lazy generation from their lethargy. We have seen success follow our efforts. We have beheld the opening of places for the preaching of the Gospel which had been closed for centuries. We have seen the theater devoted to God on the Sunday—and *now, now*, shall we stay our course? God forbid! For, if we do, what shall the enemy say but, "Lo! God has forsaken them, the Gospel can but create a *temporary* excitement, truth is evanescent in its influence." Instead thereof, let us hold hard to God and to His Word, for the glory of the Truth and for the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, I hear some self-satisfied people say, "*We* do not want this sermon this morning. We are not asleep. The members of this Church are not a slothful people." Well, dear Friends, I cheerfully admit that, as a body, we are not given to slumber. But I am not so sure that this is true of you all. At any rate, those who are awake will find it a good thing to have a jog, lest they should fall like Eutychus into a sleep. But I am sure that some of you *are* asleep, and I shall not hesitate to treat you as such. But you will reply to me, "Why, Sir, we *talk* about religion." Many people talk in their sleep. I have heard of a man who preached an excellent sermon when he was asleep. "Well but is not our *walk* consistent?" Yes, but when I was a small boy, I used to walk in my sleep. And then I could venture in my sleep where I should not have wandered when I was awake and I should not wonder but this may be your case.

"Yes, but do we not feel religious influences? Do we not *weep* under a sermon?" Yes, and I have heard people cry in their sleep. Such things are quite possible. "But do we not *rejoice* very much when we hear the Gospel?" Yes, and some folks will laugh in their sleep. John Bunyan tells of Mercy, who did laugh because of the beauty of her dream. And your dreams may be so pleasant that they make you laugh. "Ah, well," says one, "but I do not see that we are so very sound asleep, for we *think* a great deal about religion." Yes, and people think when they are asleep. For what are their dreams but unconnected thoughts? And so you may have some straying thoughts of God and of right, and yet after all you may be fast asleep.

“Then, what do you mean by a man’s being really awake?” I mean two or three things. I mean, first, his having a thorough consciousness of the reality of spiritual things. When I speak of a wakeful man, I mean one who does not take the soul to be a fancy, nor Heaven to be a fiction, nor Hell to be a tale, but who acts among the sons of men as though these were the only substances and all other things the shadows. I want men of stern resolution, for no Christian is awake unless he steadfastly determines to serve his God, come fair, come foul. I would have you, young Christians, dedicated to God’s service. Just as Hamilcar led his two children to the altar and made them swear by the gods that they would never cease their enmity to Rome while they lived, I want you to feel that the vows of God are upon you, so that you cannot cease from attacking sin and winning souls as long as you live.

And I do not think you are awake, moreover, unless you are moved by a passionate earnestness to win souls for Christ. A man who labors and sees no success attending his efforts, may be awake if he mourns and groans, and sighs before God. But an idle preacher, a preacher without converts—a Sunday school teacher in whose class there is no conversion—a man who never saw a sinner brought to Christ by his means, and yet is happy and content—such a man is asleep. Let him take heed that he sleep not the sleep of death.

I had sooner the Lord would send claps of thunder to this Church, in the form of heavy trials and troubles—the removal of your pastor, the taking away of our best men, the riot of mobs, or the slander of the press—than that we should continue to multiply and increase and should make this place a huge dormitory wherein we snored out God’s praises in our sleep, instead of an armory where we sharpen our swords on the Sunday to go out the whole week long, contending for God and for the good of men. Never may these benches be beds, nor these seats, couches for sluggards to recline upon. “What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God.”

I have now said enough, I hope, to the slumbering Christians, only that there are some who are asleep who will not hear what I say. I do not mean that there are any in the congregation asleep with their eyes shut. But if they are asleep with their hearts, it is probable that what I say may do good to those who are awake. But those who are asleep and given to slumber, will say, “A little more rest and a little more folding of arms. We are saved ourselves, let us sleep on.” May the Lord grant you a better mind, and constrain you to act as holy gratitude and love demand of you.

II. Very solemnly and earnestly would I now address myself to SLUMBERING SINNERS. What crowds are there, this morning, of these careless ones, who are at ease on the brink of ruin. Unconverted and yet uncon-

cerned—exposed to the wrath of God but fearless—as though all were peace, They are on the edge of perdition but merry as a marriage bell—condemned already—but mirthful as revelers at a feast.

Let me attempt to disturb your quiet, by remarking, *first*, that *your sleep is utterly incomprehensible to those who are awake*. Convicted souls, who feel the danger of their own state, cannot understand how you can be so careless. We were once as foolish as you are, but when we first began to perceive things in their true light, it was the wonder of wonders to us how we could have been so much at ease in so perilous a position. The man who sports upon the gallows, or laughs when consuming in the fire, or jests with his head upon the block, is not more a marvel than you.

You are a *sinner*—a sinner! You can hear that title applied to you without any sort of fear, whereas a sinner is a thing abhorred of God. The God that made you loathes you. The sinner is one whom God *must* smite. He bears with you long but He *must* smite you soon. The sword may sleep in its scabbard but it *must* leap forth to smite you even to the death. A *sinner*! Why, you are one whose life is a continued miracle, for the heavens would fall upon you, if long-suffering did not restrain them. The very stones of the field would smite you, if God did not bind them over to keep the peace. And the beasts of the field are in league against you, and would devour you, if He did not hold them in from you.

Why, you are one that has no friends anywhere. You are a blot upon nature. You are a dishonor to creation. You are loathsome in yourself. You are contagious to others. You are grievous to the best of men. You are harmful even to the bad. You are a weed ripening for the burning, a pool of foul waters breeding a foul gas, a monster to be hunted out of the universe of God. You are a felon, a criminal, a traitor, a *sinner*, which is all these things in one and yet, under such an accusation, you are at ease!

Man, remember again, you are *a mortal*. Time eats away your life and hurries you to your grave. The sun does not stand still for you—speeding on his everlasting course, day after day—he bears you to the tomb. Every tick of yonder clock sounds as the footfall of approaching Death. The rider upon the pale horse is pursuing you, his charger is foaming with speed. Perhaps you may never see another day. The light of 1863 may never shine into your eyes. Or, if you should not yet expire, how short is the longest life! How certain is your death! A mortal man and yet you sleep!

Think, Man, of that upper chamber where you shall play the leading part, pale and languid, stretched out upon the bed. The curtains shall be drawn about you and every voice shall be hushed in sad anxiety. Weeping relatives shall gaze upon your brow, clammy with the death-sweat, and life shall be a thing of seconds with you. Heavily heave the lungs, languidly beats the pulse. The awful moment is at hand. It is yourself, you

strong man, grappling with a stronger than you are. Those are your *eyes* which shall be glazed in the darkness of death, and those are *your* limbs which shall be gathered up in the last mortal agony.

And do you, knowing, feeling that you must die, and having the sentence of death in your members already—do you still sleep? Alas, alas! How dire the stupor which death cannot startle. But, Man, remember you are *an immortal* and this makes it the more grievous that you should sleep. You shall not die when you die—you shall live again forever! Forever! Forever! Oh, eternity! Eternity! A deep without a bottom and without a shore! My Hearer, you must sail over it forever and forever never reaching a port—and that eternity will be to you, if unsaved, a sea of fire, lashed to eternal storm.

Eternity, eternity—mountain without a summit! Up its sides you must climb, O Sinner, and find it an ever-burning volcano. On, on, on, must you ascend, for summit there is none—forever! Forever! Forever! Forever! And yet do you sleep on, Sinner? What madness do I see in you? It is madness without method, insanity exaggerated, to despise the warnings of eternity. Remember, Man, as you are immortal, there is a *Heaven*, and dying, as you are living, you will lose it. For you no harps of angels, no songs of saints, no melodies of joy. For you no face of Christ to be seen with rapture, no embraces of the ever-loving Husband. For you no sunshine of the Father's face, no bliss ineffable, no rivers of pleasure at His right hand.

You are losing all these! Eternal and exceeding weights of glory you are spurning and yet you sleep! O Sleeper, what do you mean? If this bestirs you not, I would have you remember, Man, as surely as you lose Heaven, so certainly you are gaining *Hell*. For you the flames that never can be quenched, the thirst without a drop of water. For you an angry God, a fiery Law, a flaming Tophet. For you the company of blaspheming fiends and despairing spirits. For you unutterable agony, “where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.”

“What do you mean, O sleeper,” when this must be your doom if you sleep on? Were it not that we know that man is dead in trespasses and sins, this sleeping would be utterly incomprehensible to those who have once been awakened. I marvel that I can preach about these awful themes without an agony of earnestness. These are no trifles, no themes for an orator's idle hour, or a hearer's curious ear. These matters may well make both the ears of him that hears to tingle. O that they might make your hearts tremble before the Lord, that with contrition you might seek His face!

Further would I press this matter home. I am sure that *you* frivolous, thoughtless men and women, *can give no justifiable cause for careless-*

ness. Sinner, why do you sleep? Perhaps you tell me you do not believe there is any danger. I reply to you, you *do* believe it, you know you do. I reason not with you if you pretend to be infidels. There is that in you which makes you know that there is a God and that He must punish sin. You may boast that you have no fears of the hereafter but when you are alone, or sick, or in your sober senses, you tremble at the judgment to come.

You *know* it, Man, and at the bayonet point, I charge home upon you. O that I could carry your heart as readily as your conscience. You know that these things are not fictions nor falsehoods. If you should have some honest doubts, you have but to open your eyes to see, and use your common sense to be convinced. Do but listen to the utterances of your fellow sinners, as they have passed from time into eternity and have felt the foretaste of eternal wrath, and surely you must confess that there is a God that visits transgression and sin upon the ungodly. But, you will tell me, perhaps, there is time enough and therefore you may sleep. But there is no time, Man, there is no time to spare! If I were in a fever I would not say, "There is time enough to be healed," but I would say, "Let me be delivered from this consuming heat."

If I stood just now upon the edge of a burning mountain and felt the lava giving way beneath my feet, I would not say "There is time enough yet," but I would long *now* to make my escape. Sinner, you stand today over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten. You are swinging over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope and the strands of that rope are snapping now. *Now! Now!* You are in danger! You may die this morning. Many places of worship have been made places of death. God save you, that this may not happen to you, but still, this is your time of danger and there is no time to spare.

Do you say, "Well, we may as well sleep, for *there's no hope for us?*" No! Sinner, no! Blessed be God, you cannot say that! You that sit under my ministry constantly know I never taught you that! I never said of anyone of you that you could not be saved. I have not preached to you an impossible Gospel. I have not shut the gates of mercy on mankind in proclaiming Christ. Have I not rather told you that, "He is willing to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him?" I have set the door open before you and I have entreated you to come in—no, I have labored to *compel* you to come in that His house may be filled.

And now, again, I utter the same message, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." Trust in Jesus! Trust in Jesus and you shall be saved. Your despair is wicked, for it gives God the lie! Your despondency is sinful, for it doubts the Truth of Him who cannot be false to Himself or to you! Sinner, trust Him and you shall be saved this morn-

ing. God help you to throw yourself flat today upon the covenanted promises of God in Christ, and trusting His precious blood, He will save you now and save you forever. O why, why do you sleep? If you can cite no good cause, if you can offer no convincing reason, what do you mean then, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God!

But Soul, Soul, we remind you yet again, as we cannot understand your sleep, and you can not justify it—we would solemnly beg you to consider that *your sleep will soon end in ruin*. Ah, there are some of you whose hearts I shall never reach. Let me live as long as I may, I shall never see you saved. There are some of you—I have often made you weep, but the Lord has not made you hate your sins. Some of you love drunkenness and though you leave it for a little season, yet all the entreaties of the minister, and all the pleadings of your conscience, cannot keep you from returning like a dog to your vomit and like a sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Oh, my Hearers, there are some of you—I have not quite despaired of you—but I tell you solemnly it has almost come to that. O that you would know, even now in this your day, the things which make for your peace. Oh, how I fear and think I have just cause to fear, that there are some of you who will sit in this Tabernacle till you die and you will go from this place to Hell with my voice of entreaty ringing in your ears. I have prayed for you and you are not saved. I have leveled sermons at you and you have not been moved. I have preached plainly to your face against your iniquity, and laid your sin before your eyes and you have not repented. I have held up my Master's bleeding body and you have not been wooed to love.

You have been convicted for a season, and you have hushed the voice of conscience. You have vowed and you have broken your vows. You have turned again to your folly and you are still what you were—senseless, stolid, hardened—dead in sin. I shall not forever hammer at this granite. Not always shall the horses run upon the rock, nor shall we plow there with oxen, for God shall lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet and *where are you then?* Oh, if we knew by express revelations, concerning any man here present that he would be one day in Hell, if looking into his eyes we could read there, "That man will dwell forever in torments," should we not weep over him?

Yet I fear there are such here. I fear—may God remove the fear by His Grace—I fear there are such. "Lord, is it I?" Let each one say—"Lord, is it I?" Well, Sinner, you shall go sleeping on. You will go home to your house today and forget all that I have said. You will come again tonight but the result will be the same. Like the door on its hinges you will turn in and out without a change all your days. See Man, you will listen to my voice, it will be to you as a pleasing song but nothing more. You will be all your life

as the deaf adder which cannot be charmed. You will now and then murmur in your sleep, "The preacher is too earnest and makes too much noise about these melancholy matters," or "he is too prone to dwell on these hard threats." You will return to a deeper sleep and so continue year by year. How do you approve of the prospect? But stay, let me finish the story. One day there will run a rumor among us, "So-and-So who sat in that pew is dead."

"Did he die in the Lord?" will be our solemn question. And the answer will be, "We fear not. He showed no signs of repentance or of faith in Christ." Ah, then, what must our conclusion be? Well Sinner, well, do me this one favor. If you will be damned, let me be clear of your blood. Do me but this one service—if you will perish, let it not be laid to the door of my unfaithfulness. If there is anyone here present, stranger or regular attendant, who will choose his own perdition, I charge you, pay some regard to my earnest protest, for I enter it now before the Lord. Be damned if you will, but do let me first of all stand before you and tell you what damnation means and tell you that there is a way of salvation.

Let me stretch out these hands again and plead with you that you would come to Christ, that you might live. "What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise, call upon your God," for it may soon be too late for you to arise. Soon none will be able to warn you. Soon none will weep for you. Soon none will entreat you. When once the iron gates are shut and the brazen bolts are drawn, all the friendship of earth or the fury of Hell cannot unlock them. The awful gratings of those bolts that shut in souls forever in fell despair, shall be ever in your ears, covering you with hopeless dismay. Now I pray you while yet there is hope. "Awake! Arise, or be forever fallen!"

Lastly, I think I may call upon those present here who know what it is to be fully awakened, to do their best to awaken others. We read in ancient history of the Sybarites, who were a people so given to slumber that they killed their dogs lest their barking should arouse them. They would have no crowing of the cock to awake them at morn. There are some sinners who would desire to banish every warning friend and faithful minister far away from them. But I pray you, even though it should be unpleasant, do your best to keep your friends from ruin. We know that when persons are likely to perish through opiates and they are falling to sleep, the physician does not hesitate to thrust pins into the flesh, or walk them up and down even though they cry and long to go to sleep.

So with you, be not too careful about wounding the feelings or shocking the nerves if you may but win the soul. Better that you should get into discredit for being impertinent with your friends than let their souls perish through your politeness. Be you not like Agag, who comes delicately,

with “surely the bitterness of death is past.” Like the old Puritans, who availed themselves of every opportunity to rebuke sin and uphold righteousness, so be you instant in season and out of season. If you should save a soul through being too zealous, neither your Master nor the saved one will blame you for it and at least in Heaven it will never be a source of regret to you that you were too active and too diligent.

You may have an opportunity today. Who can tell whether God may not bless you in it, if you use it? But I pray you, use it, whether He blesses you or not, lest the neglect of that opportunity should leave blood upon your garments. By Him that bought you with His blood, live to His service—by Him that called you unto a holy calling, give yourselves wholly to the winning of souls—by Him who from the beginning has chosen you unto salvation, live as the elect of God, having hearts of compassion.

By your life, for which you are responsible—by your death, which may be so near—by Jesus, whose face you hope to see—by Hell, into which lost souls are sinking—by Heaven, to which the penitent shall rise, which is your hope and your joy—proclaim the Word of God everywhere to men. Tell it, tell it till the skies shall echo it. “*He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.*” “Cast your bread upon the waters”—labor, toil, seek, strive, agonize—and God give you His own blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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LABOR IN VAIN

NO. 567

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 1, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Jonah said unto them, Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land. But they could not: for the sea worked and was tempestuous against them.”
Jonah 1:12, 13.***

THESE mariners manifested most commendable humanity. They were not willing, even though it were to preserve their own lives, to cast overboard an innocent man. Therefore they first used their best endeavors. And when these failed they made a solemn appeal to God, entreating Him not to lay upon them innocent blood—and then, since necessity has no law, Jonah, as a last resource was given up to the boisterous element, but not till every effort had been made to save him. We should be very careful of human life, doing nothing which even indirectly may destroy or injure it.

And if we should be jealous over life, how much more anxious should we be concerning men's souls! And how watchful lest we should do anything by which the least of the human family may have his eternal interests endangered by our example or teaching! God give us Divine Grace, like these mariners, to row hard that if possible we may bring the ship to land laboring that none around us may be left to perish.

I shall not, however, dwell upon that aspect of the text. Our Savior selected Jonah as one of His peculiar types—“There shall no sign be given,” said He, “to the men of this generation but the sign of the Prophet Jonah.” We believe, therefore, that we are not erring if we translate the details of the history of Jonah into spiritual illustrations of man's experience and action with regard to Christ and His Gospel.

We have before us a picture of what most men do before they will resort to God's remedy. That remedy is here most fairly imaged in the deliverance of the whole ship's company by the sacrifice of one on their behalf.

I. Our first observation is that SINNERS, WHEN THEY ARE TOSSED UPON THE SEA OF CONVICTION, MAKE DESPERATE EFFORTS TO SAVE THEMSELVES. The men rowed hard to bring the ship to land. The Hebrew is they “dug” hard, sending the oars deep into the water with much exertion and small success. The tempest so tossed the sea about that they could not row in a good and orderly manner. But they desperately tugged at the oars, which the towering waves rendered useless by too deep a digging.

Straining every sinew they labored by violence to get the ship in safety to the haven. Brethren, no word in any language can express the violence of earnest action with which awakened sinners strive and struggle to ob-

tain eternal life. Truly, if the kingdom of God were in the power of him that wills and him that runs, they would possess it at once! Since they struggle, however, in an unlawful manner, the crown of victory will never be awarded them. They may kindle the fire and rejoice in the sparks, but thus says the Lord, "This shall you have of My hand: you shall lie down in sorrow."

Let us notice some forms of the fleshy energy of men straining after self-salvation. The most usual is moral reformation. We have seen the drunkard, when conscience has been awakened, renounce his cups altogether. He has gone further than temperance and has espoused total abstinence. And proceeding further still, it often happens that in the excess of zeal, he vomits forth furious words against all who go not the same length of abstinence as himself.

Yonder man was given up to blasphemy, but now an ill word never comes from his tongue—and he is therefore content with himself because he no longer curses God. Another has followed an ill trade, or has been in the habit of neglecting Sunday worship. Conscience has mercifully led him to give up his ill connections and attend a place of worship. Is not this well? It is, indeed, well. But it is not enough! It is marvelous how far men will push their reforms. And yet how little solid peace such purging can secure. For what is the sinner after his reformation but the blackamoor washed clean, a blackamoor still?

I would have the Ethiopian clean by all manner of means. But I would not let him fancy that the soap and the niter will make him white. I would have the leopard tamed and caged, but this will not remove his spots. Moral reforms are excellent in themselves, but they are dangerous if we rest in them. Let even a corpse be washed, but let no man dream that the most careful washing will restore it to life. "You must be born again" rings out the death knell of all salvation by human effort. Unless reforms are founded in regeneration, they are baseless things which fail in the end for want of foundation. They are deceptive things, affording a transient hope, which soon, alas, must melt away.

Ah, my Hearer, you may go on improving and reforming, but all your present and future amendments can never wipe out the old score of sin. There stands the black catalog of your sins, engraved as in eternal brass! The gloomy record remains unaltered and unalterable by any deeds of yours. Something more potent than your tears and change of life must take away the sins of your departed years. Beware, then, of thinking that you are getting the ship to land—no matter how hard you row with these oars of human resolution.

Others add to their reformation a superstitious regard to the outwards of religion. According to the sect with which they unite, they become excessively religious. They reverence every nail of the Church door and every panel of the pulpit. There is not a brick in the aisle which is not sacred to them, nor even tile on the roof! Every rubric, every "Amen," every vestment and candlestick has to them a world of sanctity about it. They are not content with the ordinary days of worship, but the Church bell rings every morning. And well it may, for if men are to earn salvation in God's House, they had need be there all day and all night, too!

Even in a Protestant Church, men row very hard with multitudinous observances and superstitious performances, but when you get into the Romish Church, the labor in vain comes to a climax! There are vows of poverty, celibacy, silence, passive obedience and a thousand other tortures! If the Moloch whom they worship is not satisfied he ought to be. We heard but the other day of a gentleman giving up all his goodly heritage, selling his broad acres and pouring all the purchase money into the coffers of the monks and priests in order that at last by rowing hard in this way he might get the ship to land.

It is remarked of the Hindus that they give vastly more to their idols than we bestow upon the cause of God and I suppose it is true—but then they also are rowing hard to get the ship to land. All they do is for themselves. Self is always a mighty power in the world. Do but teach men that they can gain their own salvation by their own doings and mortifications and offerings and I would expect to see the treasury filled! I would expect to hear the whip constantly going upon the shoulders. But I should despair of seeing anything like holiness surviving in the land. Superstition is hard rowing but the ship will not come to the land by it. Men invent ceremony after ceremony. There is this pomp and that show—this gaudy ornament and that procession. But the whole matter ends in outward display, no secret soul-blessing results flow from there. Priests and their votaries may go on piling up human inventions ad infinitum, but they will forever fail to ease the conscience, or give rest to a disturbed soul. Man's awful necessities crave something more than the husks of superstition!

You will find another form of the same thing among ourselves. Many persons row hard to get the ship to land by a notional belief in orthodox doctrine. This superstition is harder to deal with, but quite as dangerous as the belief in good works. It is quite as legal an idea for me to think to be accepted by believing good doctrine as to expect to be pardoned for doing good works. Yet we have scores of people who, if they can get hold of the Calvinistic creed at the right end—if they become masters of it and know how to argue against Arminianism—if they become not only sound Calvinists but a little sounder still, having not only the sixteen ounces to the pound but two or three ounces over and above, so as to make them ultra-Calvinistic—why then they fancy that all must be well!

“I never can hear a preacher,” this man will say, “who is not sound. I can tell at once when there is a grain of free will in the sermon.” This is all very well, but he who boasts thus may be no better than the devil! No, he may not be so good, for the devil believes and trembles—but these men believe and are too much hardened in their own conceit to *think* of trembling. Away with the idea that believing sound doctrine and chaining ourselves to a cast-iron creed is vital godliness and eternal life! Orthodox sinners will find that Hell is hot and that their knowledge of predestination will not yield a cooling drop to their parched tongues.

Condemning other people—cutting off the saints of God right and left—is but poor virtue and to have these blessed doctrines in the *head* while neglecting them in the *heart* is anything but a gracious sign. If you can “a hair divide between the west and north-west side,” do not therefore fancy that your fine gifts and profound orthodoxy will ensure you an

entrance into the kingdom of Heaven. Ah, you may row with those oars, but you will not get the ship to land—you must be saved by Sovereign Grace through the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart—or you will not be saved at all. As it is not by doing that we are saved, neither is it by subscribing to creeds. There is something more than this needed before the ship can reach the port.

Perhaps, in this congregation, we have other subtle methods of endeavoring to do the same thing. The pastor has noticed that many are resting upon their own incessant prayers. Ah, my poor Hearer, you know your need of *something*, you can hardly tell what. You have heard the subject of salvation explained to you a hundred times and now when it comes to the pinch you do not understand it after all. I thank God that you have learned how to pray—that your sighs and cries and groans come up before Him. But I sorrow because you trust in your prayers and rest in them. Remember that you will no more be saved for the sake of your prayers than for the sake of your good works.

If your knees become hard as the knees of St. James are said to have been—hard like the camel's through long kneeling—and if with the Psalmist you could say, 'My throat is dried, my eyes fail,' yet all this, if you look to it and do not look to Christ, will never avail you. I knew what it was for months to cry out to God and to find the heavens above me as brass, because I had not understood clearly the soul-quickenings words, "Believe and live," but dreamed that by *praying* I could get myself into a suitable state to receive mercy, or perhaps move the heart of God towards me!

Whereas that heart needed no moving towards me, it was full of love from before the foundation of the world. Pray, my dear Brethren. Let me never discourage you in that. But do let me beg you not to sit still, or recline upon your prayers, for if you get no further than your prayers, you will never get to Heaven. There is more wanted than crying to God! More wanted than earnest desires, however passionately they may be breathed. There must be *faith in Jesus* or else you will row hard with your prayers, and you will never bring the ship to land.

Then there are others who are toiling by—I scarcely know how to describe it—a sort of mental torture. Oh, the many who say, "If I could *feel* as I ought to feel. O, Sir, my heart is as hard as a nether millstone. And yet I do not *feel* that it is hard—I wish I did. I would give my eyes if I could repent. I would give my right arm if I could but weep for sin! I would be satisfied to be a beggar, or to lie rotting in a dungeon if I could but *feel* that I was fit to come to the Savior! But, alas, I feel nothing! If I did but *feel* my unfitness—did but know my own unworthiness—I should have hope. But I am made of such Hell-hardened steel that neither terrors or mercies can move me. O, that I could repent! O, that this rock could give forth streams like that Rock which Moses smote in the wilderness of old! O, that I could but bring my heart to melt into something like desires after God and Christ! Oh, I am everything but what I should be!"

Now, my dear Hearer, you will row very hard in this way before you will ever come to land, for self-righteousness lies at the bottom of all this. You want to save your heart from hardness and *then* come to Jesus, which is much as to say you wish to *save yourself* and then come to Him

to put the finishing stroke upon you. You have a secret attachment to your own goodness or you would not be so eager to compass a fitness—you should at once do as you are bid and rest alone on Jesus. Your business is not with self, but with Jesus! With Jesus, just as you are. However hard your heart may be—however destitute of feeling you may have become—this, though it should be subject for lamentation, should never keep you from resting in Him who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.

I tell you, your trying to get your heart into a right state, your trying to repent, your trying to be humble is all labor in vain. It is all going the wrong way to work. Your business is with Christ! He can soften, cleanse and sanctify, but you can do none of these, try as you will. Come as you are to my Lord Jesus, hard-hearted and all, and the sea shall soon be calm for you. While you row with your own oars, the sea will only work and be the more tempestuous.

Various are the shapes which this carnal energy assumes. I have met with many who are in this kind of case. They are constantly starting objections to their own salvation and trying to answer them. They have comfort for a moment and they say, “Yes, this is very sweet, but”—and then they will spend a week or two in trying to split up that but. When they are rid of this but, a mercy will come to them from another quarter and they are sure to meet it with, “Ah, blessed be God for that, but.” They are always pulling away at these buts.

These big waves come sweeping up to the side of their vessel and they try to dig their oars into them. Friend, if you are never saved until you, an unpardoned sinner, have answered all objections, you will *never* be saved because there are a thousand objections to the salvation of any man which can only be met by one argument and that is *the blood of Jesus*. If you will go here and there seeking answers to the devil’s suggestions of unbelief you may travel the whole world and end your fruitless task in despair.

But if you will come to Jesus, if you will see Him like another Jonah thrown out of the ship for your sake. If you will but see Him lost that you may be saved, then a peace which passes all understanding shall keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus.

II. We will now take the second point. Like these mariners, THE FLESHY EFFORTS OF AWAKENED SINNERS MUST INEVITABLY FAIL. The text says, “The men rowed hard to bring it to the land. But they could not.” With all man’s rowing after mercy and salvation, he can never find it by his own efforts. For this good reason, first of all, that it is contrary to God’s Law for a sinner to get comfort by anything he can do for and by himself. Here is the law—“By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.”

That rule, then, fixed and fast as the laws of Nature, shuts out forever all hope of the attainment of joy and peace by anything that we can do, or be, or feel—for all these the Law already claims of us. How mad then will it be on our part if we run counter to a Divine Law! Success is impossible in so perverse a course. I do well, therefore, if I discourage all the efforts of awakened consciences to find peace anywhere except in the

work of Christ. Let a man labor ever so earnestly, yet if he goes against the laws of Nature, you know his labor is lost.

Here is an oven to be warmed for hungry persons need bread. See the workers yonder, how they toil, bringing snow with all their might to heat the oven. "Well," you say, "do not discourage them. Do not discourage their earnest activity. It is a pity when you see people really determined to do anything, to discourage their efforts." Ah, it is a pity, indeed, except when these efforts are foolish. If I see them bringing snow to heat an oven I know they will never do it, work as hard as they may.

And when sinners bring their own works to yield them spiritual comfort, I know that they are spending their labor for that which profits not and I must and will discourage them! Some years ago certain persons engaged in a speculation to sink a coal mine in a part of England where coal was never found. Prospectuses were issued. Directors obtained. And shareholders duped! And the workmen began to sink their shaft. Now it was absolutely certain—any geologist could have told them so—that they would not find coal, let them dig to doomsday.

Suppose you and I had gone there and seen them digging and had laughed at them, or told them it was all of no avail? Wiseacres might have replied, "You ought not to discourage coal mining, you ought not to discourage men who are working so very hard." I would say, "I would not discourage coal mining in any place where there is coal to be had. But for these poor souls to throw away their sweat and their money for that which is not coal—I *will* discourage them in that insane enterprise and think I do them good service."

When we see men struggling after eternal life through their own efforts, we know eternal life is not to be had there. We are glad that they are awakened to anything like effort, for anything is better than spiritual sloth—but we are grieved to see them laboring in the very fire, toiling where success can never crown their endeavors. There is no salvation by the works of the Law—why then look for it there? If you dash your head against the law of Nature, the law of Nature will not change for you. And if you labor in opposition to the irreversible Law of God, you will pay the penalty of it in your utter failure.

The ancients fabled that it was one of the tortures of Hell to which the daughters of Danaus were condemned, that they should fill a tub without a bottom with buckets full of holes. Behold the picture of the self-righteous man's undertaking! He may labor, he may toil, but he is filling a bottomless tub with leaky buckets. And work as he may, though he drop down dead in the attempt, success is impossible. O that he knew it to be so and would trust in the Lord Jesus! Besides this, the man cannot succeed in obtaining salvation by his own efforts because in what he is doing he is insulting God! He is casting dirt in the face of Christ! He is denying the whole testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Ah, my Hearer, if you could save yourself, why was it necessary that Christ should die for you? If your prayers could avail, why did He sweat great drops of blood? Why, Man, if there were any merit in your mortification, or your reformation, what need that the Prince of Life and Glory should veil Himself in ignominy and suffer a death of shame? You do, in fact, say by your fleshly attempts, I want no Savior, I can save myself!

You do, in fact, scoff at the great Atonement which God has made in the Person of Christ!

This insult will ruin your soul, except you turn from it. Repent of it, I pray you. Humble yourself and receive Jesus' finished work. If scorning the Jordan, Naaman had gone to Abana and Pharpar, he might have washed not only seven times but seventy times seven! He might have earnestly persevered in the constant immersion, but he would have remained a leper to his dying day. If you scorn the Atonement and neglect God's great command to believe and live. If you go about to try and *feel*, or *be*, or *do*, you will use these Abanas and Pharpars to your own damnation! And to your own salvation never.

I pray you, do not insult God by looking for balm in Gilead, or for a physician there. There is no balm in Gilead, there never was any. There is no physician there, or else the daughter of my people would long ago have been healed. Men would long ago have saved themselves. You must look higher than the Gilead of human energy. You must look higher than earth's physicians. You must look to the hills where comes our Help, the great mountains of a Savior's work and merit!

There are many other reasons why it is impossible that a man can ever get comfort in the way of works and feelings. The principal one I will mention is because that is the way of the curse. He who is under the Law is under the curse. So long as I stick to the Law, do what I may, I am under the curse of the Law and consequently under the curse. And how can I expect in the way of the curse to find the eternal blessing? Oh, folly, to choose the way of the curse as the way of blessing! But the best proof of it all is experience. Ask either saint or sinner and you shall find that peace was never obtained in the way of the flesh. Turn to the Christian and he will tell you, "Therefore being justified BY FAITH, we have peace with God."

He will tell you that when he turns away from faith and looks to himself his darkness begins at once. He will assure you that he never walks in perfect light and true comfort except when he keeps his eyes fast fixed upon the great Sacrifice of Calvary. I know, Brethren, whenever I am dull and drooping as to my eternal interests, it is always because I have thought more of my graces than of Christ's Grace, or more of the Spirit's work in me than of the finished work of Christ on my behalf. There is no living happily but by depending wholly upon Christ. A sinner resting upon his Savior as his only hope is blest.

Now, if this is the experience of all saints, and if no sinner living will dare to tell you that he can get his conscience quiet by his own works—why do any of you try? Heaven bears witness that salvation by faith is certain—Hell bears witness that works do but ruin us. O, hear the double testimony and lay hold upon eternal life through the Person of Christ Jesus! O my dear Friend, if you are really panting for salvation, go not round and round these dreary performances of your own doings! It must all end in misery, disappointment and despair. "They rowed hard to bring it to land. But they could not."

All human work which does not begin and end in the Lord Jesus must be a failure. All your works have been failures with you up to the present

and so it will be to the end of the chapter. Give it up and God help you to try His method, for it is sure and efficacious.

III. Now, with very great brevity, I will bring you to the third point of the sermon which is that THE SOUL'S SORROW WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE SO LONG AS IT RELIES UPON ITS OWN EFFORTS. What is the effect of all that the creature does before it believes in Christ? It may be overruled for good, but much of its effect is mischievous. The good effect which flows from it lies in this—the more a man strives to save himself, the more convinced will he become of his own impotence and powerlessness.

I thought that I could turn to God whenever I pleased till I tried to turn to Him. I thought repentance a very easy thing till I began to repent. I dreamed that faith in Christ must be mere child's play till I had to groan, "Lord, help my unbelief!" As for the Law, when we attempt to keep it, we groan under a heavy burden which we have no strength to bear—

***"How long beneath the Law
I lay in bondage and distress!
I toiled, the precept to obey,
But toiled without success."***

Oh, it is hard serving the Law! He is a cruel taskmaster. The whip is always going and the flesh is always bleeding. It is hard service. Weary and faint, we fall down under it and feel it to be a load intolerable to be borne. Well is Haggi chosen as the type of the Law, for indeed it genders unto bondage.

And well was blazing Sinai chosen as its representative, for even Moses said, when standing upon that mountain, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." To be clean divorced from all legal hope is a blessed preparation for Gospel marriage with Christ. It was well that rowing hard made the mariners feel their inability to cope with the tempest—and it is best of all when creature *efforts* produce a clear discovery of creature *weakness*.

Another good result will sometimes follow. The man passionately striving to save himself by keeping the Law finds out the spirituality of that Law, a spirituality which he never saw before. He has given up outward acts of sin, but all of a sudden he is startled to find that even though he has given them all up in open fact, he is still condemned for allowing the *thoughts* of them in his heart! Even a look may be fornication, though no act of sin shall follow it. He remembers that even the wish of his heart may be theft. And that covetousness is not only straining after another man's goods, but envying him the *enjoyment* of them.

Now he finds the work is impossible, indeed, for he might sooner hold the winds in his fist than control his passions, or with his breath blow the sea into a calm sooner than he could restrain the impetuous propensities of his nature. O, Brethren, it is a good thing when we find that the Commandments of God are exceedingly broad—when we see the sharpness of this great axe of the Law and how it cuts at the very root of the tree and leaves us no green thing standing wherein we can boast!

So far so good. Fleshly effort, overruled by Divine Grace, has helped us to the discovery of the grandeur and dignity of the Divine Law. But I am afraid that much of this toil and labor is very mischievous because it makes unbelief take a firmer grip. It is easier to comfort a soul who has

been a short time in darkness than it is to comfort one who has given way a long time to an unbelieving state of heart. I remember one, I believe she is in darkness now and if I remember right it is ten years ago since she first fell into these doubts and fears. I am sometimes afraid she will never see the Light because it has become chronic with her.

Giant Despair's prisoners do not all escape. He has a yard full of bones, remember. These are the relics of willing prisoners who would not be comforted and put out their own eyes to avoid the Light. I believe that some sinners make excuses for themselves out of their despair and that they let their doubts and fears grow till they cast a thick shadow, like Jonah's gourd. And then they sit down with a miserable sort of comfort beneath the leaves. "There is no hope, therefore will I go on in my sins. There is no hope for me, therefore let the worst come to me. I can but be damned. I will fold my arms and sit still."

Oh, this is a damnable temptation! It is one which ruins multitudes I am sure! This is Satan's man-trap! Beware of it! This is the devil's stocks in the inner prison—he is to be pitied who is laid by the heels in them. While you are rowing hard to get your vessel to land and standing out against the gracious plan which God has ordained, you are letting the nightmare of unbelief grow into a dread reality! You are letting this deadly incubus rest more terribly upon your hearts. O, Sinner, I pray God deliver you from this work-mongering, this horrible trying to save yourself by something homegrown and home-spun. If we could cut off the head of your self-righteousness, we would have hope of you! If you would give up all attempts to deliver yourselves and leave the case in Christ's hands, the thing would be done!

But while you are thus doubting and fearing, you are sinking deeper in the mire. And it is harder to get you out now than ever it was. Remember this one thing, that while the sinner is thus straining himself to get to Heaven by his own righteousness, his day of wrath is getting nearer. He is adding sin to sin. He is accumulating the fuel for his own burning, filling the sea of wrath in which he must be drowned forever. "What? When I am praying, groaning and crying to God and when I am trying to mend my ways and do my best, do you say I am only doing mischief?"

I do say it. I say these things are good in themselves, but if you are *resting* in them, you are so flying in the teeth of God's great Gospel, so insulting the dignity of the great Savior that you are adding sin to sin! And among the firewood for your burning there shall be none so dry which shall burn so terribly as your own good wicked works, your own rebellious virtues, your own proud detestable righteousness which you set up in opposition to the merit, blood and righteousness of God's appointed Mediator!

Gold is good enough, but if you bow down before the golden calf I will hate the gold because you worship it. Your morality is good enough, but if you trust to it I will hate your morality because it is your destruction. Sinner, I pray you remember that your life is being shortened all the while you tarry in the plains of self. Time flies and you fade like a leaf, while your righteousnesses, which are but filthy rags, are crying out against you! You are laboring without success. But more, you are losing

time which might have been turned to better purpose. While you are spending your money for that which is not bread, you are getting nearer and nearer to the dread famine when there shall be no bread to buy.

While you are trying to get this fool's oil with which to keep your lamps burning, the Bridegroom is coming and the midnight is hastening when you shall have to say, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." There shall be no time, then, for you to buy for the darkness shall have come upon you and the door shall be shut and the Bridegroom's supper shall have begun. O that I could have some power to induce you not to follow any longer these fine ways of yours, these proud deceptive plans! O that you would receive God's plan of redemption and enjoy the peace which it brings!

IV. We will try to explain God's plan and then we have done. That is our fourth point—**THAT THE WAY OF SAFETY FOR SINNERS IS TO BE FOUND IN THE SACRIFICE OF ANOTHER ON THEIR BEHALF.** Here is Jonah. Leave out the fact that he was sinful and he becomes an eminent type of Christ. "Take me up and cast me into the sea and the sea shall become calm under me." Substitution saves the mariners—Substitution saves sinners. This is the essential oil of Gospel Truth. Jesus Christ says to His people, "I am cast into the sea. There in that depth I sleep for a while, like Jonah, to rise again on the third day. But My being cast into the sea makes a deep calm for you." How very simple this process was. They take Jonah—he himself desires it—he is thrown overboard and the deeps swallow him up.

Ah, poor Jonah, what a fall! What a terrible descent! What a frightful end to his prophetic career! Down he goes. Did I not see huge jaws opening amid the billows? Was he not devoured by some terrible monster! Poor fellow, he must have our pity! But how strange it is! Why the wind has ceased—it has dropped dead! And the waves seem to be playing now where they were battling fiercely a moment ago! No, the sea is *glassy!* We need not the oars any longer! Up with the sails, we shall soon be safely in port!

An odd thing this, the drowning of one becomes the safety of all. Mariners, let us sacrifice to Jonah's God. Ah, it is a strange and marvelous thing! It is that which sets angels singing and makes the redeemed spirits wonder on forever, that Jesus came down into this ship of our common humanity to deliver it from tempest. The vessel had been tossed about on all sides by the waves of Divine wrath. Men had been tugging and toiling at the oar. Year after year philosopher and teacher had been seeking to establish peace with God. Victims had been offered and rivers of blood had flowed and even the first-born of man's body had been offered up.

But the deep was still tempestuous. Then Jesus came and they took Him and cast Him overboard. Out of the city they dragged Him. "Away with Him! Away with Him! It is not fit that He should live!" Out of all comfort they had cast Him long ago—now from society they cast Him, too. From pity they cast Him! From all sympathy they cast Him! And at last from life itself they hurled Him, while God stands there to help them to cast Him into a sea of woes. As He, Jesus, dies there is a calm. Deep was the peace which fell upon the earth that dreadful day. And joyous is

that calm which yet shall come as the result of the casting out of that representative Man who suffered—the Just for the unjust to bring us to God!

Brethren, I wish I had better words with which I could fitly describe the peace which comes to a human heart when we learn to see Jesus cast into the sea of Divine wrath on our account. Conscience accuses no longer. Judgment now decides for the sinner instead of against him. Memory can look back upon past sins, with sorrow for the sin it is true, but yet with no dread of any penalty to come! It is a blessed thing for a man to know that he cannot be punished, that Heaven and earth may shake, but he cannot be punished for his sin!

If God is unjust I may be damned. But if God is just I never can be. That is how the saved sinner stands. Christ has paid the debt of His people to the last jot and tittle and received the Divine receipt. And unless God can be so unjust as to demand twice payment for one debt, no soul for whom Jesus died can ever be cast into Hell. It seems to be one of the very principles of our nature to believe that God is just. We feel it and that gives us our terror at first. But is it not marvelous that this very same first principle, the belief that God is just, becomes afterwards the pillar of our confidence and peace?

If God is just, I, a sinner, alone and without a substitute, *must* be punished. Christ stands in my place and is punished for me. And now, if God is just, I, a sinner, standing in Christ, can *never* be punished! God must change His Nature before one soul for whom Christ was a Substitute, can ever by any possibility suffer the lash of the Law. I must confess I do not understand the atonements which some preach. An atonement which does not atone—a redemption which does not redeem—a redemption which intends to redeem all men born of Adam and yet leaves the major part in slavery—an atonement which makes full atonement for all human sin and leaves men to be condemned afterwards—I cannot comprehend that!

But I do understand a Substitution—Christ taking the place of the Believer—Christ suffering the quid pro quo for the Believer's punishment—Christ rendering an equivalent to Divine wrath for all that His people ought to have suffered as the result of sin. I right well and right joyously understand that the Believer, knowing that Christ suffered in his place, can shout with glorious triumph, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not God, for He has justified! Not Christ, for He has died, "yes rather has risen again." My hope is not because I am *not* a sinner, but because I AM a sinner for whom Christ died. My trust is not that I am holy, but that being *unholy* Christ died for me!

My rest is here, not in what I am or shall *be*, or *feel*, or *know*, but in what Christ is and must be! In what Christ *did* and is still doing as He stands before yonder Throne of Glory. O Beloved, it is a blessed thing to get right out of self. But many Believers seem to have one foot on self and one on Christ. They are like the angel with one foot on the sea and the other on the land—only being angels—they cannot stand on such a footing. Put both feet on the Rock, Beloved! Stand altogether on Christ!

Arminianism is one foot on Christ and the other foot on self. "Christ has saved me," says the Arminian. There is His foot on the land. "But,"

he says, "I must hold on. It depends upon me whether I persevere to the end." There is his foot on the sea. If he does not look out, that foot will give way. But how blessed it is when the Christian can say, "I am saved." There is no if, no but about it. There is nothing for me to do to complete my salvation. It is all done. There is not one jot or tittle left to complete the Covenant of my salvation. The Covenant of effectual Grace is all written out in the fair handwriting of my Savior with a pen dipped in His own blood, and it guarantees all spiritual blessings to me forever! The edifice has been built and there is not wanted a beam or a brick, or even a nail or a tin tack to complete it!

From its foundation to its top stone it is all of Grace and all perfect. My garment of salvation has been woven from the top throughout—there is not a rag of thread or stitch of mine wanted to complete it. "It is finished," said the Savior, as He dipped it for the last time in the glorious carmine of His own blood and made a rich royal robe for His people to wear forever! O Brethren, if there were one stone to be put to the walls of our salvation—one single trowel full of mortar to make the stones set firmly—it would be all undone, all in ruin. But the whole of it has been completed! Stone and mortar, from basement to summit—all has been completed by Sovereign Grace!

And what shall you and I *do*? Since Jesus has been cast overboard for us, let us now rest in perfect quiet. Let us enjoy the peace "that passes all understanding, which shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." And then, having been saved in such a way as this, let us *now* go to work for God—not to win life, not to win Heaven—life and Heaven are ours already! But loved by Him let us now love Him with a perfect heart!

The man who has not attained to rest in Jesus is incapable of virtue. A man who does anything for his own salvation acts from a selfish motive, does everything for himself. He has no virtue in him. But the man who is saved, who knows there is nothing for him to do, either to put himself *into* salvation or to *keep* himself in it—knowing that all is now finished, having no need to do anything for self—he does everything for God and is holy in heart and life. Now he can sing with Toplady—

***"Loved of my God, for Him again,
With love intense I'd burn.
Chosen of Him before time began,
I'd choose Him in return."***

Let us show that this is the true root of virtue. Let us teach men who say this doctrine is licentious that it is the most heavenly soil in which the fruits of the Spirit can grow! Like a genial sunshine is this doctrine to our fruits to ripen them! Like a heavenly shower to bring them forth! God give you, Sinner, to rest in my Savior! God give you, Saint, to live to your Savior and He shall have the praise in both cases. Amen.

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JONAH'S RESOLVE—OR, “LOOK AGAIN!” NO. 1813

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 14, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then I said, I am cast out of Your sight; yet I will
look again toward Your holy Temple.”
Jonah 2:4.*

WHAT *a complex creature is man!* Those who fancy that they can fully describe him, do not understand him. He is a riddle and a contradiction. As says Ralph Erskine—

*“I'm in my own and others' eyes
A labyrinth of mysteries.”*

Here, for instance, is a confession from David. “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand” (Psa. 73:22, 23). Paul says, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 7:24, 25). He is strengthened with all might by the Spirit of God in the inner man and yet he is weakness itself! In the text before us, Jonah appears to be in a despairing condition—“I am cast out of Your sight,” but still he has hope, for he resolves, “Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” Everything seems lost and yet, as long as a man can look to God, nothing is lost! God cannot see him, so he thinks, yet he talks about looking towards God—this is amazing, is it not? It is as if he said, “I am cast out of Your sight and yet You are the Object of my sight.”

I do not know of a more gloomy sentence that human lips can speak than this—“I am cast out of Your sight.” I do not know of a more hopeful resolution that the human heart can determine upon than this—“Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” Oh, untried and inexperienced Brothers and Sisters, be not at all disconcerted when you cannot comprehend yourself! On the contrary, take it as one of the evidences that there is a Divine life within you when you become a mystery to yourself! If, like a schoolboy, you can draw your own likeness on a slate with a piece of pencil and can say, “This is all myself,” why, then you will be rubbed out and your image will be forgotten! But an immortal and divinely-inhabited spirit which is to survive sun, moon and stars is not so readily sketched. While you are brother to the worm and akin to corruption, you are, nevertheless, nearly related to Him that sits on the Eternal Throne! Vast regions of wonder-land lie between your condition, as the abject prey of Death, and your portion as an heir of God by Christ Jesus. Manhood is a great deep. I set it not side by side with the fathomless abyss of Godhead, but I know of nothing else which surpasses it.

Our text, next, leads me to observe that *faith in the child of God, whatever may be his circumstances, still comes to the front*. Here is Jonah in such a wretched condition that he says, "I am cast out of Your sight." And yet, despite this, he declares, "Yet I will look again toward your holy temple." The huge Atlantic wave comes rolling on—it sweeps not only over the feet and breast of Faith, but it rises far above her head—and, for the moment, Faith seems to be drowned. Wait an instant and with her face ruddy from the wave and her locks streaming from the flood, Faith lifts up her head again and cries, "Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple." Write Faith's motto—INVICTA—she always rides forth upon the white horse, conquering and to conquer! Faith is the child of the Omnipotent and shares in His Omnipotence! She is born of the Eternal and she possesses His immortality!

You may crush and grind her, but every fragment lives. You may cast her into the fire, but she cannot be burned, neither can the smell of fire pass upon her! You may hurl her into the great deeps but she is bound to rise again. Faith has eyes that were made to drink in the sunlight and, so long as God is a Sun, there will be eyes of faith to rejoice in Him! If we have faith, there is that in us which overcomes the world, baffles Satan, conquers sin, rules life and abolishes death. All things are possible to him that believes. Faith triumphs in every place, notwithstanding that her life is one of continued trial. Sense is broken like a potter's vessel and reason is frail as a spider's web, but Faith abides and grows—and reigns in the power of the Most High!

Please observe, for it may be for the comfort of some here present, that Jonah was in a position altogether unique and yet his faith stood him in good stead. You have read of Joseph in the dungeon, but his imprisonment was nothing compared with the entombment of Jonah in the belly of a fish! You have read of Job on a dunghill in utter misery—it is a sorry plight—but there are many Jobs in one Jonah if we reckon by present misery and distress! To lie as a living man in a living sculpture was horrible. Jonah, no doubt, suffered from those inconveniences which, apart from miracle, would have ended his life right speedily. A dark, stifling, pestilential cell would have been preferable to the stomach of a shark, or whatever great fish it may have been which had swallowed him. The amazing thing is that he was aware of his position and knew when the monster dived to the sea bottom, when it passed through a meadow of seaweed, when it neared some great mountain and when, again, it rose to the surface! This makes the miracle all the more striking, for one is apt to imagine that the man must have lain dormant, or at least, must, in a measure, have been unconscious while in such singular hiding. His position was such as never mortal man had known before or since.

Now, it sometimes happens that singularity gives a sting to sorrow. When a man believes that nobody has ever suffered as he is doing, he concludes his case to be well-near hopeless. Dear tried Friend, you cannot say this with any certainty, I am sure, for you have comrades with you in your every grief. But Jonah could say it with absolute truthfulness—he was where no man had been before and where no man has been since—and still to be alive. His trial was all his own. No stranger intermeddled in

it. In his affliction, he had no predecessor and no successor. He was the first and the last that for three days and nights had dwelt in the belly of a fish! He was singular to the last degree and yet—here is the blessedness of it—his faith was equal to his position!

You cannot banish Faith, her home is everywhere! You have seen upon the Manx penny, the three legs which must always stand—turn the coin whichever way you please! Such is faith—throw it wherever you may, it always falls on its feet. If faith is in a little child, it gives the child wisdom beyond its years. If it is in a decrepit old man, it makes him strong out of feebleness. If it is faith in solitude, it blesses a man with the best of company. If it is faith in the midst of adversaries, it brings to a man the best of friends. Faith in weakness makes us strong! In poverty it makes us rich and in death makes us live! Get a firm confidence in God and you need not enquire what is going to happen—all must be well with you. Winding or straight, up hill or down dale, or through the fire or through the sea, if you believe, your road is the King's highway!

If faith does not fail, nothing fails. Faith arms a man from head to foot with mail through which neither sword, nor spear, nor poisoned arrow can ever pierce. Though it is forged upon the anvil of the devil's greatest subtlety, no weapon can prosper against you, O true Believer! You are as safe as He in whom you believe, for, "He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust. His truth shall be your shield and buckler." If I might, at this time, help any child of God who is in trouble, into a solid rest in God, I should be, indeed, delighted. Oh that the ever blessed Spirit would help me to that end! Carefully note, first, *the verdict of sense*—"I am cast out of Your sight." And, secondly, *the resolve of faith*—"Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple." These, remember, were both found in one man at one time.

I. First, here is THE VERDICT OF SENSE. Please notice that *it comes first in the text*. Sense hurriedly decides, "I am cast out of Your sight." It is noteworthy that unbelief is always first to speak. Whenever David observes, "I said in my haste," you will notice that something is to be confessed which was unwise and untrue. Unbelief cannot wait, it must have its say—it blabs out all its silly soul at its earliest opportunity! In your own case, if you can be calm and patient, you will speak to God's Glory, but if you are hasty and petulant and must talk as soon as the trial comes upon you, it is almost an absolute *certainty* that you will say what you will be glad to unsay! Our hasty words are often dipped in wormwood and handed back to us that we may eat them! Hold still a while, my Brothers and Sisters, or, if you must speak, speak to your God and not *against* Him—speak to your God and not to yourself.

Soliloquies are frequently an increase of woe. The heart ferments and heats itself, creating an inward fever which parches the soul. If a vessel needs vent, it is not helped by being stirred within itself, yet such is the case when we say with David, "I pour out my soul in me." Better is that word, "You people, pour out your heart before Him," even before the living God! Brothers and Sisters, speak not to yourself, lest you seem to be a madman—you may vex your soul exceedingly by those lone maunderings—speak to your God! Even if you utter hasty words and words of un-

belief, they are better uttered in His Presence than muttered within your own heart. He will hear them in either case, but when He perceives that in your spirit there is no guile, though much impatience, He will freely forgive you all your childish error of too hasty speech and help you to bear up under your woe. Speak, for silence slays! But speak to God, for He is full of compassion. Take the warning of the text, however, and be slow to murmur, remembering that the carnal nature is ever swift to speak and sure to speak amiss.

This verdict of sense, in the next place, was apparently very correct. "I said, I am cast out of Your sight." Did it not seem so? Jonah had tried to get away from God and God had pursued him with a tempest and almost broken the ship to pieces in order to be at him. As the result of the tempest, Jonah had been hurled into the sea and in the sea a great fish had swallowed him and he had been carried down till the floods compassed him about. Did not all his surroundings confirm his suspicion that he was a castaway? Could he expect, ever again, that the Word of the Lord would come to Jonah, the son of Amittai? Could he hope, ever again, to stand with the joyful multitude that kept holy day in the courts of the Lord's house, or to present his sacrifice of thanksgiving upon Jehovah's altar? No, if he judged by his *feelings*, he was shut up to the conclusion which he expressed.

There remained nothing for him but bare life and that in such a condition that one could hardly desire to have it continued. He reckoned, with abundant show of reason, that he must be cast out of God's sight. Yet it was not so and, therefore, I invite those of you who have begun to judge your God by what you *feel* and by what you *see*, to revise your judgment—and in the future to be very diffident as to your power to come to any just conclusion as to God's dealings with you! Thank God, you will be wrong if you despair. It is much better for you to show your faith by *relying* on your God than to display your folly by saying, "I am cast out."

As this verdict of sense seemed to be correct, Jonah must have felt that *it was assuredly deserved*. If the Lord had dealt with Jonah according to his sins, he *would* have been a castaway. He had hurried to Joppa and taken a passage in a ship to go to Tarshish, or anywhere else, to flee from the Presence of God. Now, what was a fitter punishment for him than that he should be cast out from the sight of God? Had not this been his inquiry at Joppa, "Where shall I go from Your Spirit?" Was not this his demand, "Where shall I flee from Your Presence?" Now he has his answer—he is carried down till the depth closed him round about! His waywardness had come home to him—he had been paid in his own coin and what could Jonah feel, but that he was filled with his own ways? Had he died in the sea, he could not have doubted the Lord's justice. If he had been driven away as an outcast, it would have been righteous retribution to a runaway who refused his Master's service. This must have made him doubly sorrowful! A guilty conscience is the most sour ingredient of all. When each wave howled in Jonah's ear, "You deserve it," he was in an evil plight, indeed.

One sharp part of Jonah's misery was that *God's hand was so evidently in his misery*. He sees it and trembles. Observe how he ascribes all to God—"You have cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the

floods compassed me about; all *Your* billows and *Your* waves passed over me." We can bear a blow from an enemy, but a wound from our best friend is difficult! If the Lord, Himself, goes forth against us, the war is one to tremble at! If the messenger of grief is commissioned by Jehovah, Himself, and we know it—mere carnal reason concludes that all is finally over—and that henceforth all we can do is to sit down and die! Faith thinks not so, but this is after the manner of flesh and sense.

Observe that this verdict of sense, "I am cast out from God," *was very bitter to Jonah*. You can see by the way in which he speaks that it is a heavy burden to him and yet it seems strange that it should be so. Here is a man who, when he was in a wrong state of heart, sought to flee from the Presence of the Lord and, therefore, went to the seacoast on purpose; rejoiced to find a ship bound for a distant and almost unknown land; paid the fare to sail therein of set purpose that he might get away from God—and now that he thinks he is away from God, he is filled with horror and dismay! By this we know the children of God—even at their worst estate.

Oh, you that are the people of God, you may sometimes, in your willfulness, wish that you could get away from the all-searching eyes of God, but if you could do so it would be Hell for you! If you are a child of God, you must dwell in the Presence of God. It is your life and you cannot be happy anywhere else. Oh, redeemed, regenerate man, it is impossible, now, for your once renewed spirit ever to be happy in the beggarly elements of your former condition! Except in the Divine atmosphere of heavenly love there is no rest for you. You are spoiled for this world, O heir of the world to come! There was a time when its dainties would have been sweet to your taste and your soul could have been filled with them, but that day is over, now—you must eat the Bread of Heaven or starve!

If you are not happy in your God, you are doomed to be happy nowhere. There is no choice left for you. Your very nature is so affected, now, that as the needle rests not unless it points to the pole, so can your heart never be quiet except in Jesus! The light of His Countenance must be light to you, or you must walk in darkness! Your music must come from Jesus' lips, or else there is nothing for you but wailing and gnashing of teeth! Your Heaven must be in His embrace—there is no Heaven elsewhere for you! Nor would we wish to have it different. I am sure I can say from my very soul that if God would leave me, it would be to me a Hell worse than Dante or Milton could imagine! What if I still had to pursue my holy calling and to preach! What woe to preach without Him! What a hollow mockery! If I were bound to continue the outward form of prayer and of a moral life, what vanity of vanities would it all be without my Lord!

Without God? Brothers, Sisters, can you bear the thought? It is not the pang of Hell, nor its fires, nor its undying worm, nor anything else that can be pictured of amazing terror that causes such alarm as the bare thought of being severed from God! To be cast out from His sight were Hell, indeed! Now, I should think that if Jonah had been in a calm state of mind and had been able to consider things in the light of the Truth of God, it ought to have given him some ground of hope that he was not cast out from God, after all, because he was so unhappy at the idea of being so cast out. Will the Lord leave a soul that is distressed by such leaving? No

spirit is wholly cast off from God if it longs after God. If you can be content without God, you are, indeed, a lost one! But if there is in you a wretched rankling discontent at the very *thought* of being severed from your God, then you are His and He is yours—and no eternal division shall come between you and Him!

Thus I have brought out somewhat the force of this verdict of sense—"I am cast out of Your sight." But I want you, further, to notice that *it was not true*. There was ground for grief, but not for this despairing inference. The verdict was not sustained by sufficient evidence. It was a great deal more than Jonah should have said, "I am cast out of Your sight." What? Alive in the sea, Jonah? Alive in the deep? Alive in the belly of a fish? And you say that you are cast out from God's sight! Surely if God were anywhere in the world, it were in that great fish! Where else could there have been surer proof of His present power and Godhead than in keeping a man alive in a living morgue? There was a constant standing miracle for three days and nights! And where there is a miracle, there is God most visibly seen! If Jonah could have asked the seas and asked the deep places of the earth, they would have told him that the Lord was not far away. If he could have asked the fish, itself, it would have acknowledged that God was there!

If those who go down to the sea in ships, see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep, much more might he have seen them who went into the sea in a fish's belly! There is a text that Jonah could never have heard, which I commend to you against the time when *you* get to be where Jonah was. I do not suppose you will ever be *literally* buried alive in a fish, but you may spiritually sink as deep as the Prophet did. What is that text? "Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). Jonah said, "I am cast out"—but that was not true. Poor Jonah! The *mariners* cast him out, but *God* did not—he was cast out of the ship, but not out of the sight of God! The Lord of old was faithful and it was His rule never to cast away His people. Even as David says, "For the Lord will not cast off forever: but though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion, according to the multitude of His mercies."

Mark the text I quoted from our Lord's own lips—"Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out." Never question this sacred Word of God! He will never, never cast out a single one that trusts Him! So that if ever you should be in a condition which seems, to you, quite as forlorn as that of this Prophet in the midst of the sea, you may yet be sure that you are not cast off, nor cast out. He who says he is cast out, says more than can possibly be true since the Infallible promise is, "Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out." It is not for us to forge a lie against the God of the whole earth! He does not speak that which is false, but out of His mouth proceeds Truth. Even if all things in earth and Hell should swear that the Lord has cast away *one* of His own believing people, it will be our duty to disbelieve them all, for it is *impossible* that He should cast out any Believer, for any reason or motive whatever!

II. Follow me, dear Friends, and may the Lord make it profitable to you while I dwell during the rest of my time upon THE RESOLVE OF FAITH. Oh that the Holy Spirit may work in us "like precious faith" with Jonah!

"Yet," Jonah says, "even if I am cast out, yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple." Jonah was a man of God when he was in his worst state of mind—at no time was the eternal life quite extinct within him. An ugly kind of saint this Jonah, when he was in the sulks! A proud, self-conscious, willful and morose being—hard to love! Yet, as an oyster may bear a precious pearl within its rough shell, so did the harsh Prophet contain, within his being, a priceless jewel of *faith*—faith eminent, prevalent, triumphant—faith of the highest degree!

This faith put him upon prayer. The chapter begins, "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." Jonah had not prayed when he went down to Joppa. He had taken the management of himself into his own hands and referred nothing to God as to that rash voyage. How could he pray in such a temper? He paid his fare to go to Tarshish—he did not pray God's blessing on that expenditure, I am quite sure. When the sea began to work and was tempestuous, he was in the sides of the ship, but he did not pray. No, he went to sleep! His conscience had become stupid and seared as with a hot iron—there was no prayer in him—but there was a certain numbness of mind and lethargy of heart.

And now he gets into the fish's belly, a very close, dead place, where one would think he would lie in a state of coma, or in a sort of fainting fit, if it were possible for him to live at all! Yet *there* he begins to pray. You will find God's children praying where you thought they would despair and, on the other hand, you may discover that they do *not* pray where you thought they would abound in supplication. "Oh," says one man, "if I could have my time all to myself and had not the worry of this family and this business, what a deal of time I would spend in prayer!" Would you? I would not guarantee your abundant devotion!

Some of those who have least time for prayer, pray most, and those who have most opportunity and everything congenial, are too often found to be most slack in their petitions. Jonah's oratory was narrow and this pressed the prayer out of him. He did not pray in the sides of the ship, where he had room enough and to spare. He prayed where he could not get upon his knees, or hear his own voice. Laid out in his living coffin, he began his pleading. One would think it hard to make the belly of Hell, the gate of Heaven, but Jonah did. He prays and one of the surest evidences of a living faith is *prayer*. If you cannot do anything else, you can pray—and if you are a child of God, you will as surely pray as a man breathes or as a child cries—you cannot help it! Prayer is your vital breath, your native air. Whether on the land or in the sea, prayer is your life and you cannot *exist* without it if you are, indeed, born from on high. Answer, dear Hearer, is it not so? It is *not* the prayer-*book*, but the prayer-*faith* that we must have! Have you such faith?

I beg you to notice, however, that this faith of Jonah showed itself not in prayer to God in general, but the passage runs, "Then Jonah prayed *unto the Lord HIS God.*" There is a mint of meaning here! If you go upstairs and pray to God, as everybody's God, you have done what every Jack, Tom and Harry may do. But to go to your closet and cry to the Lord as your *own* God is what none but an heir of Grace can do. Oh to cry—"My Father and my Friend! My God in Covenant! My God to whom I have

spoken years ago and from whom I have heard full many a time! You whom I love! You who loves me, Jehovah, my God!"

This laying hold upon God as our own God is a business which the outer-court worshipper knows nothing of. Have some of you got a God at all? "Oh," you say, "I know there is a God." Yes, I know there is a bank, too, but that does not make me *rich*! What is your God to me? I want to say, "*my* God," or I cannot be happy! Have you a God to yourself, all to yourself, for if it is so, you will pray the prayer of faith when you draw near to Him—and this will prove that whatever your condition may be, you are not cast out from the sight of the Most High!

There is one thing about Jonah I want you particularly to notice, that as his faith made him pray and made him pray to the Lord, his God, *his faith made him deal familiarly with holy Scripture*. "What?" you ask—"how do you know that?" He had but a small Bible compared with ours, but he had laid much of it up in his memory. Evidently he loved the Book of Psalms, for his prayer is full of David's expressions. Kindly look at Jonah's prayer. I think I am right in saying that there are no less than *seven* extracts from the Psalms in that prayer and its preface. It was Jonah's own prayer and no man compiled it for him, for he was far away from the haunts of men. Yet his heart led him to his former readings and his memory came to his aid with expressions most suitable and forcible, borrowed from a former much tried servant of the Lord.

A deep experience is bound to resort to Scripture for its expression. Human compositions suffice for surface work, but when all God's waves and billows have gone over us, we quote a Psalm. When our soul faints within us, we are not to be revived by human songs, but we turn to the grave sweet melodies of Inspiration. When a true child of God is in trouble, it is wonderful how dear the Bible becomes to him—yes, the very words of it! I say the very words of it, for I care nothing about the scorn which attaches to a belief in, "Verbal Inspiration." If the words are not Inspired, neither is the sense, since there can be no sense apart from the words. My soul knows what it is to hang her hope upon a single Word of God and to find her trust accepted! I would not even change the expression of our translation in many places—not that I am bound by a translation, for God's *original* is that which we accept as Infallible, but yet there *are* translations which are evidently accurate, for the Lord's own Spirit has made them unutterably dear to His saints.

There are circumstances connected with the very words of many a text and with God's dealing with us through those words—and in such instances we cling even to the English text with all our might. I think you will find that tried saints are the most Biblical saints. In summer weather we delight in hymns, but in winter's storms we fly to Psalms. Your frothy professors quote Dickens or George Eliot, but God's afflicted quote David or Job! Those Psalms are marvelous! David seems to have lived for us all—he was not so much one man as all men in one. Somewhere or other, the great circle of his experience touches yours and mine—and the Holy Spirit, by David, has furnished us with the best expressions which we can utter before the Lord in prayer. Give me the faith which loves the Scriptures! Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God—and true

faith always loves the Word from which it sprang—it feeds thereon and grows thereby!

In proportion as people begin to criticize the Scriptures and to doubt the authenticity of this and that—in that proportion they move out of the latitude of faith. The region of criticism is cold as the polar seas. Faith loves a warmer atmosphere. The faith of God's elect clings to God and reverences His Word. By every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live—and upon such meat Jonah lived where others would have died.

I desire to come close up to my text, while I bid you note that *faith dares come to God with a, "yet."* Jonah said, "Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple." Faith in her worst circumstances trusts God. Clog her, load her, shut her up, yet she looks to God, alone! "O God, I trusted You once when I was but young and I felt my need of a Savior! I came to You, then, and, by Your Grace I looked to Jesus and found peace at once! But then I did not know the evil of sin as I know it now." What then? Why, with this new knowledge, yet will I look to Jesus! I did not know, then, the depravity of my heart as I know it now, but yet with this fresh sense of guilt I will, by God's Grace, look as at the first! I did not know, then, Your great and exceeding wrath against sin as I know it now, but yet, with this fuller discovery, I will look to You. I did not know the burden of life, then, as I know it now. I did not know the power of Satan over me, then, as I know it now—yet will I look again unto Your holy Temple!

With all these new weights and fresh encumbrances I do, today, by Your Grace, what I did many years ago—I throw myself on You, my Lord, and trust in Your matchless plan of salvation through the precious blood of Christ! It charmed me once, it charms me yet again. This is the perseverance and determination of Faith. She leaps over all walls and dashes through all hedges with her, "yet." Come what may, she has looked to Christ and she means to do so whatever may arise to suggest some other course.

According to the Hebrew, the word should be rendered, "only," instead of, "yet"—"only I will look again toward Your holy Temple." *Faith looks to God only.* Faith comes alone to her God and seeks no company to keep her in countenance. When we were first saved, it was by faith, only, and we must still be saved in the same way. In Jonah's case all props were knocked away—he had nothing to look to in the whale's belly at the bottom of the sea. But then and there he trusted God and that was all. He could not think very clearly, nor confess before men. Neither could he *be* or *do* anything, for he was packed away in quarters too close for action. But he could look again towards the Temple of God and this, alone, he did!

He could give the faith-look when all looking with the eyes was far out of the question. How could he tell in which *direction* to look for the Temple when all around him rolled the dark sea? His look was *inward* and *spiritual* and he was content to do that, and only that. His state was looking, looking—only *looking*. Be it ours to believe, to believe and yet again to believe! Jonah looked, again, to the place where God revealed Himself and we look to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom dwells all the

fullness of the Godhead bodily! He looked to the Mercy Seat sprinkled with the blood of Sacrifice, where the Lord was known to pardon and bless all suppliant sinners. And we, also, look to Jesus as the great Propitiation.

To this look we will add *nothing* as a ground of trust! Jesus only is our hope and we will only look to Him! We will add *nothing* to our look, our look to Christ! He alone is our stay and our comfort. It is a blessed thing to get clear of all secondary hopes and to live by faith alone. Mixtures will not do in the hour of trial. A single eye is what is needed—the least division in your trust is painful and dangerous. If you have lost some of your first light, look again! Look toward His holy Temple at once and the Light of God shall surely return to you!

Do you notice here that *faith is driven to do according to her first acts*—“Yet I will look *again*.” You know faith is described in other ways beside looking. It is taking, grasping, possessing, feeding, but faith, first of all, is *looking*, and so, whenever you fall into grievous trouble, it will be wise to resort to the beginning of your confidence and hold it fast to the end. If you cannot grasp, yet look! There are several grades of faith and when you cannot reach the higher grade, it will be wise to enter fully into the lower one. Remember, the lowest form of faith will save—and even the smallest measure of faith is effectual for salvation, though not for consolation. Look! Look to Jesus! “There is life in a look.” There is Heaven in a look. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Look! If you cannot go forth to *fight* by faith, stand still and *look* by faith. If you cannot declare the glory of the Lord, yet look! If you cannot tell what God *has* done for you, yet keep on looking by faith to see what God *will* do for you! Do your first work and, as your first work was a simple look at the Crucified One, look again to Him!

With this I shall close, urging dear friends here present, even if they forget all the rest of my text, to remember those two words, “*Look again*.” If any of you are in trouble, I will bid you go home with only these two words ringing in your ears, “Look again!” If you did look once, but have fallen into new darkness, *look again*! I mean, this morning, and I would ask you to follow me in it—to look to my Lord Jesus Christ, again, as I did at the first. It is frequently a great benefit to overhaul the foundations and begin again at the beginnings. I looked to Christ 33 years ago, or more—and so did some of you. But the devil may say, “Your faith was fancy; your conversion was a delusion.” Be it so, O Satan! We will not dispute with you, but we will begin again from this moment!

It is such a mercy that faith does not need to grow old before it saves us—the faith born this *moment* saves the soul in its very birth! Is it so, that your faith is not more than five minutes old, my Brothers and Sisters? Have you only just begun to trust Christ? Well, your faith has saved you quite as effectually as the faith of a man who has believed in Christ for 50 years! We must believe anew each day—yesterday's believing will not do for today. Let us now look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross and trust Him, this morning, as if we never trusted Him before. “I will look *again* toward Your holy Temple.” It will do each man good to look anew to that Cross which is the sole hope of his soul. There is nothing more sweetening to the spirit than to confess sin and accept mercy in the original

style—and to go to Jesus anew just as we went at first. Let us do so at this moment!

A person proudly said, the other day, that he could no longer sing—
***"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
 But Jesus Christ is my All in All."***

He had got beyond that! Highty tighty, here's a fine fellow! He has just risen from the dunghill and is come to be a grand gentleman all at once! Nothing will do for him but—

***"See the conquering hero comes,
 Sound the trumpets; beat the drums."***

Alas, for the top-lofty hypocrite! Shame on the proud self-magnifier! If he did but know himself, he would confess his nothingness with a deeper emphasis than ever—and he would, like the publican, cry—"God be merciful to me, a sinner!" I believe that as a child of God grows in sanctification, he deepens in humility. And as he advances to perfection, he sinks in his own esteem. Oh that men would give over that bladder-blowing which seems to be so much admired in certain quarters! We have had much occasion to mourn over the lower life of some professors, but the higher life of others is not a bit better—it is false, proud, censorious, and unpractical!

Those who boast of perfection will have much to grieve over when once they come to their senses and stand in truth before the living God! No man talks of living without sin till he is taken in the net of self-deception! I have walked with God for many years and enjoyed the light of His countenance, but my experience is that I am, this day, obliged to take a far lower place before Him than ever I took before, while—

***"Less than nothing I can boast,
 And vanity confess."***

Brothers and Sisters, whether *you* will do so or not, *I* flee to the Cross again! In the Rock of Ages I again hide myself! Who among us dares to come forth from that Divine shelter? "Jesus, lover of our soul, let us to Your bosom fly." Let all of us sing as though it were for the first time—

***"Just as I am—without one plea
 But that Your blood was shed for me,
 And that You bid me come to You,
 O Lamb of God, I come."***

Dear Friends, it is due to God, it is due to Christ, it is due to the Gospel that we should, every day, believe with the same simplicity of undivided trust. Keep on believing in Christ, "to whom coming as unto a living stone." We are to live by faith! You may be quite sure that you are permitted to do this, for Christ is always a sinner's Savior. If you cannot come to Him as saints, come to Him as sinners! If your unfitness for fellowship as a servant comes before your mind and breaks your heart, yet remember that you may always return as a prodigal son! If you cannot feed in green pastures as sheep of the fold, yet yield to the strong hand of Him who seeks the lost sheep. If you cannot come to Jesus as you should, yet come just as you are. If your garments are not clean as they should be, yet come and wash them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This ought to be done more readily by us every day, for it should be a growingly easy thing to believe our God as experience proves His faithfulness. When we are at our worst, let us trust with unshaken faith. Re-

member that *then* is the time when we can most glorify God by faith. To trust Christ when you have a shallow sense of sin, when your heart is glad and your face is bright, is but a slender trusting Him. But to believe that He can cleanse you when your heart is black as Hell—when you cannot see one good trait in all your character, when you see nothing but fault and imperfection about your entire life, when all your outward circumstances seem to speak of an angry God and all your inward feelings threaten you with doom from His right hand—*this* is to believe, indeed! Such faith the Lord deserves of you.

Oh, if you are only a little sinner, a little Savior and a little faith may serve your turn. If you have but little fear and a little burden, and little care, and little need—why then you cannot greatly prove or trust your Lord! But if you are up to your neck in sorrow, yes, if you are drowned in it as Jonah was, and are driven well-near to despair, then you have a great God and you should glorify Him by greatly trusting Him! If you are tempted to lay violent hands upon yourself, or to do some other rash and evil deed, do no such thing, but trust yourself with your God and this will give Him more Glory than seraphim and cherubim can do.

To believe in the promise of God, as you read it in His Word, is a grand thing. To believe it though you are sick and sorry—though ready to die—this is to glorify the Lord! Brothers and Sisters, if I live, I will believe the promise! If I die I will believe the promise! And when I rise again I will believe the promise! Let us resolve to believe though the world is in flames and the pillars thereof are removed. Let us believe though the sun is turned into darkness and the moon into blood! Let us believe though all the powers of the earth are marshaled in fight and Gog and Magog gather themselves together to battle. Let us believe though the trumpet sounds for judgment and the Great White Throne is set in the open Heaven!

Why should we doubt? The Covenant confirmed by promise and by oath—and ratified with the blood of Jesus—places every Believer under the broad shield of Divine Truth—so what cause can there be for fear? O my Hearer, do you believe in Christ? Do you trust your God? If you can stand to that, you are not only a saved man, but you already give glory to God. So may He help you to do. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Jonah 1 and 2.*
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—90, 598, 533.**

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A PLAIN TALK UPON AN ENCOURAGING TOPIC NO. 3101

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 16, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD:
and my prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple.”
Jonah 2:7.***

THE experience of the saints is the treasure of the Church. Every child of God who has tried and proved the promises of God, when he bears his testimony to their truth, does, as it were, hang up his sword and spear on the Temple walls and thus the house of the Lord becomes “like the tower of David built for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.” “The footsteps of the flock” encourage others who are following their track to the pastures above. Every preceding generation of saints has lived and suffered to enrich us with its experience. One great reason why the experience of saints in olden time is of such use to us is this—they were men of like passions with ourselves. Had they been otherwise, we could not have been instructed by what they suffered. They endured the same trials and pleaded the same promises before the same God who changes not in any measure or degree, so that we may safely infer that what they gained by pleading may also be obtained by us when surrounded by the same circumstances. If men were different, or if the promises were changed, or if the Lord had varied, all ancient experience would be but an idle tale to us. But now, whenever we read in Scripture of what happened to a man of faith in the day of trial, we conclude that the same will happen to us—and when we find God helping and delivering His people, we know that He will even now show Himself strong on our behalf, since all the promises are yes and Amen in Christ Jesus unto the Glory of God by us. The Covenant has not changed—it abides firm as the eternal hills. The preacher, therefore, feels quite safe in directing you to the experience of Jonah and in inviting you to make its lessons a practical guide to yourselves.

We shall use the lesson of the text, first, *for the child of God* and, secondly, *for the sinner awakened and aroused*.

I. OUR TEXT HAS AN EVIDENT BEARING UPON THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD, for such was Jonah. With all his mistakes, he was a man of God. And though he sought to flee from the service of his Master, yet his Master never cast him off—He brought back His petulant messenger to

his work and honored him in it—and he sleeps among the faithful, waiting for a glorious reward.

Think, then, of *the saints' condition*. In Jonah's case, as set forth before us, the child of God sees what a plight he may be brought into—his soul may faint in him.

Jonah was certainly in a very terrible condition in the belly of the fish, but the position itself was probably not so dark as his own reflections, for conscience would say to him, "Alas, Jonah, you came here by your own fault, you had to flee from the Presence of God because in your pride and self-love you refused to go to Nineveh, that great city, and deliver your Master's message." It gives a sting to misery when a man feels that he, himself, is responsible for it. If it were unavoidable that I should suffer, then I could not repine. But if I have brought all this upon myself, by my own folly, then there is a double bitterness in the gall. Jonah would reflect that now he could not help himself in any way. It would answer no purpose to be self-willed now—he was in a place where petulance and obstinacy had no liberty. If he had tried to stretch out his arm, he could not. He was immured in a dungeon which imprisoned every sense as well as every limb and the bolts of his cell, his hand could not draw! He was cast into the deep in the midst of the seas, the waters compassed him about even to the soul, the weeds were wrapped about his head. His state was helpless and, apart from God, it was hopeless.

Children of God may be brought into a similar condition and yet be dear to His unchanging heart. They may be poor and needy and have no helper. No voice may speak a word of sympathy to them and no arm may be stretched out to succor them. The best of men may be brought into the worst of positions. You must never judge of character by circumstances. Diamonds may be worried upon the wheel and common pebbles may bathe at ease in the brook. The most wicked are permitted to clamber to the high places of the earth while the most righteous pine at the rich man's gate, with dogs for their companions. Choice flowers full often grow amid tangled briars. Who has not heard of the lily among thorns? Where dwell the pearls? Do not the dark depths of the ocean conceal them amid mire and wreck? Judge not by appearances, for heirs of the Light of God may walk in darkness and princes of the celestial line may sit upon dunghills. Men accepted of God may be brought very, very low, as Jonah was.

Let me remark that the hearts of God's servants may sometimes faint within them—yes, absolutely faint in them and that, first, through a renewed sense of sin. In this matter my tongue will not outrun my experience. Some of us have enjoyed for years a full assurance of our pardon and justification. We have walked in the Light as God is in the Light, and we have had fellowship with the Father and with the Son—and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, has cleansed us from all sin. We have often felt our hearts dance at the assurance that "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Jesus Christ." We have stood at the foot of the Cross and seen the records of our sins nailed to the tree, as the token of their full discharge. Yet, at this time, we may be suffering an

interval of anxious questioning and unbelief may be lowering over us! It is possible that our faith is staggered and, therefore, our old sins have risen up against us and are threatening our peace. At such times, conscience will remind us of our shortcomings, which we cannot deny, and Satan will howl over the top of these shortcomings, “How can *you* be a child of God? If you were born from above, how could you have acted as you have done?”

Then, if for a moment we look away from the Cross. If we look within for marks of evidences, the horrible bog of our inward corruptions will be stirred and there will pour into the soul such dark memories and black forebodings that we shall cry, “I am utterly lost, my hope is hypocrisy! What can I do? What shall I do?” Let me assure you that under such exercises, it is no wonder if the soul of the Christian faints within him. Be it remembered, also, that soul-fainting is the worst form of fainting. Though Jonah in the whale’s belly could not use his eyes, he did not need them. And if he could not use his arms or his feet, he did not require to do so. It mattered not if they all failed him! But for his *soul* to faint—this was horror indeed! So is it with us. Our other faculties may go to sleep if they will, but when our faith swoons and our confidence staggers, things go very hard with us. Do not, however, my Brothers and Sisters, when in such a state, write yourself down as a hypocrite, for many of the most valiant soldiers of the Cross know by personal experience what this dark sensation means—

***“What though Satan’s strong temptations
Vex and tease you day by day?
And your sinful inclinations
Often fill you with dismay?
You shall conquer,
Through the Lamb’s redeeming blood!
Though ten thousand ills beset you,
From without and from within,
Jesus says He’ll never forget you,
But will save you from Hell and sin!
He is faithful
To perform His gracious word!
Though distresses now attend you
And you tread the thorny road,
His right hand shall still defend you,
Soon He’ll bring you home to God!
Therefore praise Him,
Praise the great Redeemer’s name!”***

The same faintness will come over us, at times, through the prospect of prolonged pain or severe trial. You have not yet felt the cruel smart, but you are well aware that it must come and you shudder at the prospect. As it is true that “we feel a thousand deaths in fearing one,” so do we feel a thousand trials in the dread of one single affliction. The soldier is often braver in the midst of the battle than before the conflict begins. Waiting for the assault is trying work—even the crash of the onslaught is not so great a test of endurance. I confess that I feel an inward faintness in the prospect of bodily pain. It creates a swooning

sickness of heart within me to consider it for a moment and, beloved Friend, it is no strange thing that is happening to you if your soul also faints because of difficulties or adversities that lie before you. May you have wisdom to do what Jonah did—to remember the Lord—for there and only there lies your great strength.

Faintness will also come upon true Christians in connection with the pressure of actual sorrow. Hearts may bear up long, but they are very apt to yield if the pressure is continuous from month to month. A constant drip is felt even by a stone. A long day of drizzling rain is more wetting than a passing shower of heavy drops. A man cannot always be poor, or always be sick, or always be slandered, or always be friendless without sometimes being tempted to say, “My heart is faint and weary; when will the day break and the shadows flee away?” I say again, the very choicest of God’s elect may, through the long abiding of bitter sorrow and heavy distress, be ready to faint in the day of adversity.

The same has happened to earnest Christians engaged in diligent service, when they have seen no present success. To go on tilling a thankless soil, to continue to cast bread upon the waters and to find no return has caused many a true heart to faint with inward bleeding. Yet this is full often the test of our fidelity. It is a noble thing to continue preaching, like Noah, throughout a lifetime, amid ridicule, reproach and unbelief—but it is not every man who can do so. The most of us need success to sustain our courage and we serve our Master with most spirit when we see immediate results. Faint hearts of that kind there may be among my fellow soldiers, ready to lay down the weapons of their warfare because they win no victory at this present. My Brothers, I pray you do not desert the field of battle but, like Jonah, remember the Lord and continue to abide by the royal standard!

It may be that enquiries will be made as to why we should thus enlarge upon the different ways in which Christians faint. Our reply is, we have been thus particular in order to meet the temptation so common among young Christians, to fancy that they are singular in their trials. “Surely no one has felt as I feel,” says many a young Christian. “I don’t suppose another person ever hung down his head and his hands and became so utterly overcome as I am.” Do not listen to that suggestion, for it is devoid of truth! Faintness is very common in the Lord’s hosts—and some of His mightiest men have been the victims of it. Even David himself, that hero of Judah, in the day of battle waxed faint and had been slain if a warrior had not come to the rescue. Do not give way to faintness! Strive against it vehemently, but at the same time, should it overcome you, cast not away your confidence, nor write yourself down as rejected of God or one fatally fallen.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, we will notice *the saints’ resort*. Jonah, when he was in sore trouble, tells us, “I remembered the Lord.” What is there for a faint heart to remember in the Lord? Is there not everything? There is, first, His Nature. Think of that. When I am faint with sorrow, let me remember that He is full of pity and full of compassion. He will not strike too heavily, nor will He forget to sustain. I will, therefore, look up

to Him and say, "My Father, break me not in pieces. I am a poor weather-beaten boat which can scarcely escape the hungry waves. Send not Your rough wind against me, but give me a little calm that I may reach the desired haven." By remembering that the Lord's mercies are great, we shall be saved from a fainting heart.

Then I will remember His power. If I am in such a strait that I cannot help myself, *He* can help me! I have needs and sharp pinches, but there are no such things with Him. There are no emergencies and times of severe pressure with God. With Him all things are possible! Therefore will I remember the Lord. If the difficulty is one which arises out of my ignorance, though I know not which way to take, I will remember His wisdom. I know that He will guide me. I will remember that He cannot make a mistake and, committing my way unto Him, my soul shall take courage. Beloved, all the Attributes of God sparkle with consolation to the eyes of faith. There is nothing in the Most High to discourage the man who can say, "My Father, my God, in You do I put my trust." None who have trusted in Him have ever been confounded. Therefore if your soul sinks within you, remember the Nature, Character, and Attributes of God!

When you have remembered His Nature, then remember His promises. What has He said concerning souls that faint? Think of these texts if you think of no other—"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be." "My Grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." When we get upon this strain and begin to talk of the promises, we need hours in which to enlarge upon the exceeding great and precious words, but we mention only these—we let fall this handful for some poor Ruth to glean! When your soul is faint, catch at a promise, believe it and say unto the Lord, "Do as You have said," and your spirit shall speedily revive.

Remember, next, His Covenant. What a grand word that word, "Covenant," is to the man who understands it! God has entered into Covenant with His Son, who represents us, His people. He has said, "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed." Truly, we may say with good old David, "Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." When everything else gives way, cling in the power of the Holy Spirit to Covenant mercies and Covenant engagements, and your spirit shall be at peace—

***"With David's Lord, and ours,
A Covenant once was made
Whose bonds are firm and sure,
Whose glories shall never fade!"***

***Signed by the Sacred Three in One,
In mutual love before time begun—
Firm as the lasting hills,
This Covenant shall endure,
Whose potent shalls and wills
Make every blessing sure!
When ruin shakes all Nature's frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same.”***

Again, when we remember the Lord, we should remember what He has been to us in past times. When any of us fall to doubting and fearing, we are indeed blameworthy, for the Lord has never given us any occasion for doubting Him. He has helped us in sorer troubles than we are passing through at this time. We have tested His faithfulness, His power and His goodness at a heavier rate than now—and though greatly tried, they have never failed us yet! They have borne the strain of many years and show no signs of giving way. Why, then, are we distrustful? Many saints have proved the Lord's faithfulness for fifty, sixty, or even 70 years—how can they be of doubtful mind after this? What? Has your God been true for 70 years and can you not trust Him a few more days? Has He brought you to 75 and can you not trust Him the few months more that you are to remain in the wilderness? Call to remembrance the days of old, the love of His heart and the might of His arm when He came to your rescue and took you out of the deep waters, and set your feet upon a rock, and established your goings! He is still the same God. Therefore, when your soul faints within you, remember the Lord and you will be comforted.

Thus I have shown you the saint's plight and the saint's resort. Now observe *the success of his prayer*. Jonah was so comforted with the thoughts of God that he began to pray and his prayer was not drowned in the water, nor choked in the fish's belly—neither was it held captive by the weeds that were about his head, but up it went like an electric flash, through waves, through clouds, beyond the stars, up to the Throne of God—and down came the answer like a return message! Nothing can destroy or detain a real prayer. Its flight to the Throne of God is swift and certain. God the Holy Spirit writes our prayers, God the Son presents our prayers and God the Father accepts our prayers—and with the whole Trinity to help us in it, what cannot prayer perform? I may be speaking to some who are under very severe trials—I feel persuaded that I am—let me beg them to take this promise to themselves as their own. And I pray God the Holy Spirit to lay it home to their hearts and make it theirs, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” God will not fail you though you fail yourself! Though you faint, He faints not, neither is weary. Lift up your cry and He will lift up His hand. Go to your knees, you are strongest there! Resort to your chamber and it shall be to you none other than the gate of Heaven. Tell your God your grief—heavy to you, it will be light enough to Him. Dilemmas will all be plain to His wisdom and difficulties will vanish before His strength! Oh, tell it not in Gath that Israel cannot trust in God! Publish it not in the streets of Askelon that trouble can dismay those who lean upon the eternal arm! With Jehovah in the van, O hosts of Israel, dare you fear? “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of

Jacob is our refuge.” What man’s heart shall quail, or what soul shall faint? “Lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees.” Say unto the feeble in heart, “Be strong. Fear not. God is with you. He will help you, and that right early.”

II. Now we must change the subject altogether. Having addressed the people of God, we feel very anxious to speak to those concerning whom the Lord has designs of love, but who are not yet made manifest. THE SINNER, WHEN GOD COMES TO DEAL WITH HIM, IS BROUGHT INTO THE SAME PLIGHT AS JONAH. His soul faints in him. What does that show?

It shows very much what we are glad to see. When a man’s soul faints within him, it is clear that *his carelessness is gone*. He used to take things very easily and as long as he could make merry from day to day, what cared he about Heaven or Hell? The preacher’s warnings were to him so much rant and his earnestness fanaticism! But now the man feels an arrow sticking in his own loins and he knows that there is a reality in sin—it is to him in very deed an evil and a bitter thing. Now the cup of gall is put to his own lips and he feels the poison in his own veins. His heart faints within him and he remains careless no longer—which is no small gain in the preacher’s estimation!

His faintness also shows that *he will be self-righteous no longer*. Once he hoped he was as good as other people and perhaps a little better. And for all that he could see, he was every whit as excellent as the saints themselves. They might speak about their trusting in Jesus Christ, but he was working for himself and expected by his regular habits to win as good a place in the world to come as the best of Believers! Ah, but now God has dealt with him and let the daylight into his soul and he sees that his gold and silver are cankered, and that his fair linen is filthy and worm-eaten! He discovers that his righteousnesses are as filthy rags and that he must have something better than the works of the Law to trust in, or he must perish. So far so good. Things are hopeful when there is no more self-reliance left in the sinner. The worst of human nature is that though it cannot lift a finger for its own salvation, it thinks it can do it all—and though its only place is the place of death and it is a mercy when it comes to burial, yet that same human nature is so proud that it would, if it could, be its own redeemer! When God make man’s conscience a target for His fiery arrows, then straightway he feels that his life is no longer in him and that he can do nothing. And he cries out, “God be merciful to me.” Oh, that the two-edged sword of the Gospel would slay all our spiritual self-reliance and lay us in the dust at the feet of the Crucified Savior!

Perhaps I speak to some who faint because, though they have given up all self-righteousness now, and relinquished all self-dependence, they yet *have not laid hold upon Christ and His salvation*. “I have been trying to believe,” says one, “but I cannot succeed.” Well do I remember the time when I labored to believe. It is a strange way of putting it, yet so it was. When I wished to believe, and longed to trust, I found I could not. It

seemed to me that the way to Heaven by Christ's righteousness was as difficult as the way to Heaven by my own, and that I could as soon get to Heaven by Sinai as by Calvary. I could do nothing—I could neither repent nor believe. I fainted with despair, feeling as if I must be lost despite the Gospel, and forever driven from Jehovah's Presence, even though Christ had died. Ah, I am not sorry if you also have come to this condition! The way to the door of faith is through the gate of self-despair. Till you have seen your last hope destroyed, you will never look to Christ for all things, and yet you will never be saved until you do—for God has laid no help on you, He has laid help upon One that is mighty, even Jesus only, who is the sole Savior of sinners. Here, then, we have before us the sinner's plight—and I will venture to call it, though it is a very wretched one, a very blessed one—and I heartily wish that every unconverted man were brought into such a condition that his soul fainted within him.

Now hear the Gospel! Incline your ear to it and you shall live! The way of salvation to you is the way which Jonah took. When his soul fainted, he remembered the Lord. I beseech you, by the living God, to remember the Lord! And if you ask me what it is you should remember, I will tell you in a few words. Remember the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of sinners. Remember Him who suffered in the place of the guilty. Know assuredly that God has visited upon Him the transgressions of His people. Now, the sufferings of such an One as Jesus must have power to cleanse away sins. He is God and if He deigns to die, there must be such merit in His death that He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. You are bidden, at this moment, in God's name, to trust your soul in those hands that were nailed to the Cross and rest your life with Him who poured out His soul unto death that you might live! In yourself you may well despair, but remembering His name, coupled with the names of Gethsemane and Golgotha—remembering all His pains, griefs and unutterable woes—remembering these by faith, there shall be salvation for you at this moment! Do I hear you sigh, "Oh, but I have nothing good within me"? Know, then, that all good is in Him for you—and go to Him for it. "But I am unworthy." He is worthy—go to Him for worthiness. "But I do not feel as I should." He felt as He should—go to Him for all that you should feel. If you bring a rusty farthing of your own, God will not have it—it would only insult the precious gold of Ophir which Jesus freely gives you—if He should allow your cankered counterfeits to be mixed therewith. Away with your filthy rags! Would you add them to the spotless garment which Christ has woven? The Apostle says our best works are dross and dung if we venture to put them side by side with the merits of our Redeemer! None but Jesus can save—remember Him and live!

"But," says one, "I have tried to remember the Lord. But I find that while I can trust Him to pardon my sins, yet I have such a hard heart and so many temptations, and I am so weak for all that is good, that I still despair." Listen, then, yet again—remember the Lord. At this time remember the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended on high, the Holy Spirit was given and He has never been recalled. The Holy Spirit is here in this

assembly right now, and in the Holy Spirit is your hope against indwelling sin! You complain that you cannot pray, but the Spirit helps our infirmities. You mourn that you cannot believe, but faith is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. A tender heart, a penitential frame of mind, a right spirit—these are the works of the Holy Spirit in you! You can do nothing, but the Holy Spirit can work everything in you! Give yourself up to those dear hands that were pierced, and the power of the Holy Spirit shall come upon you! A new heart will He give you and a right spirit will He put within you. You shall learn His statutes and walk in His ways. Everything is provided for the Believer that He can possibly need. O young Man, anxious to be saved, the salvation of Jesus Christ precisely suits your case! O seeking Soul, whatever it is you crave to make you fit to dwell where God is forever, it is all to be had and to be had for the asking, for it is all provided in the Covenant of Grace! And if you will remember Jesus the Lord, and the Holy Spirit—the Indweller who renews the mind—you will be cheered and comforted!

Yet let me not forget another Person of the sacred Majesty of Heaven—remember the Father as well as the Son and the Spirit! And let me help you to remember Him. You, trembling Sinner, must not think of God as severe or stern, for He is Love. Would you be glad to be saved? He will be still more glad to save you! Do you wish to return to your God tonight? Your God already meets you and bids you come! Would you be pardoned? The absolution is on His lips! Would you be cleansed? The Fountain of atoning blood was filled by His mercy and filled for all who believe in His Son! Come and welcome, come and welcome! The child is glad to be forgiven, but the Father is still more glad to forgive. Jehovah's melting heart yearns to clasp His Ephraim to His breast. Seek Him at once, poor Souls, and you shall not find Him hard and cold, but waiting to be gracious, ready to forgive, a God delighting in mercy! If you can thus remember God, the Son, the Spirit and the Father, though your soul faints within you, you may be encouraged.

And so I close by bidding you, if such is the case, to imitate Jonah's example and send up a prayer to Heaven, for it will come up even to God's holy Temple. Jonah had no prayer book and you need none. God the Holy Spirit can put more living prayer into half-a-dozen words of your own than you could get out of a ton weight of paper prayers! Jonah's prayer was not notable for its words. The fish's belly was not the place for picked phrases, nor for long-winded orations. We do not believe that he offered a long prayer, either, but it came right up from his heart and flew straight up to Heaven. It was shot by the strong bow of intense desire and agony of soul and, therefore, it speeded its way to the Throne of the Most High. If you would now pray, never mind your words—it is the soul of prayer that God accepts. If you would be saved, go to your chamber and rise not from your knees till the Lord has heard you. Yes, where you now are let your souls pour out themselves before God and faith in Jesus will give you immediate salvation!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JONAH 2.**

Verse 1. *Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly.* What a strange place for prayer! Surely this is the only prayer that ever went up to God out of a fish's belly! Jonah found himself alive—that was the surprising thing, that he was alive in the belly of a fish—and because he was alive, he began to pray. It is such a wonder that some people here should continue to live that they ought to begin to pray. If you live with death so near and in so great peril, and yet you do not pray, what is to become of you? This prayer of Jonah is very remarkable because it is not a prayer at all in the sense in which we usually apply the word to petition and supplication. If you read the prayer through, you will see that it is almost all thanksgiving—and the best prayer in all the world is a prayer that is full of thankfulness. We praise the Lord for what He has done for us, and thus we do, in effect, ask Him to perfect the work which He has begun. He has delivered us, so we bless His holy name and by implication we beseech Him to deliver us. Notice that it says here, “Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God.” He was a runaway—he had tried to escape from the Presence of God—yet the Lord was still his God. God will not lose any of His people—even if, like Jonah, they are in the belly of a fish, Jehovah is still their God—“Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly.”

2. *And said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the LORD, and He heard me.* You see that this is not praying, it is telling the Lord what He had done for His disobedient servant. Jonah had prayed, and the Lord had heard him, yet he was still in the fish's belly. Unbelief would have said, “You have lived so long, Jonah, but you cannot expect to live to get out of this dreary, damp, fetid prison.” Ah, but faith is out of prison even while she is in it! Faith begins to tell what God has done before the great work is actually accomplished! So Jonah said, “I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me.”

2. *Out of the belly of Hell cried I, and You heard my voice.* He was like a man in the unseen world among the dead. He felt that he was condemned and cast away, yet God had heard him, and now he sings about it in the belly of the fish. No other fish that ever lived had a live man inside him singing praises unto God!

3. *For You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas.* The word Jonah used implies that God had violently cast him away into the deep. “Cast me not off,” prayed David, but here is a man who says that God did cast him out like a thing flung overboard into the vast deep. “You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas.”

3. *And the floods compassed me about.* “They rolled all over me, beneath me, above me, around me. The floods compassed me about.”

3. *All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.* Jonah had evidently read his Bible. At least he had read the 42nd Psalm, for he quotes it here. It is a blessed thing to have the Bible in your mind and heart so that wherever you may be, you do not need to turn to the Book

because you have the Book inside you! Here is a man inside a fish with a Book inside of him—and it was the Book inside of him that brought him out from the fish again!

4. *Then I said, I am cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.* What grand faith Job displayed when he said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” And here is another splendid manifestation of faith, “I said, I am cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.’ If God does not look at me, I will still look towards the place where He dwells. As I am being flung away from Him, I will give one more look towards His holy Temple.”

6. *The waters compassed me about, even to the soul.* They seemed to get right into his spirit—his heart became waterlogged. “The waters compassed me about, even to the soul.”

6. *The depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.* Like his winding-sheet—as if the cerements of the grave were wrapped about his mouth, ears and eyes—and he was consigned to a living tomb. This narrative is a graphic description of the natural motion of the great fish which had swallowed Jonah. When the fish found this strange being inside him, the first thing that he did was to plunge as deep as he could into the waters. You will see that Jonah did go down very deep, indeed. The next thing was for the fish to make for the weeds—as certain creatures eat weeds to cure them when they feel very ill, this fish went off to the weedy places to see if he could get a cure for this new complaint of a man inside him.

6. *I went down to the bottoms of the mountains.* To the very roots and foundations of the mountains, where the big jagged rocks made huge buttresses for the hills above. “I went down to the bottom of the mountains.”

6. *The earth with her bars was about me forever.* Down went the fish, as deep as he could go! And, of course, down went Jonah, too, and he might well imagine that he was in a vast prison from which there was no way of escape!

6. *Yet have You brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.* And, dear Friend, God can bring you up, however low you may have gone! Though in your own feelings, you feel as if you had gone so low that you could not go any lower, God can, in answer to prayer, bring you up again. O despairing one, take heart and be comforted by this story of Jonah! God is dealing with you as He was with him. There may be a great fish, but there is a great God as well. There may be a deep seas, but there is an almighty God to bring you up out of it!

7. *When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD.* It is a blessed memory that serves us faithfully in a fainting fit. Mostly, when the heart faints, the memory fails, but Jonah remembered the Lord when his soul fainted within him.

7. *And my prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple.* Think of Jonah’s prayer going right within the veil, and reaching the ear and heart of God in His holy Temple. He said that he was cast out of God’s sight,

yet his prayer went into God's Temple. Oh, the prevalence of a bold believing prayer! "My prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple."

8. *They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.* If you trust anywhere but in God, you will run away from your own mercy. God is the only really merciful One who can always help you. But if you trust in your own righteousness, if you trust in priestcraft, if you trust in any superstition, you are observing lying vanities and forsaking your own mercy! God is the source of your mercy—do not run away from Him to anyone or anything else.

9. *But I will sacrifice unto You.* "I long to do so. I cannot do it just now, but I would if I could. And I will do it when You shall grant me deliverance from my present peril."

9. *With the voice of thanksgiving, I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.* That is one of the grandest utterances that any man ever made! "SALVATION!" Write it in capital letters. It is a very emphatic word in the Hebrew and I might read it, "Mighty salvation is of Jehovah." This is real, old-fashioned Calvinistic Doctrine spoken centuries before John Calvin was born! The whale could not endure it and he turned Jonah out and directly Jonah said, "Salvation is of the Lord." The world does not like that Doctrine and there are many professing Christians who do not like it. They say, "Salvation is of man's free will! Salvation is of the works of the Law! Salvation is of rites and ceremonies" and so on. But we say, with Jonah, "Salvation is of the Lord." He works it from beginning to end and, therefore, He must have all the praise for it forever and ever!

10. *And the LORD spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.* God has only to speak and even sea monsters obey Him! I know not how He spoke to the fish. I do not know how to talk to a fish, but God does. And as the Lord could speak to that fish, He can speak to any sinner here! However far you may have gone from all that is good, He who spoke to that great fish and made it disgorge the Prophet Jonah, can speak to you, and then you will give up your sins as the whale gave up Jonah! God grant that it may be so this very hour! That is the prayer of an ancient mariner—may it be ours, as far as it is suited to our circumstances—and may we be brought by God's Grace to cry with Jonah, "Salvation is of the Lord"!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE FAINTING SOUL REVIVED

NO. 3510

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1916.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.”
Jonah 2:7.***

WHEN man was first made, there was no fear of his forgetting God for it was his highest privilege and delight to have communion with his Maker. “The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day,” and Adam was privileged to hold fellowship with God, closer, perhaps, than even the angels had in Heaven. But the spell of that sacred harmony was rudely broken by man’s disobedience and his dreadful fall! Ever since our first parent tasted of the forbidden fruit, which brought death and all its train of woes into our world, his mortal race has been naturally prone to forget God. The evil propensities of flesh and blood have made it impossible to persuade man to remember his Creator! The complaint of God against the Jews is true as an indictment against the whole human family. “Hear, O Heaven, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” Man is foolish—he flies from the highest good! Man is wicked—he turns his back upon supreme holiness! Man is worldly—he forgets the Kingdom of God and the world to come. Man is willful—he follows his own vain imaginations and, with head-strong rebellion, opposes himself to his God, that he may pursue his own wayward course and gratify his wanton passions!

To convince a man of his error, to arrest him in his evil pursuits, to reclaim him to the paths of righteousness—this is seldom accomplished without dire trouble and deep affliction. Some men, it is true, are brought to God by gentle means—they are drawn by soft but mighty bonds. Still, a much larger class of persons remains upon whom these silken cords would exert no influence. They must not be handled softly, but must be dealt with heavily. The picklock will never open their hearts—there must be the crowbar, or even the battering ram to give a furious cannonade. Some hearts can never be captured for God and for Truth except by storm. Sword in hand, God’s Law must scale the ramparts! With thundering report, God’s Word must dash down the walls of their confidence and make breach after breach in the bastions of their pride, but even then they will fight it out and never yield, until, driven to an awful extremity, they see that they must either yield at once, or else be lost forever!

It is with such persons that I now particularly want to deal. There are those who have forgotten God after having once known Him—and they are not likely to be brought back without great trouble. And there are others who never did know God and they never will enquire after Him unless they are driven to their wits' end by calamity, as when a great famine in the land where he dwelt compelled the prodigal for very lack of bread to seek his father's house. So I have first to remonstrate—

I. WITH THE BACKSLIDER.

Let me, however, before I go into the matter with you, describe a little more minutely the individuals I wish to address. There is no need to call out your names—it will suffice if we portray your character and describe your conduct. There are some of you who used to be members of Christian Churches years ago, but you have gradually declined and so reckless has your career at length become, that it is a wonder that you have not utterly perished in your sin! You seemed to run well on the outset, and for a time you held on in the way, but where are you now? Well, you happen at this present time to be in God's House and I trust that God's own hour has come, when He will meet you and bring you back. What we have to say of Jonah, I do entreat you to apply to yourselves. If the cap seems to fit you, put it on and wear it, even though it should be a fool's cap—wear it till you are ashamed of yourselves, and are led to confess your folly before the God who is able to remove it—and to make you wise unto salvation!

Observe, dear Friends, that though Jonah remembered the Lord, it was not till he got into the whale's belly, nor even then, till his soul fainted within him! He did not remember the Lord all the time he was going down to Joppa to find a ship, nor yet when he got on board that ship. His Master had said to him, "Jonah, go to Nineveh," but Jonah was a strong-willed, head-strong fellow. Though a true servant of God and a Prophet, yet he fled from the Presence of the Lord. To Nineveh, he resolved within himself, he would not go! He could foresee no honor to himself out of the journey, no increase of his own reputation, no deference that would come to him among those proud Assyrians, so, in direct defiance of the Divine Command, he set off to Joppa, to take a ship and to flee from God's Presence. Into the ship he got, paid the fare, and went sallying down the sea to go to Tarshish. And all this while he never thought of God.

Not unlikely in this vast assembly there may be a woman who used to be a member of a Christian Church, but she married an ungodly man—after that there was no going to the House of God, much less anything like keeping up her church membership! The shop was kept open on Sunday, or there was a pleasure party to be entertained at home, or an excursion taken into the country. All this seemed very pleasant. The disquietude of conscience she might feel at first wore off as habit made it familiar, until, year after year, this woman, who once seemed to be a true servant of Christ, lives in carelessness and indifference, not to say profanity, with hardly any thoughts of God! Perhaps she has not quite given

up prayer—she could not absolutely become an enemy of Christ, or entertain a dislike to His people—still, God was forgotten. So long as the business prospered, the husband was in good health and the world smiled, God was never thought of.

Can I be mistaken in supposing that there is a man here who in his youth was a loud talker, a vehement professor of religion and a companion of those that fear the Lord? But after a time there seemed to be a way of getting money rather faster than the ordinary methods of honest labor or simple merchandise, so he entered into a speculation which soon ate out the vitals of his piety. His new projects involved new companions—in their fellowship he stifled his old convictions and, as he would not play the hypocrite, he ceased to make any profession at all! Perhaps months have passed since he has been in a place of worship. Even now he would rather be unrecognized, for he has only come here because a friend from the country asked his company to see the place and to hear the preacher. Ah, my dear Sir, it is strange, indeed, if you are a child of God, that you could have walked so contrary to God as you have. Yet so did Jonah. Do I, then, hold up his case before your eyes to comfort you? No, but let me hope that you will apply the bitter rebuke to your own soul and be led to do as Jonah did. All the while the ship sailed smoothly over the sea, Jonah forgot his God. You could not have distinguished him from the worst heathen on board! He was just as bad as they were. Yet was there a spark of fire among the embers, which God, in due time, fanned into a flame. Happy for you if this better part of his experience should tally with your own!

Such, too, was Jonah's blank forgetfulness, that he does not appear to have thought upon his God *all the while the storm raged*, the billows rolled and the ship was tossed with tempest. The poor heathen sailors were all on their knees crying for mercy, but Jonah was asleep in the vessel, till the superstitious captain, himself, was amazed at his apathy! "What do you mean, O sleeper! Do you not care that we all perish?" He went down and upbraided him, and asked him how it was that he could sleep while the passengers and crew were all crying! "Arise," he said, "and call upon your God." He was stirred up to his danger and his duty, even by a heathen! Now maybe there are some here who have had a host of troubles. Is your husband dead? Are you a lone woman with a family to provide for? Or are you a widower, looking on your children with pity, whom you once regarded with a homely pride? Possibly you may have another form of trial. Your business has gone bad—you expected to have realized large profits by it—but you encountered loss upon loss, till your little capital has been scattered. Still, all this while you have not thought about God. Perhaps child after child has been taken from you and yet you have not remembered God. Is it really so that the Lord loves you and, because He loves you, therefore chastens you? Mark my word, you will continue to suffer loss upon loss till you have lost all you have and all you count dear—and you will be brought to death's door—but He will save you at last! If you ever were His, He never will let you sink into Hell!

But, oh, it will be hard work for you to get to Heaven! You will be saved, but it will be so as by fire. You will be saved as by the skin of your teeth—barely saved—and the way in which you are saved will be a most terrible one to you. Oh, Friend, I wish you would turn while God is smiting you gently, for know of a certainty if rods will not do, He will come to scourges! And if the scourge will not do, He will take the knife—and if the knife will not do, He will take the sword—and you shall have to feel it, for, as sure as God is God, He will never lose His child! He will cut that child, as it were, into pieces, but He will save his soul! He will undermine your constitution by disease, and make you toss upon the bed of anguish, but He will bring you back! Oh, that you had Grace to come back by gentler means before these terrible actions are tried!

So, then, Jonah did not think of God all this time. Now at length the vessel begins to creak, and seems as if she must go to pieces. Then they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah. He is about to be thrown into the sea. At that moment a pair of huge jaws open wide, shut again, and swallow him up. “Where am I now?” says Jonah, as he is taken down deep by the motions of this monstrous fish, till the weeds come into the fish and wrap about his head and his life is only preserved by a miracle. Then, oh, *then* Jonah thinks upon his God! “When my soul fainted within me.” Now why did his soul faint within him? Was it not because he thought, “Now I am in a hopeless case. I shall never come out of this. It is a wonder I am not drowned—it is a marvel I was not snapped in pieces by those huge jaws. What a hopeless case I am in! I will but linger a little while, then I must perish in this horrible prison of a whale’s belly.” I dare say he thought that never was man in such a plight before—never a person that was alive inside a fish! And how comfortless he must have felt with nothing but the cold deep around him. Instead of garments, weeds were wrapped about his head. How his heart throbbed, and his head ached, with no cheer, no light, no friendly voice, no succor, no help—far away from dry land, out on the boundless deep, without a comrade to sympathize with his strange plight!

Now when a child of God goes astray, it is not at all unusual for God to bring him into just such a state as that, a condition in which he cannot help himself—*forlorn and friendless*—with no one who can relieve or minister to him. Meanwhile this dreary thought will always haunt his mind, “I brought it all upon myself!” Have you not procured this unto yourself? Like a woman who has left her husband’s house, deserted her home and betrayed her kind and tender protector, what fruit can she expect to reap of her wickedness? When she is ready to starve, when the wind blows through her tattered raiment, when her face is swollen with weeping and her soul is full of anguish, she has only herself to upbraid, as she cries, “I have brought this upon myself! Would God I had never left my cheerful homestead, however humble the lodgings might have been. Would God I had never deserted the husband who loved me and spread his protection over me, however roughly he sometimes spoke! Oh, that I had been more scrupulously obedient and less prone to discon-

tent!" The afterthought of sin—I think they call it remorse. Thus it was that Jonah thought upon his God when the shame of his transgressions overwhelmed him!

Oh, how merciful our God is to allow us to think about Him and turn to Him when in so pitiable a plight! "Yes," said a tradesman once to a customer for whose favors he felt little cause to be grateful, "I know why you come to me—you have been to every other shop in the town for the article you require, and you could not obtain it—and now you come back to me whom you had no good cause ever to leave. I shall not serve you." This is *not* how the Lord speaks to us. He does not resent our ingratitude. "My child, My poor child," He says, "though you have gone and spent your substance. Though you have been feeding swine. Though you are all black and foul and filthy, yet you are still My dear child and My heart yearns towards you." Without a word of rebuke, or even a taunting look, as soon as ever a poor sinner comes back to the Father's house, the Father's arms are round about his neck and the kiss of pardon is pressed on his cheek. "I remember you well," He says, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities."

Now if there is a backslider here—and I know there are several—I can only hope that God will bring you into Jonah's peril. You shall have no pity from me if He does! I will rather be thankful to God that He has brought you there, because I shall know, then, that He has some designs of love towards you! But when you get into the regions of despair, do as Jonah did—think upon your God! What? Do any of you object? Do you imagine that to think about God would make you worse? Well, think that you were once His child, and think again that He has found you out, and knows where you are! Jonah felt that God knew where he was, because He had sent the fish. God knows your whereabouts, my good woman! He knows what quarters you are now in, my fellow sinner! Remember, too, that you are yet alive! What a wonder it is that you are still permitted to hear the voice which says, "Return, return, oh backslider, return!" God is Immutable—He cannot change. His Covenant is steadfast—He will not alter it. If He has loved you once, He loves you now. If He bought you, He will have you! Come back to Him, then! He is still your Husband. Return! Return! He is still your Father—return! Return! But, oh, my Hearer, perhaps you have no pretensions to be a child of His! Perhaps you may have played the hypocrite and made a profession in your own strength. You turned back from the company of those who fear the Lord because you never were truly converted! If it is so, let the mercy which God shows to sinners embolden you to cry to Him! And may He break you to pieces now with the hammer of His Word. So may He save you and so shall His praise be exceedingly great in your salvation!

Though I have tried thus to reach the backslider, it is likely enough that I have missed my mark, honest as my intention has been. Oh, it seems so dreadful that any of you should perish in your sins who know the way of escape! Some of you were candled on the knees of piety. There are those now in Heaven who look down upon you and could they weep,

you might feel their tears dropping on your brow! You know very well that time was when the hope of a better world yielded you some kind of comfort and joy. You do not think, at any rate, that you were feigning piety then, but you did account yourself a sinner! By the compassion of the Most High, by the love of God, I pray you stop! Do not drink the cup of devils after having drank the cup of the Lord, and give not that soul to damnation which once seemed to bid fair for salvation! Eternal life is too rich a prize to trifle with! May the Spirit of God do what I cannot! May He send home these things to the persons for whom they are intended!

And now we have, in the second place, to deal with the careless, the thoughtless, the profligate, with—

II. THOSE WHO NEVER WERE AWAKENED—moral or immoral in the world's reckoning. Jonah did not remember God till his soul fainted within him. And the reckless sinner, as a rule, never does remember God till under the stress of law, or the distress of pain and penalty, *his* soul is ready to faint within him. Now I hope some of you will be brought to feel this faintness.

What kind of faintness do persons who are under the sacred discipline of the Spirit of God generally feel?

There is faintness of *horror at their present condition*. I can imagine a person lying down on the edge of a cliff and falling asleep. On suddenly waking up, having moved during his sleep, he finds himself within an inch of the precipice and looks down and sees, far beneath him, the jagged rocks and the boiling sea. How his nerves would quiver as he realized his position and his jeopardy! Many a sinner has thus opened his eyes to discern his terrible hazard. He has suddenly awakened to find that he is on the brink of eternal wrath, standing where an angry God is waving a dreadful sword and certain to plunge it into his heart before long! Every unconverted person here is balanced over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten! He is hanging over the jaws of Hell by one rope—and the strands of that rope are snapping every moment! If a man does but apprehend this and feels it, I do not wonder that he faints.

Faintness, moreover, arises from *a dread of horrors yet to come*. Who can conceive the heart-sinking of those poor passengers on board that vessel which so lately foundered in the open sea, at the prospect of being swallowed up alive, and sinking they knew not where! It would be no easy thing, one would think, to keep from fainting at a time when such a doom was imminent. So when God awakens the soul by the noise of the tempest, it looks out and sees the ocean of Divine Wrath about to engulf it. The cries of lost spirits appall it and it says to itself, "I shall soon mingle with those shrieks! My voice will aid the wailings of their dolorous company before long! I shall be driven from His Presence with a fiery sword at my heels before many hours are over." Then the soul faints with alarm at the thought of judgment to come.

Faint, too, is the soul of the sinner through a *sense of weakness*. "I cannot do anything to avert the catastrophe" seems to be the leading idea

of a person when he has fainted. Over the awakened sinner there comes this sense of weakness. When a sinner does not know himself, he thinks that being saved is the easiest thing in the world. He supposes that to come to Christ to get peace is a matter that can be done just as readily as one snaps his fingers! But when God begins to deal with him, he says, "I would believe, but I cannot!" And he cries out, "Oh, God, I find that faith is as impossible to me as keeping Your Law! Help me!" Once he thought he could reform himself and become as holy as an angel, but now he can do nothing, and he cries out for very faintness, "Oh, God, what a poor, helpless, shiftless creature I am!"

And then there will sometimes come over him faintness of such a kind as I must call *horrible*. Well do I remember when I was in that state! I thought I would give up prayer because it seemed of no use to pray, and yet I could not help praying! I must pray and yet I felt that I did not pray. I thought I would not go to hear the Gospel anymore—there was nothing in it for me—and yet there was a fascination about the preaching of the Gospel that made me go and hear it! I heard that Christ was very gracious to sinners, but I could not believe that He would be gracious to me. Little did it matter whether I heard a promise or a threat. I liked the threats best. Threats appeared to me to be just what I deserved and they provoked some kind of emotion in my breast. But when I heard a promise I shuddered with a gloomy feeling that it was of no use to me—I felt condemned already. The pains of Hell got hold upon me, so tortured was my soul with the forebodings of an endless doom!

I heard, the other day, of a young minister becoming an infidel, and I prayed for him. What do you think was the burden of my petition? I prayed *that God would make him feel the weight of His hand*, for I cannot imagine that a man who has once felt the weight of God's hand can ever afterwards doubt His Being, His Sovereignty, or His Power! Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, there is such a thing as an unutterable anguish a man could not long endure without becoming absolutely insane—and which God makes some people feel in order to crush their love of sin, to purge them of their self-righteousness—and bring them to a sense of their dependence on Him! Some men can never be brought in any other way. I may be addressing the patients I am describing. I sincerely hope I am. You are feeling God's hand. The whole weight of it rests upon you—and under it you are crushed—as a moth is crushed beneath one's finger. Now I have a message from God for you. When Jonah was in your case, he remembered his God. Tell me, what say you, poor heart—what say you to remembering your God?

The case I am going to describe is not exactly that of John Newton, but it is from his experience that I gather my picture. There is a young man with a very good father, a holy father. As the young man grows up, he does not like his trade—he cannot bear it, so he says to his father, "While I succumb to your government, I mean to have my own way. Other people enjoy themselves and so will I. And as I cannot do it under your roof, I will follow my fancy elsewhere." He goes to sea. When he is at sea,

he discovers that all is not quite to his taste—the work he has to do is very different from what he had been accustomed to. Still, he doesn't flinch. At the first port he reaches, he gives loose to his passions. "Ah," says he, "this is a jolly life! This is far better than being at home with my father, and being kept tied to my mother's apron strings all my days! I say a merry life is the thing to suit me, Sir!" He goes on board again, and wherever the vessel puts in, each port becomes an outlet for his vices. He is a rare boy to swear and drink, and when he comes back to England he has no words too bitter to utter against religion in general, and against his father's scruples of conscience in particular! It so happens that one day there comes on a dreadful storm. He has to take a long spell at the pumps and when that is over, he must begin to pump again, for the ship is ready to founder and every man must keep hard at it hour after hour. There is a driving wind and a heavy tempest. At last they are told that nothing can save them—there are breakers ahead, and the vessel will be on shore! He lashes himself to the mast and floats about all night, and the next day, and the next, with faint hope of life. He has some twitches of conscience now—he cannot help thinking of his father and mother. However, he is not going to be broken down by a trifle. He has a hard heart and he will not give way yet. He is crashed on shore and finds himself among a barbarous people. He is taken care of by the barbarians—they give him food, albeit his meal is scant—and he is presently set to work as a slave. His master proves harsh to him and his master's wife especially cruel. He gets but little to eat and he is often beaten. Still, he bears up, and hopes for better days. But, half-starved and hard worked, his bodily health and his mental energy are reduced to a low degree. No marvel that fever overtakes him. Who has he to nurse him? What friend to care for him? The people treat him as a dog and take no notice of him. He can neither stir nor move. In vain, he pines for a drop of water in the dead of the night. He feels that he must die of thirst. He lifts his voice, but there is nobody to hear him. To his piteous appeal there is no answer. Then it is he thinks, "Oh, God, if I might but get back to my father!" Then it is, when he is at the last extremity, that he thinks of home.

Now what happened in the case of John Newton will happen, and has happened, in the case of many a sinner. He never would come back to God, but at last he felt that it was no use trying anywhere else. He was driven to utter desperation. In this dilemma his heart said, "Oh, that I might find the Lord." Listen, now, I will tell you a tale. A lot of sailors were going to sea. When about to start, the owner said, "There! I have bought a lifeboat. Put it on board." They reply, "No, never! We don't believe in lifeboats! They are new-fangled things. We do not understand them and we shall never use one." "Put it on board and let it abide there," says the captain. "Well, Captain," says the boatswain, "a tom fool of a boat—isn't it? I cannot think what the owner meant by putting such a thing as this on board." Old tars, as they walk along the deck say to themselves, "Ah, I never saw such a thing in all my life as that! Think of old Ben Bolt taking a lifeboat with him! Don't believe in such gimcracks!"

Presently a stiff breeze springs up, it comes to a gale—a hurricane—a perfect tornado! Now let down the lifeboat, Captain. “No, no, no! Nonsense!” Let down the lifeboat! No, the other boats got out, but they are stove in, one after another, and capsized. They bring out another—she cannot ride out the storm. There she goes, right up on the crest of the waves and she has gone over, bottom uppermost! It is all over with them! “What shall be do, Captain?” “Try the lifeboat, Boatswain.” Just so. When every spar is gone, when every other boat is washed overboard, and when the ship is going down, they will take to the lifeboat! So be it. The Lord wash all your boats overboard. May it please God to wreck your vessel! May He shiver every timber, and make you take to the lifeboat. I fear some of you will never take counsel till you reach the crisis! May there come, then, such a storm that you will be driven to take to Christ! That done there is no storm you need ever fear. That done, let the loudest tempest roar, you are safe! You have Christ in the vessel with you!

Two or three more words, and I have done. God has been pleased to give His dear Son, His Only-Begotten Son, to die a most dreadful death, not for righteous ones, but for sinners! Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. If you are a sinner, you are the sort of person Christ came to save. If you are a lost one, you are the sort of man that Jesus Christ came to seek. Let your present sorrow comfort you because it is an indication that you are the kind of person that Christ will bless! Let your despair deliver you from despair, for when you despair there is hope for you. When you can do nothing, God will do everything! When you are empty of your own conceits, there is room for Christ to enter your heart. When you are stripped, Christ’s garments are provided for you. When you are hungry, the Bread that comes down from Heaven is provided for you. When you are thirsty, the Water of Life is yours. Let this broken-heartedness, this terror, this alarm, this faintness, this weakness of yours only lead you to say, “I am such as Christ invited to Himself. I will go to Him, and if I perish, I will perish only there.” And if you trust Jesus, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand. May you trust him here and now! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14:1-20.**

This is a Chapter which I suppose most of us know by heart, full of comfort, a very river of delight.

Remember that our Lord spoke this to His own beloved ones—to the inner circle. It was not addressed to the general public. It is not a sermon to the world. It is a discourse to those who had lived with Him and were now sorrowing because He was about to leave them by a cruel death. Thus He begins—

1. *Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.* “You have believed in God, whom you have never seen. Believe in Me when you cannot see Me. Believe that I still Am—that I still am working

for your good. You have believed in God, though He has not manifested Himself to you in His Person as I have done. Now when I am no longer seen of you, believe in Me as you believe in the invisible God.” It is well for us to have the same faith in Christ that we have in the Everlasting God. This is the cure for our heart trouble. You are sure to be troubled in heart unless you have much faith in God. “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me.”

2. *In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* Our Lord was going away, but He was going away with a purpose, and a grand purpose, too—a purpose which had to do with the everlasting future of His beloved ones. “I go to prepare a place for you.”

3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.* And He will come again, Beloved. That is our grandest hope! We are looking for His coming. It is very sweet to know that we shall be forever with the Lord if we die before His coming, but still, the hope of God’s people is the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead—His taking to Himself all His redeemed to be forever with Him!

4. *And where I go, you know, and the way you know.* We know where Christ has gone. Every step we can follow. The way we know. It always reconciles us to a friend’s going away if we know where he has gone—know all about him. A mother tells me that she has missed her boy, now, for 12 months and never heard from him. That is sorrow, but when we know that our son has gone to the other side of the world, and we know why he has gone, and where he has gone, and what is coming of it, we are greatly comforted. So Jesus says, “Where I go, you know, and the way you know.”

5. *Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where You go; and how can we know the way?* There is always somebody who has not learned the lesson. I am afraid that it is not one Thomas, but a great many Thomases who still have to say, “We know not.” Although Christ Himself is the Teacher, we are always poor learners.

6. *Jesus said unto Him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me.* There is nothing good except by Christ. They who hate Christ very soon hate God. They get rid of the Christ of the Gospel and they soon get rid of God out of Creation, too, and there is no coming to the Father in any way or fashion except by Christ. He has gone to the Father, but He is also the way to the Father!

7, 8. *If you had known Me, you would have known My Father, also, and from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him. Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us.* There is a Philip as well as a Thomas. It does not seem that even with Christ for a Teacher, we would learn much without the Holy Spirit. The greatest blessing, after all, is not the bodily Presence of the Savior, though we learn something from that, but it is the indwelling and the teaching of the Holy Spirit which we most of all need!

9-11. *Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, then, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake.* The Eternal Union between Christ and the Father should never be forgotten by us. He seems to sink Himself, but the well-beloved Son will have it that His words are not His own, but come from the Father. I cannot help remarking how different this is from some who profess to be the ministers of Christ. They must be original! They must be great thinkers! Every man nowadays makes his own gospel, but the Savior was no original—the grandest of all intellects and yet He says, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very work’s sake.”

12. *Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father.* While the Master was here in His humiliation, He healed a few poor Jews and raised here and there a dead one—but He purposely veiled the splendor of His Godhead. But now that He has gone up on high, He does greater wonders by His servants than He, Himself, personally did, for He said to a few poor fishermen, “Go and break up the Roman Empire,” and they did it! They preached the Gospel and the gods of the heathen that sat upon their thrones for ages were cast to the moles and the bats! And there are greater victories yet before the Church of God. You ought not to measure our passage by the past, but believe that “greater works than these shall you do, because I go unto My Father.”

13. *And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* We do not believe enough in the power of prayer. I sometimes feel staggered when I meet with good people, undoubtedly good people, who still look upon it as a new thing that we should believe that God hears our prayers! But this is the fundamental of Christian experience! How can we live without the Mercy Seat? And if that Mercy Seat is nothing but a vain show, and prayer is only a pious but useless exercise, what is there in the Christian religion at all? We have heard some very wise people say that prayer is no doubt beneficial to those who offer it, but to suppose that it has any effect upon the mind of God is absurd. Do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, that they think us all idiots! They must do so, for do you suppose that any but an idiot would go on praying at all if he did not believe that it had some effect upon the mind of God and that it prevailed with God? I would as soon stand and whistle out of my bedroom window for half an hour, as I would kneel down and pray for half an hour if there were to be no result coming from it! And so would every sensible man! But we know of a surety that God hears prayer. We cannot imagine our Lord deceiving us—and He

must have done so if it is not so, for He says—“Whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

14. *If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.* But there is a deal of praying that never reaches to the name of Christ. Even to pray for Christ’s sake does not reach to the point of praying in Christ’s name. If I go and transact business in the name of such a person, that is a different thing from merely asking to be allowed to do my own business for the sake of that person. But when you are authorized to use the name of Christ—as it were, to write His signature to your checks—oh, what power there is in prayer at that time! “If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” But you cannot ask everything in that name. You are obliged to draw back from some prayers, and say, “No, Christ would never authorize me to put His name to that.” You see there is a blessed check upon the universality of prayer—a most necessary and useful check—for we would not dare to ask some things in that wondrous name!

15-17. *If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.* He dwelt with the Apostles, but was not in them until after Christ rose from the dead. But now you and I know His indwelling. He has made our bodies to be the Temples of the Holy Spirit!

18. *I will not leave you comfortless.* Orphans.

18. *I will come to you.* He does this by His Spirit, but still, He means more than that. It is not a spiritual coming merely—it is a personal coming. “I will come to you.”

19, 20. *Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* Wondrous unity!—Christ in the Father, we in Him, and Christ in us! Who understands this? He only who is taught of the Holy Spirit!

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

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

SALVATION OF THE LORD

NO. 131

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 10, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Salvation is of the Lord.”
Jonah 2:9.***

JONAH learned this sentence of good theology in a strange college. He learned it in the whale’s belly, at the bottom of the mountains, with the weeds wrapped about his head, when he supposed that the earth with her bars was about him forever! Most of the grand Truths of God have to be learned by trouble. They must be burned into us with the hot iron of affliction, otherwise we shall not truly receive them. No man is competent to judge in matters of the Kingdom of God, until first he has been tried—since there are many things to be learned in the depths which we can never know in the heights. We discover many secrets in the caverns of the ocean, which, though we had soared to Heaven, we could never have known. He shall best meet the needs of God’s people as a preacher who has had those needs himself. He shall best comfort God’s Israel who has needed comfort. And he shall best preach salvation who has felt his own need of it. Jonah, when he was delivered from his great danger—by the command of God, the fish had obediently left its great deeps and delivered its cargo upon dry land—was then capable of judging. And this was the result of his experience under his trouble—“Salvation is of the Lord.”

By, *salvation*, here, we do not merely understand the special salvation which Jonah received from death, for according to Dr. Gill, there is something so special in the original, in the word, “salvation,” having one more letter than it usually has, when it only refers to some temporary deliverance, that we can only understand it, here, as relating to the great work of the salvation of the soul which endures forever. That “Salvation is of the Lord,” I shall, this morning, try to show as best I can. First, I shall endeavor to *explain the Doctrine*. Then I shall *try to show you how God has guarded us from making any mistakes and has hedged us up to make us believe the Gospel*. Then I shall dwell upon *the influence of this Truth upon men*. And I shall close up by showing you *the counterpart of the Doctrine*. Seeing every Truth has its obverse, so has this.

I. First, then, to begin by explanation, let us EXPOUND THIS DOCTRINE—the Doctrine that salvation is of the Lord, or of Jehovah. We are to understand by this, that the whole of the work whereby men are saved from their natural estate of sin and ruin and are translated into the

Kingdom of God and made heirs of eternal happiness is of God and of Him only. "Salvation is of the Lord."

To begin, then, at the beginning, *the plan of salvation is entirely of God*. No human intellect and no created intelligence assisted God in the planning of salvation. He contrived the way, even as He, Himself, carried it out. The plan of salvation was devised before the existence of angels. Before the daystar flung its rays across the darkness—when as yet the unnavigated ether had not been fanned by the wing of seraph and when the solemnity of silence had never been disturbed by the song of angel—God had devised a way whereby He might save man, whom, in His Sovereignty, He ordained would fall. He did not create angels to consult with them. No, of Himself He did it! We might truly ask the question, "With whom took He counsel? Who instructed Him when He planned the great architecture of the temple of mercy? With whom took He counsel when he dug the deeps of love, that out of them there might well up springs of salvation? Who aided Him?" No one! He did it alone. In fact, if angels had then been in existence, they could not have assisted God. I can well suppose that if a solemn conclave of those spirits had been held, if God had told them, "Men will rebel. I declare I will punish them. My justice, inflexible and severe, demands that I should do so. But yet I intend to have mercy." If he had put the question to the celestial squadrons of mighty ones, "How can these things be? How can Justice have its demands fulfilled and how can Mercy reign?" the angels would have sat in silence until now—they could not have dictated a plan! It would have surpassed angelic intellect to have conceived the way whereby righteousness and peace should meet together and judgment and mercy should kiss each other. God devised it because without God it could not have been devised! It is a plan too splendid to have been the product of any mind except of that mind which afterwards carried it out. "Salvation" is older than Creation. It is "of the Lord."

And as it was of the Lord in planning, *so it was of the Lord in execution*. No one has helped to provide salvation. God has done it all Himself. The banquet of mercy is served up by one Host—that host is He to whom the cattle on a thousand hills belong! But none have contributed any dainties to that royal banquet. He has done it all Himself. The royal bath of mercy, wherein black souls are washed, was filled from the veins of Jesus—not a drop was contributed by any other being. He died upon the Cross and as an Expiator, He died alone! No blood of martyrs mingles with that stream. No blood of noble confessors and of heroes of the cross entered into the river of Atonement. That is filled from the veins of Christ and from nowhere else! He has wholly done it. Atonement is the unaided work of Jesus. On yonder Cross I see the Man who "trod the winepress alone." In yonder garden I see the solitary Conqueror who came to the

fight single-handed, whose own arm brought salvation and whose Omnipotence sustained Him. "Salvation is of the Lord." As to its provisions—Jehovah—Father, Son and Spirit—have provided everything!

So far we are all agreed, but now we shall have to separate a bit. "Salvation is of the Lord," *in the application of it*. "No," says the Arminian, "it is not! Salvation is of the Lord inasmuch as He does all for man that He can do. But there is something that man must do, which if he does not do, he will perish." That is the Arminian way of salvation. Now last week I thought of this very theory of salvation when I stood by the side of that window of Carisbrooke Castle out of which King Charles, of unhappy and unrighteous memory, attempted to escape. I read in the guide book that everything was provided for his escape—his followers had means at the bottom of the wall to enable him to flee across the country and on the coast they had their boats lying ready to take him to another land! In fact, everything was ready for his escape. But here was the important circumstance—his friends had done all they could—he was to do the rest. But that doing the rest was just the point and brunt of the battle—it was to get out of the window—out of which he was not able to escape by any means, so that all his friends did for him went for nothing, as far as he was concerned!

So with the sinner. If God had provided every means of escape and only required him to get out of his dungeon, he would have remained there to all eternity! Why, is not the sinner, by nature, *dead in sin*? And if God requires him to make himself alive and then, afterwards He will do the rest for him, then verily, my Friends, we are not so much obliged to God as we had thought! For if He require so much as that of us and we can do it, we can do the rest without His assistance! The Romanists have an extraordinary miracle of their own about St. Dennis, of whom they tell the lying legend that after his head was off, he took it up in his hands and walked 2,000 miles with it! Whereupon said a wit, "So far as the 2,000 miles go, it is nothing at all! It is only the *first step* in which there is any difficulty." So I believe, if that is taken, all the rest can be easily accomplished! And if God requires of the sinner—dead in sin—that he should take the first step, then He requires just that which renders salvation as impossible under the Gospel as ever it was under the Law, because man is as unable to *believe* as he is to *obey*—and is just as much without power to come to Christ as he is without power to go to Heaven without Christ! The power must be given to him of the Spirit. He lies dead in sin. The Spirit must quicken him. He is bound hand and foot and fettered by transgression. The Spirit must cut his bonds and *then* he will leap to liberty! God must come and dash the iron bars out of their sockets and *then* he can escape from the window and make good his escape afterwards! But unless the first thing is done for him, he must pe-

rich as surely under the Gospel as he would have done under the Law! I would cease to preach if I believed that God, in the matter of salvation, required anything whatever of man which He, Himself, had not also engaged to furnish! How many have I frequently hanging upon my lips of the worst of characters—men whose lives have become so horribly bad that the lips of morality would refuse to give a description of their character? When I enter my pulpit, am I to believe that these men are to do something before God's Spirit will operate upon them? If so, I would go there with a faint heart, feeling that I never could induce them to do the first part! But now I come to my pulpit with a sure confidence—God the Holy Spirit will meet with these men this morning! They are as bad as they can be. He will put a new thought into their hearts! He will give them new wishes. He will give them new wills and those who hated Christ will desire to love Him! Those who once loved sin will, by God's Divine Spirit, be made to hate it and here is my confidence—that what they cannot do, in that they are weak through the flesh—God, sending His Spirit into their hearts, will do for them and in them—and so they shall be saved!

“Well, then,” says one, “that will make people sit still and fold their arms.” Sir, it will not! But if men did so, I could not help it—my business—as I have often said in this place, is not to prove to you the reasonableness of any Truth, nor to defend any Truth from its consequences. All I do here—and I mean to keep to it—is just to assert the Truth because it is in the Bible! Then, if you do not like it, you must settle the quarrel with my Master—and if you think it unreasonable, you must quarrel with the Bible. Let others defend Scripture and prove it to be true. They can do their work better than I could—mine is just the mere work of proclaiming. I am the *messenger*. I speak my Master's message. If you do not like the message, quarrel with the Bible, not with me! As long as I have Scripture on my side, I will dare and defy you to do anything against me! “Salvation is of the Lord.” The Lord has to apply it, to make the unwilling, willing, to make the ungodly, godly, and bring the vile rebel to the feet of Jesus or else salvation will never be accomplished! Leave that one thing undone and you have broken the link of the chain, the very link which was necessary to its integrity. Take away the fact that God begins the good work and that He sends us what the old divines call Preventing Grace—take that away and you have spoiled the whole of salvation—you have taken the keystone out of the arch and down it tumbles! Then there is nothing left.

And now on the next point we shall again disagree a little. “Salvation is of the Lord,” *as to the sustaining of the work in any man's heart*. When a man is made a child of God, he does not have a stock of Grace given to him with which to go on forever. But he has Grace for that day. And he

must have Grace for the next day and Grace for the next and Grace for the next, until days shall end, or else the beginning shall be of no avail. As a man does not make himself spiritually alive, so neither can he keep himself so. He can feed on spiritual food and so preserve his spiritual strength. He can walk in the Commandments of the Lord and so enjoy rest and peace, but still, the inner life is dependent upon the Spirit as much for its after existence as for its first begetting! I do verily believe that if it should ever be my lot to put my foot upon the golden threshold of Paradise and put this thumb upon the pearly latch, I would never cross the threshold unless I had Grace given me to take that last step whereby I might enter Heaven! No man of himself, even when converted, has any power except as that power is daily, constantly and perpetually infused into him by the Spirit! But Christians often set up for independent gentlemen. They get a little stock of Grace in hand and they say, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved." But ah, it is not long before the manna begins to be putrid. It was only meant to be the manna for the day and we have kept it for the morrow and, therefore, it fails us! We must have fresh Grace—

***"For day by day the manna fell,
Oh to learn that lesson well."***

So look day by day for fresh Grace! Frequently, too, the Christian wants to have Grace enough for a month vouchsafed to him in one moment. "Oh," he says, "what a host of troubles I have coming—how shall I meet them all? Oh, that I had enough Grace to bear me through them all!" My dear Friends, you will have Grace enough for your troubles, as they come, one by one! "As your days, so shall your strength be." But your strength shall never be as your months, or as your weeks. You shall have your strength as you have your bread. "Give us this day our daily bread." Give us this day our daily Grace. But why is it you will get to troubling yourself about the things of tomorrow? The common people say, "Cross a bridge when you come to it." That is good advice! Do the same. When a trouble comes, attack it and down with it and master it! But do not begin, now, to forestall your woes. "Ah, but I have so many" says one. Therefore I say do not look further before you than your needs. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Do as the brave Grecian did, who, when he defended his country from Persia, did not go into the plains to fight, but stood in the narrow pass of Thermopylae. There, when the myriads came to him, they had to come one by one and he felled them to the earth. Had he ventured into the plain, he would have soon been devoured and his handful would have been melted like a drop of dew in the sea. Stand in the narrow pass of today and fight your troubles, one by one. Do not rush into the plains of tomorrow, for there you will be routed and

killed. As the evil is sufficient so will the Grace be! “Salvation is of the Lord.”

But lastly, upon this point. *The ultimate perfection of salvation is of the Lord.* Soon, soon, the saints of earth shall be saints in light. Their hairs of snowy age shall be crowned with perpetual joy and everlasting youth. Their eyes, suffused with tears, shall be made bright as stars, never again to be clouded by sorrow. Their hearts that now tremble are to be made joyous and fast and set forever like pillars in the Temple of God! Their follies, their burdens, their griefs, their woes, are soon to be over! Sin is to be slain, corruption is to be removed and a Heaven of spotless purity and of unmingled peace is to be theirs forever! But it must still be by Grace. As was the foundation, such must the top stone be. That which laid on earth the first beginning, must lay in Heaven the topmost stone. As they were redeemed from their filthy conversation by Grace, so they must be redeemed from death and the grave by Grace, too, and they must enter Heaven singing—

**“Salvation of the Lord alone,
Grace is a shoreless sea!”**

There may be Arminians here but they will not be Arminians there! They may here say, “It is of the will of the flesh,” but in Heaven they shall not think so! Here they may ascribe some little to the creature, but there they shall cast their crowns at the Redeemer’s feet and acknowledge that He did it all! Here they may sometimes look a little at themselves and boast somewhat of their own strength, but there, “Not unto us, not unto us,” shall be sung with deeper sincerity and with more profound emphasis than they have ever sung it here below! In Heaven, when Grace shall have done its work, this Truth of God shall stand out in blazing letters of gold, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

II. Thus I have tried to expound the Gospel. Now I shall show you HOW GOD HAS HEDGED THIS DOCTRINE ABOUT.

Some have said salvation, in some cases, is the result of *natural temperament*. Well, Sir, God has effectually answered your argument. You say that some people are saved because they are naturally religious and inclined to be good? Unfortunately I have never met with any of that class of persons yet. But I will suppose for a moment that there are such people. God has unanswerably met your objection, for, strange to say, the great number of those who are saved are just the most unlikely people in the world to have been saved, while a great number of those who perish were once just the very people whom, if natural disposition had anything to do with it, we would have expected to see in Heaven! Why, there is one here who in his youth was a child of many follies. Often did his mother weep over him and cry and groan over her son’s wanderings, for with a fierce high spirit that could brook neither bit nor

bridle, with perpetual rebellions and ebullitions of hot anger, she said, "My son my son, what will you be in your riper years? Surely you will dash in pieces law and order and be a disgrace to your father's name!" He grew up. In youth he was wild and wanton but, wonder of wonders, all of a sudden he became a new man, changed, altogether changed, no more like what he was, before, than angels are like lost spirits! He sat at her feet, he cheered her heart and the lost, fiery one became gentle, mild, as humble as a little child and obedient to God's Commandments. You say, wonder of wonders!

But there is another here. He was a fair youth—when but a child he talked of Jesus. Often when his mother had him on her knee, he asked her questions about Heaven. He was a prodigy, a wonder of piety in his youth! As he grew up, the tears rolled down his cheek under any sermon, he could scarcely bear to hear of death without a sigh. Sometimes his mother caught him, as she thought, alone in prayer. And what is he now? He has just this very morning come from sin! He has become the debauched, desperate villain! He has gone far into all manner of wickedness and lust and sin and has become more damnably corrupt than other men could have made him! His evil spirit, once confined, has now developed itself—he has learned to play the lion in his manhood, as once he played the fox in his youth. I do not know whether you have ever met with such a case. But it very frequently is so. I know I can say that in my congregation some abandoned, wicked fellows have had their hearts broken and been led to weep and have cried to God for mercy. By His Grace they have renounced their vile sins, while some fair maiden has heard the same sermon and if there was a tear she brushed it away. She still continues just what she was, "without God and without hope in the world." God has taken the base things of the world and has picked His people out of the very roughest of men in order that He may prove that it is not natural disposition, but that "Salvation is of the Lord," alone!

"Well," but some say, "it is the *minister* they hear who converts men." Ah, that is a grand idea, full sure! No man but a fool would entertain it! I met with a man sometime ago who assured me that he knew a minister who had a very large amount of converting power in him. Speaking of a great Evangelist in America, he said, "That man, Sir, has got the greatest quantity of converting power I ever knew a man to have. And Mr. So-and-So in a neighboring town, I think is second to him." At that time this converting power was being exhibited—two hundred persons were converted by the converting power of this second best—and joined to the Church in a few months. I went to the place some time afterwards—it was in England—and I said, "How do your converts get on?" "Well," he said, "I cannot say much about them." "How many out of those 200 whom you received in a year ago stand fast?" "Well," he said, "I am afraid

not many of them. We have turned 70 of them out for drunkenness already.” “Yes,” I said, “I thought so—that is the end of the grand experiment of converting power!” If I could convert you all, anyone else might unconvert you! What any man can do, another man can undo. It is only what *God* does that is abiding!

No, my Brothers and Sisters—God has taken good care it shall never be said conversion is of *man*—for usually He blesses those who seem to be the most unlikely to be useful! I do not expect to see as many conversions in this place as I had a year ago when I had far fewer hearers. Do you ask why? Why, a year ago I was abused by everybody. To mention my name was to mention the name of the most abominable buffoon that lived! The mere utterance of it brought forth oaths and cursing. With many men, it was a name of contempt, kicked about the street as a football. But then God gave me souls by hundreds who were added to my Church and in one year it was my happiness to see not less than a thousand personally who had then been converted! I do not expect that now. My name is somewhat esteemed now and the great ones of the earth think it no dishonor to sit at my feet. But this makes me fear lest my God should forsake me, now that the world esteems me. I would rather be despised and slandered than anything else! The assembly that you think so grand and fine, I would readily part with, if by such a loss I could gain a greater blessing. “God has chosen the base things of the world.” And therefore I reckon that the more esteemed I may be, the worse is my position—so much the less expectation shall I have that God will bless me. He has put His “treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man.” A poor minister began to preach, once, and all the world spoke ill of him but God blessed him. By-and-by they turned round and petted him. He was the man—a wonder! God left him! It has often been the same. It is for us to remember, in all times of popularity, that, “Crucify Him, crucify Him” follows fast upon the heels of “Hosanna.” The crowd today, if dealt faithfully with, may turn into the handful of tomorrow, for men love not plain speaking. We should learn to be despised, learn to be contemned, learn to be slandered—and then we shall learn to be made useful by God! Down on my knees have I often fallen, with the hot sweat rising from my brow, under some fresh slander poured upon me. In an agony of grief my heart has been well-near broken till at last I learned the art of bearing all and caring for none! And now my grief runs in another line. It is just the opposite. I fear lest God should forsake me, to prove that He is the Author of salvation—that it is not in the preacher, that it is not in the crowd, that it is not in the attention I can attract, but in God and in God, alone!

And this thing I hope I can say from my heart—if to be made as the mire of the streets, again. If to be the laughing stock of fools and the

song of the drunkard once more will make me more serviceable to my Master and more useful to His cause—I will prefer it to all this multitude, or to all the applause that man could give! Pray for me, dear Friends, pray for me, that God would still make me the means of the salvation of souls. For I fear He may say, “I will not help that man, lest the world should say *he* has done it,” for, “salvation is of the Lord,” and so it must be, even to the world’s end.

III. And now WHAT IS—WHAT SHOULD BE THE INFLUENCE OF THIS DOCTRINE UPON MEN?

Why, first, with sinners, this Doctrine *is a great battering-ram against their pride!* I will give you a figure. The sinner in his natural estate reminds me of a man who has a strong and well-near impenetrable castle into which he has fled. There is the outer moat. There is a second moat. There are the high walls and then, afterwards, there is the dungeon, into which the sinner will retire. Now, the first moat that goes round the sinner’s trusting place is his good works. “Ah,” he says, “I am as good as my neighbor! Twenty shillings in the pound, down, ready money, I have always paid. I am no sinner. I tithe mint and cumin. A good respectable gentlemen I am, indeed!” Well, when God comes to work with him, to save him, He sends His army across the first moat. And as they go through it, they cry, “Salvation is of the Lord.” And the moat is dried up, for if it is of the Lord, how can it be of good works? But when that is done, he has a second entrenchment—ceremonies. “Well,” he says, “I will not trust in my good works, but I have been baptized, I have been confirmed—do not I take the sacrament—that shall be my trust!” “Over the moat! Over the moat!” And the soldiers go over again, shouting, “Salvation is of the Lord.” The second moat is dried up, it is all over with that.

Now they come to the first strong wall. The sinner, looking over it, says, “I can repent, I can believe whenever I like. I will save myself by repenting and believing.” Up come the soldiers of God, His great army of conviction, and they batter this wall to the ground, crying, ‘Salvation is of the Lord.’ Your faith and your repentance must all be given up, or else you will neither believe nor repent of sin.” And now the castle is taken! The man’s hopes are all cut off. He feels that it is not of self. The castle of self is overcome and the great banner upon which is written, “Salvation is of the Lord,” is displayed upon the battlements. But is the battle over? Oh no, the sinner has retired to the dungeon, in the center of the castle. And now he changes his tactics. “I cannot save myself,” he says, “therefore I will despair. There is no salvation for me.” Now this second castle is as hard to take as the first, for the sinner sits down and says, “I can’t be saved, I must perish.” But God commands the soldiers to take this castle, too, shouting, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Though it is not of man, *it is of God.* “He is able to save, even to the uttermost,” though you cannot

save yourself. This sword, you see, cuts two ways. It cuts pride down and then it cleaves the skull of despair. If any man says he can save himself, it halves his pride at once! And if another man says he cannot be saved, it dashes his despair to the earth, for it affirms that he can be saved, seeing, "Salvation is of the Lord." That is the effect this Doctrine has upon the sinner—may it have that effect on you!

But what influence has it upon the saint? Why, it is the keystone of all dignity. *I will defy you to be heterodox* if you believe this Truth of God! You must be sound in the faith if you have learned to spell this sentence—"Salvation is of the Lord." And if you feel it in your soul, *you will not be proud*. You cannot be! You will cast everything at His feet, confessing that you have done nothing save what He has helped you to do and, therefore, the Glory must be where the salvation is. If you believe this, you will not be distrustful. You will say, "My salvation does not depend on my faith, but on the Lord. My keeping does not depend on myself, but on God who keeps me. My being brought to Heaven rests not now in my own hands, but in the hands of God! You will, when doubts and fears prevail, fold your arms, look upwards and say—

***"And now my eye of faith is dim,
I trust in Jesus, sink or swim."***

If you can keep this in your mind. *you may always be joyful*. He can have no cause for trouble who knows and feels that his salvation is of God! Come on, legions of Hell. Come on, demons of the Pit!—

***"He that has helped me bears me through,
And makes me more than conqueror, too."***

Salvation rests not on this poor arm, else I would despair, but on the arm of yonder Omnipotent—that arm on which the pillars of the Heavens do lean! "Whom should I fear? The Lord is my strength and my life—of whom shall I be afraid?"

And this may, by Grace, *nerve you to work for God*. If you had to save your neighbors, you might sit down and do nothing. But since "Salvation is of the Lord," go on and prosper! Go and preach the Gospel. Go and tell the Gospel everywhere. Tell it in your house, tell it in the street, tell it in every land and every nation—for it is not of *yourself*—it is "of the Lord." Why do not our friends go to Ireland to preach the Gospel? Ireland is a disgrace to the Protestant Church. Why do not they go and preach there? A year or so ago a number of our brave ministers went over there to preach. They did right bravely. They went there and they came back again and that is about the sum total of the glorious expedition against Popery! But why come back again? Because they were stoned! Good easy men! Do they not think that the Gospel will ever spread without a few stones? But they could have been killed! Brave martyrs, they! Let them be enrolled in the red chronicle! Did the martyrs of old—did the Apostles

shrink from going to any country because they would have been killed? No, they were ready to die! And if half a dozen ministers had been killed in Ireland, it would have been the finest thing in the world for liberty in the future—for after that, the people would dare not have touched us! The strong arm of the Law would have put them down. We might have gone through every village of Ireland afterwards and been at peace! The constables would soon have put an end to such infamous murder! It would have awakened the Protestantism of England to claim the liberty which is our right, there, as we give it elsewhere! We shall never see any great change till we have some men in our ranks who are willing to be martyrs! That deep ditch can never be crossed till the bodies of a few of us shall fill it up—and after that it will be easy work to preach the Gospel there!

Our Brothers should go there once more. They can leave their white cravats at home and the white feather, too, and go forth with a brave heart and a bold spirit! And if the people mock and scoff, let them mock and scoff! George Whitefield said, when he preached on Kennington Common, where they threw dead cats and rotten eggs at him, “This is only the manure of Methodism—the best thing in the world to make it grow. Throw away as fast as you please!” And when a stone cut him on the forehead, he seemed to preach the better for a little blood-letting. Oh for such a man to dare the mob and then the mob would not need to be dared! Let us go there, remembering that, “Salvation is of the Lord,” and let us, in every place and at every time, preach God’s Word, believing that God’s Word is more than a match for man’s sin and God will yet be Master over all the earth!

My voice fails me again and my thoughts, too. I was weary this morning when I came into this pulpit and I am weary now. Sometimes I am joyous and glad and feel in the pulpit as if I could preach forever. At other times I feel glad to close. But yet with such a text, I would that I could have finished up with all the might that mortal lips could summon. Oh, to let men know this, that their salvation is of God! Swearer, swear not against Him in whose hand your breath is! Despiser, despise not Him who can save you or destroy you! And you hypocrite, seek not to deceive Him from whom salvation comes and who, therefore, knows right well whether your salvation has come from Him!

IV. And now, in concluding, let me just tell you WHAT IS THE OBVERSE OF THIS TRUTH. Salvation is of God—then *damnation is of man!* If any of you are damned, you will have no one to blame but yourselves. If any of you perish, the blame will not lie at God’s door. If you are lost and cast away, you will have to bear all the blame and all the tortures of conscience, yourself—you will lie forever in Hell and reflect, “I have destroyed myself. I have made a suicide of my soul. I have been my own de-

stroyer. I can lay no blame to God.” Remember, if saved, you must be saved by God, alone, though if lost you have lost yourselves. “Turn you, turn you, why will you die O house of Israel?” With my last faltering sentence I bid you stop and think. Ah, my Hearers! My Hearers! It is an awful thing to preach to such a mass as this. But the other Sunday, as I came down the stairs, I was struck with a memorable sentence, uttered by one who stood there. He said, “There are 8,000 people this morning without excuse in the day of judgment.” I should like to preach so that this always might be said! And if I cannot, O may God have mercy on me for His name’s sake!

But now remember! You have souls! Those souls will be damned, or saved! Which will it be? Damned forever they must be unless God shall save you—unless Christ shall have mercy upon you, there is no hope for you! Down on your knees! Cry to God for mercy! Now lift up your heart in prayer to God. May now be the very time when you shall be saved! Before the next drop of blood shall run through your veins, may you find peace! Remember, that peace is to be had NOW. If you now feel your need of it, it is to be had now! And how? For the mere asking for it! “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find.”—

***“But if your ears refuse
The language of His Grace,
Your hearts grow hard, like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race—
The Lord with vengeance drest,
Shall lift His hand and swear,
‘You that despise My promised rest
Shall have no portion there.’”***

Oh that you may not be despisers, lest you “wonder and perish!” May you now fly to Christ and be accepted in the Beloved. It is my last best prayer. May the Lord hear it! Amen.

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

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

WHO CAN TELL?

NO. 275

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from
His fierce anger, that we perish not?”
Jonah 3:9.***

THIS was the forlorn hope of the Ninevites—“Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?” The book of Jonah should be exceedingly comfortable to those who are despairing because of the wickedness of their times. Nineveh was a city as great in its wickedness as in its power. If any of us with little faith had been bid to go round about her and “tell the towers thereof and mark well her bulwarks.” If we had been commanded to go through her streets and behold her both in the blaze of the sun and in the light of the moon as her inhabitants indulged in vice, we should have said. “Alas, Alas, the city is wholly given unto idolatry and it is girt about with a wall of sin as stupendous as its wall of stone.”

Suppose that the problem had been given to us to solve—how shall this city be moved to repentance? How shall its vice be forsaken and the God of Israel worshipped by all its inhabitants from the highest to the lowest? If we had not been paralyzed with despair, which is the most probable, we should, nevertheless, have sat down carefully to consider our plans. We should have parceled it out into missionary districts. We should have needed at least several hundred, if not thousands, of able ministers. At once expenses would have to be incurred and we should have considered ourselves bound to contemplate the erection of innumerable structures in which the Word of God might be preached. Our machinery would necessarily become cumbersome. We should find that we, unless we had the full resources of an empire, could not even begin the work.

But what said the Lord concerning this? Putting aside the judgments of reason and all the plans and schemes which flesh and blood so naturally do follow, He raises up *one man*. By a singular Providence He qualifies that one man for his mission. He sends him down into the very depths of the sea, where the weeds are wrapped about him. He comes up from the great deep and the awful descent has steeled his soul and completely covered him with the armor of courageous faith. Who need tremble at anything on shore who has passed the bowels of a fish and yet survived? He comes into the city, his eyes almost starting from their sockets with the remembrance of the great judgment which had passed over his head and in stern inflexible manner, with shrill monotonous voice, he begins to cry, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

Is this, O God, is this Your way? Is this the means with which You will accomplish the great event? Will you make Nineveh repent at the bidding of *one man*? Shall yon sickly man fresh from the sea—shall his voice be sufficient to stir this great city? O God, if You had come forth in Your fiery chariot, if You had spoken with Your thunder, if You had shaken the earth with Your earthquakes—then might Nineveh feel. But surely this *one man* is not sufficient for the deed! But as high as the Heaven is above the earth, so high are His ways above our ways and His thoughts above our thoughts. So skillful is He that with the weakest instrument He can produce the mightiest workmanship. That one man begins his journey. Already the inhabitants flock to listen to him. He proceeds—the crowd multiplies. As he stands at the corner of the alleys and the lanes, every window is thrown open to listen and the streets are thronged as he walks along. Still on he goes till the whole city has begun to shake with his terrible voice.

And now the King himself bids him come into his presence and the fearless still propounds the threat of God. Then comes the effect. All Nineveh is wrapped in sackcloth. The cry of man and beast go up in one terrible wailing to God. Jehovah is honored and Nineveh repents. Ah, my Brethren, we see in this rich grounds for hope. What cannot God do? Think not that He needs to wait for us. He can accomplish the greatest deeds by the meanest instrumentality. One man, if He willed it, would be sufficient to stir this giant city. One man, if God decreed it, might be the means of the conversion of a nation, no, a continent should shake beneath the tramping of one man.

There is no palace so high that this one man's voice should not reach it and there is no den of infamy so deep that his cry should not be heard in it. All we need is that God should "make bare His arm," and who can withstand His might? What, though He grasp but the jawbone of an ass yet is His arm mightier than Samson's and not only would it be heaped upon heaps, but city upon city, continent upon continent! With the meanest instrument would God slay His thousands and overcome His myriads. Oh Church of God, never fear—remember the men that God has given you in the days of yore. Look back to Paul. Remember Augustine. Think about Luther and Calvin. Think of Whitfield and of Wesley and remember these were but separate individual men and yet through them God did a work the remembrance of still rolls on, and shall never cease while this earth endures.

With this by way of preface, I shall now somewhat turn aside from the narrative to address myself to those who are trembling on account of sin and who are in the same position as the men of Nineveh and like them anxiously desiring mercy.

I shall notice briefly this morning three things. First, the miserable plight in which the men of Nineveh found themselves. Secondly, the scanty reasons which they had for hope. And then, thirdly, I shall observe that we have stronger reasons to compel us to pray and more comfortable arguments to urge us to trust.

I. First then, I shall consider the men of Nineveh, as representing many here present, as to THE DOLEFUL PLIGHT IN VICE THEY FOUND THEMSELVES. The men of Nineveh were like those in the days of Noah. They were married and given in marriage—they ate and they drank—they built and they planted. The whole world was their granary and the kingdoms of the earth their hunting ground. They were rich and mighty above all people, for God had greatly increased their prosperity. And they had become the greatest nation upon the face of the earth. Locked in security they fell into great and abominable sins. Their vices probably rivaled those of Sodom. If they were not worse, even, than the Eastern cities of the present day, they were abominable beyond description. How suddenly were they however startled from their security and convicted of their sin! The preaching of that one strange man had brought them from the height of their splendor to the depths of sorrow. Now was their boasting cut off. The sound of their mirth had ceased. And they began to weep and lament. What was their miserable plight? I take it, it consisted in three discoveries. They now discovered their great sin. Then again, the shortness of their time and in the next place, the terrible character of their destruction. Would that you would discover the like you careless sinners, you that slumber in Zion, you that fear not God, neither turn from your evil ways.

Would I say that in the first place, some Prophet's voice would stir you to remember your sins, for are they not many and exceedingly great? Let each man among us look to his life and who is there here that need not blush? Some of us have been moral. We have by the training of our youth and by the restraints of grace been kept from the immoralities of others, but even we are compelled to lay our mouths in the dust. While looking into our heart we discover it to be a nest of unclean birds, full of all manner of evil and loathsome things. We have been as visions in our hearts as the worst of men have been in their acts. But there are too many who cannot even plead that they have been moral, though this would be but a poor excuse for the want of love to God.

Look, Brothers and Sisters, look to your lives—who among us has been free from murmuring against God? Who is he that has loved his neighbor as himself? Who is it that has never been angry without a cause? Who has never cursed God in his heart, even if he has not done so with his lips? Who among us have always scrupulously kept our eyes from lust and our heart from covetousness? Have we not all sinned? If our iniquities could now be revealed—if on every man's brow were written his sin, which of you would not put his hand upon his forehead to hide his iniquity from his fellows? It will be of essential service to many of you if you will read over your lives. Turn, I beseech you, to the pages of your memory and let the black, blotted, misspelled pages now be read again.

Think not that the preacher understands how to flatter his congregation. It has become fashionable in these times to look upon our hearers as all being good and excellent—would not this be a lie and a falsehood before Almighty God? Are there not here those that can indulge secretly in vices which we must not mention? Are there not those who do that to

their fellows in trade which they would despise in others? What? Are none of you covetous? Do none of you over-reach or defraud your neighbors? Do none of you practice the common frauds and tricks in trade? Are none of you liars and none deceivers, none slanderers who bear false witness against your neighbors?

Am I so happy as to have a spotless congregation here? I cannot flatter myself that such can be the truth. No, our iniquities are great and our sins are hideous. Oh, that we were all ready to confess, each man for himself, the iniquities which we have done! Surely, if the Spirit of God shall but shine into our hearts and show us the evil of our ways, we shall find ourselves in a sorrowful condition, indeed, and shall be ready to cry out before God, even as Nineveh did of old.

Added to this, however, the Ninevites had information as to the shortness of their days. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." How fixed and definite the date! "Six weeks shall scarcely run their round," says the Prophet, "before you must die and perish miserably." To an hour was the time described, "yet forty days." How would the Ninevites count the days with terror and watch each rising and setting sun as if these were the black milestones upon their dreary road to death! "Ah," says one, "but *you* will not tell us that our days are only forty." No, Brothers and Sisters I am no Prophet. I cannot tell how many your days may be—but this one thing I *can* say—it is possible that there are some here who have not forty days to live! There may be some among you who have not so long a respite as even Nineveh itself.

Suppose now I should be able to take you to that great city. If I could have shown you its massive ramparts and its stupendous fortresses—if like Jonah I could point to them and say, "In forty days this city will be all overthrown," which would require the greatest stretch of credulity to believe this Prophecy or that which follows, "In forty days your body shall crumble back to dust?" Which, I say, would require the greatest stretch of faith? Which is the easier of these two—to send you to death, or to uproot a city? What are you, Man, but a heap of animated dust? A worm may destroy you, a grain of sand may be sufficient to take away your life. Feeble is the thread of life—a spider's web is a cable compared to it. It is but a dream—a child's whisper may break it and we may awake in another world.

"Forty days!" Surely that was a long and distant period compared with what may be the date of your death. I have been long enough preaching in this place to look back now on many who have gone from this spot to the place appointed to all living. Many, many are the faces which this day I miss as I look along your ranks and cast my eye around this gallery. There are not a few who I remember to have passed from the land of the living and to have gone to another world—and some how suddenly, how rapidly! I have been startled at it often myself. I have seen some here on the Sabbath and by the Tuesday or by the Thursday the message has come, "On what day can you bury such-and-such a one?" "Bury her!" "Yes

Sir, bury her, she is gone.” And I have said, “How strange it seems that she should be dead who so lately was living in our midst!”

Forty days, I add, is a long lease compared with that which you have any reason to conclude that God has bestowed on you. But what if it were forty years, how short a time even then? If you will but look with the eye of wisdom, how rapidly our years revolve. Are you not startled even now to see the sear leaf in your path? It was but yesterday that the fresh green buds were seen. It seems but a month ago since first we saw the wheat starting up from the ground and lo, the harvest is over and gone, and many of the birds have disappeared and the tints of autumn are succeeding the verdure of summer. Years seem but months now and months but days and days pass so rapidly that they flit like shadows before us. O, Men and Women, if we could but measure life, it is but a span and in a time how short, how brief, everyone of us must appear before his God.

The shortness of time should help to arouse us and then, let me add the third thing which startled the Ninevites—the terrible character of the judgment. Doubtless one part of the effect of Jonah’s preaching may be traced to the singular vagueness of his prophecy. He says, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” By whom, he does not tell us. How, he does not deign to reveal. It is to be overthrown, that is all. Whether some mighty nation should invade it, or whether an earthquake should swallow it up, or whether by plague or pestilence the whole city should be emptied, or whether an intestine disease should cut off the population, he says not. The very vagueness and indistinctness of a prophecy adds to its terror, just as men can never bring their minds to think of specters in the plain daylight, but always conjure up such things in hours of shade and gloom. The gloominess of the message made men tremble.

And oh, you that are not reconciled to God, men without religion, without hope and without God in the world—how terrible is the judgment that shall come upon you! It is not for me to attempt to describe it. Scripture only speaks of the life to come in indistinct terms. Terrible are they in their vagueness. Jesus said, “These shall go away into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth,” and now and then He speaks of torment as a place, “where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.” And then He describes it as “a bottomless pit,” and as “a fire” that “never shall be quenched.” Ah, my Brethren, we know but little of the wrath of God which shall certainly come upon the wicked, but we know enough to let us understand that it is too terrible for human ear to hear. If Hell had been fully described to us in this time-state, this life itself would have been but the vestibule of eternal torment.

I question whether any eyes could bear to read such a description as God might have given. Both our ears would have tingled and our hearts would melt like water at the sound thereof. Oh, Sinner, it is enough for me to say to you this day, except you repent, you must perish with a terrible overthrow. God, even God Himself, shall draw His sword and bathe it in your blood. He shall drive you from His presence amidst the thunders of His wrath and the lightning of His vengeance. He shall smite you with

His Omnipotence and shall spend Himself in punishing you and your torment shall be without end and the smoke thereof shall go up forever and ever. I speak not this day to you that are unbelievers in the Word—with you I will have nothing to do this morning. But to you who are Believers in the Revelation of the Bible—who profess to be nominal Christians—with you I have to deal.

Oh Sirs, if you believe this Book, if you are impenitent, how tremendous is the doom which awaits you—how fatal shall death be to you and how terrible the last dread Day of Judgment! And all this is coming on apace. The chariot wheels of God's justice have axles which are hot with speed, the black coursers are covered with foam as on they drive. Perhaps, as here I stand and speak, alas, too coldly on things which should make any man boil over with enthusiasm—perhaps death may even now be fitting his arrow to the string and you may be his victim and this sermon may be closed, as Paul's sermon was, with someone's falling dead like Eutychus, in the window in his sleep. God grant it may not be so, but nevertheless there is cause enough for each one of us to tremble and to bow before the God of Israel. Thus have I spoken on the first point—O Holy Spirit, bless the word!

These Ninevites however took heart and hope. They said, "Let us proclaim a fast, let man and beast cry mightily unto God, for who can tell but He may turn from His fierce anger that we perish not."

II. Now the second point was, THE SLENDER GROUND WHICH THE NINEVITES HAD FOR HOPE. And now regard attentively, for I long this morning for you all in the heart of Christ, that you also with a far better hope may be enabled to imitate the example of the men of Nineveh. You will notice that in Jonah's message, there was no proclamation of mercy made. It was one short sentence of doom. It was like the great bell of St. Sepulcher's Church tolling out the hour of the execution of a criminal. There was not so much as a *note* of mercy. It was the trumpet of the Judge, but not the silver trump of Jubilee. No mercy glanced from Jonah's eye, no pity was in his heart. He was sent with a thundering commission and he dealt it out in a thundering fashion. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

I think I see the king of Nineveh sitting down with his nobles at a council of State and one of them would say, "We have little hope of mercy, for if you will observe, Jonah never offered us any. How terribly he spoke. There was not so much as a tear in his eyes. I am persuaded that Jonah's God is very just and severe. He will by no means spare us. We shall be cut off." But the king's answer to his counselor was, "Who can tell? You only think so, but you cannot say it, let us yet hope, for "Who can tell." My dear Hearers, it is no Jonah that addresses you. My language today shall be rather that of Isaiah, "Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord—though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Oh cannot you say with Nineveh's king, "Who can tell?" Will not you go home to your chamber and pray, for "Who can tell?" Will you not go to the

Bible and search for a promise, for “Who can tell?” Will you not go to the Cross and trust in the flowing blood, for “Who can tell?” You may be forgiven yet, accepted yet, and one day yet sing God’s praises before the Throne above.

Another thing which would cut off the hope of the Ninevites very much was this—they knew nothing of God except, it may be, some dreadful legends they had heard of His terrible acts. One of the counselors of the king, deeply learned, would say, “O king, live forever! The God of Jonah is a terrible God. Have you not heard what He did in Egypt? How He destroyed Pharaoh and his chariots of old in the Red Sea? And have you not heard what He did to Sennacherib when He cut him off and his hosts? Have you never heard the thunder of His power and the might of His terrible acts? Surely He will have no mercy on us.” But the king answered—“Who can tell?” You do not know. It is but a surmise. “Who can tell?”

But oh, my Hearers, we are on a vantage ground here, for *you know* that God is merciful. Many and many a time have we assured you from the lips of God Himself, through this written Word, that He delights in mercy. You have His promise for it, no, you have His oath for it. Jehovah lifts His hands to Heaven and swears by Himself. “As I live,” says the Lord, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies. But had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” Come, then, Sinner, for “who can tell?” He is a merciful God. Do what Benhadad did of old, when he and his army had been routed and he alone was left with a few of his nobles. He said—“Let us put ropes on our necks and go unto the king of Israel, for we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings.” You do the same with Jesus. You have heard that He is merciful and full of compassion. Come to Him now—trust in His blood and, “who can tell?” This day your sins may be blotted out. “Who can tell?” This day you may be washed in the blood of Christ and made white as Adam in Paradise. “Who can tell?” This day the Lord may make your heart leap with joy, while He whispers—“You are Mine and I am yours.” “Who can tell?” Drowning men catch at straws—this is no straw—this is a solid rock—lay hold on it and be saved. “Who can tell?”

But once again, the people of Nineveh lacked another encouragement which you and I have. They had never heard of the Cross. Jonah’s preaching was very powerful, but there was no Christ in it. There was nothing about the Messiah that was to come—no talking of the sprinkled blood—no mention of a great sin-atonement sacrifice—and therefore the men who were in the council of the king, might have said—“Surely we have never heard that any satisfaction has been offered to the injured justice of God. How, therefore, can He be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly?”

“Ah,” said the king, “who can tell?” And on that slender “who can tell?” they ventured to cry for mercy. But oh, Sinner, you are answered this day, that “God has spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, that whosoever believes on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world that He sent forth His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him might not perish, but might be saved. For

there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Come Sinner, come to the Cross, for God can be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. I say, this should make you ask—“Who can tell?” He may wash me clean, He may accept me and I may yet be able to sing with the loudest of all the voices of His children—

***“I, the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.”***

And now shall I tell you what I think was the hope which the poor king of Nineveh really had? I have set before you his discouragements and now I will set before you his encouragements. They were very slender, but still they seemed to have been sufficient. Perhaps the king said in his heart, or he might have said to his counselors—“Sirs, there is one thing which you cannot deny, we are come to the worst and if we repent and cry for mercy, at least that cry will not be to our disadvantage. We shall be none the worse off even if we are not heard.”

Now sometimes I have known a trembling sinner take comfort even from that. The words of our hymn suggest the full idea—

***“I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try.
For if I stay away I know,
I must forever die.”***

If you do not seek Christ. If you repent not of sin. If you put not your trust in Him, you must perish. That is certain. If you go and are rejected, at least you are none the worse off. Try it and you shall find out that you are much the better—for you shall not be rejected. Remember the three lepers at the gate of Samaria? They were sitting there without food to eat and at last the pangs of hunger were strong upon them. One of them said to his fellows, “Let us go now to the host of the Syrians. If they kill us we shall but die. If they save us alive, we shall live. But if we stay here, perish we must.” So, as there was nothing to lose and there might be something to gain, they risked it.

Oh, Sinner, would to God the Lord would teach you as much wisdom as this! Go to Him just as you are and say, “Lord, sink or swim, I take Your Cross to be my only trust. If You will not save me, if I perish in the stream, yet will I perish clinging to the Rock of my salvation, for no other trust and no other hope have I.” Oh, that you may be led to do even this—and you shall not be disappointed.

Besides, the king would add, “It is true that Jonah did not say that God would have mercy, but then he did not say He would not.” There was a cry from Jonah’s lip, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown” but he did not say, “God will not have any mercy at all.” So the king said, “Who can tell, then?” If any could have told him, Jonah would. Was he not a fierce looking man. If there had been any thunders in store, would he not have dealt them out in his terrible fury of prophecy? “Surely,” said the king, if he stopped there and did not add, ‘I will have no mercy,’ this is a happy token. Who can tell? If Jonah did not tell, we cannot.”

And now, Sinner, I would you would catch hold on this. But you have something stronger and firmer still, for there is mercy proclaimed to you this day. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. These are His own words and He Himself expressly invites you to come to Him. He says, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And He gives you His Word for it—"He that comes unto Me I will in nowise cast out." Salvation is free as the air we breathe to every convicted sinner. If you know this day your need of Christ, take Him, He is yours. He is a fountain open for the thirsty. All the preparation you need is simply a burning thirst. Then come and drink and none can tell you no—

***"From the Mount of Calvary,
Where the Savior deigned to die,
What transporting sounds I hear,
Bursting on my ravished ear! —
Love's redeeming work is done,
Come and welcome, Sinner, come!"***

Well, then, if you are invited, "Who can tell?" Come, come and try, for, "Who can tell?"

I think the greatest confidence which the king of Nineveh would have would be derived from the following suggestion. "Oh," said he, "if God had meant to destroy us without giving us an opportunity of pardon, He would not have sent Jonah forty days beforehand. He would have given us no time at all. He would simply have given a blow and a word, but the blow would have been first. He would have overthrown the city in His wrath without a single message. What did He do to Sodom? He sent no messenger there. The sun rose and the fire descended from God's terrible right hand. Not so Nineveh. It had its warning. And now, Sinner, turn this to good account. You have had many a warning. You are this day warned, no, more—you are affectionately *invited to come* to Christ. The voice from the Cross is speaking and each trickling drop of blood cries, "Amen."

"Come and welcome, Sinner, come!" Now, if the Lord were unwilling to forgive, would He have sent His servants to warn and to invite? If there was not a heart of mercy within Him, would He not have said, "Let them alone, they are joined unto idols, let them perish"? It is no small prophecy of God's good intentions to a man when God sends to him a faithful minister. Oh, my Hearers, I cannot speak to you with eloquence. I cannot address you with the fervid words of such an one as Whitfield, but this I can say and God is my witness, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, whether man would hear, or whether he will not. If you perish, it is not because I have kept back any part of that which I have received of God, who has sent me.

I have broken through the trammels of creed and system that I might free my head of the blood of all men. I have not been content to run in the track of an old and narrow creed, if I felt that it kept me from earnestly pleading with you and warning you to flee from the wrath to come. I have endangered many a friendship and brought upon my self no little shame,

because I must and will, in this matter, deal earnestly with your souls. It is no child's play to preach. It shall be no child's play to give an account of preaching at the last great tremendous day. You are warned—in God's name I conjure you, before the gates of mercy are shut upon you—before life shall end, now, now remember—now may the Spirit of God bring you to your knees, now drive you to prayer, now lead you to faith in the sprinkled blood of the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.

Sinner, remember! If you perish, you destroy yourself. Behold, God wills not your death, but He bids you come now. No, He does, as it were, pray that you would return. He says, "Return, you backsliding children of men." "Oh Israel, return unto Me." He says again, "Come, now, let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson they shall be white as snow." Would that *I* could draw you! Oh that *I* had chains on my lips that should bind you in golden fetters to the Cross of Christ! Come, Sinner, for, "who can tell?"

No, I change the sentence. "I can tell"—if you turn, He will turn unto you. Come to Him and He will accept you, for He is a God ready to forgive and now, this day, He is ready to cast your sins into the depths of the sea and remember them no more.

III. And now, this shall bring me to the third point, namely, THE URGING OF MANY REASONS WHY WE SHOULD IMITATE THE NINEVITES IN REPENTANCE.

It was an old and a horrible custom of past governments, when a man was executed for murder, to allow him to be hung in chains, so that as often as anyone passed by the gibbet they might learn, as was thought, the severity of justice. I fear, however, that they more frequently learned the brutality and barbarism of the age. Now, as these were hung in chains as warnings, I would translate this horrible figure into one that shall glitter with joy and delight. God, in order that you may know His mercy, has been pleased to preserve instances thereof, that so often as you look upon them you may be led to say, if such-and-such an one was saved, why may not I? It is needless for me to refer you to Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures. You will remember well the pardon given to David! Surely you have not forgotten the mercy which God had on that chief of sinners, Manasseh! As for the New Testament pardoned sinners, from the thief on the Cross to Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, it suffices but to hint at them.

And now this day behold before your eyes in this place, sinners, once like yourselves, who have obtained mercy and are now forgiven. Among the thousands in this hall there are not a few who (say some two years ago or less) entered this place out of idle curiosity. I could describe some to you who had never entered a place of worship for twenty or even thirty years. Some of them had been habitual drunkards, their lives had been the abodes of misery. Some of them had been harlots and led others into sin, beside destroying their own bodies and their souls. Into this place they crept, they came merely to listen to the preacher, of whom many a strange thing had been said. Their attention was riveted. An arrow from the bow of God shot into their hearts and here they are this day.

Without boasting I say it, they are my joy and my crown of rejoicing and shall be such in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If you, who have been like they, but are now repenting of your sins, could hear their testimony as I have done, you would never doubt of the mercy of God. If you could read the account that I have preserved of some of them—sailors, who in every part of the world have sinned—who have never touched upon land except to commit fornication and wickedness—if I could tell you on the other hand the dreadful iniquities into which some here have plunged in the days of their flesh, you would say, “Surely He is a pardoning God,” and methinks that might entice you to come.

Oh, if there are any such here and there are many such here, I know—if you are sitting in this hall today side by side with some trembling sinner and you observe the tear dropping from his eye, be not slow to tell him, “I am one of the men that Mr. Spurgeon mentions.” The Lord has saved you and be not slow to take the hand of the penitent and bid him come where you went and bid him look for mercy where you sought it and found it. And I may say again, if I may speak for myself here today, if you knew my own character as it was before conversion, you need none of you despair of mercy. When I went to God confessing my sins to Him, I felt myself to be the vilest sinner out of Hell. Others might have praised me, but I had not a word to say on my own account. If the hottest flames of the pit had been my eternal portion it was not one whit more than I deserved. But—

**“Tell it unto sinners tell,
I am, I am out of Hell,”**

and forgiven and accepted in Christ.

Who, then, need despair? Who can tell? Come, Sinner, come and say this in your heart and go and cry unto God in prayer and lay hold on Christ by faith, saying, “Who can tell?” The innumerable instances of past mercies should stir us up to say, “Who can tell?”

And then again let me remind you—you that are now conscious of your guilt—your only hope for deliverance lies in the mercy of God. When a man knows that he has only one hope left how tenaciously will he cling to it. Some sick man has tried every system of medicine—he has spent nearly all his wealth and now he has come to the last stage. He is trying the last system of medicine. If this remedy fails, die he must. Do you not readily imagine that he would use this with the greatest diligence and be as obedient as possible to every command of the physician?

And now Sinner, it is Christ or Hell with you this day. If Christ saves you not, you are a lost man. If the Cross is not your salvation, the jaws of Hell must soon close upon you. It is Christ or nothing. No, it is Christ or *perdition*! Lay hold on Him then. Clutch Him. He is your last, your *only* hope. Oh, fly to Him—He is your only refuge. If you were pursued by some fierce beast of prey—if there were but one tree on some vast plain, albeit, there were but a scanty hope of escape by climbing it, with what speed would your feet carry you to it? I see you running and I come before you and say, “Stop, why in such haste?” You rush past me crying—“Sir, it is my only chance, it is my only hope. I am devoured, I am rent in pieces if I find not shelter there.” It is your case today. Behold the roaring lion of the pit, thirsty for your blood, is

after you. Away to the Cross! Cling to it. There is hope. There is sure refuge. But apart from that you are worse than rent in pieces. You are destroyed forever and ever.

But for your encouragement, let me tell you one other thing and then I shall have done. Sinner, remember that while it will be a happy thing for you to be saved, it will be a glorious thing for God to save you. Men object not to do a thing which is expensive to them, if it brings them in some honor. They will not stoop to do a thing which involves shame and scorn. But if honor goes with a thing then are they ready enough to do it. Now Soul, remember, if God shall save you it will *honor him*. Why, will you not honor Him if He will but blot out your sin? I thought when I was seeking mercy, if God would but save me there was nothing I would not do for Him. I would be cut in pieces rather than deny Him. I would serve Him all my life and He might do what He would with me in Heaven.

And do you not sometimes feel that if God would but save you, you would sing loudest of them all in Heaven? Would you not love Him—creep to the foot of His Throne and cast your crown before His feet, saying—“Lord, not unto me, not unto me, but unto Your name be all the glory”? God delights to save sinners, because this puts jewels in His crown. He is glorified in His justice, but not as He is in His mercy. He appears in silken robes with a golden crown upon His head when He saves sinners. He wears an iron crown when He crushes them. Judgment is His strange work—He does that with His *left* hand—but His *right*-handed acts are those of mercy and of love. Hence He puts the righteous always on the right hand that He may be ready to pardon and ready to deliver.

Oh, come then, Soul, to Christ! You are not about to ask a thing which God is unwilling to give, or that which will slur His escutcheon, or blot His banner. You are asking for that which is as glorious to God as it is beneficial to yourself. Come, humble Soul, and cry to Christ and He will have mercy upon you!

My only fear in conclusion is that if any of you have received the slightest impression this morning you will go home and forget it. May I ask you now, as a favor, that if you have but got so much as a scratch under the preaching of the Word, go home alone, if you can. Say but little if you are obliged to walk with others and go straight away to your chamber. There fall there on your knees, make a confession of your sins, cry to God for mercy through the blood of Christ, and, “Who can tell?” Who can tell—this very day there may be a high holiday in Heaven over hundreds of sinners who in this Music Hall have first learned to pray—who in this place have first been led to consider their ways and turn to God?

I hope our friends will all remain and no one move, while I pray that that may be the case and all of you that wish it may be so, will solemnly say Amen after the few sentences of prayer I shall utter—“Lord, save us this morning. We confess our sin. We ask for mercy humbly through the blood of Christ. We pray You do not deny us, but let us all appear at Your *right hand* at last. Here reveal with power and let many be saved this morning for Jesus’ sake.” And the people said AMEN.

JONAH'S OBJECT-LESSONS

NO. 2504

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad for the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.”

Jonah 4:6-8.

I WANT to lay the stress especially upon these three sentences in my text—

“God prepared a gourd.”

“God prepared a worm.”

“God prepared a vehement east wind.”

The life of Jonah cannot be written without God. Take God out of the Prophet's history and there is no history to write. This is equally true of each one of us. Apart from God, there is no life, nor thought, nor act, nor career of any man, however lowly or however high. Leave out God and you cannot write the story of anyone's life. If you attempt it, it will be so ill-written that it shall be clearly perceived that you have tried to make bricks without straw and that you have sought to fashion a potter's vessel without clay. I believe that in a man's life the great secret of strength, holiness and righteousness is the acknowledgment of God. When a man has no fear of God before his eyes, there is no wonder that he should run to an excess of meanness and even to an excess of riot! In proportion as the thought of God dominates the mind, we may expect to find a life that shall be true and really worth living. But in proportion as we *forget* God, we shall play the fool. It is the fool who says in his heart, “No God,” and it is the fool who lives and acts as if there were no God!

In Jonah's life, we meet with God continually. The Lord bade the Prophet go to Nineveh, but instead of going there, he took ship to go to Tarshish. Quick as thought, at the back of that announcement, we read, “But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.” God hurled out the wind as if He had been throwing a thunderbolt after His servant who was seeking to escape from Him—and there was such a terrible storm that the shipmen were compelled to cast Jonah overboard! Then we read, in the 17th verse of the first chapter, “The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish

three days and three nights.” God began by preparing a storm, but he went on to prepare a fish! We do not know what fish it was and it does not matter—it was one that God made on purpose. And it answered so well that Jonah lived in the fish’s belly for three days and three nights—and then he was landed safely—a better man than when he went into the sea, though none too good even then!

You may have found, dear Friend, that God has prepared a storm in your life. There was a tempest which checked you in your career of sin. You had determined to go to destruction and you had “paid the fare,” but there came a great trial—something or other that stopped your ship and utterly threatened to swallow it up. After that, there came delivering mercy. You who were cast into the sea were, nevertheless, not lost, but saved. What you judged to be your destruction turned out to be for your salvation, for God had from of old prepared the means of saving you—and He sent you such a deliverance that you were compelled to say with Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Since that time, I should not wonder if you have seen the hand of God in very many amazing ways, possibly in much the same form as Jonah did, not literally, but spiritually. Especially if you have erred as Jonah did, if you have fallen into ill-humors as he did, you have probably had to bear the same kind of discipline and chastisement.

Let it never be forgotten that Jonah was a man of God. I often hear great fault found with him and he richly deserves the condemnation. He was not at all an amiable person but, for all that, he was a man of God. When he was in the very depths of the sea—when he appeared to be cut off from all hope, he prayed as none but a man of God could pray—“Out of the belly of Hell cried I, and You heard my voice.” It takes a real saint to cry out of such a place as Jonah was in—the living tomb of the belly of a fish! He was also a man of faith, otherwise he had not been a man of prayer. And he did believe in his God—it was the result of a mistake that was made by his *faith*, rather than by his unbelief, that he tried to run away! He had such regard for God’s honor that he could not bear to exercise a ministry which he feared would raise a question about the truthfulness of God and represent Him to be changeable. So far as his idea of God went, he was faithful to it. His fault mainly lay in that imperfect idea of God which had taken possession of his mind.

Jonah was a man of faith and a man of prayer, and God honored him exceedingly by making his word to turn the whole city upside down! For my part, I hardly know of any other man who ever had so high an honor put upon him as this man had. It is just possible that if you or I had made a king on his throne to come down from it and robe himself in sackcloth. And if we had seen a whole city—men, women and children—all crying out for mercy as the result of one sermon from us, we might have been as greatly foolish, through the intoxication of pride, as this man was foolish through a vehement zeal for God which happened to take a harsh shape instead of being tempered, softened and sweetened by a recognition of the great love and kindness of God—and by a sweet delight in those gracious attributes of His Character!

Jonah was grandly stern amid a wicked generation. He was one of God’s, “Ironsides.” He was the man for a fierce fight and he would not

hold back his hand from the use of the sword, or do the work of the Lord half-heartedly. He was one who wished to make thorough work of anything he undertook and to go to the very end of it. We need more of such men, nowadays! He was not lacking in backbone, yet he was lacking in heart—in that respect we would not be like he. He was singularly strong where so many in these days are grievously weak. Perhaps he is all the more criticized and condemned because that virtue which he possessed is so rare today. The faults he had were on that side on which most modern professors do not err and, therefore, Pharisee-like, they are content to condemn the man for that which they do not, themselves, commit because they are not brave enough and strong enough to fall into such a fault!

In my text we have God very conspicuous in the life of His servant Jonah and I want to bring out this truth very prominently, that we may also see God in *our* lives in similar points to those in which He manifested Himself to Jonah. So, we will notice, first, that *God is in our comforts*—“God prepared a gourd.” Secondly, God is *in our bereavements and losses*—“God prepared a worm.” Thirdly, God is *in our heaviest trials*—“God prepared a vehement east wind.” Then, fourthly, what is not in the text in words, but is the very essence of it, *God prepared Jonah*—these three things—the gourd, the worm and the east wind were a part of his preparation, the means of making him a fitter and a better man for his Lord's service. He learned by the gourd, he learned by the worm and he learned by the vehement east wind. They were a sort of kindergarten to which the child-like spirit of Jonah had to go. He needed to be taught as children in their infancy are taught by object-lessons and things that they can see. So Jonah went to God's kindergarten, to learn from the gourd, the worm and the east wind the lessons that he would not learn in any other way.

I. So, first, I remind you that GOD IS IN OUR COMFORTS—“God prepared a gourd.” Everything of good that we enjoy, however little it may be, comes from God—

**“Tis God that lifts our comforts high,
Or sinks them in the grave.
He gives and blessed be His name!
He takes but what He gave.”**

Let me call your attention to Jonah's comfort, that is, the gourd which God prepared. It was sent to him when he was in a very wrong spirit, angry with God and angry with his fellow men. He had hidden away from everybody in that bit of a shanty which he had put up for himself outside the city, as if he was a real Timon, the man-hater. Sick of everybody and sick, even, of himself, he gets away into this little booth and there, in discontent and discomfort, he sits watching to see the fate of the city lying below the hill. Yet God comforted him by preparing a gourd to be “a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief.” You know that we are very apt to say of some people, “Well, really, they are of such a trying disposition. They fret about nothing at all and they worry themselves when they have no cause for it. We have no patience with them.”

That is what *you* say, but that is not how God acts! He has pity upon such people and He has had patience with many of you when you have

been of the number of such people. Why, I do not believe that any man here would have proposed to make a gourd grow up to cover the head of the angry Prophet—we would much more likely have called a committee meeting and we would have agreed that if the discontented Brother liked to go and live in a booth, he had better work the experiment out. It would probably be for his good and make him come back and live in the city, properly, like other people! Though he was left to feel the cold by night and the heat by day, it was entirely his own choice—and if a person chooses such a residence, it is not for us to interfere! That is how men talk and men are so exceedingly wise, you know. But that is not how *God* talks and He is infinitely wiser than any of His creatures! His wisdom is sweetly loving, but ours sometimes curdles into hardness. What do you think, Brothers and Sisters, has not God sent us many comforts when we did not deserve them? When, on the contrary, we had made a rod for our own back and might well have reckoned upon being made to smart? Yet God has sent us comforts which have relieved us of the sorrow which we foolishly brought upon ourselves—and made us stop the fretfulness which was our own voluntary choice. God has been wonderfully tender with us, even as a mother is with her sick child. Have you not found it so, Brothers and Sisters? Well, now, look back upon your past life and think that all the comforts which came to you when you deserved to be left without them, came from God, and for them all let His name be blessed!

Further, notice that the comfort which came to Jonah was exactly what he needed. It was a gourd, a broad-leaved plant, very probably the castor-oil plant, which botanists call *Palma Christi*, because of its resemblance to the human hand. In its native country, it grows very rapidly, so that it would speedily afford a welcome shade from the heat. Whatever kind of gourd it was, God prepared the plant, and it was exactly the kind to shield Jonah from the burning heat of the sun. The Lord always knows how to send us the very comfort that we most require. There is many a mother who has had only one of her children spared to her, but what a comfort that one child has been! I have heard one good woman say, "My dear daughter is such a joy to me, she is everything I could wish." Or it may be that God has sent to you some other form of earthly comfort which has been altogether invaluable to you—it has been a screen from the great heat of your trouble—"a shelter in the time of storm." Whenever you get such an invaluable blessing, praise God for it! Do not let your gourd become your *god*, but let your gourd *lead you to your God*. When our comforts become our idols, they work our ruin. But when they make us bless God for them, then they become messengers from God which help toward our growth in Divine Grace.

Note, next, that God sent this comfort to Jonah at the right time. It came just when he needed it—when he was most distressed. Then it was that the gourd came up in a night. The punctuality of God is very notable—

***"He never is before His time,
He never is too late."***

Just when we need a mercy and when the mercy is all the more a mercy because it is so timely, then it comes! If it had come later, it might have

been too late, or, at any rate, it would not have been so seasonable and, therefore, not so sweet. Who can know when is the right time like God who sees all things at a single glance? He knows when to give and when to take. In every godly life there is a set time for each event. And there is no need for us to ask, "Why is the white here and the black there? Why this gleam of sunlight and that roar of tempest? Why here a marriage and there a funeral? Why sometimes a harp and at other times a sack-but?" God knows, and it is a great blessing for us when we can leave it all in His hands. Let the gourd spring up in a night it will be the right night—and let the gourd die in the morning—it will be the right morning! All is well if it is in God's hands. Let us, therefore, distinctly recognize God in our comforts, in their coming to us when we are unworthy of them, in their coming in the form in which we most require them and in their coming at the time when we are most in need of them.

This gourd, like all our comforts, was sent to Jonah *with an exceedingly kind design*, and God made it to come up, "that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief." One would not have thought of a gourd delivering a man like that from his grief. It is an unmanly thing for a Prophet of Jehovah to have a grief from which a gourd can deliver him, but God knew His servant, and in condescension He sent this amazing form of comfort with this motive, "to deliver him from his grief." I think that Jonah, when he wrote this verse, must have smiled to himself and thought, "All through the ages, what a fool they will think I was!" Yet he went on and honestly put it down. So, often, when you and I have been comforted by some mere trifle and we have been very grateful for it, looking back upon it, we have thought to ourselves, "What poor creatures we were to have been comforted by so small a thing! How foolish it seems for us, first, to have been put out by so little a matter, and then to have been comforted by something equally little!" Let us see, here, God's wonderful kindness, His microscopic kindness in thus looking, as it were, to our thimble of grief, and somehow dealing with them after their own shape and form so as to deliver us from the grief they have caused us.

Yet, further, it seems *that this design of God was fully answered*, for, "Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd." God has often sent us mercies that have made us exceedingly glad and we have been delivered from the pressure of heavy grief. But here is the sad note in the history of Jonah, as it has often been with us, also—although he was exceedingly glad, he does not appear to have been exceedingly *grateful*. It is one thing to be glad of a mercy—it is another matter to be grateful *for* that mercy. Sometimes a man spends all his time in rejoicing over the comfort, which then becomes idolatry, whereas he ought to have expended it in blessing God for the comfort. And then it would have shown that he was in a right state of heart. I do not read that Jonah thanked God for this gourd. Possibly no worm would have devoured it if he had done so. Our comforts are always safest when they are enveloped in gratitude. Let us overlay the wood of our comfort with the gold plate of our gratitude—and so shall it be preserved. An ordinary comfort protected with a sheet of gratitude shall become to us a double means of Divine Grace.

This, then, is the first point at which I am aiming. I want every child of God—and I would that every man and woman and child here would do the same—to think of every comfort as having come from God. Even though it is a poor fading thing, like a gourd, yet it is valuable to you for the present. Therefore, think of it as having come to you from God, even as “the Lord God prepared a gourd” to deliver His servant, Jonah, from his grief. So, the Lord has prepared your comforts, prepared your prosperity, prepared your wife, prepared your children, prepared your friends! Therefore bow your heads in gratitude to Him and bless the name of the Lord whose mercy endures forever.

II. Now we turn to our second point, where we shall need even more faith than in the first part of our subject. The Prophet next says that “God prepared a worm,” which teaches us that **GOD IS IN OUR BE-REAVEMENTS AND LOSSES.**

Jonah's great comfort was destroyed by *a very little thing*. It was only a worm, but that was enough to destroy the gourd. Oh, how soon may our earthly comforts be taken away from us! There is a little fluctuation in the markets and the prosperous merchant becomes a bankrupt. A little red spot appears in the cheek of your fair child and in a few weeks she is taken away by decline or consumption. A very little thing may soon destroy all your comforts and make them to be like the withered leaves of Jonah's gourd.

It was also, probably, *an unseen thing* that worked this havoc. Very likely Jonah did not see that worm. God prepared it, but the Prophet did not discern it until he saw the destruction it had caused. And, my dear Friends, some little unseen thing may yet come to you and turn into grief all your present joy.

Besides, *it was a very foul thing*, a worm, a maggot at the root of this gourd—and through this foul thing it withered and died. It is sometimes the sharpest bitterness of our grief when we have our joy spoiled by somebody else's sin. The venomous whisper of a wicked gossip—a foul drop from the black tongue of slander has poisoned the very well-spring of domestic bliss! In Jonah's case, the Lord prepared the worm and although no evil thing can be charged against the good God, yet at the back of man's free will there is the great Truth of Divine Predestination, which, without taking any evil upon itself, yet overrules even the waywardness of man for the Lord's own Glory. People often think that there is no worm which can eat into their comfort, but God can prepare one, as He did in the case of the Prophet. He as much prepared the worm as He prepared the gourd. He as much destroyed the comfort as He first of all gave it to His sorrowing servant.

This worm, which God had prepared, *did its work very speedily*. The gourd was destroyed in a night. When Jonah fell asleep, there it was over his head, guarding him from the bright beams of the moon. But when he woke in the morning, it hung shriveled and worn out, affording no protection, whatever, from the fierce rays of the sun. Oh, how soon can God take away every atom of comfort that we have! I am never at a wedding but the thought of a funeral crosses my mind. I cannot help it. Neither do I hear the sound of joyous music, but I reflect how soon it will all be over and the trumpet of the great Day of Judgment will subdue all hearts with

fear. It is well, when you are glad, to rejoice as though you rejoiced not, for then you will learn, when you are sorrowful, to mourn as though you sorrowed not. Recollecting the vanity and frailty of all things here below, have yourself well in hand. Create your circumstances, rather than be the creature of them! Overrule them by faith instead of bowing before them in terror.

Further, when God prepared the worm to destroy Jonah's gourd, the *result of its work was very sad*. It left the poor man without that which had made him exceedingly glad and he was as angry and distressed as before he had been rejoicing! I want you, dear Friends, to pause here to learn this lesson. It is *God who sends your trials*—do not get into your head the notion that your sickness or anything else that grieves you is from the devil. He may have a finger in it, but he is, himself, always under the supremacy of God. When Job is vexed and plagued by Satan, the archenemy cannot touch him anywhere till God gives permission. God always stands at the back of all that happens. Therefore, do not begin kicking at the *secondary agent*. You know that if you strike a dog with a stick, he bites at the stick—if he were a sensible dog, he would try to bite you! If you quarrel with anything that happens, your quarrel is virtually with God Himself. It is no use to quarrel with the Lord's agent, for it is God, after all, who sends you the affliction—and “He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” Say, as old Eli did, when he heard the evil tidings concerning his household, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” Let it be with you as it was with Aaron when, as he could not speak joyfully, he did not speak at all—“Aaron held his peace.” It is sometimes a great thing to not be able to say anything. Silence is golden when it is the silence of a complete submission to the will of the Lord. God prepares the worm, therefore, be not angry with the poor worm, but just let the gourd go. It was God who made it grow and He had a perfect right to take it away when He pleased.

III. Now, thirdly, “God prepared a vehement east wind,” which teaches us that **GOD IS IN OUR HEAVIEST TRIALS**. Jonah could not escape the fury of the wind, especially when his gourd was withered. This wind came from the east, which, according to our old proverb, is “neither good for man nor beast.” But it came from the east *most vehemently* and, at the same time, after the protecting gourd was gone! The fierce rays of the sun beat upon Jonah's head, where he seems to have been weakest, though he probably thought himself to be strongest.

So, dear Friends, *God may send you troubles on the back of one another*. The gourd is gone. Now the east wind comes. Troubles seldom come alone—they usually fly in flocks, like martins—and it will often happen that one will come upon the back of another and you will say to yourself, “Why does this trial come just now when I am least able to bear it?”

Sometimes, also, *troubles come very fiercely*. It was “a vehement east wind.” It came like the rush of scorching heat out of the open door of an oven. It was like the Sirocco, a sultry wind burning up everything in its track. This wind came with all its might upon poor Jonah—and just so may fierce and fiery trials come at any time upon the dearest servants of God.

And, once more, trouble may come *when we think ourselves secure*. When Jonah left the city, he seemed to say, "There, I will get away from men. I will not have anything more to do with them, they have always worried and troubled me. I will get quite alone and I shall sit and enjoy myself, for I cannot enjoy anybody else." But the troubles came even there! Indeed, Jonah had built his booth "on the east side of the city," just where he would be likely to feel the full force of the wind blowing from that quarter. In going there, he had not gone out of the realm of withered gourds, nor had he gone beyond the reach of the vehement east wind. Neither have you, dear Friend, though you say, "I thought, when I left my last trying situation, I would get into a comfortable place." Yes, I will tell you when you will get into a comfortable place, if you are a Christian, and that is when you pass out of this world altogether! And you will not find it anywhere else—go where you may on this globe—there are no islands upon which the sea does not sometimes beat roughly. There is no atmosphere so calm but the east wind will disturb it, sooner or later. You may go and sit in your booth if you like, but there shall come to you, even in that booth, the checks of comfort and of loss, of gourds which spring up in a night and which also wither in a night!

Yes, fierce troubles will come to us, and *they may bring us no benefit in themselves*. It is a popular notion that trials sanctify those who have to endure them. But, by themselves, they do not. It is a sanctified trial that sanctifies the tried one, but trial itself—alone and by itself—might make men even worse than they are. Here, for instance, is Jonah. His gourd is gone and the sun's fierce heat beats upon him and makes him faint. And even to the Lord, Himself, he says that he does well to be angry, even unto death. The trial was not sanctified to him while he was in it—and it often happens that "nevertheless afterward" is the time in which trials benefit us. "No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." You may have ten thousand trials and yet be none the better for them unless you cry to God to sanctify every twig of the rod and to make the fury of the east wind or the burning rays of the sun to be a blessing to you!

It seems that, at the time, *this trial only revealed Jonah's folly*, for it appeared to make him pray very foolishly and talk very foolishly. His trials were like the tossing of the troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt. This vehement east wind threw up great masses of black seaweed upon the shore of Jonah's character and made the great sea of his heart roll up the foul mass of corruption that otherwise might have been hidden and still. Brothers and Sisters, unless the Spirit of God comes upon us in power, we shall not grow holy through our trials! Though we were washed in a sea of fire, we would not lose an atom of our sin by suffering! No, the very flames of Hell shall never purify a soul, or purge away a single sin—he that is filthy shall even there be filthy. There is nothing in suffering, any more than there is in joy, in and of itself, to make a man holy!

That is the work of God and of God alone, yet God overrules both our joy and our grief to accomplish His own Divine purpose by His Spirit. It is God who sends the wind, so, once again, I want you to pause and bow

your heads before Him who sends all your trouble. Do not be angry with God for what He does to you, but feel that it must be right even though it should tear everything away from you, though it should leave you a widow and houseless, though it should strip you and though it should even slay you! God is still God and the deeper your trouble, the greater are your possibilities of adoration, for, when you are brought to the very lowest, it is then, *in extremis*, you can raise the song in excelsis! Out of the deepest depths you can praise the Lord to the very highest! When we glorify God out of the fires of fiercest tribulation, there is probably more true adoration of Him in that melody than in the loftiest songs of cherubim and seraphim when they enjoy God and sing out His praises in His Presence above!

IV. Now, lastly, I said that it was not verbally in the text, but it was there in spirit, that IN ALL THIS GOD WAS PREPARING HIS SERVANT.

Do you not see that *God was teaching Jonah by the eye and by experience*? Unless the Lord had put Jonah through this process, He could not so well have argued with His servant. So the gourd must go and the wind must come, and the sun must beat upon the fainting Prophet—and Jonah, in his angry temper, must get to feel great grief over his poor gourd which had met with such an untimely death. And then God comes to him and says, “Are you troubled about your gourd? Have you pity upon a gourd and should not I have pity upon a great city with more than a hundred and twenty thousand helpless children within its walls, and all those thousands of unsinning cattle? Should not I spare these, when you would have spared this tender plant which sprang up in a night and withered in a night?”

Sometimes God puts us through an unusual experience in order that we may the better understand Him. And sometimes that we may the better know ourselves! Men who are of a hard nature must have hard usage. Diamond must cut diamond, that at last the purpose of the great Owner of the jewels may be accomplished. Then, dear Heart, with your sore afflictions, God is preparing you to be a comforter to others! You distressed and troubled one, God is training you that you may be a very Barnabas, the son of consolation, to the sons and daughters of affliction in times to come. I would suggest to some of you here who have to bear double trouble that God may be preparing you for double usefulness, or He may be working out of you some unusual form of evil which might not be driven out of you unless His Holy Spirit had used these mysterious methods with you to teach you more fully His mind.

I am probably speaking to some who are not yet converted to God. You have not yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet you have a world of troubles. You think that God is so angry with you that He means to destroy you, for ever since you have begun to think of Divine things you have had nothing but trouble. You have lost one dear friend after another. You have, yourself, been very ill, and you often feel very low-spirited and sad, and you say to yourself, “Ah, I am doomed to perish!” Now, I do not come to that conclusion at all! On the contrary, I thank God for your trouble, for I think that, as God dealt with Jonah to teach him a lesson, He is dealing with you to bring you to Himself! It was a good thing for Jonah when he had finished that quarrel with his God, for

no good ever comes that way. What a blessed thing it would be for you, also, to finish your quarrel with God! Finish it soon, I beg you.

How can you be reconciled to Him? Only by the death of Jesus, for God has given His Son to die for sinners. That ought to end your quarrel with God. Remember that blessed verse, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Turn to Him, then. Let the God of Love end your discussions and end your questionings! May His blessed Spirit come and sanctify your troubles and bring you to Himself! God bless you all, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JONAH 4.

You know all about Jonah's refusal to go upon the Lord's errand and how he was held to it, and carried to his work in a great fish as he would not go by himself. Somehow or other God will make His servants do His will. And the more speedily they do it, the better it is for them. You know also how the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah and how the Lord had mercy upon them.

Verses 1-3. *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray You, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before You unto Tarshish: for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech You, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.* "For, if I live, the Ninevites will say, 'This man scared us needlessly. He is a Prophet of evil and he is a liar, too, for our great city is not destroyed! He frightened us into a kind of repentance for which there was no necessity, for his God does not carry out His threats,'" and so forth. And poor Jonah could not face such talk as that. But, Brother, if you preach God's Word as He gives it to you, you have nothing to do with the consequences that come of it! God will justify His own Truth. And even if it should seem that the worst rather than the best consequences ensue, it is still for you to go on in the name of Him who sent you. Whenever you and I begin to try to manage God's Kingdom for Him, we find the Divine scepter too heavy for our little hands to hold. Our case would be like that of Phaeton trying to drive the horses in the chariot of the sun! We cannot hold the reins of the universe. And poor Jonah, wanting to manage everything for God, makes a dreadful mess of it and, in his anger, makes a very foolish request—"O Lord, take, I beseech You, my life from me."

4. *Then said the LORD, Is it right for you to be angry?* How kind of God to speak thus gently to His rebellious servant. Are any of you given to anger? Might not the Lord say to you, "Is it right for you to be angry, so soon—so often—so long—about such little things?"

5. *So Jonah went out of the city*—When, no doubt, everybody would have been willing to entertain him, for all, even to the king, must have felt a deep respect for the messenger who had brought them to their knees before the Lord. "Jonah went out of the city"—

5. *And sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.* To see those 40 days out—half hoping, perhaps, that there would come an earthquake to shake the city down and then, under his little booth of boughs, he would not be hurt by the falling edifices! In as sulky and surly a spirit as he could be, he put himself to great inconveniences. The dampness of the night fell on him and the heat of the sun would soon wither up the branches. If, dear Friends, like Jonah, you need to complain, you will soon have something to complain of! People who are resolved to fret, generally make for themselves causes for fretfulness.

6. *And the LORD God prepared a gourd and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad for the gourd.* Those who are angry with God show the littleness of their minds. “Little things please little minds.” So a gourd made Jonah glad.

7, 8. *But God prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die—*Jonah was soon up and soon down. Yesterday he “was exceedingly glad for the gourd.” Today he is fainting because of the heat of the sun! If we allow our mercies to become too sweet to us, they will soon become, by their withdrawal, too bitter for us. When we feel too much affection for the creature, we shall soon find a great deal of affliction *from* the creature. “The sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die”—

8, 9. *And said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Is it right for you to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.* He had got into such a bad spirit that he could even brave it out with his God! Oh, that we might be preserved from such an evil temper! It is well for us that, “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” When a child is in a fever and says a great many naughty things, his father puts it down to the sickness rather than to the child. So it was with God’s poor fainting servant, Jonah.

10, 11. *Then said the LORD, You have had pity on the gourd, for the which you have not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh—*“Nineveh, for which I have labored. Nineveh, which I made to grow. Nineveh, which has been many years in the building. Nineveh, which contains multitudes of immortal souls which will not perish in a night—‘Should not I spare Nineveh?’”

11. *That great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand.* This is always supposed to mean infants and I judge that the supposition is a correct one. So Nineveh had a population of over one hundred and twenty thousand who were under two years old. So it must have been an immense city. Who can tell the blessing that even infants bring to us? It may be that God spares London for the sake of the children in it. What a deal the Lord Jesus Christ made of children! He suffered the little chil-

dren to come to Him and forbade them not. Does God care for children? Yes, that He does—and so should His servants! They are the better part of the human race! There is more in them that is admirable than there is in us who are grown up. They are, in many respects, a blessing to the city, as these six-score thousand little ones were to Nineveh. But how amazingly does God add—

11. *And also much cattle?* Does God care for cattle? He does! And how that fact should teach His servants to be kind to all brute creatures! There is some truth in those lines of Coleridge—

***“He prays best, who loves best
All things, both great and small,”***

for everything that lives should be the object of our care for the sake of Him who gave them life. And if He has given us to have dominion over all sheep and oxen, and the birds of the air, and so forth, let not our dominion be that of a tyrant, but that of a kind and gentle prince who seeks the good of that which is under his power.

Here ends the story of Jonah which he tells himself—and he did not add anything to it because nothing needs to be added. The Lord's question to him was altogether unanswerable and Jonah felt it to be so. Let us hope that during the rest of his life, he so lived as to rejoice in the sparing mercy of God. He had stood outside the door, like the elder brother who was angry, and would not go in, and who said to his father, “Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.” But his father said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.”

I hope that he went in and I trust that Jonah also went in and lived with the penitent Ninevites, and that all were happy together in the love of the God who had been so gracious to them.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—106 (PART II), 212, 205.

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